

The Family at Home: Familiar Illustrations of Various Domestic Duties

By Gorham D. Abbott

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Section 1

The following volume was placed in my hands by one of the most active members of the Executive Committee of the London Religious Tract Society, with an earnest request, that I would introduce it to the American Christian community. And I do this the more readily, and with more pleasure, from the conviction which I have, that it is calculated to shed a most happy influence over the relative *duties of domestic life*.

It seems to me, so far as I am able to understand the *spirit* of the Bible, that more is implied in the pious obligations involved in the family tie, than is ordinarily recognized at the present day.

If we look back upon the history of the world, with a view to discover the principles of the government of God from his dealings with men, there is evidently an important design in the arrangement, which he has constituted, for dividing the whole race into distinct and separate family circles. This is equally obvious, whether we regard the nature of the relations which are thus established, or whether we reflect upon the consequences, which have grown out of them, as they are developed in every page of history, sacred or profane.

Perhaps we have no certain assurance, that, even if our first parents had continued faithful and obedient, *their children* would have followed their example, and that all successive generations of parents and children, in their turn, down to the end of time, would have perpetuated the example and the imitation of parental and filial obedience to the divine commands, and consequently have secured the enjoyment of divine favor. But of this we are certain, that, among every nation, kindred, tongue and people, the example of *disobedience* has been, and certainly will be followed, except where Sovereign Mercy interposes and rescues the parent or the child from the deadly influence of the *examples of sin*, which they have witnessed and imitated.

It is perfectly evident, in the patriarchal days, that God regarded the head of the family as, in some measure at least, responsible for the pious character of the whole household. He was to be the representative of Jehovah himself, in making

known to the *whole domestic circle* the moral duties and ceremonial observances, which the Almighty had enjoined. He was, in this capacity, to act as the family Prophet. In offering the sacrifices, and in leading the devotions of the social circle, the head of the family was obviously the family Priest. And everywhere, the authority of the master of the house is manifest to have been supreme. He was, to all intents and purposes, the *absolute King*. The movements of all that appertained to the Patriarch were directed by his will. And guilt in the family was guilt and shame upon his head. The consequences of disobedience and sin, not the offender alone, but the parent and all the family were to share.

In conformity with this view, the sin of Esau, in selling his birthright, appears in a stronger and clearer light. Not only did he alienate from himself the birthright of an earthly inheritance, conveyed by primogeniture, but he *lightly esteemed* the sacred and priestly prerogative of the head of the household. And for this it was, that his story stands so conspicuous in the oracles of God, as an instance of the guilt of *such sin* in the eyes of the Father of all, for future generations to ponder and avoid.

A most striking proof of the peculiar manner in which the family relation is regarded by the Lord appears in the promise to the Father of the Faithful—"In you shall all the *families* of the earth be blessed."

Whatever may tend to turn the attention of God's people to this subject, must be considered as a token for good. The multiplied avocations of the religious world at the present day, which are calculated to divert the mind from the duties, responsibilities, and privileges, that lie appropriately "at home," need some restraining influence. There is danger of diverting our Christian sympathies, efforts and prayers, unduly away from our homes. This vineyard should be sacredly cultivated.

This book, we hope and believe, will be found a useful and interesting volume. And we commend it to the kind blessing of Him, who is the God of all the families of the earth.

On putting the present volume to press, it was ascertained, that another work was announced in Philadelphia, under the title of "The Family Book," which was the original title of this work. In order to prevent mistakes, the name of this was changed. Appropriate articles from different sources have been added, so that the work is nearly double the size of the original English copy.

Gorham D. Abbott, Boston, Dec. 22, 1833.

INTRODUCTION

There is a well-known saying—"He who would end as his father ended, must begin as his father began." If the father through life acted wisely and well, the children cannot do better than follow his example. But it is possible that, in passing through life, the parents have been convinced of many errors; perhaps have smarted for their folly, and become wiser by bitter experience. In such a case, if the parents have candor and humility enough to point out to their children the mistakes into which they have fallen, with the inconveniences they have suffered in consequence, and the advantages they have found in correcting their sentiments and altering their habits, then the wisdom of the children will appear, not in blindly following their parents through all their errors, but in listening to their warnings, in avoiding their mistakes, and so arriving at as good a conclusion as their parents, without having so many painful steps to retrace. Such an act of parental kindness I have often wished to perform for my dear children; and with that view, I have long been in the habit of penning down such maxims and hints as I have gleaned in passing through life—some of them gathered from the lips of my parents or other friends; others resulting from observation, or experience of the inconveniences resulting from an improper course of conduct. "Experience keeps a costly school; but fools will learn in no other." I hope my children will not be guilty of such folly, but will be glad to take advantage of the experience of others.

The first step to obtaining true wisdom for ourselves, or imparting useful instruction to others, is to obtain a clear insight into human nature; to keep constantly in view our own depravity and the corruption of our hearts, as the great source of all our mistakes, both concerning the interests of time and eternity. We are too apt to look upon idleness, extravagance, selfishness, incivility, and peevishness, as accidental faults, which stand alone, and which are to be corrected by arguing against this or that particular vice or folly; but the fact is, they are all so many streams issuing from a corrupt fountain, and the only effectual cure will be found in purifying the fountain. If the heart is renewed by the grace of God, though lesser faults may for a time be overlooked, yet, when they are fairly brought before the notice of the individual, they will be regarded in the light of *sins against God*, and on that ground steadfastly and successfully resisted.

It is quite right that people should see the inconvenience and mischief resulting from improper conduct; and we have great reason to be thankful that sound policy is always on the side of duty, and that godliness is found "profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" but then we must remember, that worldly interest is but a very inferior motive. The promise of advantage in this life—is to godliness and the minor virtues which godliness brings along with it—not to the minor virtues detached from godliness. Besides, in point of fact, they very seldom, if ever, are really separated.

