

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

By Gorham D. Abbott

1833

### Section 6 — HELPING ONE ANOTHER

It is a remark, which I have often heard addressed to the members of a family in general, "Know your own places—but be always willing to help one another!" These two rules will do much to promote family order and harmony. "What is everybody's business—is nobody's care." It is both the occasion and the excuse of neglect. Duty is often altogether neglected of which it may be said, "Most likely *Jane* has done it," or "I dare say *Richard* will be home in time to do it," or "I thought *Betty* had done it." For that reason it is desirable that every duty, however small, should be regularly assigned to *Jane*, or *Richard*, or *Betty*. But, then, it is equally desirable, that a general feeling of good-will should be nourished among them; that each, having performed his or her own part, should be ready to render assistance to anyone who may happen to be a little behind with theirs, and all should cheerfully join in making things comfortable when any extra work occurs, either through illness or visitors.

I know a large family, whose house is the seat of order and harmony; and this is how they manage. They keep no servant, but the industrious and judicious mother has brought up her children to a thorough knowledge of the management of domestic affairs in general. Each, also, has a particular department assigned, according to their particular abilities; and the least agreeable services are taken by each in turn. One daughter takes care of the pantry, and another of the bedrooms; a third is chiefly employed in making up the clothes of the family; one superintends the laundry; and another the nursery and sick room. One son takes care of the garden, another manages the horse and other animals. But, though each knows and keeps his own department, each takes pleasure in lending a helping hand to the other: thus all is managed without bustle, confusion, or altercation.

I have also heard a story of a humorous old gentleman, who, hearing a dispute between two of the servants, inquired what was the matter. The house-maid replied, that, being very tired, she had asked the coachman to fetch her a pail of water from the well, which was at a great distance from the house: this he lazily and surlily refused. "Nay," said the master, "I could not have thought, John, that you could be so ungallant as to refuse to assist a female." John sulkily muttered,

"that it was not his place to fetch water—he was not hired to do it." "True, true," replied the master; "I beg your pardon for supposing that you would do anything that you were not hired to do. Go directly, and bring the carriage to the door." In a few minutes, the carriage was announced, when the master directed the housemaid to get in with her pail, and ordered John to drive her to the well as many times as she required. "Whenever young people feel a grudging disposition, and unwillingness to render any little service that they are not expressly hired to perform, let them remember the old gentleman's humorous reproof, and remember, above all things, the precepts of the holy Book, which, if acted on, would prove the cure of all *selfishness* and ill-will: 'Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.' 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.'

## **CHANGING EMPLOYMENT**

"Think twice before you act once," said a man to a journeyman, who talked of leaving his master for the sake of higher wages. "You may, perhaps, get higher wages for a few weeks, just while the market lasts, but how will it be all the year round? Besides, think how ungenerous it would be, in the busy time, to leave a master who has kept you employed when trade was dull.

"When I was in business," said this man, "I had many men in my employment, and was always desirous of keeping them in constant work, at such wages as would enable them to live. I never got rid of men at a time when work was dull, but found them employment in what I hoped afterwards to bring into use. I seldom had occasion to take on extra hands at a busy time, and I made it a rule never to take on a man who had once deliberately left my employment. If anyone signified his intention of leaving, I generally advised him to sleep upon his resolution, and to remember that—if he once left, he would have no chance of being hired by me again. By steadily maintaining this plan, I and my men came to understand each other; they were satisfied that moderate gains, all the year round, were, on the whole, preferable to an occasional flush—and following, frequent destitution; they lost the restless desire of changing jobs, and I had the pleasure of leaving in the employment of my sons, scores of men who had worked many years for their father—men who had maintained their families in decency, and who had most of them laid by a snug trifle for a rainy day."

## **SUPERSTITION**

"Don't put those hams in salt today, whatever you do," said superstitious Mary to the cook, who was preparing the ingredients for that purpose. "Why not?" asked the cook. "Because it is Friday," answered the silly girl, "and no good luck ever comes to anything begun on a Friday."

"And are you really silly enough to believe that *being Friday* can have anything to do with the matter?" asked her mistress, who happened to be passing the pantry door at the moment.

"Everybody knows that's true, ma'am; at least all country people do. There is not a farmer's wife round, who would put hams in salt, or begin making cheeses, on a Friday. It is certainly true that they never prosper."

"Do you know the reason why Mrs. Thomson's bacon was spoiled last autumn, which she was so very careful to put in salt on a *Saturday*?"

"No, ma'am, I do not know."

"Then I will tell you. It was because the weather was warm, and the meat was not salted early enough to preserve it. If it had been salted on the *Friday*, it is very likely it would have proved good bacon; but it was sacrificed to the silly superstition of not putting it in salt on *Friday*.

"Much in the same manner Mrs. Taylor allowed her baby to scratch and disfigure its face, because she had a notion that it is *unlucky* to cut the nails of a child under a year old. And Nanny Scott, the old washer-woman, is sure that another death will happen this year in the family, because, when her sister-in-law was taken out to be buried, somebody shut the house door before the corpse was under ground, and so shut death into the house. Another neighbor expects a similar event, because a single raven flew over the house, and the cricket chirped on the hearth, and she saw a winding-sheet in the candle.

"My dear women," continued the lady, "how can you be so silly as to embitter your lives by such foolish superstition? It is very likely that death will enter the house within the year, for no doors nor bolts can keep it out, and it is very likely that you may be its victim. You have more reason to think so than any of your silly omens can give you."

"Dear, ma'am, what reason?" asked one of the women in terror.

"Because the Bible tells us that it is *appointed* to all men once to die, and warns us to be always ready, because we know not the day nor the hour when we shall be called."

"But, ma'am, don't you believe in anything that is a *token* of death, or of good or bad luck?"

"In nothing whatever! There is no such thing as luck, either good or bad; for luck means *chance*; but everything, great and small, is under the wise and gracious direction of God! Nothing can happen without his permission, and He permits

nothing but what, in His wonderful plans, He designs to work about for good. We are kept in ignorance of the particular events which are to befall us, in order to keep up in us a constant sense of our dependence on God, and a constant obedience to the directions of His word, by which alone we can be prepared for the dispensations of his providence."

