

## The Family at Home: Familiar Illustrations of Various Domestic Duties

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### Section 4 – CHANGING RESIDENCES

My eldest brother, a steady, industrious young man, had been married three or four years, and had got things a little comfortable about him, when he was strongly tempted to move into a house, that had stood some time empty in a neighboring town, and which was offered him, as he thought, on very advantageous terms. He had pretty much set his mind upon it, when he came to consult father and mother on the subject. They scarcely knew what to say, lest they should advise him against his real interest. For their parts, they did not much like the notion of moving; but then they considered that they were elderly, and, as it were, rooted in the soil, and had not the spirit to try new openings and new enterprises which young people might try, and succeed very well. At last they advised him to consult with a friend, who was very well known as a gentleman of great wisdom and experience. To this proposal he readily agreed. The gentleman asked my brother what reason he had for wishing to leave his present abode. Was he likely to be turned out; or was it out of repair, or unhealthy, or inconvenient?—No; the place was in very decent repair, and suited the family very well; and as he had always paid his rent, he had no reason to think his landlord would turn him out. "Then," said he, "if you ask my advice, stay where you are. There must be at least three good reasons for moving to weigh against one for staying." But the house he proposed taking was a larger, smarter-looking house, and no higher in the rent. "Then you must add to the rent the expense of moving your family and goods; here and there an odd bit of repair which you will find necessary; the wear and tear of furniture in taking down and putting up again; the chance of some things being too large and others too small for the places where they are to stand; and the time you will be put to inconvenience before you will have got your garden to grow, and your family settled in your new abode." "Very true, sir; I hardly know what to do; but they say there is a great chance of getting on in business there: the landlord has promised to get me customers." "Have you not got good employment here?" "Pretty fair, sir; we make a pretty good shift to live, and lay aside a small sum." "Then would it not be very unwise to give up a present certainty, though moderate, for the sake of a distant uncertainty, which may chance to be better, as you say, but which may chance to be good for nothing at all? It is for the interest of the man who has the house to dispose of to represent everything in the best light he can; but you ought to allow

a considerable set-off from his statements. He may do what he can to serve you, and that may be little or much; or he may forget his promise, and leave you to take care of yourself. At any rate, you will have much up-hill work before you can establish a good employment, like that you leave. Remember the old saying, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush;' and those in Poor Richard's famous Almanac,

"I never saw an oft-removed tree,  
Nor yet an oft-removed family,  
That throve so well as those that settled be."

And 'Three moves are as bad as a fire.' There is another thing which ought not to be overlooked. How will the relocation affect your best interests? Your present abode is very near the house of God, which is no small convenience to the mother of a young family; you are well known to the minister, and kindly cared for by him; your pious parents reside here, and might often warn you of any evil or danger which you did not suspect; you have steady Christian friends here, and are engaged with them in endeavoring to do good. Now, I don't say that there are not good people in another place, or that you would not do good and get good there; but relocating into a new connection is too often the occasion of breaking off some profitable friendship or some beneficial habit, which might not be readily replaced in a new situation. Let all these things be well weighed in your own mind, and sincerely prayed over before you come to a decision; for I hope you know the value of that precept, 'In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct your paths.'"

My brother was wise enough to listen to this wholesome advice. He soon made up his mind to remain where he was; and he never had reason to repent it.

## **PROVIDENCE**

Some people sadly forget that they are constantly dependent on Providence. If things prosper with them, they take all the credit to their own skill and diligence—or else they stupidly ascribe it to good luck. Others speak of Providence with a trifling levity, very unfitting the subject. In the most thoughtless manner such people will say, "Please God, I'll do so and so," or "God bless you," and other similar expressions, which never ought to be uttered but with seriousness and reverence. Others, again, presumptuously talk of putting their trust in Providence, while they neglect to use the means which Providence has appointed. They involve themselves in difficulties by their extravagance or imprudence, and trust to Providence to get them out; or they neglect to make provision for a time of need, in the hope that Providence will send them a supply. Such conduct is not trusting, but tempting Providence; and such hopes, sooner or later, make ashamed.

The following maxims on Providence are well worth committing to memory. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord." "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."

"Nothing happens in the world—without God's providence; without his commission nothing stirs; without his blessing nothing prospers." This saying, properly understood, believed, and acted on, would tend to keep our minds quiet under the many things that occur to ruffle them, and would encourage a habit of constant prayer, since nothing can hurt him who has God for his friend! Likewise, nothing can, finally, be a blessing to him who has God for his enemy.

"The blessing of God, it makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it."  
Success is God's blessing on a good cause.

God's word and his providences mutually expound each other. "Providences are sometimes dark texts, which lack an expositor." Then comes scripture to explain; "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." "All things work together for good to those who love God."

"God's providences fulfill his promises." Though they sometimes seem to cross, in reality they are in perfect harmony. Jacob said in haste, "All these things are against me!" But a few days proved that all these things were working together for his good—to restore to him his long-lost son, to provide for the welfare of himself and his family, and to bring about the fulfillment of God's promises concerning his posterity.

"Count every day, as well as you can—as the providences of God towards you on that day." This will excite holy wonder and gratitude, deep humility, holy circumspection, and cheerful confidence.

"Lord, when I count your mercies o'er,  
They strike me with surprise!  
Not all the sands that spread the shore  
To equal number rise."

"He who carefully considers the providence of God shall never lack a providence to consider and admire."

"Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them." Hosea 14:9

## **PEACE AND FORGIVENESS**

I have often tried to reckon in how many ways a good man may be a blessing to the neighborhood in which he dwells; and I am continually adding to the list. My mind, at such times, is sure to revert to some of my early and venerated friends, whose whole character exemplified that saying of the wise man, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." One particular in which they were very useful, was in promoting a spirit of peace and forgiveness among the neighbors, who were too apt to indulge a litigious or a malicious spirit. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God;" and truly enviable is that person whose endeavors, under the divine blessing, prove the means of banishing a spirit of contention and discord, and promoting that harmony and peace by which earth may be made in some degree to resemble heaven.

Let me set down a few rules for living in peace.

"Mind your own business." Half the quarrels among neighbors arise from idle curiosity, impertinent meddling, and foolish talking about the affairs of others.

"Keep your tongue from evil." If you cannot speak well of a neighbor, speak no evil. Never be afraid of the tongue growing rusty for lack of use! Give it no work but what is really profitable: keep it constantly under the direction of the law of wisdom, and the law of kindness; and they must be quarrelsome people indeed that will quarrel with you. If a spark from their ill temper should fall, it will soon go out for lack of fuel. It is the *second* blow, which makes the fray. A peaceful man is not likely to strike the first blow: let him resolve not to strike the second, and the matter will soon end. "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." James 1:19.

"Do not contend for every trifle, whether it be matter of right or opinion." There is great dignity and magnanimity in yielding a just right, rather than indulging contention. And as to matters of opinion, nothing can be more foolish than to wish other people to see with our eyes, or to desire a law that all the clocks in the parish should strike at the same moment with ours. If we think that others are wrong, we may with meekness instruct them. If called upon to defend our principles or our practice, our contest should be for *truth*, not for *victory*—and truth is best sought in the spirit of peace.

"If others neglect their duty to you, be sure that you perform yours to them." The rule is, "Do to them (not as they *do* to you, but) *as you would desire them to do to you*." To return railing for railing, is to return sin for sin.

"If you have an enemy, make him see and feel that you love him." Love in return for hatred, and good for evil—penetrates like oil in the bones; it subdues without striking a blow.

"Beg of God for universal charity." Whenever you pray for yourself, pray for all mankind; especially remembering those who have done you evil, or attempted to

do it. Pray for grace to forgive them from your heart, and beg of God for Christ's sake to forgive them too. Remember Him who prayed for his cruel murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"Be humble." Have no lofty claims, no high conceits. Think how insignificant, undeserving and guilty you are; then you will be slow to perceive or take offence, prompt in forgiving and forgetting, and incapable of revenge. When any injure you, think, "If I did not deserve this particular injury at the hand of my neighbor, I deserve far worse at the hand of God." Forget the faults of others, and remember your own. Forgive anybody rather than yourself.

