

The Family at Home: Familiar Illustrations of Various Domestic Duties

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Section 9 – RULES FOR DAILY CONDUCT

(From Mason's Select Remains)

For the government of the conduct, the following rules are important—

1. Make the word of God the rule of all you do.
2. Whatever you do, do it in the strength of Christ. Without Christ, you can do nothing. Of yourself, you cannot even think a good thought; but you may do all things, through Christ strengthening you. Nature is a dry root—no gracious actions spring from it. Grace depends on continual supplies from Christ, as of sap from the root, or heat from the sun. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and then nothing shall be too hard for you. Mountains shall melt to plains, and valleys be filled up. All things are possible to him that believes and relies upon Christ's power.
3. As we are to act by the power of Christ, so we are to present our services for acceptance in the name of Christ. The best we can do, needs his intercession, blood, and merits, to render it acceptable to God. In the Lord alone—we have righteousness and strength.
4. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Selfishness is the natural idolatry of the human heart. The design and tendency of piety is to take the heart off self—and set it upon God. That duty which does not begin and end with God is no part of godliness. Self must be entirely cast down—and God alone exalted.
5. To spend every day well, let your waking thoughts be with God; let your fervent prayers ascend in the name of Christ; let the word of God be your counselor; let the fear of God be always before your eyes. In all your actions, let integrity and uprightness preserve you, as those who wait on God. Set a watch over your lips, and a guard upon your spirit, that you be not provoked to anger, nor speak unadvisedly with your lips.
6. At night, review the actions of the day. Give to God the glory of what has been

good; take shame to yourself for what has been evil. Review the dispensations of God's providences, and consider their special meaning and application. Acknowledge the mercies of God received through the day. Submit to the afflictions laid upon you. Desire a fresh application to your conscience of the blood of sprinkling; and commit yourselves afresh to the mercy and protection of God, through Jesus Christ; that you may be preserved through the slumbers of the night, and be permitted to wake in peace, whether it be in earth or heaven.

By these points let every action be examined—

By whose *rule* have I acted?

In whose *strength* have I acted?

In whose *name* have I acted?

For whose *glory* have I acted?

What faith, humility, self-denial, love to God and Christ, have there been in my actions?

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

It is a common remark, that large families agree better, and often prosper better, than those consisting of but two or three children. I do not exactly see how or why this should be—but common remarks are seldom altogether without foundation. Perhaps it may be traced to some mismanagement during the period of childhood, by which the selfish passions have been fostered. This supposition is founded on two principles; first, that selfishness is the great cause of disagreements, whether in families, neighborhoods, or nations; and, secondly, that the character is generally formed during the years of childhood. I do not mean to say unchangeably formed; for divine grace, in many happy instances, has given a new bias to the affections, and consequently a new aspect to the character—the man has become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Circumstances, too, may, in after life, develop traits of character which had altogether passed unobserved in childhood; so that it is often said of a man or woman, "He is not a bit like himself in youth; his character and disposition seem completely changed." From this remark I beg to differ, and say—the disposition was there, only circumstances were required to bring it into active and palpable operation. The character at fourteen is so far formed, that the *good man* will, through life, have more or less to struggle with the errors and evil propensities of that date; or, in the *bad man*, they will go on to their odious maturity, as naturally, as the bud and blossom will advance to the fruit or seed. At that age a great majority of young people leave the parental roof, and the fellowship of brothers and sisters is afterwards but occasional. The principles and habits already acquired will,

however, be found to give a color to that fellowship through future life. The meetings may be so infrequent and transient as hardly to afford time for rubbing off the restraints of politeness; but should anything like the intimacy of domestic life occur, and especially should anything like a collision of interests arise, the adult brother and sister will discover the very same dispositions as those which marked their childish fellowship; and the surviving parent will be reminded, perhaps pleasingly, perhaps painfully, of the instructions, the developments and the discipline of the nursery.

There is a probability that the children in small families are more indulged, and engross a more exclusive and injurious attention. If attention is *well directed*, it is scarcely possible to bestow too much on children. By well-directed attention, I mean attention to their real needs and interests; for I am sure it is no small advantage to children to be brought up by those who have no time to attend to their whims; and that they should learn, at a very early age, that they will get nothing by being pesty, troublesome, and tale-bearing. I have seen a mother worn out by two or three teasing children, each bent on having its own way, to the annoyance of the rest; and I have thought, "What would she do, if there were eight or ten of them? it would be enough to drive her mad!" And then it has occurred to me that, perhaps, larger families are more harmonious in after-life, because in childhood they have almost necessarily been more accustomed to greater degrees of mutual forbearance and self-denial. The subject, at all events, is highly important, and may suggest some useful hints both to parents and children.