"Would you not think me very silly," continued she, "if I were to say, Some dirty rags were put into the mill, and by good luck they came out clean paper? You would say luck had nothing to do with it. It was the intention of the master to make those rags into paper, and every part of the mill was contrived for that very purpose; for that he sets the different machines to work, and employs the various substances which he knows will bring about and effect the change he intends.

"Now, though I don't know much about paper-making, I know you employ different materials and different methods, according to the different kinds of papers you want to produce. But suppose I were to say, 'A raven flew over the mill, and therefore I know the pulp in this tub will come out brown paper. Or—the cat mewed for some meat, or purred over her kitten, and that is a sure sign that the pulp in this other vat will become white paper.' Well, the paper turns out white or brown, just as I had said; but would you not think me very silly indeed, if I could for a moment suppose that the raven or the cat had anything to do with making it so?"

"Very true, ma'am; it could have nothing to do with it: we know better than to think it could. We know all that is done to make the rags into paper, and to make the paper white or brown, as the master pleases."

"Yes, my friend, and we know, too, that every event, both great and small, is under the direction and control of God, and all are employed in effecting his plans. Then, as to our having a knowledge of any particular event beforehand, God, in his infinite wisdom, has seen fit to withhold such knowledge. It would only *unfit* us for our duty; and it is both vain and wicked to endeavor to obtain it, or for anyone to pretend that they possess it. The Bible tells us quite enough of futurity to teach us to prepare for it, as far as it rests with us to prepare; and as to the particular strength and assistance we shall need when any particular trial comes upon us, it is much safer and better for us to know that a God of infinite mercy is exactly acquainted with our circumstances and need—has all resources at his disposal, and will bestow upon his people, in answer to prayer, *what* and *when* is really best for them, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

We do just so, with our little children—we give them food or medicine as we see necessary, and tell them to come to us when they are in want or in pain; but we never think of telling them exactly what and when we intend to give them next, though we take care to provide such things as are necessary.

"Had it been according to the will of God, and for our real good, that we should

know everything beforehand, we may depend upon it, the information would have been given us in God's holy word, or gathered from general instruction and observation, as we find all kinds of knowledge are obtained that are worth possessing. It certainly would not have been left to creaking doors, and croaking ravens, and ill-made tallow candles."

A lady once lent us an excellent little story about Tawny Rachel, showing the wickedness of those people who pretend to tell about the future, and the folly of putting any faith in dreams, omens, and conjurers. I was mightily pleased with the whole story, and shall here copy a few of the concluding remarks.

"Listen to me, your true friend, when I assure you that God never reveals to weak and wicked women, the designs of his providence, which no human wisdom is able to foresee. To consult these false oracles, is not only foolish but sinful. It is foolish, because they are themselves as ignorant as those whom they pretend to teach; and it is sinful, because it is prying into that futurity which God, in mercy, as well as in wisdom, hides from man. God indeed orders all things, but when you have a mind to do a foolish thing, do not fancy you are *fated* to do it; this is tempting providence, not trusting God. It is indeed charging Him with folly; prudence is his gift, and you obey him better when you make use of *prudence*, under the direction of *prayer*—than when you madly rush into ruin, and think you are only submitting to your fate. Never fancy you are compelled to undo yourself, or to rush upon your own destruction, in compliance with any supposed *fate*. Never believe that God conceals his will from a sober Christian, who obeys his laws, and reveals it to a vagabond, who runs up and down breaking the laws both of God and man. King Saul never consulted the witch until he left off serving God; the Bible will direct us best; conjurers are impostors; and there are no days unlucky but those which we make so—by our vanity, folly and sin."

## **HOMEMAKERS**

"Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God." Titus 2:4-5

*Cleanliness*.—"Have your *house* clean, your *dress* clean, your *body* clean, and your *mind* clean."

"Let your mind's sweetness have its operation

Upon your person, clothes, and habitation."

And truly the connection is much nearer than would appear at first sight; purity, commencing in the heart as the fountain, extends itself to every little rill of conduct and appearance.

"Cleanliness," says the proverb, "is next to godliness;" we will not dispute about the exact degree of relationship. Cleanliness ought never to be set up as a substitute for godliness; but it certainly is, or ought to be, a constant attendant upon godliness.

All physicians agree that cleanliness does much to preserve and to restore the health of the body; by frequent washings, the skin is kept clear from disease, and the circulations go on freely; by frequent change of bed-linen, the sleep is more refreshing, and general health and cheerfulness are promoted. Children, in particular, have their temper, as well as their health, affected by the cleanly or the negligent habits of those who nurse them; and it is not improbable that many a fretful, irritable temper, through life, may be traced in the beginning to this very circumstance.

Clean skin, clean walls, and clean furniture, will do more to keep off infectious disease than all the scents and perfumes in the druggist's shop.

A healthy air, like pure water, should be quite free from every kind of taste and smell.

To enter an unkept and dirty apartment is disgusting; but thorough cleanliness is at once inviting to the eye and refreshing to the spirits.

Families who are thoroughly cleanly in their habits, generally enjoy more peace and contentment than those of an opposite description; and the unexpected entrance of a visitor produces no feeling of shame or irritation. Then, again, cleanly people are generally forecasting and prudent in other respects; their furniture and clothes are carefully preserved, and so last longer. Time seems turned to a better account; a cleanly person is never indolent. Neither is half the time occupied in cleaning, by people who are *habitually* cleanly; hence they have more time to devote to every other proper purpose, and, in particular, more time to attend to the duties and enjoyments of religion. It is a very common excuse for neglecting public worship—"We have no decent clothes to appear in!" This is not the plea of the cleanly; however poor, they can always command a decent appearance, and are generally distinguished for their orderly attendance on public worship. Thus we make good the assertion, that cleanliness is the handmaid both of peace and godliness.

*Keeping things to their proper uses.* The three well-known rules of domestic economy ought to be affixed in some conspicuous part of every kitchen and cottage, at least until they are transcribed into the memories and habits of the inhabitants—

Do everything in its proper time;

Put everything in its proper place;

Keep everything to its proper use.

It is a perpetual source of vexation in families, and a disgrace both to mistresses and servants, when household articles are either mislaid or injured, in consequence of having been used for improper purposes—a good table-knife hacked with cutting wood, instead of a saw or a chopper; the prongs of forks bent or broken, by having been made to do the work of a corkscrew; a dresser or table made to serve for a chopping board, and a chair for a pair of steps; a table-cloth cut by having been used as a knife-cloth, and a good cloak or blanket scorched by being made to serve as an ironing-blanket. Many such sights may be seen in slatternly families; and they generally indicate that the owners will one day be destitute of these things for their use.