"By faith wait for the providence of God." Be not hasty in vindicating yourself, but commit your cause to Him who judges righteously; and in due time he will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. "Do not recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save you." Our *remembering* an injury often does us more harm than our *receiving* it.

"God permits a Christian to be wronged that he may exercise his *patience*. He commands him to forgive the wrong that he may exercise his *charity*."

He who overcomes evil with good, overcomes three at once, namely, the devil, his adversary, and himself; and the self-conqueror is the greatest of all conquerors.

By taking revenge—a man may be even with his enemy; but by rendering good for evil—he is superior.

"I will be even with my bitterest foe,"  
Revenge exclaims, and then returns the blow.  
"I'll be superior," should the Christian say,  
"And kind forgiveness readily display."

Cranmer was so remarkable for returning good for evil, that it was commonly said, "Do him an ill turn, and you make him your friend forever."

I know a gentleman who had a fine garden, in which he took great delight. It was surrounded by the cottages of his tenants and laborers, to whom he justly looked as to the protectors of his property, and felt secure, inasmuch as no person could approach his premises but through theirs. He had for some days watched the progress of a fine bed of tulips. "Tomorrow," said he, "they will be in full perfection;" and he invited a company of friends to witness the display of their beauties. In the morning he hastened to the spot; but, to his utter astonishment, the whole bed was a scene of shriveled desolation. Some unaccountable influence had withered every stem, and each flower lay prostrate and fading on the ground.

A short time afterwards, a bed of ranunculus shared the same fate; and in succession several other choice and favorite productions. At length the gentleman became persuaded that the destruction did not proceed from any natural cause, such as blight or lightning, but that it must have been occasioned by the intentional mischief of some treacherous and malignant individual, who had access to the grounds. He resolved, therefore, to watch, and engaged a friend to accompany him for that purpose. After remaining in their station some time, they saw a person come out of one of the cottages, and apply some destructive preparation to the roots of such flowers as were advancing to blossom. The gentleman at once recognized him as a workman whom, a few weeks before, he had had occasion to reprove, and who thus malignantly gratified his resentment. His friend strongly urged that the offender should be prosecuted, and offered to bear witness against him. But the proprietor replied, "No; I am much obliged by your kindness in remaining with me; I have ascertained the author of the mischief, and am satisfied; I must use another method of dealing with him."

In the morning, the gentleman ordered his servant to purchase a fine joint of meat, and carry it to the cottage of this evil man, desiring he would enjoy it with his family. This treatment, so contrary to his deserts and expectations, proved the means of effectually humbling and softening the stubborn and malignant heart. The offender presented himself before his injured master, freely confessed his guilt, implored forgiveness, and proved, from that day forward, a most faithful, diligent, and devoted servant. "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:19-21

Among the lot of furniture which William West, who was mentioned in the 21st chapter, inherited from his old aunt, was an easy chair: it had been good in its day, but was falling to pieces, and stood about as mere lumber. This was many years after the old lady's death, and the rest of the family had forgiven William, though, perhaps, he never forgave himself. One of his nieces happened to be in need of such an article, and offered to purchase it of him. He readily consented, on condition of borrowing the chair in case he should be ill. The full value was given for the chair, and twice that sum expended on repairing and new covering it. When this was done, it presented a very respectable appearance. After some years, the old gentleman fell ill. His niece, unsolicited, returned the easy chair to him, and did whatever else could contribute to his comfort. He expressed much gratitude for her kindness, and, what to her was far more pleasing, expressed anxious concern, where he had formerly displayed careless indifference. He died, praying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

When the funeral was over, the chair was of course claimed by its rightful owner, but unjustly withheld by the children, whose mother had set them an example of

loving unjust gain. Such ingratitude and dishonesty was very provoking to the injured parties, who, for a moment, indulged a thought of enforcing the law, for the restitution of their property. But, on consulting their father, his more judicious counsel prevented such a step. He said, "You have nothing to expect from them: as selfish, worldly people, they have acted in character. But you must act in character as Christians: much is expected from you, and much is due to your profession and your principles. If you submit in silence to injury, you will lodge in the bosom of the aggressors a reproof keener than the most angry invectives, or the most expensive lawsuit. Suppose that, instead of resenting their injustice in withholding the chair, you were to give them the best cover, which you tell me you still have in your possession."

This proved to be almost the last counsel of a venerated parent; for, though then in health, he died a few days afterwards. The advice was followed by his children; the chair-cover was packed up, and sent without remark. No expression of gratitude was returned at the time; perhaps shame suppressed it. In a short time, the easy chair, like the rest of the furniture, went to a broker's for a few shillings; but years afterwards, the parties, from whom it was unjustly wrested, had the satisfaction of knowing that their conduct had been the means of impressing this conviction on the minds of this selfish family: "There must be something in their piety, because it enables them to return good for evil."

We will give one more example, which illustrates this subject. When the indefatigable traveler, Bruce, was in Abyssinia, one of the governors, according to the custom of the country, sent him twelve horses, saddled and bridled, desiring him to fix on one for his own use. The groom urged Bruce to choose one of them, assuring him it was a most excellent animal, and very quiet and safe to ride. It proved that the horse was extremely wicked, of which the man was well aware, and apparently had selected him with a malicious intention. The traveler, however, was well skilled in horsemanship. After a severe contest, he successfully curbed the unruly animal, completely exhausted him, and descended unhurt. The governor expressed the greatest surprise and concern at the transaction, and most solemnly protested his entire innocence of any design in it, adding, that the groom was already in irons, and before many hours passed would be put to death. "Sir," said Bruce, "as this man has attempted to endanger *my* life, according to the laws of the country, it is I that should name his punishment." "It is very true," replied the governor; "take him and cut him in a thousand pieces, if you please, and give his body to the birds." "Are you really sincere in what you say?" asked Bruce; "and will you have no after excuses?" He swore solemnly that he would not. "Then," said Bruce, "I am a Christian; the way my religion teaches me to punish my enemies, is, by doing good for evil; and, therefore, I keep you to the oath you have sworn. I desire you to set this man at liberty, and put him in the place he held before; for he has not been undutiful to you."

## KINDNESS AMONG NEIGHBORS

It is a pleasant thing to have the reputation of being a *good neighbor*. Who is it that deserves it? Not the idle gossip, who, for lack of useful employment at home, goes to spend an hour in one neighbor's house, and an hour in another's, assisting the idle in squandering the time they already despise, and robbing the industrious of a precious jewel, of which they (the industrious, not the visitor) know the value. Such neighbors have often extorted from those on whom they bestow their senseless visits, the pathetic exclamation, "Taxes press heavily enough; but the hardest tax of all is that which the forms of society authorize the idle to levy on the well-employed, by interrupting their engagements and defeating their purposes." Well has the wise man said, "Withdraw your foot from your neighbor's house, lest he be weary of you, and hate you," Proverbs 25:17. Still less is the character of a good neighbor due to those who ingratiate themselves into families, and become possessed of their secrets, or draw from them remarks on others, and then go elsewhere and make mischief of what they have heard.

Those are not good neighbors who lead each other into pleasures and expenses which are unprofitable in themselves, or which the circumstances of the parties do not justify. There are many families living in frugal comfort, to whom the expense of a dinner or tea-party would be a serious inconvenience; yet such inconvenience is frequently entailed by thoughtless, though perhaps well-meaning neighbors, who press them to accept of entertainments, which seem to lay them under a sort of obligation to invite in return.

A good neighbor is, first, *harmless and peaceable*. He will not intentionally annoy or injure another. No littered articles, nor any unseasonable noises, are permitted on his premises, to endanger the health or disturb the repose of the neighborhood.

The children of such a family are not permitted to throw stones into a neighbor's garden, to hurt his cat, or to bother his poultry. These, and numerous other feats, performed by crude and ill-trained children, for the annoyance of the neighborhood, are never tolerated in the family of the good neighbor. Should any inconvenience have been inadvertently occasioned by him or his children, it is no sooner mentioned than cheerfully removed or repaired.