We sometimes see ungodly people who are decent, industrious, frugal, and prosperous; but then there is so much ill temper and peevishness mingled with

these good qualities, as deprives them, and those around, of the comfort their circumstances would lead us to suppose they enjoyed; or perhaps there is such a miserly spirit as embitters all; or such a worldly spirit as renders the thought of death dreadful, as the period which will terminate all these pleasures, and give them nothing better in their stead; or there is such a self-righteous spirit, as induces people really to suppose that heaven is their just due, as a reward for their industry, decency, and frugality in managing their little worldly affairs.

One way or other it will surely be seen, that there is no complete character except the true Christian—and he, alas! is very far from perfect. There are two or three principles, however, constantly operating on his mind, which tend to secure that uniformity of character, which men of the world never attain, and for lack of which, they are never thoroughly comfortable. In the first place, the Christian sees himself as a sinner—unworthy of every good thing, and deserving everything evil. This makes him humble, contented, and thankful. Then he habitually remembers that he is accountable to God for every moment of time, and every atom of worldly possession and influence with which he is entrusted. This teaches him carefully and diligently to employ all in the best possible way, so as to promote the happiness of his fellow-creatures, and the glory of God. Besides this, he habitually considers himself as only a passenger through this world to a better world. This is the best guard against worldly-mindedness, and, at the same time, a great support under the sorrows and trials of life. Then, again, feeling that he is indebted for all his comforts here, and for all his hopes of heaven hereafter, to the free mercy of God in Jesus Christ, he finds the love of Christ constraining him in everything so to live, as to glorify the Savior, and to bring others to love and serve him too.

The person who is habitually governed by these principles, will most successfully pursue the study of "whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely and of good report," and will most effectually secure his own happiness in this life, and the happiness of those around him.

I therefore wish my children to remember, that, though I may often set down some particular instance of conduct, and the consequences resulting from it; it is my settled conviction,—that whatever is bad in conduct flows from the inward depravity of the heart, and whatever is really good flows from the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit on the heart, making the tree good, that the fruit also may be good; moreover, that, though people without religion may act wisely in some particulars, there is nothing uniformly and permanently valuable in character, but what springs from Christian principles.

Being, as I have already observed, chiefly indebted to the instructions of my parents and friends for any useful knowledge I may be able to impart to my children and others, and not wishing to receive credit for what does not belong to me, I shall first introduce my reader to the acquaintance of those friends, and

then proceed to give some of their maxims, and, when I can recollect them, the occasions of their being communicated.

THE SUTTON FAMILY

I will next give you such particulars as I have been able to collect of the excellent and judicious friends, to whom I have already alluded. On retiring from business, Mr. and Mrs. Sutton settled in the country, and they were in comfortable, moderate circumstances, but not what might be reckoned wealthy. Had they been intent on obtaining a large fortune, they would most likely have remained longer in a flourishing business; but they resolved rather to be content with moderation, and to retreat from the busy world, that they might have more leisure to devote to the cultivation of religion in their own souls, and to exert themselves for the good of their fellow-creatures. Accordingly, having seen their eldest daughter comfortably married, and given up business to two sons, they came, with two younger daughters and one little boy, to settle in our village; and many have had reason to be thankful that ever they came. Though the good old people have been dead many years, and the young ones settled far away, their names are still held in grateful remembrance; and perhaps some, who little think it, are to this day indebted to them for the comfort of a decent, respectable servant, or of a prudent, managing wife.

It was my happiness, when a girl, to be often employed in this excellent family, by which means I had frequent opportunities of observing their good ways; and when, in course of years, I settled in life, and began house-keeping for myself, the good old lady often paid me a visit, and gave me such advice and admonitions as I have thought worth laying up for my children's children. It seemed to be the constant study of this worthy family, how they might benefit others: there was no case of sorrow or suffering to which they did not attempt to afford relief. For this purpose they not only freely gave of their substance, but they spared no pains to put people in a way of bettering their own condition.

It is surprising to observe how much everyone's condition, under God, depends on himself; and how much things may be bettered by, as the saying is, taking hold of the tool at the right end. There was a wealthy man in the place, a kind-hearted, well-meaning man in his way, and who, as I have heard, had many more thousands a year than Mr. Sutton had hundreds; but which of them did most good among the poor? The latter, ten to one. The former, it is true, never refused to give relief to any case of distress, real or pretended; but then he did not trouble himself to go among the people, and find out the causes of their distress, and put them upon exerting themselves in the best way, and bringing up their families in an orderly, respectable and pious manner.

This good work, in our village, chiefly rested with Mr. and Mrs. Sutton: they were

indefatigable in it, and, by this means, they were greater benefactors to the poor than if they had lavished among them thousands a year without discrimination and without personal exertion. Indeed, after they came into the village, what was otherwise given in charity was turned to much better account than it was before, for people often consulted them, and always attended to their recommendation.

When we see good fruit, we generally feel an interest in knowing something about the nature of the tree that produced it; and my children will, like myself, be inclined to inquire by what principles this amiable family were influenced and regulated, and what was the source of the excellency they discovered. I have already sufficiently intimated that it was a pious family; I may add, that, from what I constantly saw and heard among them, I was first led to form an idea what true religion is.

I have mentioned being frequently employed in the house at needlework: besides this, I have several times traveled with the family; and once I was in the house several months together, on account of the dangerous illness of the youngest Miss Sutton. For several weeks, my mother, a domestic, named Mary, and myself, took turns in sitting up with the young lady; thus we had many opportunities of seeing and hearing what was good, and I do hope it was made a great blessing to us.

For the first three weeks, Miss Sutton was scarcely at all sensible: during that time her affectionate parents were filled with the deepest distress and anxiety, which, as we could find, both from their conversation and prayers, arose not so much from her state of suffering, or even the prospect of losing her, as from a deep concern to be assured of her everlasting safety and welfare. This was often a matter of surprise to my mother and myself; indeed there were many remarks made, and many practices adopted in this family, which we could not at all understand; and my mother used to think they were rather to blame in speaking so plainly about death and preparation for it, lest it should alarm the poor young lady. We were, however, soon convinced that, if the soul and *eternity* are of real importance, the attention paid to them was not greater than the subject justly demanded.