"Only for once,"—"It does not much matter,"—"It is not worth while to fetch it,"—with the whole train of similar foolish apologies and excuses, should always be heard with suspicion and disgust; and where young people find themselves at all inclined to set up such excuses, they should immediately stand self-convicted of the beginning of mischief, and should at once resolve to do the thing properly, and to acquire a habit of so doing.

*Kindness to animals.*—In most families, one or more domestic animals are kept: as they are removed from their natural state, in which they could have supplied their own needs, and that for the use or gratification of man, they have a claim to be properly supplied and kindly treated. "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel."

Every domestic animal should be distinctly understood to be the charge of an individual; else there is great danger of its being forgotten or neglected, under the idea that another person has supplied it. The person who undertakes this charge, should have a regular time allotted for fulfilling it, and a regular place assigned, in which supplies are to be put as they accumulate; the fragments of the cookery, and of the table, for the poor dog and cat, and even the crumbs for the chickens or sparrows. Let nothing be wasted that can contribute to the happiness of any living thing; there is something delightful in a benevolence resembling that of the bountiful Creator, who provides for the lowest creatures, and takes pleasure in their happiness.

Children should early be taught to be kind to animals; encouraged to supply them with food and water; taught to know what food is suitable for them; and never, on any account, be allowed to torment them in sport.

Cleanliness is as conducive to the health and comfort of animals, as it is to the human species. Even those that bear the character of the dirtiest animals, thrive astonishingly better if kept thoroughly clean; and their being kept so is essential

to the health and comfort of those who live near them.

*Borrowing.*—Avoid a habit of borrowing: remember, "the borrower is servant to the lender." The proverb runs, "He who goes a-borrowing, goes a-sorrowing;" and so, indeed, does he who lends to some people. They are only concerned for their own immediate convenience, and have no due regard to their neighbor's property. They will even forget that the article does not belong to them, or imagine that it was returned long ago, and will feel offended when the owner applies for it. This is very frequently the case with respect to books, the benefit of which a benevolent man would wish to extend to his friends; but is often, by repeated losses, discouraged and deterred.

In household affairs, people should take care to have their own articles kept in good repair and fit for use, that they may not often be compelled to trouble their neighbors. If any article is borrowed, special care should be impressed on the minds of all concerned, to remember that it is borrowed, to preserve it from injury, and to return it to the owner as soon as done with.

It is wise to have a separate place, in which to put borrowed articles, especially borrowed books; lest, being put among others, the circumstance of their being borrowed should be forgotten, the lender injured, and the borrower disgraced.

These hints will not be despised either by Christian mistresses or Christian servants, on whom it is incumbent that the houses in which they preside or serve, should be models of good management to observers, and of comfort to the inhabitants. It is no small part of Christian duty to make all connected with us as comfortable as our means and circumstances will admit. "If a Christian," said Mr. Newton, "is but a shoe-black, he ought to be the best in the parish."

## **RESPECT TO THE AGED**

A gentleman was once passing through a village, and happened to see a poor feeble old woman let her stick fall, and stand a moment in perplexity, not knowing whether she dared stoop to pick it up, or attempt to reach her home without it. Just by the spot where the accident happened, a group of boys were playing at marbles; some of them took no notice, others rudely mocked the poor old woman's distress; but one kind-hearted lad threw down his marbles, ran to her assistance, and helped her into her house. She thanked him, and said, "God Almighty's blessing be upon you, for your kindness to a poor old woman!" The gentleman saw and heard the whole, and made inquiry after the lad, in whom he felt deeply interested. He found that he was already in the Sunday-school, and, in all probability, had there learned the scriptures, that inculcate reverence to the aged. From that time he had him instructed in writing and accounts at an evening school; when old enough, assisted in apprenticing him, and in course of time had the satisfaction of seeing him a respectable and flourishing tradesman.



I recollect his mentioning the circumstance to his wife as soon as he came home; and he then said he thought that boy discovered the rudiments of a good character, and that he should be greatly disappointed if he did not turn out one whom it would be a credit and satisfaction to have put forward in life. The after years fully proved that his opinion was correct. This, and some other circumstances, led the gentleman to make many remarks on the treatment the aged should receive, which deeply impressed my mind, and which I have endeavored to preserve.

"The hoary head is a crown of glory—if it is found in the way of righteousness." "You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear before the Lord your God." Such are the express precepts of scripture. So reasonable in itself, and so clearly commanded by God, is reverence from the young to the aged, it may be fairly said, that the young person who fails in so obvious a duty is a stranger to the fear of God, and destitute of those dispositions which alone can render youth amiable, manhood virtuous, and old age honorable.

Honor the aged—because God has put an especial honor upon old age; and to treat old people with respect, to study their comfort, and tenderly to soothe their infirmities, is an act of obedience to God.

Honor the aged—because they have generally a claim on your gratitude. Perhaps some feeble, decrepit old person, whom the thoughtless youth may be inclined to ridicule and despise, has, in days that are past, nurtured his infancy, or rescued his heedless steps from danger, or administered a medicine that was the means of saving his life, or in some way or other been instrumental in giving him a good education, or introducing him to some advantage in society, which he now enjoys.

Honor the aged—because the time was when they were as blooming and lively and active as yourselves; and if you live to old age, you will probably be as feeble and decrepit as they; and then, how can you expect sympathy, kindness, and respect, if in your youth you have not shown them to others?

Honor the aged—because outward infirmities do not necessarily enfeeble the mind, and much valuable instruction may often be derived from people laboring under the weakness and sufferings of old age. "Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom." "Ask now your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they shall teach you." Young people might find it greatly to their advantage to listen to the experience of the aged, and to treasure up and improve their observations; to ask, and to attend to their counsels, rather than to follow the dictates of their own ignorance and self-conceit. But it is only a respectful, soothing deportment on the part of the young, which can invite the aged to bring forth the rich stores of their experience. Wise is the youth who

never allows such an opportunity to pass unimproved.