The good neighbor is *kind and accommodating*. It gives him pleasure to promote the comfort and welfare of those around him. If people are of the same trade, no base jealousies are indulged, no petty tricks practiced against them; but the proper feeling is cherished—"I wish to do well for myself, and I wish well to my neighbor; the world is wide enough for us both." Among neighbors of the poorer class, a good or an ill disposition is manifested in the manner in which they regard the conduct of their wealthy neighbors towards each other. Some poor people rejoice in the kindness shown to a neighbor, and gladly embrace an



opportunity of speaking favorably of his character, or representing his need to those who can assist him: while others are spiteful enough to regard the good done to a neighbor as an injury done to themselves, both by the person who confers and the person who receives the benefit.

Good neighbors, especially among the industrious poor, frequently have it in their power to protect each other's children and property during the absence of the parents. They may also materially assist each other in enjoying the church services, by alternately taking charge of each other's infants and household affairs during the hours of worship.

In time of sickness, the kind offices of a good neighbor are peculiarly valuable. "Better is a neighbor that is at hand, than a brother that is afar off." The kindness of such a neighbor has been thus vividly and beautifully described: "Oh, I love the soul that must and will do good; the kind creature who runs to the sick bed of a poor neighbor; wipes away the moisture of a fever, smooths the clothes, fluffs up the pillow, fills the water pitcher, sets it within reach; administers a cup of cold water, but in the true spirit of a disciple of Christ, and becomes a fellow-worker with Christ, in the administration of happiness to mankind. Peace be with that good soul! She must come in due time into the condition of her neighbor; and then, may the Lord strengthen her on the bed of languishing, and, by some kind hand like her own, "make all her bed in her sickness."

The good neighbor will avoid a meddling, obtrusive interference, yet will not hesitate to point out, in a kind and gentle manner, any mistake into which a neighbor may have fallen, or any advantage he may have overlooked, by which the interests of himself and family may be promoted.

Especially, the good neighbor will not fail to use the influence given him, by kindness in common things, to persuade those for whom he is interested, to frequent the worship of God in his sanctuary; to maintain family prayer; and to attend to the moral and pious education of their children. The conduct of a consistent Christian family is a kind of living invitation to those around; "Come with us, and we will do you good, for God has spoken good concerning Israel;" and not infrequently has the reply been heard, "We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you." Although I have not, in this chapter, mentioned the names of my venerable friends, my mind looks back to many families, to whom their neighborhood was thus made a blessing, and to many others, on whom they impressed the duty, and whom they awakened to the practicability and the pleasure of being good and useful neighbors. I shall add some of their maxims, gleaned from scripture and other sources.

*Maxims on Friendship and Company.*

"Too much familiarity breeds contempt."

"Suspect extraordinary and groundless civilities."

"Suspect a tale-bearer; and never trust him with your secrets who is fond of entertaining you with those of another person. No wise man will put good liquor in a leaky vessel."

"By the company a man keeps, you may know what he is, or, at least, what he shortly will be."

"He who walks with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

"No man can be provident of his time—who is not prudent in the choice of his company."

"Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man you shall not go, lest you learn of his ways, and get a snare to your soul."

"Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags."  
Proverbs 23:20-21

"Beware of a reconciled enemy and an untried friend."

"Your own friend, and your father's friend, forsake not."

"Prosperity gains friends; adversity tries them."

"Like a bad tooth or a lame foot is reliance on the unfaithful in times of trouble."

"A friend in need, is a friend indeed."

"The best mirror is an old friend."

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so does the sweetness of a man his friend, by hearty counsel."

"The best friendship is that which is cemented by love to Christ, the best of Friends. Those who are thus united, will, like David and Jonathan, strengthen each other's hands in God; and the friendship begun on earth will be carried on and perfected in heaven."

## SELF-DENIAL

It is no uncommon thing for people to go to some benevolent, influential man in their vicinity, with heavy complaints of need in their families and their circumstances. If things were but so and so, different from what they are, how much happier they would be! "I'll tell you what," said a gentleman once, who heard complaints of this kind, "there is a much shorter way to happiness than getting your circumstances altered. It is this,—you must cultivate a spirit of self-denial. What is the great cause of misery in the heart, and in the family? The worship of *that great idol, self-will*. What is the readiest way to happiness? For a man to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ daily. Could we but deny ourselves in our own wisdom and will, we would never more know a restless hour.

Sometimes our minds are set upon that which is in itself evil. We are restless for the attainment of it, and it would seem a great act of self-denial to debar ourselves of it; but there is nothing sinful to which we can be tempted, but we shall find greater comfort in resisting than in indulging it.

"To conquer a lust is greater than to conquer a kingdom. He who follows Christ in the path of self-denial, will dwell with him in the world of glory! Who would not deny himself for a time, that he may enjoy himself forever?"

## USEFULNESS

My mother once said to a rich acquaintance, "Sir, there is only one thing I envy you, and that is your usefulness. What a deal of good may be done by one person, who has good learning, good property, and a good will!" "My friend," replied he, "that God has in any degree made me useful to my fellow-creatures, is, indeed, one prime enjoyment of my life; but you need not envy me a pleasure that is so freely open to yourself. You speak of learning and property: it is true, they are both means of usefulness; but let me tell you, that *good-will* is far more essential than either."

"Can you tell me, sir, any way in which such a poor creature as I can be useful?"

"Yes, many ways; but, if you have the sincere desire, as I believe you have—you will be sure to find out occasions. Do you never exert yourself to do good to your fellow-creatures in their bodies and in their souls? never do a kind action, or give a useful hint? Have you never been successful in warning anyone against error or danger into which they were falling; or spoken a word to a young person which may be remembered through life?"

"Tis little, sir, that I can say worth remembering: and yet I wish to say and do

what I can; and you know God can give his blessing to the weakest."

"Well, if you say and do what you can—you will be useful! Remember what seems at the time a very small degree of usefulness may be the seed of a great deal. There is a good saying, 'A whetstone, though it cannot cut, may sharpen a knife; a match may light a torch.' To encourage you in trying to do good, I will mention an anecdote of a poor, but pious, shoemaker. Meeting a young gentleman just going to the university, to study with a view to the ministry, he thus addressed him: 'Sir, I hope you will study your Bible well, that you may be qualified for feeding the sheep of Christ with the bread of eternal life.' A divine blessing attended this hint, and impressed it on the mind of the student. He never forgot it while he lived, and he lived to be an able, faithful, and successful minister of the gospel."

Timothy, that eminent young evangelist, who was honored as the companion of the apostle Paul, was distinguished for his knowledge of the holy scriptures. And how did he acquire it? By the early instructions of his pious mother and grandmother. Here was the whetstone sharpening the knife, and the match lighting the torch; and who shall say that the pious parents who trained the young minister were less useful than the minister himself?

There is another way in which Christians may be useful, even when under the most trying feelings of uselessness and helplessness —by patiently suffering the will of God. The calmness and cheerfulness of a bed-ridden Christian have been made the means of carrying conviction to the heart shut against all the eloquence and appeals of the pulpit.

An eminent Scotch divine (Ralph Erskine) visiting a poor crippled woman, she thus addressed him: "O, sir, I am just lying here, a poor useless creature." "Do not think so!" said the minister. "I think," added she, "that if I were away to heaven, I would be of some use to glorify God without sin." "Indeed," replied the good man, "I think you are glorifying God now—by humble resignation and submission to his will, and that in the face of many difficulties, and under many distresses. In heaven the saints have not your burdens to groan under. Your praise, burdened as you are, is more wonderful to me, and, I trust, acceptable to God."

The great secret of Christian usefulness is to be awake to opportunities, and intent on doing what we can—rather than bewailing that it is in our power to do so little; and, in this respect, he who faithfully improves the one talent, bids fair to be entrusted with the five or the ten.

I must not omit to tell you of one instance more, showing how a person in a humble station of life may be honorable and useful, and greatly promote the usefulness of those above him.