Jealousies among children are often excited in the most foolish manner possible. In two families, nearly related, a second child was born about the same time. To the eldest child, in one family, a silly nurse was allowed to say, "Here, Master Alfred, here's a baby come; your nose will be put out of joint. Mamma must nurse the baby now." A spirit of rivalry was thus immediately excited. The little hero of two years old felt himself called on to vindicate his rights, and frequently attempted to pinch, or strike the babe, or to drag it from his mother's lap. It was in vain *then* to say, "Pretty baby! you must not hurt the baby!" or even to advance to the threat, "If you hurt the baby, you shall certainly be whipped." The mind of the child had already sustained an irreparable injury.

As the children became playfellows, jealousy, oppression, and resentment, marked their fellowship; and the parents were perpetually called upon to take part with one against the other in their childish brawls. In the course of a few years, the constitution of the elder child was considerably affected by a succession of the ordinary diseases of childhood; the younger child passed through them much more favorably; and henceforward, notwithstanding the disparity of age and gender, the balance of strength was on her side. Many a sturdy battle was now fought between the little champions, and many a sly and spiteful trick was performed, when opportunity offered, on the brother's kite, or on the sister's doll. Separation at school was a temporary cessation of hostilities,

rather than an interruption of affectionate fellowship; and the holidays, instead of affording a welcome renewal of cheerful tenderness in a united family at home, were distinguished by ingenious contrivances of the young people to vex and torment each other. A present from the parents, or any mark of attention or indulgence, was invariably perverted into a subject of jealousy and contention. Every benefit conferred on one child was regarded as an injury inflicted on the other; and the parents, instead of being gratified by promoting the happiness of their children, were mortified by hearing perpetual altercations as to the comparative value of Alfred's case of mathematical instruments and Louisa's drawing box, Alfred's watch and Louisa's necklace.

In course of time the parents died; and the contentions which had hitherto been employed on trinkets and trifles were transferred to legacies and possessions. Though an ample sufficiency was left for both, each party seemed determined to contend for every trifle with the other. Several boisterous meetings occurred, and several angry letters passed, full of invective, reproach, and recrimination; and then several hundred pounds, perhaps thousands, were wasted on each side on lawsuits, at the close of which each party sat down, not to enjoy, but to hold the wreck of their property—just as two quarrelsome dogs, after fighting for that which they might as well have shared amicably, each guards his respective bone, and growls envy and spite at the other.

Alfred and Louisa have lived several years in the same town without speaking to each other. The children of one family are not allowed to take the same walks, or to frequent the same school, as those of the other; the same tradesmen must not be employed, nor the same society frequented, by both families; and whoever may desire the friendship or countenance of the one, must obtain it at the expense of the enmity and persecution of the other.

It is pleasing to turn to the other family alluded to; in which the first and second children were of the same ages as Alfred and Louisa. The introduction of little Henry to his infant sister was managed so as from the first to excite benevolent feelings towards the little stranger. "See, my dear little Henry," said the father, "here is a sweet, lovely babe, which the Lord has graciously given to us. Look at its little hands and feet; how pretty and how soft! But it is tender and helpless: it cannot do anything for itself. We must beg dear mamma to be so kind as to feed it, and nurse it, and take care of it for us, as she did of Henry; and then we hope it will grow strong, and be able to run about, and speak."

Thus the elder child, instead of being taught to regard the babe as an intruder, received it as a delightful acquisition, and as one in whose protection, welfare, and improvement, he was to cherish a lively interest. The effect was immediately visible. He would frequently run to his mother, and say, "The 'tender babe' cries; take it up and feed it;" or to the servants, "don't make a noise; the 'tender babe' is asleep." Whatever was given him, he was sure to inquire whether the 'tender babe' might have part of it; and rapturous and benevolent was his delight when

the babe began to caper and coo at the sound of his drum or whistle. For an hour together, he would amuse the little one on the carpet, and, by degrees, entice it to crawl, and then to run after his ball, at the same time carefully pushing aside whatever might injure it.