Honor the aged, because a disposition in youth to give due honor to age, is one of the fairest indications of general excellence of character; and a particular blessing is often seen to rest upon those who have treated the aged with conscientious respect. On the other hand, the youth who can despise and ridicule the aged, gives sad evidence of a generally wicked and depraved disposition. He often becomes a tyrant in his family, a quarrelsome neighbor, and a despiser of religion! And many instances are on record (besides that of the children of Bethel, who mocked the prophet Elisha) in which the divine displeasure has evidently rested on those who refused the honor due to old age.

I have somewhere met with the following narrative by an eyewitness. "My duty calls me every morning to pass through a certain busy town; and as I take my walk, I cannot help making observations upon what I see as I go by, and sometimes as I call at the shops and houses of the inhabitants. I have been especially struck with the different treatment which old age meets with, in the various families where I have had an opportunity for taking notice. There is one family, in which I observe a very old woman, who has been the slave of her children and grandchildren for many a year, for which she now receives nothing but neglect. I have seen her wait most diligently on her three unruly sons; and if it was a wet day, she would stand and entreat of the one who was going out, to put on a raincoat, or take an umbrella, lest, '*dear fellow,*' as she said, he should take cold; and I have seen that son snatch it from her hand, throw it aside, and, calling her an old fool, and set off without it, in defiance of her: yet she would meet his return with a smile, forgetting and forgiving all; his warm tea would be ready, and his slippers and dry clothes by the fire, and no remarks made on his ill conduct to her. To the children of her three sons she was a complete drudge. I think I see her now stooping to lead them and teach them to walk, until her poor old back was almost broken; but she never did enough to satisfy them: the three wives of her sons thought fit to ridicule her. She is now a paralytic, and sits in the chimney corner to bear the insults of the youngest child: a kind word is never given her; and all think it no use to pity her. I never see her, without hoping that God will in mercy soon give her a joyful release, lest her children should fill up the measure of retribution which they are preparing for their own old age.

"I have observed another scene. The dwelling is hardly to be called a cottage, for that gives one the idea of a neat pretty abode, with white-washed walls covered with roses: this is a little, old, dirty house, consisting of two rooms; the people pretend to sell green-grocery; and I see the grandmother fetching dead sprouts and parched greens to set out on a block before the door. Poor old creature! her face is one mass of wrinkles; her steps are tottering, and her hands tremble; her daughter is a widow, a hard-working charwoman. Lack of cleanliness is her chief fault, and her greatest excellence filial affection to her poor old mother. As I pass their door, the aged creature is sometimes entering with her bundle of greens. I have often seen the daughter come out to meet her, saying, in a kind tone,

'Mother, why do you carry so many? Come sit down, and let me give you something to eat and drink, for I am sure you must be faint.' There is a large family of children; and one day I heard the eldest boy give his grandmother an impertinent answer, for which he received from the mother a hearty box on the ear: 'That is to teach you not to answer your grandmother in that manner,' said she; 'go and beg her pardon this moment.' Away went the young culprit, and did as he was told. There are perhaps better systems of family discipline than this: the woman is dirty and slatternly, and I fear she has very little thought of religion; but her behavior to her aged parent is a pattern to many.

"There is one old woman, who has five sons and one daughter: the sons are all married and prosperous for their station in life, but they forget their mother. She is a high-spirited old woman, and does not like to ask them for help: for many a day she worked hard for them, and succeeded in making them what they are, clever workmen. Her daughter, who is a notable girl, obtained a good service, and had such wages as enabled her to dress very respectably: she lived also at a plentiful table. Her fellow-servants were a cheerful, pleasant set, and the situation had many advantages; but several times, when she went home to see her mother, she found her overdone with work, infirm, and needing attention. 'I cannot live here,' said the good girl, 'and see my mother in this state. How can I enjoy my health, and sing, and be happy, while her age is fainting under hard work? Can I enjoy a meal while she lacks? No.'—So home she came, and mother's bed was taken down and washed, and her room scoured very clean, and her easy chair placed at the window; and there sits mother now, like a lady: no work will Fanny allow her to do, but works hard herself: and when she carries up her nice, nourishing basin of beef-tea, or her cup of coffee when she wakes, the showers of blessings from a mother's lips, make Fanny happier and richer than a princess. O what a store of comfort is she laying up *for herself!*

"I know one poor servant girl, who is a credit to her class: her mother lives with a married daughter, who does all she can for her; but many a comfort would she lack, were it not supplied from the wages of Jenny—a bit of fish, when she can purchase it at a cheap rate, a little ripe fruit, or any other nicety which is within her power to obtain, a pair of easy warm shoes, and, at Christmas, a few yards of new flannel, to keep off the rheumatism—these things my own eyes have seen bestowed, and many a crown and half sovereign with them—by a hard-working servant girl, on an aged mother! And may God send his best of blessings into the cup of that dutiful child!

"I passed the house of one who had ever been accounted dutiful to her mother: she married, and had herself become the parent of three children, when called to that mother's death-bed, during the period of whose sickness her tender care was required; but she was so taken up with her three children, that she could not spare an hour for her dying parent; no, these little new-comers so engrossed her affections, that the old tried friend, who had so carefully reared her, who had been ever ready with advice and help for her, when in difficulty, was now

forgotten: if food required preparing for the sick mother, she was sure to be making up a smart cap for the baby. She never would contrive matters so as to devote an hour to her mother, and yet not neglect her children—no, the love, the gratitude of the daughter was lost. Let her take care, lest her three *idols* pass unheedingly by her dying bed: they are three beautiful children; but I never see her fondle them without thinking of the poor old mother's last, lonely hours.

"There is one old lady—she is quite a lady in manners and fortune—whose fine house I pass; but her estate, and her set of servants, cannot help her under her infirmity of mind, which is *the fear of death*; she is a holy, good woman, and none who know her, but herself, doubt of her eternal safety. She has a daughter who is a great comfort to her; and the constant effort of this good girl is to smooth the mother's passage to the tomb. She knows her gloomy fears, and is ever pointing out some new, and beautiful, and cheering view of the heavenly Canaan. She will draw the mother's attention to the beauties of nature, and lead her trembling steps in the green pastures, and beside the still waters; and then, while she is enjoying all, will remind her,

"If such the sweetness of the stream,  
What must the Fountain be?"

She often reads to her, how 'the arrow sharpened with love let easily into the heart,' was Christiana's token, when she was called to go over the river; and how Despondency's last words were, 'Farewell, Night! Welcome, Day!' and how his daughter Much-afraid went through the river singing; and 'how glorious it was to see how the open region was filled with horses and chariots, with trumpeters and pipers, with singers and players on stringed instruments, to welcome the pilgrims as they went up, and followed one another in at the beautiful gate of the city.'

