

Catherine mansfield

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Catherine Mansfield was New Zealand's most famous. Her favorite form of literature and the one that made her famous was the short story. It was said that her style was similar to D. H. Lawrence's and even Virginia Woolf's. She had indeed some similar features: middle-class characters, the use of stream of consciousness, but the one that influenced her most was Anton Chekhov. She had the same kindness in telling, the same interest for the human being's behavior and the details that form our life.

Looking deeper in the human behavior and trying to see the important details, her short stories had a didactic particularity. This happens with the short story: "Sixpence". The story is a didactic one, but not as we might think at the beginning. The writer portrays two types of parents behavior. A little boy, Dicky, does not behave properly one day, just when his mother has a guest. This was a very strange fact, because he usually was "good as gold as a rule, sensitive, affectionate, obedient and marvelously sensible for his age" (Mansfield, Sixpence). The child makes a mistake and the guest, Mrs. Spears, gives his mother an advice: the only punishment is the whipping. This contradicts his mother's opinions, because when she said punishment she was not referring to beating. And here comes the two types of behavior, or we could extend the two types of parents. Mrs. Spears sons were very quiet, permitting their mother to give credit to her theory about punishment. Dicky's mother does not agree to the beating, but she let herself convinced by her friend's words. The children themselves were very different and Dicky was the one that had a normal behavior for his age. He was gentle and sensitive, but sometimes he was acting foolishly, maybe because a child's energy is too big and cannot be held in. Mrs. Spears sons were not acting

right for some children, they were too calm and quite. Mrs. Spears and Mrs. Bendall see this like a positive result of the whipping, but it is in fact a negative effect: the boys preferred playing in the horsewhip : “ behind the dog kennel or in the tool-house , or round about the dust bin”(Mansfield, Sixpence).

But Mrs. Bendall’ s mind was bending this woman’s words. In the end she convinced her husband to give a whipping to their boy, but the result was tragic.

Some gentle parents , who educated right their other children(that know what a punishment is in fact), made a mistake on a bad influence. Dicky stands the whipping with courage, without crying, and this thing starts a storm in his father’s heart. In the end the father does not know how to put right the things, but he becomes the one that learns a lesson from his son. He gives sixpence to Dicky, hoping that this will make him forget. But a heart’s wound does not cure so easily and not with a material gift.

The question from the end carries, perhaps, the whole essence of the story “ But could even that-could even a whole sixpence- blot out what had been?”(Mansfield, Sixpence). This story is a didactic one, but it is more a lesson for the parents, and a reminder that children are fragile little human beings, with frail souls, but with personality too. Whipping them is not a solution, it converts them into vulnerable, blighted persons that will act the same. Children can also teach their parents because they are spotless and their acts can show us the right path.

Works Cited

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