The kindly feeling was reciprocal. The earliest associations of the infant girl connected the idea of her brother with those of protection and pleasure. Illness, when it occurred, proved a new occasion of tenderness and sympathy; and restoration to health, of new cheerfulness and enjoyment. As childhood advanced, the indications of abiding affection continued to develop themselves. It was from Henry that the little Ellen first learned the form, sound, and use of letters. It was the hope of being able to make Henry's shirts that stimulated the little seamstress to acquire the use of the needle. The value of a parent's present was enhanced, as affording not solitary, but *mutual* gratification; and the earliest appropriation of pocket-money was to purchase a little present from one child to the other.

Separation, for the objects of education and business, was felt as a real trial; yet soothed by frequent and affectionate interchange of letters, and by the delightful anticipation of meeting again. The vacations were indeed seasons of parental, filial, and fraternal delight and mutual improvement; and this lovely family often drew forth from observers the exclamation—"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

In early life, Henry and Ellen became, through divine grace, genuine possessors of that religion, the principles of which had been carefully instilled into their infant minds by their pious and affectionate parents. Thus their fellowship assumed a still more sacred character; they became helpers of each other's faith, hope, and steadfastness. Nor have the subsequent vicissitudes of life in any degree weakened the delightful bond of union, so early and so successfully entwined. No jealousies, no jarring interests, have interrupted the delightful harmony, but each fully participates in the happiness of the other; and, in time of affliction, each is secure of receiving from the other the tenderest sympathy and most cheerful aid.

In closing this sketch, it may be well to drop a few hints, tending to promote and secure family harmony through life. Let the sentiment be inwrought in the minds of children, that the interest and happiness of each is identified with the interest and happiness of all. As much as possible, preserve children from entertaining an idea of *selfish gratification*.

Jealousy is oftener excited than prevented, by the scrupulous care of some parents to give every child exactly alike. Let the same affection be cherished towards all, and the same principles regulate the general conduct towards all; and then occasional varieties in the detail may be rather advantageous than injurious. The minds of the children, being settled on the great points of the parent's affection and wisdom, will not be easily shaken by any trifling variations

that circumstances may dictate.

Early justice should be steadily maintained and enforced. If a child has any little possession of his own, his property ought to be respected, and not alienated by the parents, or infringed on by the other children. A child should never be *compelled* to give up his toy, or to share his cake, because another child wishes for it. At the same time, early kindness should be inculcated and encouraged. In a well-regulated family, this will be done so insensibly, and at so early a period, that a child shall never remember a time when he *could* have eaten his morsel alone; having always experienced the highest pleasure of possessing anything to result from being able to share and impart gratification to those most dear.

Mutual confidence among the members of a family should be promoted by the parents, and encouraged among the children. It is most natural, that a child should tell his little troubles at his own home; and there, rather than elsewhere, seek sympathy, counsel, and assistance. There is no friendship so safe and so delightful as that which is grafted upon natural affection. This will prepare also for that most pleasant, and yet most rare attainment, free pious fellowship among the nearest and dearest connections; and piety will ever prove the sweetest and most delightful cement and sanctifier of friendship and affection.

It may be urged upon young people to strive together for the comfort of the parents. This common object, kept constantly in view, and diligently sought by all, will delightfully endear them to each other. They should be guarded against jealousy of parental assistance, either during the period of education, at first setting out in life, or in any subsequent season of trial; also against a selfish, encroaching spirit, which would seek to engross as much advantage as possible. It cannot be too often repeated, that selfishness is the bane of affection and happiness.

Let them guard also against coolness, through long separation. There is danger of affectionate concern, about the absent branches of a family, gradually becoming less and less vivid, until at last it sinks almost into indifference. It is therefore highly desirable that frequent fellowship should be kept up, and, if possible, little tokens of affection exchanged. A little book, presented as a memorial of affection from an absent brother or sister, has often been made a blessing in more senses than one, as keeping alive affectionate recollections during absence, and as winning the attention to truths of everlasting consequence.

It will be found necessary to guard against alienation, from the formation of new connections. There have been instances in which, when entire dependence for domestic comforts has been severed from the parental home, a painful indifference has been manifested towards the earliest relations in life. There have been instances, too, in which the influence of a married partner has operated to the disparagement of former connections, and produced alienation bordering on

enmity. These, perhaps, are extreme cases; but it will be found desirable to guard against the most distant approach to so unhappy a state of things. For this end, in forming new connections, it is of no small importance to select such as are likely to blend harmoniously with those already in existence; and then, by mutual good offices, to keep alive the friendly and affectionate feeling.