"Reader, how is it between you and your parents? Perhaps they are gone—they no longer need your kindness. But if they still live, and your heart tells you that you have not showed them all the tenderness and respect which you might have done, oh, begin this moment to endeavor to soothe their few remaining, painful days: think of the satisfaction it will yield you, when they are no more. The pleasures of earth are going from them: you and your children are in health, cheerfully looking on to prosperity and many happy days of joy; but your aged parents' eyes are closing to all things under the sun; life and its joys are become tasteless: they may adopt the words of Barzillai to King David, when he said, "Cross over with me and stay with me in Jerusalem, and I will provide for you." But Barzillai answered the king, "How many more years will I live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? I am now eighty years old. Can I tell the difference between what is good and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still hear the voices of men and women singers? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? Your servant will cross over the Jordan with the king for a short distance, but why should the king reward me in this way? Let your servant return, that I may die in my own town near the tomb of

my father and mother." 2 Samuel 19:33-37

And is this the case of your parents, and do you not deeply feel for them? Can you see those trembling hands, and forget that they nourished your infancy; or watch those tottering steps, and forget how often in their strength they have hastened to comfort you? Look back, when absent from home and among strangers, how the sudden sight of your mother or your father has caused your young bosom to swell with joy, and brought kindly tears to your eyes: you have flown to them, and felt at home. Did ever stranger watch your sick bed as they have done? Did ever stranger, mirthful and pleasant as he might be, show the daily, the constant, the deep, the self-denying interest for you that they have done? When trouble has overtaken you, the world has passed heedlessly on, busy and cheerful—what did it care whether you did well or ill? But there was one, whose countenance fell when you were in sorrow; one who thought of you, and wept for you, and prayed for you, yes, and acted for you, when and where he could—it was your father. There was one whose deep sighs and many tears told how her heart bled for you—it was your mother. Can you forget all this, and allow their gray hairs to go down to the grave with sorrow? Oh, turn, before it is too late. Let their weak hands and their feeble knees plead for your tenderness now, as your weak hands and feeble knees once pleaded with them. They were ready to forgive your faults, to hide your defects; oh, let the same love look over and pass by the peevishness, the defects of their old age: recollect how much that was disagreeable they put up with in you, and that not grudgingly, but out of a heart overflowing with love. Pay them back liberally the debt of gratitude you owe; and as you would that your children should do unto you, do you even so unto your parents."

## **JESTING, FOOLISHNESS**

It is a great attainment always to preserve *seriousness* without gloom, and *cheerfulness* without levity. I never knew a more cheerful family than that of Mr. White's. Parents, and children, and servants, all had a happy expression of countenance: all tried to make each other happy: all, I believe, had a conscience void of offence both towards God and man; and, as they felt really happy, they always appeared really cheerful; but levity and folly they could not endure; light, foolish jests were never heard, either in their parlor or kitchen. I have heard there many remarks on the subject, the truth of which I have seen exemplified in many other families, though not in theirs; and have observed, that families where a spirit of jesting is indulged, though they are sometimes very merry, are at other times very gloomy, and generally very contentious. Their conduct and temper reminds one of the saying of Solomon, "The laughter of fools is like the crackling of thorns under a pot,"—a great blaze and soon over; and often "in the midst of laughter the heart is in heaviness."

How strikingly the apostle cautions—"Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk

or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving." Indeed they are not; and it may be questioned which is greatest, the *folly* of jesting, or the *mischief* arising from it. A jester is a most contemptible or a most dangerous person; no one either respects or trusts him. He who delights in puns—does not scruple not to make himself the ape or the buffoon of a company. He who indulges a more pungent and malignant kind of evil-speaking, spares neither the feelings nor the character of others;

"Who, for the poor renown of being smart,  
Would stick a dagger in a brother's heart."

Another poet has it,

"Laugh at the reputations she has torn,  
And holds them dangling at arm's length in scorn."

The contemptible light in which jesters are held by all men of sound wisdom, is evident in many cautionary maxims left on record, such as, "Commit no business, no secret of importance, to a jester." "Let not a fool play with you in the house, lest he play with you in the market." "The joking of wits, like the play of puppies, often ends in snarling." "He who makes himself the common jester of the company, has but just wit enough to be a fool."

The jester has seldom any reverence for sacred things; the sacred name of God, or some sentiment or precept of his holy word, is often perverted, to give point to the strokes of his profane levity. "It may be wit to turn things sacred to ridicule, but it is wisdom to let them alone." "Sin is too bad, and holiness too good, to make sport of; the one demands repentance, and the other reverence." "They are fools, who mock either at sin or holiness."

It is a great pity that even pious people sometimes indulge themselves in repeating the puns or mistakes of others on the words of scripture, which are thus associated in the mind with improper and ludicrous ideas; and the sacred influence of the passage is entirely lost. Some ministers have declared themselves precluded from preaching on one or more very solemn and weighty passages of scripture, from being unable to divest them of some ludicrous association imprinted on the mind, perhaps in the days of youthful vanity and folly, or perhaps, which is still more to be lamented, presented more recently by some one who ought to have had enough sacred wisdom to restrain this frivolous wit.

Not less foolish or injurious are those practical jests which the young and thoughtless often practice on each other for mere sport. Many people, as long as they live, never recover the effects of some sudden surprise or fright, thus wantonly inflicted; some now living, and once possessed of the finest faculties, fitting them to be the ornaments of society and great benefactors to mankind,

have been thus reduced to a mere state of idiocy, and present an affecting wreck of former capabilities thus wantonly shattered and destroyed. Truly, he is a "madman who casts about firebrands, arrows and death; so is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, Am I not in sport?"

Even in cases where neither death nor derangement result from such foolish jesting, it is often attended with consequences which, though less serious, occasion real suffering and inconvenience through life. A child was terrified to silence by a wicked servant assuring her that if ever she mentioned some misconduct which she had witnessed, the birds would fly down and peck her— (the hangings of the bed in which the child slept were trees and birds painted.) Young as the child was, she knew enough to be sure that this was impossible; yet an undefined terror possessed her mind, which seriously affected her health and endangered her life. She could never afterwards have a quiet night's rest in that bed, nor could she see a bird, either living or dead, without an agony of terror. Even in mature life, (though by no means of a timid disposition,) she suffers more at having to pass near half-a-dozen harmless barn-door fowls, than if they were really fierce and destructive creatures. More than once, in peculiar circumstances, her health and even life have been endangered by this ungrounded and yet unconquerable apprehension.