Philip Melancthon was one of the reformers, those great and godly men who were instrumental in bringing about the reformation from popery. He labored, by his conversation and his writings, to enlighten the minds of men; and his kind and amiable disposition and manners did much to win their hearts and engage their attention. Among the many Christian virtues that adorned his character, Melancthon was highly esteemed for his great generosity. Indeed, his friends were astonished at his liberality, and wondered how, with his small means, he could afford to give so much in charity. It appears to have been principally owing to the care and good management of an excellent and faithful servant named John, a native of Sweden. The whole duty of provisioning the family was entrusted to this domestic, whose care, assiduity and prudence amply justified the unbounded confidence reposed in him. He made the concerns of the family his own, avoiding all needless expenditure, and watching with a jealous eye his master's property. He was also the first instructor of the children during their infancy. John grew old in his master's service, and expired in his house, amidst the affectionate regrets of the whole family. During a service of thirty-four years, how much usefulness was effected by honest John, and by his master through his instrumentality! Melancthon invited the students of the university to attend the funeral of his faithful servant, delivered an oration over his grave, and composed a Latin epitaph for his tombstone, of which the following is a translation—

"Here, at a distance from his native land,  
Came honest John, at Philip's first command,  
Companion of his exile, doubly dear,  
Who in a servant found a friend sincere;  
And more than friend—a man of faith and prayer,  
Assiduous soother of his master's care.  
Here to the worms his lifeless body is given,  
But his immortal soul sees God in heaven."

This is, perhaps, as good a place as any to add another epitaph on a faithful servant, copied from a village church in Leicestershire.

"Reader,  
Respect the memory of Sarah Jackson,  
An invaluable servant, a sincere Christian;  
Distinguished beyond wealth and titles  
By the dignity of worth.  
Let her remind you, that a humble station may exercise  
The highest virtues  
And that a well-earned pittance of earthly wages  
May prove the richest treasure in heaven.  
She lived, during twenty-seven years,  
In the family of the Spencer Madan,  
By whom this marble is affectionately inscribed,  
In token of respect, esteem, and gratitude.

"A servant—no—a humble friend  
Sinks to the tomb in Sally's mournful end!  
Peace, honest Sally, to a soul that knew  
No deed unfaithful, and no word untrue!

"Thrice happy they, whose mortal labors done,  
May lead, like yours, from service to a throne.  
Go, claim the promise of your chosen part,  
In zeal a Martha, with a Mary's heart."

"Masters and mistresses must have devices how to do good to their servants; how to make them the servants of Christ and the children of God. God, whom you must remember to be 'your Master in heaven,' has brought them to you, and placed them under your care. 'Who can tell' for what good he has brought them? What if they should be the elect of God, fetched from different parts, and brought into your family on *purpose*, that, by means of their situation, they may be brought home to the Shepherd of souls? O that the souls of our servants were more regarded by us; that we might give a better demonstration that we despise not our own souls, by doing what we can for the souls of our servants! How can we pretend to Christianity when we do so little to *Christianize* our servants? Truly, you *must* give an account to God concerning them. If their souls should be lost through your negligence, what answer can you make to 'God the Judge of all?' Methinks, common principles of gratitude should incline you to study the happiness of those, by whose labors your lives are so much accommodated. Certainly, they would be the better servants to you, more faithful, honest, industrious, and submissive, for your bringing them into the service of your common Lord."

I somewhere met with a paper under this title, the '*Resolution of a Master;*' which pleased me so much that I transcribed it.

"I would always remember, that my servants are, in some sense, my children; and by taking care that they lack nothing which may be good for them, I would make them as my children; and as far as the methods of instilling piety into the mind, which I use with my children, may be properly and prudently used with them, they shall be partakers in them. Nor will I leave them ignorant of anything, wherein I may instruct them to be useful to their generation.

"I will see that my servants be furnished with Bibles, and be able and careful to read these living oracles. I will put Bibles and other good and proper books into their hands; will allow them *time to read*, and assure myself that they do not misspend *this* time. If I discover any wicked books in their hands, I will take away from them those pestilential instruments of wickedness. I will also teach them to write as well as read. And I will appoint them now and then such things to write, as may be for their greatest advantage.

"I will be very inquisitive and solicitous about the *company* chosen by my servants; and with all possible earnestness will rescue them from the snares of evil company, and forbid their being the 'companions of fools.'

"Such of them as may be capable of the task, I will employ to teach lessons of piety to my children, and will recompense them for so doing. But I would, with particular care, contrive them to be such lessons as may be for their own edification too.

"I will sometimes call them alone, talk to them about the state of their souls; tell them how to close with their only Savior; charge them to do so, and 'lay hold on eternal life;' and show them, very particularly, how they may render all they do for me a service to the *glorious Lord*; how they may do all from the principle of obedience *to him*, and become entitled to the 'reward of the heavenly inheritance.'"

## COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

On these subjects much advice is *given*—and very little *taken*. If asked at all—it is generally not until the mind is made up, the affections engaged, and perhaps the hand already pledged.

There were one gentleman and lady in our village, who were commonly consulted on this business by all the prudent young people in the neighborhood. The first question they generally asked was, "Have you consulted your parents? What do they think of it? for you cannot expect happiness if you marry without the full consent of your own parents and the parents of your intended partner." Very commonly the answer was, "I have spoken to my parents, and they advised me to consult you." These people had a way of making young people themselves see and own if there was anything imprudent or wrong, so as to induce them to give up the matter of their own accord, which was easier than for the parents directly to forbid it.

My brother Richard, I remember, was in a terrible hurry to get married before he was out of his apprenticeship. Father and mother did all they could to persuade him to wait a while, and it was well for him, that they succeeded. The gentleman, too, of whom I have just spoken, talked kindly to him on the subject. "Don't be too hasty, young man; 'tis easy to marry in haste, and repent at leisure. I would advise you not to think of marrying until you are settled in a fair way of getting a living. You don't wish to be a burden to your parents, but to be able to provide for yourself, and those dependent on you; and for some years to come it will be much better for you to have *one plough* going than *two cradles*. You may think that '*love and a little*' will be quite enough, but let me tell you, *love and nothing* will be but sorry fare; and, 'When poverty comes in at the door—love flies out at

the window!' You think, perhaps, that no such thing can happen to you: then let me tell you, that, if you think your love strong enough to bear poverty after marriage, you had better try its strength in waiting beforehand. If you do really love one another, I think you will find it easy and pleasant to work and save, that you may have something to make your home comfortable, when it is prudent for you to marry." My brother promised to wait a year or two, and set about in good earnest every leisure hour he had, to work and save for future comfort. But in less than three months' time, he came again to his friend in great trouble, and told him that *Fanny* was getting very shy of him, and had been seen walking with another fellow—and now what was to be done?

"By all means let her go," he replied, "and reckon it a very good miss for you. If she is tired of waiting, let her go on without you; and when she is gone, comfort yourself with remembering that there are as good fish left in the sea—as ever were caught out of it."

This seemed hard doctrine at the time, and Dick was half inclined to break his promise, and go after *Fanny* with an offer to marry directly; but prudence prevailed.

After flirting about with three or four different young men, *Fanny* at last married William Stephens, the sawyer, and a poor, dressy dawdle of a wife she made him. As for Richard, he soon found that he could do vastly well without her; and, I believe, he forgot all about marrying for four or five years, until he met with a steady, respectable young woman, whom all his friends approved, and who turned out to be an excellent partner to him, and a good mother to his children. When he looked at his decent, tidy wife, his well-furnished cottage, and his clean, well-managed children—and contrasted them with those of his neighbor Stephens, he sometimes went across the house humming the old ditty,

"As pathetic a wife as Stevens had!  
I would not give a button for her."

A second question which these mature friends used to ask the young people who came to consult them, was this: "What is it in the person of whom you speak, that makes you think you should love him (or her) better than all the world beside? You ought to be able to do this; for it is a very foolish action either to marry without love, or to love without reason. Is it *beauty*? Beauty is only skin deep, and sometimes covers a heart deformed by vice and ill temper. Beauty is a poor thing, unless it accompanies something far better than itself, and that will long outlive it. To marry only for beauty, would be like buying a house for the flowers in the windows. 'Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised,' and chosen too by the wise man who seeks a godly helpmate. Would you marry for *money*? 'In seeking after a comfortable partner, good character more to be sought for than a great dowry.' 'Better have a fortune *in* a wife than a fortune *with* a wife.'