In some families it may be necessary to guard against jealousies, on account of being in the same line of business. Here, again, we must come to the old remedy, Christian integrity and benevolence. Let every man look not on his own things exclusively, but also, with feelings of good-will and kindness, to the things of others, especially those so near and dear. And, finally, that brotherly love may continue, not only through time but through eternity, let it be impelled, and regulated, and sanctified by true religion; let brethren and sisters be allied, not only by the ties of nature, but by the more sacred and indissoluble bonds of Christian union; let each be sharers of each other's pious cares, and sorrows, and joys, and all anticipate the day when, through divine grace, they hope to meet "a family unbroken in the skies!"

DECISION IN PIETY

There are many people who seem well inclined towards piety, but who linger at the threshold, and cannot quite make up their minds to renounce the world, and to take up with the "one thing needful."

They frequent the house of God, and seem to listen with devout attention and interest; but *now and then* their place is empty. On some *particular occasion* they have a Sunday party, or go on a Sunday excursion; they do one thing which their conscience disapproves to oblige a good customer, and another rather than give offence to a rich relation, and another in compliance with the urgent request of some mirthful companion. This is a truly miserable and dangerous state, in which to be found. Such people have just enough religion to embitter the pleasures of sin—but not enough to strengthen and cheer them in abandoning those pleasures. They have just enough religion to make life restless and apprehensive, but not enough to render death safe and easy. "How long will you halt between two opinions?" If piety is anything—it is everything. Either settle in your own mind that you have something more valuable than true religion, or else resolve to part with whatever is necessary to secure the possession of that pearl of great price. Either satisfy yourself that you can be safe and happy without yielding to the restraints of piety, or else go into it with all your heart. Turn your back upon the world, and go determinately and steadily on in the ways of piety; then, and then only, will you find them to be ways of pleasantness and paths of peace.

Without decision of character in piety, there can be neither stability nor security. How many pleasing, hopeful, promising, well-inclined young people, have been

altogether drawn aside from the ways of piety into the paths of sin, for lack of *making up their minds* on the right side of the question! A hesitating, lingering character, is sure to be marked by the seducer and destroyer of men, and is almost sure to become his prey! He who is *almost* persuaded to be a Christian, is in the greatest danger of perishing for lack of being *altogether so*. In the time of Noah, we may conclude that many lingered near the ark, and looked at it, and resolved to ask admission into it; but while they hesitated, the door was shut, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

Those who would secure the advantages of piety, and partake its solid enjoyments, must enter into it with all their heart and soul; then every duty will be easy, and every sacrifice light. There will be real peace and satisfaction of mind, in a conscious possession of that which is worth all the world, and which the world can neither give nor take away.

CONSISTENCY WITH CHRISTIAN PROFESSION

"What do you do, more than others?" is a question which both the church and the world will feel themselves at liberty, often, to propose to everyone, who makes a profession of piety; and it is a question which every professor ought frequently and impartially to propose to himself.

He who professes piety, says, that he acts upon higher principles, and is impelled by nobler motives, and sustained by higher strength, and cheered by sweeter enjoyments, and animated by brighter prospects—than people in general. Then, surely, it is to be expected that his conduct should be more blameless, upright, and exemplary than those who make no such profession.

Well do I remember the endeavors of some of my friends to awaken the young to a serious concern about their souls' best interests; and well also do I recollect, when such interest was excited, when any began to take delight in reading the scriptures, in attending public worship, and in engaging in Sunday-school teaching or missionary collecting, how they used to urge upon them the necessity of consistency and circumspection in all their deportment.

To some young ones, brought to an acquaintance with true religion, of which their parents, as yet, remained ignorant, they would say, "Now, if your parents won't read Christianity in the Bible, nor hear it from the pulpit, they must see it in your life and conduct. There must be a marked difference in your behavior now, from what it was before you professed Christ. You are not accused of being disobedient, unkind, or ill-behaved; but there must now be a refinement, a delicacy, a tenderness in your obedience, worthy of those who do it as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Your conduct must be such as to constrain those around you to say, 'It is not whim or mere outside show, which makes them forsake the company and the ways of the world, and choose those of Christ. No! they

certainly are *sincere* in what they profess; and surely it cannot be a bad religion that makes them so much better than they used to be before they professed it."