Surely this ought to be a caution to those entrusted with the care of children, never to fill their minds with imaginary terrors; and to young people, in their moments of sport, never to venture on a play or a joke, which may wound the feelings of a companion, and perhaps endanger his reason or his life.

This is a good place to caution young people against such sports as would endanger themselves, or such feats of strength as, if accomplished, can scarcely fail to injure the constitution. There is no true courage in foolhardiness; and no person can trifle with his own safety and health without sin. Our health and strength are talents bestowed on us by God, which we are to employ for the purposes intended, and for which we must be accountable; but it is no part of a man's duty, nor at all to his credit, to display the strength of a horse, for mere idle boasting of what he can do. Let a man, who possesses great bodily strength and courage, carry them meekly and quietly on ordinary occasions; and when a real emergency arises, let him rush forward, regardless of labor and fearless of danger, to save the life of a fellow-creature. This is a cause worth his exertion, and will secure, as it deserves, the admiration, respect, and gratitude of others. But he who hazards his health, limbs, or life, for the mere idle boast of what he can do, is as deservedly despised, even by those whom he amuses; and, were it not for the awful futurity awaiting him, others would be apt to form an estimate similar to his own, of the worthlessness of that life which he so wantonly endangers.

One of our kings gave a fit rebuke to foolhardiness. When a man, who had climbed to the top of Salisbury cathedral, presented a memorial to the king,

hoping to be rewarded for his feat—the king strictly forbid all his other subjects to attempt the like, on pain of death.

A sailor had often run by the mouth of a cannon at the moment of its firing. Many of his comrades had admired the feat, and laid wagers on his performing it; but others, more sober, entreated him to desist from so presumptuous an attempt, and even endeavored to pull him back; but he persisted, and in an instant was blown to atoms. This is an affecting picture of those who, in spite of all the warnings of the word of God, and the remonstrances of pious friends, madly rush on in the ways of sin, and sport on the very edge of the pit of destruction. This is fool-hardiness indeed; for a puny worm of the earth to rush forward and contend with his Maker, and dare the Almighty to do his worst—to dance over the embers of sin and corruption, which one breath of Jehovah can kindle into everlasting burnings. "Who ever hardened himself against God and prospered?" "Oh that they were wise, that they would consider this!" "He who, being often reprov'd, hardens his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." "Now, consider this, you who forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

## **CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM**

A Christian ought never to be a noisy, disputing politician, but he ought to be a patriot. Every man who shares the blessings and protection of a civilized country, ought to have its interests at heart: he is bound to pray for the peace and prosperity of the land he lives in; he is bound to cultivate and exemplify that righteousness which exalts a nation, and to discountenance and weep over that sin which is a reproach to any people, and which, sooner or later, brings down the judgments of a righteous God. When the Lord was about to pour forth his dreadful judgments on the wicked Jews, the few truly pious and patriotic were thus distinguished: "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

A friend often said that he reckoned my father a true patriot: father was surprised at this, and said he thought it belonged only to great and learned men: "No," said his friend, "that is quite a mistake; even a poor and unlearned man may be the support and honor of his country, while he guides his affairs with integrity and discretion; while, by his patient industry, he renders the natural produce of the land available to the supply of the community in general, as well as his own; while he rules well his own household, and trains up a family of good subjects to the state; and while he prays for kings and all that are in authority, that they may rule over men in the fear of the Lord, and that all the subjects of the land may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. Such a man is a true patriot, and has as loyal and patriotic an interest in 'his own hearth-stone,' 'his own vine and fig-tree,' as a noble has in his splendid mansion and extensive



estates.

'Better is the poor who walks in his integrity, than he who is perverse in his ways, though he is rich.' Sometimes it is seen that 'though the rich man is wise in his own conceit, the poor who has understanding searches him out.' Solomon tells us that 'there was a little city, and few men within it, and there came a great king against the city and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now, there was found in it a poor wise man, and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city. Then, said I, Wisdom is better than strength;' and 'by a man of knowledge and understanding the state shall be prolonged.'

"Remember, then, everyone may be a true friend to his country—not by blustering about politics, and shouting at elections, but by acting well himself, and setting a good example to all around him. The best reform will be, when everyone sets about, in earnest, to reform himself. 'When everyone sweeps before his own door, we shall soon have a clean street;' and when every man is what he ought to be, we shall have a whole nation fearing God and working righteousness; meanwhile, let everyone look to himself, and do his part towards it."

## **GOOD AND BAD REPORTS**

A good man's character is very dear to him—it ought to be so—he is commanded to follow those "things that are of good report." This is a point in which bad men are always ready to injure him; as they hate their brother, because his works are good and theirs are evil; his goodness reproves their badness, and therefore they cannot bear to have it appear that he is as good as he is. They will not scruple to invent, or pervert and circulate, stories to his hurt; they will misrepresent facts and malign his motives. This is very trying to the spirit of a man who desires so to live that he may adorn the doctrine of God, his Savior, in all things; but "to do well, and be ill-spoken of—is characteristic of the Christian."

When men are troubled in this way, it is better, in nine cases out of ten, to take no notice at all, but let malice run itself out of breath. A great philosopher, on being told that some had spoken badly of him, replied, "It matters not; I will endeavor so to live that nobody shall believe them." Malicious aspersions cast upon the character of a good man, will, in time, wear off, and his righteousness will appear it's the light, and his judgment as the noon-day: indeed, the very attacks of malice may prove a benefit to the Christian. Those who lay to his charge things which he did not do, may bring to his notice imperfections which he had not observed, and lead him to correct them. It has been prettily represented, that the Christian goes through the world as with a rich silk garment, that glistens in the sun; but the spite and malice of men follow him, and cast dirt upon his garment, and then call upon others to observe how it is bespattered: he goes on his way, perhaps grieved at the injury he has sustained—perhaps unconscious of

it—but, by-and-by, the dirt rolls off, one piece after another, and proves to have been nothing more than fuller's earth; it cleanses the garment of some spots it had contracted, and leaves no trace of the dirt that had been maliciously cast upon it.