Old Mary, and Robert the gardener, had lived in the family a great many years. Robert had been gardener to Mr. Sutton's *father*, and, on his death, from attachment to the family, lived with Mr. Sutton, in the city, until his retiring from business to live in the country again placed him in a situation more agreeable to his early habits. Mary also had been in the family ever since Mr. Sutton's marriage. Both were completely identified with all the interests of the family, and seemed to look on the young people almost as if they were their own children. Old Robert was always on the watch, when any one came out of the sick room, to inquire what sort of a night his dear young lady had passed, or to offer choice flowers, or fresh ripe fruit, which he hoped she might fancy.

One evening, we were all sent downstairs to supper, while Mr. and Mrs. Sutton remained with their daughter. Old Robert began the conversation by asking my mother whether she thought there were any hopes of Miss Harriet's recovery. Mother replied, she had very little hope, but there was no certainty: she had seen people still worse who yet had been restored.

Robert.—"I am sure many, many fervent prayers ascend on her behalf; and we know that God is a God hearing and answering prayer."

Old Mary.—"I am sure I, for one, should be most truly thankful for her recovery; and yet I pray more earnestly still, and so do her dear parents, that she may be enabled to leave some decided testimony of her safety for eternity. Dear child! she knows what is necessary to a sinner's salvation, and if she might but express that her mind is fixed on the Rock of Ages, I could resign her, and so could master and mistress. If the soul is safe—it little matters whether death comes in youth or old age. But it is not for us to dictate. She has been the child of many fervent prayers; she has been instructed in the way of salvation, and she has had holy examples set before her. We may hope that the Lord is working on her mind, though she is not capable of expressing it; yet it is very natural that her anxious parents should long to know from her own lips the state of her mind at this solemn period."

Mother.—"I wonder, for my part, that they should be so anxious on that particular: there is no doubt but what she is very safe. If she is not fit to go, what will become of thousands? Think how well she has been brought up; and so amiable and well behaved; and so good to the poor! 'Tis hard parting, to be sure, but I wish every child of mine were as fit to go. It is a pity her parents should distress themselves about it. If she had not been so good as she has been, yet God Almighty is very merciful; but she, dear innocent young creature, is sure to go to heaven."

Mary.—"Ah, my friend, these things cannot satisfy the minds of her parents. Amiable and good as she has been—and there could scarcely be a child more dutiful and amiable—the Bible tells us we are all sinners in the sight of God; and except we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation, we must perish."

Mother.—"And do you suppose she does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Mary.—"I have no doubt she believes that what the Bible says about him is true; but what we are anxious to know is, that she feels *herself* to be a lost, perishing sinner, and in deep concern commits her soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus, to be saved in his own appointed way. This is a very different thing from believing in a general, careless manner. If we believe to the saving of the soul, we apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, feeling that we need his salvation, as much as if we were the only beings who had sinned, and needed a Savior; and we cannot rest

satisfied without a well-grounded confidence and heartfelt experience of his salvation.

"You know, now Miss Harriet is sick, we are not satisfied with knowing that the doctor is a skillful man, and that he has plenty of excellent medicines in his shop, but we apply to him, and desire that he would come himself, and give his advice in this particular case, and we get the dear young lady to take the medicines he prescribes. So, every sinner must feel and bewail his own sin and misery, and seek Christ for himself, in fervent prayer, and have the remedy provided in the gospel applied to his own case."

Mother.—"Well, if all this belongs to believing in Christ, and obtaining salvation, I am afraid there are thousands who call themselves believers, and yet know nothing at all about it."

Robert.—"No doubt of that. I remember the time when I thought little about it myself: my parents taught me to be honest, industrious, and civil, and so I got the name of a good lad. As it was the custom of my parents, I went to church meeting at least once every Sunday, and generally read a chapter in the Bible every evening. I used also to say the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, night and morning, unless I was very much hurried or tired. This was more than many young men did; and I thought myself very good indeed. I was not over fond of thinking about death, but if ever the thought did come into my mind, I persuaded myself that I had done no harm, and was sure to go to heaven; but all the while I was as great a stranger to repentance, faith, and prayer—as if I had been born a heathen!"

Mary.—"Yes, it was the same with all of us at that time; and oh, what a mercy that we were not left to perish in that state of ignorance! We may well say, 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ. By grace we are saved.'"

Mother.—"Well, it is a great mercy to be set right, if you were wrong before. And were Mr. and Mrs. Sutton of the same way of thinking? And how was it that you all took such a new turn?"

Mary.—"I will tell you all about it. When they were first married, they thought little about *the religion of the heart*. They were upright and kind to their fellow-creatures, and decent in their attendance on public worship; but at that time, it may be truly said of the whole family, we were living without God in the world.

"When Miss Ellen was born, a nurse was recommended to my mistress by an old lady whom she greatly respected. Mistress was not one of those mothers who leave their children entirely to the care of domestics, though at that time she loved pleasure more, and was more inclined to go out than she now is. However,

let children be ever so well attended by their parents, it is a great matter to have a faithful, conscientious nurse, such as Fanny proved herself to be. When she came to be hired, she was very particular in engaging for liberty to attend public worship at least once every Lord's day, unless there was illness: this my mistress readily granted her, and it was the only liberty she required; indeed, there was no persuading her to leave sight of her charge for a single hour on any other business whatever; and even then, she was as particular in her directions to me and the housemaid, as if the child had been her own. She had very good ways with the children, (she lived with us until there were seven of them,) keeping them in strict subjection, and yet so cheerful and happy. Never were pleasanter children, nor children who gave less trouble to those around them, which I must, in a great measure, attribute to her good methods with them.

"Fanny generally spent her leisure, when she had any, (which was not very often, for she was industrious with her needle,) in the nursery, reading good books; yet she was by no means morose or gloomy. If we invited her, she had no objection to sit an hour with the rest of us in the kitchen; but she could not endure any light, vain conversation, or foolish song, or jest books, which, I am sorry to say, we at that time saw no harm in. However, she made herself very agreeable; having traveled much, and seen a great deal of the world, her conversation was always entertaining, though she never failed to give it also an instructive turn, and often proposed to read a chapter in the Bible, or an extract from some good book which she had by her, or had borrowed.