"Is it for *genteel, attractive manners and great accomplishments*? Don't be imposed upon: 'all is not gold that glitters.' Beauty, and property, and pleasing manners, and great accomplishments, are all very good make-weights to a bargain, which is good independently of them, but would make a wretchedly bad bargain of themselves. In marrying, you need not only what will look well, and excite admiration when all goes on smoothly—but you need what will afford real comfort and support in the time of adversity."

Then they would ask, "How does the party behave in present relationships? Is he (or she) remarked as a dutiful, affectionate, attentive child; a kind brother or sister? for never yet was it found that the disobedient, rebellious son, or the pert, undutiful daughter, was fitted to make an affectionate, faithful, valuable husband or wife."

Then again, "Is the intended party of age, temper and habits suitable to your own? for people may be very good in themselves—who are not suitable to each other; and two people who have been used to different ways of living, must have an uncommon share of good temper and forbearance, if ever they make each other happy in the married life. Remember, 'Marriage with peace and piety is this world's paradise. Marriage with strife and disagreement—it is this life's hell.'

"Is the person humble, industrious, and contented? If not, your present lot will not satisfy her; still less will she be willing to descend to a lower state, if such should be the appointment of Providence.

"And then, how is it as to *the one thing needful*? Whatever you do, don't let this be overlooked. Without true religion, you lose the best sweetness and relish of prosperity; and you have no provision whatever for meeting trials and afflictions! Besides, if you could live together a century in the tenderest affection, and the most unmingled comfort, what a dreadful thing to think of death coming and separating you forever! Be sure, then, you remember the scripture rule, 'marry only in the Lord;' and expect not the blessing of God if you violate it. Ask the blessing of God on all your engagements. 'A prudent wife is of the Lord.' 'In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.'

"When all these matters are satisfactorily settled, and your choice is fixed, be steady and faithful. Never act with levity, or say or do a thing that would give each other pain. Be very prudent and circumspect in your fellowship with each other. In this respect, your future comfort and confidence are at stake, as well as your fair character in the world. Let nothing which occurs now, furnish matter for reproach or regret at any future time."

To young married people, our friends would say, "Let your conduct be such as to render easy the duties of the other party. A wife is commanded to *respect* her husband. Let his conduct be wise and holy, and then it will command respect.

'Husbands, *love your wives;*' then wives should be truly amiable; a man can hardly love a vixen or a lazy woman. If a wife wishes to keep her husband at home, she must make home comfortable to him. In order to this, she must be, as the apostle says, 'discreet, chaste, a keeper at home.' A giddy, gadding wife is sure to make a dissatisfied, if not a dissolute husband. Seek to promote each other's comforts; so will you best secure your own.

"Let there be no secrets, and no separate interests. Do nothing that requires concealment, and never act in such a way as to provoke it. Many a partner of a generous and open disposition, has been driven to practice concealment by the extravagance or unkindness of the associate."

To husbands they said—"Treat your wife always with respect. It will procure respect to you not only from her, but from all who observe it. Never use a slighting expression to her even in jest, for slights in jest, after frequent bandyings, are apt to end in angry speeches. To both—"Remember the design of your union, to promote each other's honor, comfort and usefulness in this life, and preparation for eternity. You are to walk together as fellow-travelers through the paths of time, whether smooth or rugged; and as fellow-heirs of the grace of life, helping each other by prayer, counsel, sympathy and forbearance.

"Always keep in view the termination of your union—'*until death us do part.*' This will keep you sober and moderate in your worldly enjoyments and expectations, and at the same time will preserve you from such conduct as would embitter the parting moment, or add an unnecessary pang to the grief of the survivor."

It was no uncommon thing for people to carry to our good mature friends, complaints against bad husbands or bad wives. Such complainants generally met the reply: "Go back, then, and be yourself a better wife, (or husband,) and see if that does not prevail with him (or her) to be a better husband (or wife.)" Another sound piece of advice often given them was this: "Whenever differences arise, endeavor to persuade yourself that they must have arisen from some mistake or misunderstanding of *your own*; never suppose the other party in fault, or that anything unkind *could* have been intended, but charge all the blame on yourself, and make it *your* business to promote reconciliation and preserve peace. This will at once mellow your own spirit, and win the other party to reconciliation and love."

I remember being greatly pleased with a fable which I once read. It was something like this—

The sun and the north wind were trying which could soonest make a traveler part with his coat. The wind began, and, storming with all its force, tumbled and tossed the coat about the poor man's ears, but to no purpose; for the stronger it blew, the man held and enrapt his coat the closer about him. When the wind was weary, the **sun** began, and played his cheerful beams so successfully, that he

soon melted the traveler into a kindly warmth, and made his coat not only useless, but troublesome to him, and so he quickly threw it off. The moral is plain and easy; and all married people, in particular, would do well to remember, that when storming and raging are ineffectual to gain their ends—kindness and good-nature will seldom or never fail of success.

Another good rule is this—Let husband and wife never be angry at the same time: by this means family feuds and discord will neither come often, nor continue long.

By way of reconciling married people to their own peculiar lot, our mature friends would say, "If marriages are appointed in heaven before they are solemnized on earth, then, though a Christian might have had a richer, better, or more sweet-tempered partner, yet probably not a *fitter* partner; therefore, though nuptial love and other duties are not performed to you, yet do your part, in obedience to God, and you will assuredly find comfort in the end, whatever crosses you may meet with in the way."

I may add, that by the counsels of these judicious friends, many connections were prevented which were likely only to end in sorrow and ruin; many were formed to the satisfaction and real enjoyment of the parties; and many people were brought to a more correct and faithful discharge of their duties, and, consequently, to a higher degree of happiness in the marital relation.

## **CARE OF CHILDREN**

We occasionally find a lady, who is the kind friend of all the young mothers in the village. I was once acquainted with such a lady, and I can speak of her friendly advice with great gratitude, and have reason to know that many others can do the same. I have often thought that by attention to her good rules, the lives of many children were saved; and by being properly trained, many have become real comforts to their parents, and useful members of society. I am sure that many lives are sacrificed to bad management in infancy; and others have grown up, under parental neglect and bad example, such wicked characters, that it might truly be said of them, "It had been better for them if they had never been born." Parents ought seriously to consider that they are to their children either their best friends or their worst enemies; and a solemn reckoning will be made at the last great day. What a dreadful meeting will that be for ungodly parents and ungodly children! What a blessed meeting for pious parents and grateful, godly children, whose feet they have early directed into the way of peace! How true and how weighty are those sayings of holy writ, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it;" but "a child left to himself brings his mother to shame!"

I once asked her how early she thought a child could be made to mind, because I

had heard some women say it was of no consequence how a child was humored the first few months, while it knew no better. She replied, "If a child can be *humored*, it can be *managed*; and whatever silly people may say about its knowing no better, its crying when anything is done to it, or when it wants anything—is the trial whether the child or the parent shall be master! You will soon find, when you wash and dress your child, if you stop when it cries, next day it will cry the louder; but if you go quietly on, the child will soon be quiet too. What can it cry for—except it be in order to get its own way? This, then, is the easiest time for teaching it that it cannot have its own way, but must be content with the parent's way; and you can hardly imagine how valuable this lesson, thoroughly learned in infancy, will be to the child in future life."

Another of this lady's rules was this—"If children are to be made obedient and tractable, both parents must be of one mind. If one denies an indulgence and the other grants it; or if one corrects and the other pities and soothes, and says, 'Poor thing! it did not mean any harm,' the children are not likely to regard either parent. It is the father's part to insist upon it that the children obey their mother both in his presence and in his absence, and the mother's part to teach them to love and respect their father. By this means both may hope to maintain their just authority, and to preserve order and harmony in their family."