It is a just observation, that as those who for every slight illness take powerful medicine, do rather injure than repair their health, so they, who for every trifle, attempt to vindicate their character, do rather weaken it.

The best defense, against both oppression and malice—is a harmless life and a peaceful spirit. While we suffer in the way of well-doing, we need not plead our own cause, but commit it to Him who judges righteously—who will execute judgment for the oppressed, and bring to light every secret work of darkness.

We should, however, make it our concern to act prudently as well as harmlessly, and not provoke opposition by a rash and meddlesome spirit. Every man ought to be ashamed of suffering as a babbler, a mischief-maker, or a busy-body in other men's matters; but if he is assailed with unmerited opposition and unfounded malignity, then he suffers as a Christian; and let him glorify God in this behalf, and commit the keeping of his soul unto God in well-doing, as unto a merciful and faithful Creator.

## **COMPANIONS AND SECRETS**

We should labor to impress on young people, especially at their first going out into life, the importance of prudence and caution in the choice of companions. It is a generally-received maxim that "you may know a man by the company he keeps;" and if two are seen familiarly to associate together, it is concluded, that the worst will corrupt the best, rather than the best reform the worst,—for such is the natural tendency of corrupt human nature; therefore, take heed of being infected by the breath of a profane or a polluted heart. What good can you expect from bad company? If you are truly good, they will taunt or despise you; if you are unsettled, they will surely corrupt you.

We are not, however, to refuse all worldly dealings with ungodly men; for then, as the apostle says, we must needs go out of the world. But the Christian's fellowship with such men should resemble that of "the physician in an infected apartment, or of a lawyer conversing with his client in a shower of rain;" neither will hesitate to discharge their duties; but, having done so, both will be glad to hasten on. The Christian is not required to be either surly, uncharitable, or fanatical; on the contrary, he is commanded to be courteous to all men. In worldly matters, he should act with worldly men as a citizen of the world, but always under the influence of Christian principles; so that worldly men who deal with him shall be made to feel that they may trust him to the uttermost, but they dare not take liberties with him. As to his *chosen society*, he should say with the Psalmist,

"I am a companion of all those who fear you, and of those who keep your precepts." "I have not sat with vain people, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked. O Lord, gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men!"

In all the conduct of consistent Christians, that wisdom of the prudent which is profitable to direct, will be manifested. Divine wisdom in the heart lays the best foundation for human prudence and profitable conversation.

In reference to social fellowship, the following maxims are worthy to be observed:

"Beware of strangers, and behave with caution in mixed companies."

"Censure not people nor principles before strangers, or in mixed company."

"Never listen or peep at doors or windows; never ask a man what he carries covered; never peep behind a curtain, nor look into other men's books or papers."

"Believe not all you hear, nor repeat all you believe."

"Suspect a tale-bearer, and a great talker—in the multitude of words there lacks not sin, and he is not worthy of being trusted with your secrets who is fond of entertaining you with another man's."

"Tell not your secrets to your servant, lest he become your master."

"Say little of people whom you can neither commend without envy, nor censure without danger."

"Those who are eager to know a secret, are sure to be fond of telling it; therefore, trust not any who press for your confidence."

"Rather persuade yourself than your friend to keep your counsel; for how should another keep that secret which concerns him not, when you can not keep it yourself, whom it does concern?"

"Impart not to your friend such things as cannot benefit him to know, but may harm you, if discovered. 'A fool utters all his mind, but a wise man keeps it in until afterwards.'"

"Trust not him who flatters with his lips. Flatterers have generally some interest of their own to serve, as the eagle is said to lift up the tortoise, in order to get something by his fall."

"Know yourself—and then no flattery can deceive you."

"Love your friend, with all his faults; you are not perfect yourself, therefore expect no perfection in others."

"Respect both yourself and your friend."

"Too much familiarity breeds contempt."

"Be not too eager in counseling others. Ill success sometimes attends good counsel; then the blame is laid to the adviser's charge, though the success attending good advice is seldom thanked for."

Seek the company of those who are capable of instructing you, especially in the things which relate to your soul or your calling, and improve every opportunity of converse with them to treasure up some piece of useful knowledge, some maxim or motive for prudence or spiritual improvement. It is a pity to look back on hours, or even minutes, spent in the society of wise and good men, without having derived some real profit from it. In all our fellowship with society, it should be our constant aim either to do good or to get good; but false modesty too often prevents the one, and self-conceit the other.

The sacred book of Proverbs abounds with precepts and cautions in the choice of companions, which the young should treasure up in their memories and hearts. "My son, if sinners entice you, consent not." "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you perceive not in him the lips of knowledge." "He who follows vain people is void of understanding." "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." "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." "He who walks with wise men shall be wise—but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

## **THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE**

This comes in very near connection with the last subject. Many maxims apply to both. It is a very common mistake of wicked men to say, "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" Even godly people often fail in circumspection here, and speak as if they thought words were of very little consequence. But our Lord has taught us, "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken." Matthew 12:36. The apostle James speaks of the government of the tongue as one of the highest and most difficult points of Christian attainment, and an indispensable mark of the sincerity of our Christian profession. "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."

James 1:26

There is great danger of sinning with the tongue, because the depravity of our own hearts inclines us to it. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

There is danger of sinning, because it is so very easy to do so. Some sins require time, preparation, exertion; and while all this is going on, a better thought may come in, and check the mischief. But the instant an improper thought or feeling enters the mind, what can be so easy as for the doors of the mouth to fly open, and give it utterance? Hence the too frequent apology, "I am sorry I said it—I meant no harm—it was but a hasty word—I spoke without a thought." *Not quite*, we may say, for speaking is but thinking aloud; but the fact is, we should think twice before we speak once.