"By degrees she quietly wrought a great change in our kitchen: instead of vain, unprofitable talk, that one should have been ashamed to remember, we either spoke of something useful, or else Robert read to us as we sat at our needlework.

"As the children became old enough to understand anything, Fanny spared no pains in teaching them sweet little hymns and catechisms, suited to their capacities; she used also to read the Bible, and pray with them, and took them with her to public worship. My mistress did not object to this, for, though she thought them too young to understand what they heard, she was always satisfied as to their being safe in Fanny's care. But children understand more than grown people are aware of. Their father and mother were fond of the children, and often had them into the parlor, but they did not at that time notice these things, and, perhaps, hardly knew the instructions which were bestowed on them.

"But, with Fanny's serious conversation and reading, and the children's pretty little sayings, we, in the kitchen, began to think there must be something in religion beyond a mere name. I believe Robert was the first who proposed to go with Fanny to her place of worship."

Robert.—"Yes, and never, I trust, shall I forget it. Every word the minister said came home to my conscience, and I could get no rest nor peace. I shall never

forget how all my honesty, and civility, and prayers, (as I called them,) shrunk into nothing before the holy word of God; and I felt, at once, that I was a wretched, ruined sinner, deserving nothing but everlasting misery."

Mary.—"And how Sally, the housemaid, and I, laughed at you, when you were determined to go again in the evening! We little thought how soon we should feel in the same manner."

Robert.—"Yes, you all thought it was because I liked Fanny's company, and so I did; but that is nothing now; it was not to be. But we have all reason to be thankful that she was sent among us, to be the means of leading our feet into the way of salvation."

Mother.—"But you said you could get no rest nor peace, your mind was so uneasy with what you had heard."

Robert.—"Indeed, I could not have peace, when I saw myself a perishing sinner, until I went again and again to hear the gospel, and read the Bible for myself, and so was enabled to see and believe, that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief!' And oh! what a different thing it is to read the Bible, and hear the preaching of the gospel, when one has the full impression that we are reading and hearing for the salvation of our own precious souls! Only think what a difference it would be, if we were reading a common newspaper, or if we had been told that that newspaper contained an advertisement of a great fortune which we might have on applying, and proving our relationship to such and such people."

Mother.—"I believe it would, too! We should not be trifling about other people's affairs, but we would read that one advertisement over and over again, and try to understand every word of it, and consider how we might best apply, and how we could prove ourselves to be the parties described. And really, when one comes to think of it, it is a matter of far greater concern that we should know whether or not our souls are safe for the eternal world; for we none of us know how soon we may be cut off by death.—And have you felt so ever since?"

Robert.—"I hope I have never lost the concern that was then awakened, nor ever been disposed to look upon sin as a trifle. It is still my grief that so much sin cleaves to me, and that I cannot do the things that I would. Sometimes the sinfulness of my heart so overwhelms me, that I seem to think it is scarcely possible for so sinful a creature to be pardoned and accepted; but then I go again to my Bible, and there I find that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from *all* sin;' that 'He is able to save to the *uttermost*, *all* who come to God by him;' and 'whoever comes to Jesus—he will never drive away;' and thus I again find comfort and strength; and so, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, whom God has promised to those who ask him, I hope to go on to the end, and so receive the end of my faith, even the salvation of my soul."

Mother.—"Well, that is a happy state of mind. I can only say I wish that mine was like it. And how was it that the rest were brought into the same way of thinking?"

Mary.—"Why, as opportunity offered, sometimes Sally went with Fanny and Robert, and sometimes I went; and the more we went, the more we liked to go; and we all took more pains to contrive our work on a Saturday, and as we all agreed together, and were willing to help one another, it was never necessary for more than one to stay at home. So we had many opportunities: and, as 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' the Lord was pleased to open our hearts, as he did the heart of Lydia, to attend to the things which were spoken by the minister; and we searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so, and prayed earnestly that we might be taught by the Holy Spirit, and 'made wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' And thus, having obtained help from God, we continue to the present day; still very ignorant, and very sinful, yet waiting on the Lord, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.—But you inquired how the change was brought about in the minds of our dear master and mistress with respect to religion."

Robert.—"Ah, that is a painful story! And yet we have all reason to say that joy arose in the midst of grief, and that, in the time of affliction, God remembered mercy, and bestowed that which more than made up for all he saw fit to take away. But you shall tell the story, Mary; I never can have the heart to go through with it."

Mary.—"Well, when we were all brought to know and love the truth, we used, as the Bible says, to take sweet counsel together, and walk to the house of God in company. Master and mistress were very kind, and as we always managed the work on a Saturday, and took turns in staying at home, so that they were never inconvenienced by our going out, they never interfered with it, but often expressed themselves pleased with our faithful services: it would be a shame indeed if Christian domestics were not faithful. But, as far as we could judge, our master and mistress had little or no serious concern about their souls. They generally went to church once on the Sunday, if the weather was fine, and spent the rest of the day in visiting and walking; they also, most days, read a chapter in the Bible: this was quite as much religion as most of their acquaintances possessed, and it seemed quite enough to satisfy them. You may suppose that, when we were brought, as we trust, to know something of a more vital and influential piety, we became anxiously concerned that our dear master and mistress should share our happiness. It would not do for us to set up for their teachers, but we took an opportunity, now and then, in a respectful way, to drop a hint, which never gave any offence, though it never seemed to make any deep impression. Good Fanny, being constantly with the children, saw more of mistress than the rest of us, and had more opportunities of speaking. She had been longer in the ways of God, and knew, better than the rest of us, what to say,

and when and how to say it. However, we all prayed for them most earnestly and affectionately. I may say again, in the words of scripture, 'Then those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for those who feared the Lord, and who thought upon his name.'