I set down some more of her sayings. "Remember your children are born with depraved inclinations, which soon show themselves in a spirit of selfishness. This you must very early resist, not only by making your children obey yourselves, but by teaching them to be kind one to another, and to find pleasure in giving up a thing they like for the gratification of another. This is the way to make them beloved by others, and happy in themselves. Whatever you do, set a good example before your children. Never say a word or do an action that you would not like them to imitate. Be not hasty or angry in correcting them. When you find it necessary to correct, let the child see that it is according to the sin of the action committed—not according to the inconvenience it may occasion you; and make your children sensible, by your calm, serious and affectionate manner, that you correct them from a sense of duty, and a desire for their real advantage.

"Never deceive children in the smallest matter or the greatest. Never promise that which you cannot perform, or which you do not intend to perform. Never get them to act as you wish, by telling them a thing is different from what it really is, or by any foolish threats of 'an old man,' 'a black man,' 'a ghost,' etc. It is foolish to make them fear what has no being, and wicked to make them fear or hate what does exist, but would never injure them. People talk of 'white lies' to children; there are no white lies; but some of the blackest are those which, by deceiving children, teach them to practice lying and deceit themselves. 'A trick helps once, but hinders ever after.' If you tell a child that bitter medicine is sweet, you may get him to take it that once; but do you think he will ever believe you again? or, what is of more consequence still, do you think you can ever convince him that there is any harm in telling a falsehood when he can gain his purpose by

so doing?

"Have no favorites, but treat all your children alike, according as their circumstances require, and their conduct deserves. If children are treated alike when all things are equal, it enables the parents to make a difference with advantage when circumstances require. A child which has misbehaved is not jealous at seeing its brothers and sisters enjoy pleasures or notice which he feels he has justly forfeited; but he is stimulated to better conduct in future, which may deserve the same kindness, and which he knows he shall receive if he deserves it. None of the children are jealous of the particular attention paid to a sick child; but by observing that the parents consider such a distinction necessary, tender feelings are awakened in their minds on behalf of the sufferer, and a desire to do or avoid anything in their power by which its comfort may be promoted.

"Parents who always treat their children with justice, fairness, and affection, will find little difficulty in inducing the many to forego their noisy sport for the sake of the one, or to give up anything they possess for his gratification. These things are comparatively easy in families where a habitual good understanding is maintained between all parties; and these kind dispositions, thus early cultivated, generally mark the fellowship of the brothers and sisters through life.

"Be frugal in the use of rewards and punishments. It is the part of wisdom to effect all possible good at the least possible expense. Rewards and punishments are like money, valuable according to the value set upon it, and the advantages it will procure. If sending to bed an hour earlier than the rest of the children is found sufficient to impress on the mind of the offender a sense of the evil of his conduct, and the folly of repeating it, it would be a pity to waste a more severe punishment, which should be reserved for some great and special occasion. In some families, a kiss, or a quarter of an hour's conversation or reading, or being employed in some little commission for the parents, forms a more powerful reward, or the withholding them a more effectual punishment, than the lavishing of costly gifts, or exercising severe flogging, or starvation, or imprisonment would do in others. But this is managed by firmness: a very small punishment, which is sure to be inflicted, will intimidate more than a much greater punishment, where there is a hope of getting off.

"Children should be early taught to employ their time in doing something useful. There is no surer way to make a child respect himself and have a regard to his character, than to let him feel that he is of some use to his parents; and nothing so effectually keeps children out of mischief as the habit of having something to do.

"When children are to be seen gambling, or tormenting a mouse, a worm, or a fly, it just makes good what the little hymn says,—

'For Satan finds some mischief still

For idle hands to do.'

"If these children had been taught to take pleasure in making baskets or nets, in gardening or carpentering, as their turn might be, it is most likely they would never have thought of cruel, mischievous sports. The mind or the hands unemployed resemble an empty dwelling with a sign, *This house for rent*; and some tempter or other is sure to get access to it.

"Children should not only be well employed in a general way, but they should early be taught some regular employment by which there is a prospect of their getting a livelihood. Old Mr. Dod, the puritan minister, used to say, 'Give them a Bible and a calling—and may God be with them.'

"Children should be early trained to an orderly attendance at the house of God. It is not for us to say at how early a period, pious impressions of a saving kind may be made on the minds of children. Some children have given decided evidence of them very young indeed; but whether or not a child of three years old may be benefited by what he hears—it is a disgrace that a child of three years old should keep someone at home to mind him. A mother who manages her infant well, may very safely take it in her arms the first six or eight months. It will then perhaps become so lively as to disturb the solemnity of worship; but if it is brought under control, and accustomed to habits of propriety at home, at eighteen or twenty months old it may be made sensible that at such a time and place it must be quiet. In families where no servant is kept, or only one, and where pious privileges are prized, it will be no small acquisition to be enabled to take children early to the house of God; and to the children themselves the early formation of this habit may prove of unspeakable advantage. What a lovely example does little Samuel present! the child who was weaned and brought to wait upon the Lord, and who was as eminent for steadfast piety as he was for early devotedness; and what a pleasing proof that his fond and pious parents had been exemplary and successful in the exercise of early discipline! A well-behaved child in the house of God is a credit to its parents, and proves that it has been well instructed and well disciplined at home.

"It is of great importance early to impress on the minds of children sentiments of respect and reverence for the ministers of the gospel. Children are very observant even of tones and manners. Happy are those children whose earliest associations are connected with the minister as the most esteemed friend of the family; one who was always welcomed with affectionate cordiality; always spoken of with respect and gratitude; his advice sought; his approbation valued; his instructions treasured up and enforced; and the success of his labors made a constant matter of prayer. Many such families have I known, and I have observed that the young people in those families have been distinguished by a modest sedateness of manners, and a reverence for sacred things in general; which, though not in themselves amounting to a saving change, nor by any means to be substituted for it, are yet very lovely and desirable, and which are often the

companions or the precursors of an ear and a heart opened to receive the saving impressions of divine truth.

"I have also known families—yes, and schools,—professedly religious, where the dinner-table conversation of the heads of the family on a Sabbath day was generally occupied in censuring some expression of the minister, or ridiculing something in his tone or manner. And the effects have been lamentable. Some young minds, on which impressions had been made by the sermons so ridiculed, were thus encouraged to postpone the convictions they had begun to admit, and to shut their hearts against the instructions they were thus taught to despise. Some have even advanced from contempt of an individual minister, to indifference, contempt, and scepticism on all pious subjects. This is not a fiction or a fancy, but a *fact*; a fact, it is to be feared, by no means uncommon; and one which, perhaps, in some measure accounts for a frequent wonder in the pious world, namely, how it is that the children of pious parents, and those brought up in religious schools, so often become indifferent or opposed to religion. A great and beneficial hold is laid on the feelings of a child who has been taught to reverence his minister.

"Parents who know the value of their own souls, will hardly neglect the pious instruction of their children. Perhaps they may feel their own ignorance and inability to teach; yet let them be encouraged to try. It is very remarkable that the means of instruction most expressly charged on parents in the word of God, is that which is within the reach of the poorest and most illiterate. It requires no great learning to talk in a familiar way with our children. Who is there that sits down to a meal, and rises up in silence? Who takes a walk with his children, and says nothing as they go along? Now, scripture expressly enjoins, that this free and affectionate fellowship between parents and children, should be made subservient to the purposes of early pious instruction. The only pre-requisite for employing this best and most efficient means—is a heart thoroughly alive to the importance of the subject. 'And these words which I command you this day *shall be in your heart*, and you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes, and you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and upon your gates.' That is, all the habits and observances of the family should be calculated to keep alive a constant remembrance of true religion, and to present it in a lovely and attractive form to all around. A child brought up in a consistent family, when it goes out into the world, will look anxiously for a Bible, and feel the lack of it a deficiency for which nothing can compensate. He will wait for the summons to family prayer, and if no such call be heard, he will feel that a most important part of the business of the day has been neglected, and a most delightful part of its daily enjoyments withheld.