We are in danger also from the frequency of speech; that which we do but seldom, we are more apt to weigh well, and take pains to do properly; but we are obliged to speak many times every day of our lives, and it is a great wonder if we do not often speak amiss. To avoid this, it is wise not to speak without real occasion. "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise." Proverbs 10:19. "God has given us two ears and but one tongue, as if to intimate that we should be twice as ready to hearken as to speak." "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." "Life and death are in the power of the tongue." "Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him." "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue." Proverbs 17:27-28

The following are excellent maxims of wisdom in this particular: "There are times when we may and ought to say nothing, and there are times when we may and ought to say something; but there will never be a time when we should say all things." "We must never say anything but the truth, nor must we say the truth at all times." "One often repents of saying too much, but seldom of saying too little." "Better say nothing than nothing to the purpose." "Great talkers discharge too thick to take good aim." "To one you find full of questions, it is better to make no answer at all." "Praise no man too liberally before his face, nor censure any man severely behind his back." "Say nothing to any one in a fury, for that is like putting out to sea in a storm." "In times of joy and grief, set a special guard upon the tongue, for then you are most in danger of speaking imprudently." "Words spoken in meekness and wisdom, not from an angry spirit, are most searching to him to whom they are addressed, and most comfortable to him that speaks them."

"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." This paradox has been well explained.

"The *fool*" is one who does not make a proper use of his reason. When he

speaks in the folly of passion, answer him not with like folly, but give 'a soft answer, which turns away wrath.'

"Answer not the folly of mere *talkativeness* with similar folly. Perpetual prating about nothing may often be put down by a dead silence. Answer not the folly of *unreasonableness*, *false argument*, or *prejudice*, by like folly; but 'prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.'

"Answer not the folly of *profaneness* by folly like his own, but by marked silence, or well-timed reproof. (The Rev. John Howe, walking in the park, met two gentlemen, who, in eager discourse, repeatedly uttered the awful word 'damn,' to each other. Mr. Howe took off his hat, and, with much solemnity, said, 'Gentlemen, I pray God to save you both.' A word spoken in season, how good is it!')

"Answer not the folly of *malignity* with like folly. 'There is that which speaks like the piercings of a sword; but the tongue of the wise is as a healing medicine. In the mouth of the foolish there is a rod of pride; but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.'

"Answer not the folly of *peevishness* according to its folly, but pity, forbear, and forgive; and

'The tear that is wiped with a little address,  
May be followed, perhaps, with a smile.'

"Answer not the folly of *captiousness* with similar folly. Be not displeased when you are contradicted; above all, do not wait for an opportunity of contradicting in your turn, to pay off the supposed affront.

"Answer not the folly of *flattery* according to itself, but turn to it a deaf ear, and a disgusted heart; for he who flatters his neighbor, spreads a net for his feet. Flattery cherishes pride, self-love, and self-ignorance.

"But 'answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit;' that is, answer him so as to refute him on his own false principles, lest his being left without an answer, should lead him to suppose that his folly is unanswerable, and so confirm him in his mistake. Answer him, if he fancies himself right when he is clearly in the wrong, if possible to prevent him from deluding others."

I remember hearing a sermon read, in which the laws of speech were thus laid down, by which our conversation should be governed.

"The law of *prudence*.—This condemns idleness and folly; for no one has a right to talk nonsense. It condemns, also, all that is impertinent and unsuited to the place, the company, and the season. 'A wise man's heart discerns both time and

judgment.' 'A word fitly spoken, O how good is it! It is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.' All 'foolish talking and jesting' are forbidden by the apostle, while he enjoins, 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer every man.'

"The law of *purity*.—This forbids all ribaldry, and not only everything that is grossly offensive, but all indecent allusions and insinuations, however artfully veiled: 'but fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints.'

"The law of *veracity*.—This condemns everything spoken with a view to deceive, or spoken so as to occasion deception, which may be done by a *confusion* of circumstances; by an *omission* of circumstances; by an *addition* of circumstances. 'Therefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another.'

"The law of *kindness*.—This condemns all calumny and tale-bearing, the circulation of whatever may be injurious to the reputation of another. This requires that, if you must speak another's faults, you do it without aggravation; and that you do it, not with pleasure, but with pain; and that, if you censure, you do it as a judge would pass sentence on his son. 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.'

"The law of *utility*.—This requires that we should not scandalize another by anything in our speech; but contribute to his benefit by rendering our discourse instructive, or reproofing, or consolatory. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.'

"The law of *piety*.—This requires that we should never take God's name in vain, never speak lightly of his word or worship, never charge him foolishly, never murmur under any of his dispensations. It requires that we extol his perfections and recommend his service." (Rev. W. Jay.)

The following remark is worth preserving and noticing. "A cause which has a strong tendency to destroy pious seriousness, and which almost always prevents its formation and growth in young minds, is levity in conversation upon subjects connected with religion." (Paley.) "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness and wisdom."

There is, perhaps, no fault more common than gossiping; I mean telling and hearing the petty news and idle chit-chat of the neighborhood. Few masters and mistresses like to have many comers and goers in their kitchen; and none would be willing to have all their concerns talked over with the servants of their neighbors. Every considerate head of a family will be willing to indulge his

servants with liberty to visit their friends, at proper times; and of this you will do right to avail yourself; but when you are sent on an errand, or other necessary concern, call to mind the injunction given by the prophet Elisha to his servant, which you may find by turning to the second of Kings, Chapter 4. ver. 29, and act accordingly; (If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not answer.) Or, if civility requires you to give or return a salutation, be sure you do not stop and waste your time in foolish tittle-tattle. This is no unnecessary caution. Often have I beheld a whole group of servants standing together for half an hour or more, gossiping about what one's master says, and another's mistress does; and fifty other things as little worth knowing or relating; while, perhaps, three or four helpless infants have been all the while exposed to the bleak winds, or set down upon the cold stones; and many a one has been condemned to drag crippled limbs, or suffer excruciating pains throughout their whole lives, who might date the commencement of their sorrows to such unpardonable negligence.

Ever stand at the utmost distance from all such practices; and if anyone is so imprudent as to ask you questions relative to the concerns of the family with which you live, check at once their foolish curiosity by replying, "that it is no part of your business to inquire into such matters, nor would it be right for me to divulge them to you." You will say, perhaps, "What! am I never to talk?" Yes, I am sure you will, whether I give you leave or not; nor do I wish to prohibit it. Man is a social creature; and the gift of speech, when properly exercised, is not only one of the distinguishing, but one of the noblest blessings, bestowed upon him by the great Author of his existence. Use it with thankfulness, but use it also with discretion. Converse with your friends and acquaintance freely and cheerfully; but take care that your conversation is inoffensive, that it does not interfere with your duty, that it is never slanderous or censorious. Remember who has said, "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken." Matthew 12:36.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

#### **Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine***

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).