"But when we pray for spiritual blessings, how little do we think in what way our prayers are to be answered! We were living very happily together, delighted to see the docility and improvement of the sweet children, and only desiring the conversion of our master and mistress, when Miss Ellen came home, very sick: the illness proved to be the measles. She had it very favorably; but the rest of the children took it, and two of them died; the youngest a sweet little babe of ten months old, and the other a fine boy of six years. Oh what a house of mourning was ours when death first entered it! Master and mistress were dotingly fond of their children, and, when that fine lovely babe died, it seemed as if they would break their hearts; but that was only the beginning of sorrows. Don't you remember, Robert, how affectingly master spoke to you about it, some time afterwards?"

Robert.—"Yes, quite well. He said—The first stroke seemed too heavy to be borne. We were rebellious under it; we struggled like a wild bull in a net; and felt as if God had no right to touch our treasures. It took more and severer strokes to bend our stubborn souls; but God, who is rich in mercy, opened a way to our hearts by means of affliction, and then came in himself and filled the painful void."

Mary.—"Well, when this dear little William died, it was hoped that all the rest were going on favorably; but a cold easterly wind set in just at the time, and, though every care was taken of the dear little sufferers, Master Herbert, the flower of the flock, was seized with inflammation of the lungs, and died!"

Robert.—"But oh, what a happy death was his! His kind nurse had been the means of bringing this dear little lamb to the Good Shepherd, and while he lay suffering, and his dear parents were weeping over him, he was continually saying some sweet verse of scripture, or of his little hymns, about the love of Jesus, and assuring them that he was quite happy and willing to go to Jesus; or fervently praying, in his own simple language, for his dear papa and mamma, and brothers and sisters, and even everyone of us servants by name. It was a melting scene. His dying sayings surely sunk into the hearts of his dear parents."

Mary.—"Yes, that they did. I remember, when we had laid the dear little corpse in the coffin, my poor dear mistress bent over it, and said, 'Would to God I were where my child is! I can bear this stroke better than the former; and, dearly as I love my remaining children, I could gladly part with them all, and go myself, if we were all sure of dying as happy and as well prepared as this precious child!' Poor Fanny, though herself almost broken-hearted, as indeed we all were, talked

sweetly to mistress, and begged her to carry her sorrows to God in prayer, and beseech him to make the affliction a blessing, by leading her to that gracious Savior, who had been so gracious to the dying child. Then she gave her the little books with which William used to be so delighted, and marked the passages of scripture he loved to repeat. The bereaved mother withdrew with them to her chamber, where she remained some hours; and I do believe she then began to seek a throne of mercy for herself the few remaining days that Fanny was with us."

Mother.—"What! did she leave you soon afterwards?"

Mary.—"Yes, indeed, she did, never to return! When little Herbert's funeral was over, mistress was continually going into the nursery, and asking questions about him; she seemed like a little child among the children. Her attention was awakened to those things which she never had before regarded. She found the need of consolations which the world could not bestow; and she felt assured, that her dear dying child had enjoyed those consolations through the truths impressed upon him by his faithful nurse. After two weeks had elapsed from the time of his death, when Fanny herself was seized with the illness—she had it very severely, and, though she did not actually die under the disease, she never recovered from it. A cough settled on her lungs, and she went off in a rapid consumption. You may suppose that master and mistress were greatly distressed at the prospect of losing so valuable a servant, and one who had been so great a blessing to their dear children.

"They kept her in the house, and paid her every possible attention; but it was all in vain, as to this world. However, even this additional trial proved a great blessing to all the family. The good old lady who first recommended Fanny to the place, often visited her in her illness, and her conversation was very consoling and profitable to my mistress, who, though she had long respected her, never until now knew her real worth. With some hesitation, Fanny expressed a wish to see the faithful minister on whom she had long attended. To this our master and mistress readily consented: whatever prejudices they might formerly have felt on such a subject, had now given way; their hearts were softened and inquiring; and they were ready to receive, as an angel of God, any one who could instruct them in those sacred truths which they now perceived to be of infinite value. The good man became a frequent visitor, and, by the bedside of the dying servant, he uttered many a sentiment, and breathed many a prayer, which, through the Holy Spirit's influence, sunk deep into the hearts of our master and mistress.

"The last days and hours of this excellent young woman were rich in heavenly hopes and consolations many precious instructions flowed to us all, from her dying lips; and her memory is to this day fondly cherished in all our hearts. The whole family followed to the grave the remains of faithful Fanny, and were present at her funeral sermon. The preaching was of a totally different kind from the cold, trifling, and formal sound which our master and mistress had been used

to attend. They at once perceived that the minister was in earnest, and that he really believed the things he uttered were true and important. This naturally excited serious attention. Then he so carefully proved from scripture whatever he advanced, that there was no questioning it; and his tender and affectionate spirit tended to win the heart. From that time the family regularly attended his ministry, as long as we resided in the city; and he has been to visit the family since we came into the country.

"Under these various means, our master and mistress were gradually enlightened to perceive their own state, however amiable and estimable their characters before men, as guilty and polluted in the sight of God, and altogether without hope, except from the free mercy of God, in Jesus Christ. Like the apostle, they have been brought to say, 'But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.'

"I need hardly tell you, that, when these sentiments and feelings had taken possession of their *hearts*, a suitable change was soon seen in the *conduct* of their family. The Sabbath was entirely devoted to its sacred purposes; family worship was established; worldly pleasures abandoned; and the great concern about the children, was, that they might be brought up 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;' and, as they advanced in years and understanding, the utmost anxiety was evinced by the affectionate parents, that each might become a personal subject and possessor of divine grace. They have often spoken of it, as a great mercy, that they were brought to a knowledge of the truth while their children were yet young and tender; the eldest was not more than nine or ten years old, and the instructions of their nurse had prepared them receive the instructions of their parents; and I suppose they can scarcely remember the time when things were different from what they now are. The fervent prayers of the parents have been answered, and their pious endeavors succeeded and blessed in a good degree. The eldest four of the family have long been decidedly pious, and the two younger are amiable and hopeful. This dear Miss Harriet is, as you say, a kind, gentle, lovely young lady; but, from what we have told you of the views and experience of the parents, you cannot wonder that they should be deeply anxious to obtain decisive evidence that she knows the grace of God in truth, and is enabled, in this trying hour, to rest a firm hope for eternity on Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners."