"Parents who are sensible of their own deficiencies, and yet desirous that their

children should be well instructed, will surely avail themselves of the valuable advantages of Sunday school instruction. Indeed, every young person, in whatever station of life he may be placed, ought to be either a Sunday scholar, or a Sunday school teacher. It is a pity that either pride, indifference, or love of pleasure, on the part of the young, or false indulgence on that of parents, should withhold the attendance of so many children and young people, who ought to be employed in getting good or doing good. Parents should enforce the attendance of their younger children as learners, and encourage and stimulate their diligence, devotedness and perseverance as teachers, when arrived to sufficient maturity.

"One word more on the subject of children. Parents ought not to make the care of a family an excuse for negligence in the great affairs of personal religion. It is hardly possible to manage a young family so as to occasion no privations and sacrifices of attendance on the public means of grace; but by early discipline with the children, and a good understanding among those who have the care of them, the labor may be so lightened and so divided, as that no one person need be confined from public worship a whole Sabbath, except in case of illness. On the other hand, there are some mothers who need a caution against indulging themselves in frequent attendance on week-day services, to the neglect of a young family. It was well said by a worthy minister, on finding a family of children in dirt and confusion at a late hour in the morning while the mother was upstairs at her devotions, 'What! is there no fear of God in this house?' In other families, the children have been exposed to bodily danger, or to the greater danger of being corrupted by evil example and impious companions, while the mother was seeking her own pleasures in the house of prayer, or perhaps engaged in religious gossip in a neighbor's house, but neglecting the obvious duties of life. This kind of neglect is perhaps less frequent than the other extreme; yet both should be guarded against. The care of children will not atone for the neglect of the soul; but the truly consistent Christian will give to every duty its proper place and proportion, and, by early rising and good contrivance, will secure time for pious duties, without neglecting her duty to the bodies and souls of her children: 'These ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone.'"

The indirect influence of a mother upon the formation of her children's character is very great.

"Mr. Cecil's mother was a woman of real piety. Her family, for generations back, were pious people. It was a special mercy to Mr. Cecil that his mother was a partaker of the same grace with her ancestors. She labored early to impress his mind, both by precept and example; she bought him Janeway's 'Token for Children,' which greatly affected him, and made him retire into a corner to pray; but his serious beginnings wore off; and he at length made such progress in sin, that he gloried in his shame.

"Lying one night in bed, he was contemplating the case of his mother. 'I see,' said



he to himself, 'two unquestionable facts: first, my mother is greatly afflicted in body and mind, and yet I see that she cheerfully bears up under all, by the support she derives from constantly retiring to her closet and her Bible; secondly, that she has a secret spring of comfort of which I know nothing, while I, who seek pleasure by every means, seldom or never find it. If, however, there is any such secret in religion, why may not I attain it as well as my mother? I will immediately seek it of God.' He instantly rose in his bed, and began to pray. But he was soon damped in his attempt, by recollecting that much of his mother's comfort seemed to arise from her faith in Christ. 'Now,' thought he, 'this Christ have I ridiculed. He stands much in my way, and can form no part of my prayers.' In utter confusion of mind, therefore, he lay down again. Next day, however, he continued to pray to 'the Supreme Being.' He began to consult books, and to attend preachers: his difficulties were gradually removed, and his objections answered, and his course of life began to amend. He now listened to the pious admonitions of his mother, which he had before affected to receive with pride and scorn; yet they had fixed themselves in his heart, like a barbed arrow; and though the effects were, at the time, concealed from her observation, yet tears would fall from his eyes as he passed along the streets, from the impressions she had left on his mind. Now he would discourse with her, and hear her without outrage; which led her to hope that a gracious principle was forming in his heart, and more especially as he then attended the preaching of the word. Thus he made some progress; but felt great difficulty in separating from his favorite connections. Light, however, broke into his mind, until he gradually discovered that Jesus Christ, so far from 'standing in his way,' was 'the *only* way, the truth, and the life, to *all* that come unto God by him.'

"My first convictions on the subject of religion were confirmed from observing, that really pious people had some solid happiness among them, which I had felt that the vanities of the world could not give. I shall never forget standing by the bed of my sick mother. 'Are not you afraid to die?' I asked her. 'No!' 'No! Why, does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?' 'No; because God has said to me, "Fear not: when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." The remembrance of this scene has oftentimes since drawn an ardent prayer from me, that I might die the death of the righteous.' The seeds sown in tears by his inestimable mother, though long buried, now burst into life, and shot forth with vigor; and he became a preacher of that truth he once labored to destroy.

"Where parental influence does not convert, it hampers—it hinders the the wheels of evil. I had a pious mother, who dropped godly hints in my way—I could never rid myself of them. I was a professed infidel; but then I liked to be an infidel in company, rather than when alone—I was wretched when by myself. Her principles and maxims spoiled my pleasure. With my companions I would sometimes stifle them; like embers, we kept one another warm. Besides, I was a sort of hero; I had beguiled several of my associates into my own opinions, and I had to maintain a character before them: but *I could not divest myself* of my

better principles. I went with one of my companions to see a blasphemous play: he could laugh heartily, but I could not: the ridicule on regeneration was high sport to him—to me it was none; it could not make me laugh. *He* did not know what regeneration was—and *I* did. I knew there was such a thing. I was afraid and ashamed to laugh at it. Parental influence thus cleaves to a man—it harasses him—it throws itself constantly in his way."

Mrs. Huntington gives the following account of her mode of educating her children—"I begin to have my children in the room at prayers, within the month after their birth; and they always continue to be present, unless they are sick, or are excluded the privilege as a punishment for having been very naughty. It is difficult, when they are quite young, to keep them perfectly still. But the habit of thinking they are too young to be present at family devotion, is a bad one. And, besides, if they do not come in, someone is obliged to remain out with them, and is thus deprived of a precious privilege, and an important means of grace. After they get to be two years, or more, old, and are able to understand the meaning of your conduct, if they play, or in any other way make a disturbance, they may be taken out, and compelled to remain by themselves until the service is over; which will generally be felt by them to be so great a punishment, that they will not soon commit a similar offence. I would not do this, however, on every slight deviation from perfect order, as children cannot be expected to conduct themselves like adults.

"As to government, I have always made it a rule never to give a child what it is passionately earnest to have, however proper the object may be in itself; because, otherwise, an association would immediately be formed in the mind between importunity and success. Were a child always told, when he cries for a thing, 'You shall have it when you show a proper temper,' it would soon teach him to be reasonable. I think it the destruction of government to be capricious; to refuse, one day, what, in circumstances not seen by the child to be different, is granted on another; to let fretting and teasing carry a point at one time, when, at another, they would bring punishment. Children very soon see whether we are consistent; and little deviations from an established rule afford great encouragement for the next time. These little deviations do great mischief, and are often imperceptibly by the parent, though the child is quick-sighted enough to observe them.

"One thing, my dear friend, I think of the greatest importance, and that is—that children be made always to mind, and consider the parent's word as their law. Giving up once, after a command has passed, may lay the foundation, and lead to the establishment, of a *principle of insubordination* as troublesome as unconquerable.

"It is also very necessary to good government that punishment should be *proportioned* to offences. If we make no distinction between intentional offences, and careless inadvertencies, the child, by the frequent recurrence of these latter

faults, and the sharp rebukes they bring upon him—will become so accustomed to severe reproof, that he will not mind it. Tenderness of heart is the most powerful human engine of parental government; and when this is lost, it seems to me all is lost, unless the grace of God interposes. The inevitable consequence of frequent reproof is, a heart blunted in its sensibilities, and unmoved by the parent's displeasure.

Many little things should not be observed, which, if you were conscious the child knew you had observed, ought to be reproved. A harsh and angry tone should never be used, unless a gentle one has previously failed. And I believe, where the authority of the parent is early established by the mild and gentle means to some of which I have alluded, severe measures need be resorted to very seldom."