Mother.—"Indeed, I do not wonder at it; and I hope it may please God to grant their desire. But I want to know who took care of the children after the death of your fellow-servant Fanny?"

Mary.—"Why, master and mistress were sadly afraid of engaging anyone on whom they could not rely for acting in the fear of God, and instilling holy principles into the minds of the children. As there was not a young infant to mind, and Sally the housemaid, and myself, were very fond of the children, we begged mistress not to hurry about getting anyone, assuring her we would do our best to make things comfortable, and would prefer engaging in a little extra work, rather than running the hazard of having a fellow-servant who might not be a comfortable companion in the best things. I must say, Robert was as willing as either of us to make this bargain, and never objected to put his hand to anything by which the general comfort of the family might be promoted; and so we have gone on very happily ever since.

"Mistress, having given up her mirthful engagements, resolved to devote herself to the education of her children. In this great work she found the advice of the good old lady highly valuable; indeed, the intimacy was like that of a mother and daughter.

"At first, mistress was sadly afraid she should experience great interruption in her new plans, from the visits of her impious acquaintances; but the difficulty did not prove nearly so great as had been expected. Most of them were sickened at the change they perceived, and dropped off one after another, saying that Mr. and Mrs. Sutton had gone *melancholy* since the loss of their children. Never was a greater mistake; for it was then they began to know what true happiness means. However, it is a pleasure to say, that *all* did not thus forsake them in disgust, but that several families of their acquaintance were induced by their example to think seriously about religion, and, in time, became their companions in the ways of God.

"About two years after the death of the two children and their nurse, it pleased God to bestow on our dear master and mistress another son, whom they called, after his departed brothers, *William Herbert*. Being so much younger than the rest, he has always been the darling of the family; I hope and trust he will not be spoiled. He is the child of many prayers, and of wise parental government; and, from many little circumstances that have come under our observation, we have great hope that his dear young mind is inclined to seek the God of his parents. About the time of his birth, a governess was engaged to assist mistress in teaching the young ladies: she was a pious person; and, as all went hand in hand with the parents, great success has attended their endeavors. Never was a more lovely and well-behaved family than ours; at least, I think so, and so do many who are better judges. But the great care and anxiety is, still, to ascertain that the root of the matter is in them; for, as humbling as it may be, it is a truth, that the loveliest babe that ever was born, and the most amiable youth that ever eyes beheld, is a guilty, depraved creature, and must be born again before it can see the kingdom of God." ("I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom

of God unless he is born again." John 3:3)

Mother.—"I thank you for telling me all this, and I shall often think of it; for, if such a change was necessary to those *good* people, it is surely as necessary to me and mine.

"I must ask you one more question: What became of Sally, the housemaid? She did not come into the country with you."

Mary.—"No—she was married to one of master's young men, just before we came down; and she keeps house, and attends upon the two young gentlemen, who are now in business. They highly value her, as trusty and faithful, and master and mistress are satisfied in knowing that there is a prudent, careful person to look after their comfort and expenses; for young men, especially in London, are exposed to great snares and dangers. But, as Sally said in her last letter, it is such a comfort to see them steadily following the ways of their dear parents—useful and honorable in the church of God, and promoters of every good word and work."

At the close of this long conversation, the bell rang for one of us to sit by Miss Harriet's bedside, and the rest to come in to family prayer. Mr. and Mrs. Sutton had evidently been weeping much; they, however, appeared peaceful and resigned. Mr. Sutton read the 126th Psalm, and, in prayer, committed their dear dying child, as she then appeared, to the care and protection of Infinite Mercy, at the same time expressing a grateful hope that she herself had not been a stranger to the throne of grace.

We afterwards learned that the conversation had been very satisfactory and consolatory. She had opened her mind to her parents, and had relieved theirs. Timidity and reserve had hitherto restrained her lips; but now, in the near prospect of eternity, she ventured to state, that she had long sought the Lord in humble prayer, and was now permitted to enjoy his supporting presence. She had still a faint recollection of the scene when the children were taken into Fanny's dying chamber, to receive her last farewell, and when she entreated each of them to apply to that gracious Savior who said, "Allow little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." At that time, the children wept, they scarcely knew why. The next day, they were told that Fanny was gone to heaven, to their dear little brothers, and to that Savior whom she had taught them to love; and the passages she had urged on their attention became permanently associated in their minds with the affectionate tenderness of one they had so dearly loved, and the happiness on which she had so soon entered.

The happy change that took place in the minds and habits of the parents tended to confirm these early impressions on their children; and they had now the unspeakable happiness of seeing the elder four walking in the truth; and now,

concerning the youngest, who had shared the instructions and solicitude of their long-lost pious nurse, of cherishing the pleasing hope, that, "whether she lived, she would live to the Lord, or whether she died, she would die unto the Lord; and so, living or dying, she would be the Lord's."

It pleased God to raise Miss Harriet from her bed of sickness, and to spare her to become an ornament to true religion, and a great blessing to all connected with her.

I may add, that, during many weeks, in which she was slowly recovering, it was my happiness, and that of my dear mother, to gather those instructions from the reading, the conversation, and the prayers of this pious family, which, I trust, have proved a great and lasting benefit to us.

DEFERENCE TO PARENTS

I once received a useful lesson from some kind friends, which leads me to look back with keen self-reproach; and that, perhaps, is generally the case with the most profitable lessons we receive; for the more clearly we are taught what we ought to do and be, the more we shall be humbled at observing how far we have fallen short of it.

The point to which I allude is deference to parents—one on which I believe many young people transgress, more from lack of due consideration, than from really bad intentions.

I have observed, that, when my mother was out at work, or nursing, it fell to my lot to keep house for my father and brothers: I grieve to think how often, in this respect, I failed in my duty. Having an employment of my own, I was too apt to regard my *time* and *earnings* as entirely mine—and to grudge any interruption. Often my dear father has come in, cold and weary, and found the fire out, the house untidy, and no supper prepared. Instead of attending to these things, I have been eagerly busy at my needlework, pleasing myself with the thought of what I should earn, or, perhaps, amusing myself with altering my own clothes to the newest fashion that had come to my knowledge. Father was a mild, quiet man, and seldom found fault; but I am sure my unkindness and neglect must have given him pain at the time, as they have given me many an uneasy feeling since.

One day, when I was about seventeen years of age, a gentleman from a distance came to reside in our neighborhood, and both my mother and myself got many days' employment in settling the family. Mother got the house in order, and cleaned the furniture, as it arrived by the wagon; and I set at work with the young ladies, making up window-curtains and other things of that description.

Just as the house had gotten finally settled, mother was called away to a neighbor whom she had engaged to nurse. As I had only two or three hours' work to do, she left the key of our house with me, and charged me to be sure and go home in good time to get my father some supper.

In the course of the day, the ladies thought of some more work they wanted done, and asked me when I could be spared from home. I replied, that, if they pleased, I would stay then, and not go home at all; for I was delighted at working with the young ladies, and getting such profitable employment. But the lady of the house, who had heard my mother's charge to me, asked me who was at home to provide for my father's comfort. I answered her with some degree of confusion; for, though I had never thought much about the matter before, my conscience felt as if I had neglected a duty. She then very kindly said to me, "My good girl, it is quite right that you should be diligent in your business, and desirous of honest gain; but let your duty to your parents have its proper place—they have the strongest claims on your gratitude and obedience. Think how much of their own comfort they have relinquished to provide for and make you comfortable when you could do nothing for yourself! Think what they have sacrificed to procure you the knowledge by which you are enabled to maintain yourself now, and to assist in the support of the family!"

My confusion increased; for I felt conscious that, as I approached to womanhood, I had fancied myself my own mistress, and especially since I had been out to work, that I had spent most of my earnings on myself, and had in many respects been very deficient in consulting the comforts and wishes of my parents. Perhaps they, too, had erred in *indulgence* towards me, and leaving me too much to my own disposal. They would not have done this had they observed in me any particular wicked propensity; but, seeing me, in the main, tolerably steady and industrious, they were thrown off their guard. This is a danger to which well-disposed parents are often exposed, especially when the children have had anything like an education of which the parents have been destitute: they are apt to think too highly of the little attainments of their children, and to treat them with deference as a superior kind of beings. Such conduct too frequently leads children to forget their dependence and obligations, and the respect and deference due to parents. During the remainder of the day, nothing more was said to me on the subject, and it is very likely that the lady thought no more about it; but a train of reflections was awakened in my mind, which proved of lasting benefit. I resolved from that hour to be more observant of the wishes of my parents; and it was my happiness, years afterwards, to receive from each, the dying parent's blessing on a dutiful child.

Let me set down, by way of admonition to all other young people, a few instances in which I recollect my own early failures, and in correcting which, the happiness of my dear parents was promoted, as well as my own peace of mind.

One thing to which I have already alluded is, prompt and punctual attention to their requests and comforts. Though my parents had borne much, and complained little—I shall never forget the fond pat which my dear father gave me that first night, when, on coming home, weary and hungry, he found a cheerful fire, a clean-swept hearth, and a bit of hot bacon and potatoes ready to set on table; nor the tender tear that started in my mother's eye, when I carried her gray cloak to the house where she was nursing, to keep her warm if she should have to sit up all night: these were the first fruits of my friend's admonition.

Another point on which I had not sufficiently consulted my parents' comfort was that of regularity at meals. Regularity is at all times desirable, and as people advance in life, it becomes of more consequence that they should take their meals and retire to rest with punctuality. When awakened to think more particularly of my duty to my parents, I recollected with pain, that I had sometimes allowed my mother to rise and prepare breakfast, and to call me again and again before I could shake off sloth and obey the summons; that I had often been sitting eagerly at my work, or gossiping at the door with a neighbor's daughter, when my parents were waiting for dinner or supper; that I had sometimes been out when I ought to have been at home; or had brought my young companions uninvited, and when, perhaps, their company was an intrusion on the rest or quietness my parents wished to enjoy. It only required a habitual and conscientious sense of what my parents had a right to expect, and what it ought to be my pleasure to yield, to do away with all these improprieties.

And here I cannot help noticing, that proper behavior towards parents is the safeguard of many other *virtues*, and the security against many *temptations*. It checks *indolence*; for a dutiful child cannot be idle, and allow a parent to toil. It checks *extravagance*; for, so far from appropriating all earnings to his own use, much less sponging on the resources of his parents, the dutiful child will be intent on sparing from his own gratification for the comfort of those so dear to him, and to whom he is so deeply indebted. It checks *self-conceit*; for a child accustomed to consult the wishes and opinions of parents, so often sees his own mistakes corrected, and perceives the advantage of looking to those wiser and more experienced than himself, that it very much tends to sober his opinion of his own judgment. It tends to break the snare of *unprofitable or injurious company*; for the youth who drops a friend, in compliance with the wishes of wise and good parents, generally lives to see that the friendship would have done him no good. I can look back on several friends who have turned out very worthless, and have involved in ruin those connected with them, concerning whom, years before, my parents had said to one or other of us, "I'd have you beware of such a person; don't be hasty in forming a friendship; I think he (or she) will not prove a profitable acquaintance." Once I thought my parents *narrow-minded* in these remarks; but subsequent events have so frequently showed that their judgment was right, as to lead me almost to attach a sacred authority to their sayings.

Another advantage resulting from dutiful conduct to parents is this—It is the best

preparative for filling up every other relation in life with propriety. The best *child* bids fair to make the best *husband* or *wife*, and best knows what to expect and claim from children, and how to enforce those just claims and expectations.