## **FAMILY PRAYER**

When any of the young people were married, our minister made a point of urging on them to begin by setting up family prayer. He always advised them to begin at first; "for," said he, "if it be omitted the first day, it is more likely to be deferred the second, and perhaps deferred until conscience shall have left off to feel the omission; or until the difficulties of making a beginning seem almost insurmountable."

I wish I could recollect the whole of a beautiful sermon, (Sermon on Family Religion, by Matthew Henry) which he once read to us on this subject, but I will set down a few of his sayings, addressed to different people, and meeting the difficulties and objections which those who had lived in neglect were too ready to urge against beginning.

"Prayer is a key which unlocks the blessings of the day, and locks up the dangers of the night." "It is the part of wisdom, as well as of duty, to seek the blessing of the Lord on all our undertakings, for, 'Except the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.' What can you do without the blessing of God? And if you neglect to ask it, you can hardly expect to have it."

"There are five special errands which should bring every family daily to the throne of grace, and which cannot so well be carried either in public or in secret prayer—

"1. *To own our dependence on God.* It is he who sets the solitary in families; and on his free goodness in Jesus Christ we depend for all things that pertain to life and godliness. On him we depend for all our supports and comforts here below, and for all our hopes of heaven hereafter; and to him we are accountable for our improvement of the various relations in which he has placed us, and the various

talents he has entrusted to our hands. These things should be daily acknowledged, that the remembrance may be kept alive and acted upon in the family.

"2. *We have family sins to confess.* The best of families have to confess daily sins of infirmity; failing to do to each other as much good as we might have done; leading one another into sin and folly; much vain and unprofitable conversation; perhaps some irritability of spirit or unkindness of speech, instead of provoking one another to love, and to good works. In many things we all offend God and one another; and a penitent confession in prayer, together with believing application to the blood of sprinkling, will be the most effectual way of reconciliation with God, and with one another. The best families, and those in which piety and love most prevail, in many things come short, and do enough every day to bring them on their knees at night.

"3. *We have family thanksgivings to offer.* It is of the Lord's mercies, that we are not consumed. When the family comes together safe in the morning from their respective retirements, and meets safe at night after their various employments, what can be so natural as that they should kneel together and bless the Lord, who daily loads them with benefits, even the God of their salvation? Has the family been preserved from sickness? or has health been restored where it had been interrupted? Does God bless our substance, and prosper the work of our hands? Does God give us bread to eat, and raiment to put on? Does God make us happy in our family relations, and rain down about our tents the manna of the gospel? Surely, where these mercies are enjoyed, the voice of rejoicing and thanksgiving should be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous.

"4. *We have family mercies to seek.* Daily bread is received by families together, and we are taught to pray for it together: 'Give *us* this day *our* daily bread.' We need daily directions as to the path of duty; we need wisdom for the management of family affairs; success to crown our endeavors; or grace to prepare us for disappointment. All these blessings should be sought of God in prayer. Then, too, we need the blessing of God to crown the instructions, which, as a family, we have been receiving in the sanctuary, and to crown the instructions and counsels given by parents to children. It is true, we cannot give our children grace, and in prayer we humbly acknowledge that we cannot; but then in prayer also we commit them to him who *can* give them grace, and who has declared that for all these things he will be sought unto, by the house of Israel to do it for them. Besides, children hearing their parents fervently implore the grace of God for them, is a likely means to awaken them to a sense of the value of the grace of God, and to move them to pray for it themselves.

A young lady, who had been piously brought up, but up to the time of her marriage had not imbibed anything of the spirit of her pious parents; who had daily heard their fervent prayers, but had never joined in them with a heart-felt interest—when she entered the house of her husband, and found that family

prayer was not observed, became wretched and desolate for the lack of it. She was led to see the value of the privileges she had hitherto slighted, and the infinite importance of a personal interest in the salvation, of which she had so often heard with indifference. Her convictions were deep and lasting. She became, from that time, a decided Christian, and deeply anxious for the spiritual welfare of her husband and her household. In this respect her prayers were heard, and her endeavors succeeded. Her husband joined her in the way to Zion, and their children and household were taught and commanded after them to keep the ways of the Lord. What a rich reward to her pious parents, who had for so many years gone forth sowing precious seed, and weeping in the fear that it was devoured by the fowls of the air, or rotting beneath the clods!

"5. *We have intercessions to make for others.* Perhaps some of the family are at a distance, for the purposes of health, business, or education. These should be recommended in prayer to the grace of God. Perhaps relations dear to all the family are in circumstances of sickness, danger, or distress. God should be sought unto on their behalf for support and deliverance. The benefit of prayer can extend far. He who hears prayer—can extend the hand of his power and mercy to the utmost corners of the earth, and to them that are afar off upon the seas. Beside this, we should pray for the land we dwell in, and make supplication for the king and all in authority. Our children should go forth into life with the testimony lodged in their bosom, of the loyalty and patriotism of their parents. Then every Christian family should pray for the *peace of Jerusalem*. They shall prosper, who love Zion; and the real saint looks forward with the greatest pleasure to seeing his children's children, when it is coupled with peace upon Israel. Then there is the *world* which lies in wickedness; and while we think of the mercies our families enjoy, we must be stimulated to pray for the families in bondage and slavery, in ignorance and idolatry; and the remembrance of them in our family prayers will stimulate us and our families to do what we can for their relief, and engage the divine blessing, by which alone our efforts can be rendered successful.

"The habit of family prayer is of great value as a check to sin, and a pledge for consistency of conduct. 'Praying will make a man leave off sinning—or sinning will make him leave off praying.' He who daily meets his family in prayer, will be induced to check the rising temper, and to suppress the angry expression, that would be inconsistent with his prayer for meekness, gentleness, and self-possession. He will be ashamed to say or do anything that his prayers would reproach.

"Family prayer tends greatly to secure family order, harmony, and subordination. It often places a happy restraint on the giddy and headstrong passions of youth. Family prayer often fixes something in the minds of children, which, in after life, perhaps when the parents are far distant, or dead, springs up as a shield against temptation, or an encouragement to return, after long wandering, to a refuge, to which the wanderer remembers his parents used to resort.

"Some would object that they have not time for family prayer. They have forgotten the true sayings, 'Prayer and provender hinder no journey;' 'There is nothing got by sinning—or lost by praying.' 'Work for earth is done best—when work for heaven is done first.' The busiest have most need to pray for composure of mind in the midst of a bustle, and for strength of body and mind to discharge their various duties. 'There is a season for everything, and a time for every purpose under the sun;' and surely the most important purpose of all need not be shut out of this wise regulation. By order, economy, and diligence, time might be redeemed, in every family, for the necessary duty of family prayer; and the habits of order, diligence, and regularity, thus acquired and cultivated, would soon be found more than to make up for the time given to devotion.

"Some plead their lack of ability. They would not make this an excuse if they could not have a mouthful of food, until they had prayed for it: 'where there is a will, there is a way;' and where there is a sincere desire to pray, though the words be few and simple, even should they be confused and broken, the exercise will be neither unacceptable nor unprofitable. 'A heart without words—is better than words without a heart.'

"Lack of capacity is too often an excuse, for lack of inclination. Those who begin in humble distrust of their own ability, will find their ability increase by exercise. Besides, there are many excellent forms of prayer for those who need them, and in the use of which many truly pious people have found their devotional feelings kindled, and their spirits greatly refreshed.

"Some have so long neglected the duty of family prayer, that they are ashamed to begin. Here is a saying for them too: 'Better late than never!' 'It is a shame to neglect a duty—but never a shame to return to it.' When family prayer is omitted—the sweetest bond of family union is lacking. There is a continual need of something to calm the mind under the daily hurries, irritations and disappointments of life. If these needs and inconveniences begin to be felt, now is the proper time for setting about to meet them. Let shame and indolence, and every other opposing influence, be set aside; let the duty of family worship be *this day* set up in the house under feelings of deep contrition for the guilt of past neglect, with earnest supplications for pardon through the blood of Christ, and for the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit to enable you to persevere in the path of duty; and then (as it was said to the Jews, to encourage them to build the temple, a work which they had long neglected) take notice whether from this day forward, God does not remarkably bless you in all you have and do."

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