To return to the time when that lady's remark made such an impression on my own mind.—As soon as I could be spared from home, I went there to work again. At family prayer, that evening, a chapter was read out of one of the epistles, (I believe it was Ephesians,) in which a great deal is said about the duty of children to their parents. At that time, I thought it was all meant for me; however, I resolved not to take offence, but attend to good instructions, and endeavor to improve them. I afterwards found that the chapter occurred in the regular course of family reading; but the instruction was just as applicable as if it had been read, or even written, on purpose for me.

It was a custom in that family, as they sat at work, to converse about the passage of scripture which had been read; or sometimes a page or two would be read from some other book, which served to explain it. That day, a beautiful address to young people on *Filial Duty*, was read, in which it was explained, that the word used in the fifth commandment, "*honor*," comprehends more than any other single word that could have been put in its place: it includes *reverence*, *love*, and *obedience*. Parents should be treated with great reverence and gratitude, as the best friends and benefactors; their opinions should be received with deference; their feelings should be regarded with the greatest delicacy and respect; they should never be spoken to but with modesty and submission; nor spoken of, but with tenderness and veneration; their instructions should be gratefully received and regarded; their commands cheerfully obeyed; their counsel sought in every matter of importance; and every effort should be made, by a dutiful and affectionate child, to render their last days comfortable.

Perhaps the expenses of bringing up a family have straitened the parents through life, and disabled them from laying by any savings for the support of their old age. Perhaps the incessant care and attentions bestowed on their children may have impaired their strength, and brought on weakness and disease. Perhaps their privations have laid the foundation of their children's success in life—they denied themselves to give education to their children, and to set them up in life; and the children have prospered, but the parents are fallen to decay. Then what can be more reasonable or more equitable than that the children should "requite" the parents, and consider it a most sacred duty to provide for their comfort to the very utmost of their ability, even at the sacrifice of many personal and family indulgences?

This is the substance of what was read to us, and which, I hope, made a deep impression on my mind. The gentleman also mentioned, that he once heard an aged minister say, that, having, through the course of a long life, made observations on the dealings of Providence with the children of men, he had rarely, if ever, met with an instance in which the three following crimes escaped

evident punishment, even in this life: *murder*, *infidelity* to the marriage covenant, and *disobedience* to parents. Of this he gave some striking instances, as also of the blessing of God eminently resting on dutiful and affectionate children in fulfillment of the first commandment with a promise—"Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

He told us of one wicked son, who not only refused to give his aged father anything to support him, but even thrust him out of his house, and dragged him by the hairs of his head. When they came to a certain part of the grounds, the old man cried out, "Stop, son! stop! You have no right to drag me any farther. To this point I dragged *my* father; and now I see and feel that God is just!"

Another affecting story that he related was this—"In a town in the center of England, lived a family of humble circumstances. Some of the younger children and their father died, leaving the aged mother with two sons grown up, and able to assist her. This, however, they refused to do, and she was obliged to apply to the parish for relief; and, for some years, two shillings a week were allowed her by the overseers, which, with a trifle added by some Christian friends, was all which she had for subsistence.

"During this time her youngest son died. He had lived without the fear of God, and died under a sense of his wrath, in deep agonies, both of body and mind, and uttering dreadful expressions. The eldest was clever in his business; he got forward in the world, and became possessed of considerable property. But he still refused to assist his mother, and, even while holding wealthy jobs, left his mother to her allowance from the parish. This conduct, of course, was noticed; he was repeatedly spoken to upon the subject; at length, he ordered her name to be taken off the parish books, *and allowed her the two shillings a week out of his own pocket*, at a time when he possessed thousands of pounds, and was without a family.

"One day some friends were assembled, and her case being mentioned, they proposed to remonstrate with the ungrateful son. 'No,' said an aged minister, 'let him alone; if he dies possessed of the property he is now worth, I shall be deceived. God will never allow such base ingratitude to prosper.'

"In a short time afterwards the mother died; and such was her humility and Christian spirit, that she died imploring a blessing upon her son.

"Years passed on; she was forgotten, and his behavior towards her was only remembered by a few, who had been impressed with the vileness of his conduct. His circumstances at length began to change; repeated losses ensued, and after some time he became *a bankrupt*, and lived in *abject poverty*."

The following interesting anecdote I have somewhere read in ancient history. A certain city was besieged, and at length obliged to surrender. In the city there

were two brothers, who had in some way obliged the conquering general, and in consequence received his permission to leave the city before it was set fire to, taking with them as much of their property as each could carry about his person. Accordingly, the two generous youths appeared at the gates of the city, one of them bearing their father, and the other their mother.

I shall here set down another pleasing fact. A recruiting officer was applied to by a very fine young man, who desired to be enlisted into his company. He appeared greatly agitated, and expressed a fear lest the bounty he required should be considered too high, and his offer rejected. He asked ten guineas, assuring the officer that it was no unworthy motive which compelled him to demand so large a sum, and that he should be the most miserable of men if he was refused. The officer complied with his request, handed him the money, and told him the company would depart on the next day. He then requested leave of absence for one hour to perform a sacred duty at home. This the officer granted, relying on his honor; but, observing something mysterious in his manner, he had the curiosity to follow him at some distance. He hastened to the town prison, knocked, and was admitted. At the door of the prison, he presented the ten guineas to the jailer, saying, "Here is the sum for which my father is confined; I put it into your hands, and request you to conduct me to him immediately, that I may release him from his misery." In a few moments the officer saw the venerable old man locked in the arms of his son, and bedewing him with his tears. The officer was not immediately perceived, until, deeply affected by the melting scene, he approached the old man, and said, "Be composed; I will not deprive you of so worthy a son. Permit me to restore him to you, that I may not regret the money which he has bestowed in so virtuous a manner." The father and son fell on their knees at his feet; the youth hesitated to accept the offered freedom, until constrained by the generous officer, who accompanied them both from the prison, and took his leave with the pleasing reflection of having contributed to the happiness of a very worthy son and an unfortunate father.

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