One of our poor neighbors, a sharp-tempered woman, who led her husband a weary life, and violently used her poor children, in a long illness, received great attention from our kind friends. Their instructions were blessed in awakening her concern and softening her heart. As she recovered from her illness, great was their concern that her future conduct might be such as to adorn religion. They spoke to her in this manner—"Well, Martha, we hope you begin to love prayer, and find the sweetness of communion with God. It will be your desire in future to devote time to the exercises of piety; but, remember, this time must be redeemed by industry, good management, and self-denial, not robbed from your duties to your family. Your husband must find his home more cleanly and comfortable than ever, his wishes and comforts more promptly and kindly attended to, his children kept in better order. Be sure you never forget to pray for the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit: there is nothing which more adorns religion in the eyes of those who have not embraced it. There must be no more bitter words with your husband; no more violence with your children. If your husband is vexatious, or unreasonable, or unkind, you must always have ready a soft answer, which turns away wrath. With your children, you must be at once firm and mild, and then they will mind you ten times more than when you beat or scolded them. It is thus that, by your holy life, you will recommend the religion you profess. Your temper will be often rising, and you will have hard work to keep it down; but if you constantly seek strength from God, his strength will be made perfect in your weakness; and the power of true religion will be displayed in the conquest, it enables you to maintain over your easily besetting sin."

To one of my brothers, then an apprentice, who had recently indulged the hope that he was reconciled to God, a pious friend said, "Now, young man, you profess to be a partaker of the grace of God, which brings salvation; and it must teach you not only to deny ungodliness, but also worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. Young men under its influence must learn to be sober-minded. I hope you will no longer have an inclination for the society or the pleasures of those who fear not God. I hope and believe that the light song, the public-house jest, the impure word or action, would be odious in your esteem: but this is not all; you must be more than ever diligent and devoted to your master's interests—no eye-servant, but one who acts as if the master were always present. There must be no pert, sullen, or grudging answer, but with good-will you must do service as unto the Lord."

There was a very industrious, saving couple, who lived in a cottage belonging to Farmer West. They were religious people, very constant in attending on the means of grace, and brought up their children in a sober, orderly manner. It need hardly be said, that they were reputed very honest people—for there cannot be a pious person who is not honest—but there was a sort of self-love and covetousness indulged, which, though it might not be exactly called dishonesty,

yet went far enough to sully the brightness of their religious profession, and gave occasion to their master and fellow-servants to remark that, "religious people generally take pretty good care of themselves." Such sneers ought not to be brought against religion: if they are false, great is the guilt of those who utter them: but if religious people, in any degree, give occasion for them, they are guilty, in a degree, of religious inconsistency; for they profess to be governed not only by the first great commandment, but by the second, which is like unto it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and "Whatever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so unto them."

To the cottage inhabited by these people, there was a large garden attached, half of which they cultivated for their master, and half for themselves. They had also the care of the poultry for their master, and kept poultry of their own. Now, it was observed that the fattest chickens and the largest eggs were carried to market on their own account, and the smallest sent for the use of their master's family; and that the finest cabbage, broccoli, and onions, were on their side of the garden. There was not much difference in the general appearance of the garden, but enough to convince a keen observer, that there was rather more labor bestowed on one half than the other, that the ground was rather better fertilized, and that the best of the plants and flowers found their way to that side. Now, who could say this was direct dishonesty? and yet, who could help feeling that it was *selfishness*, very unworthy of the professors of religion?

Then, again, the man in question was paid by his master regular day-wages. It is not said that he did not go to work *pretty nearly* at the appointed time; but then he had first been laboring two or three hours for himself; and every allotted hour of refreshment he was again toiling away at his own concerns; and surely industry and early rising are highly commendable; yet even these may be carried so far as to involve a species of dishonesty. If a man's time is paid for, he is bound not merely to spend the stipulated hours on his master's ground, but to allow himself sufficient repose to bring his full vigor to the task; and, unless employed and paid at task-work, it can hardly be reckoned just that he should spend the best part of his strength on his own business, and go to his master's work half wearied and exhausted.

What little things mark the character! and what improper views are formed of religion, under the impression that it sanctions all the conduct of its professors! Another laborer of Farmer West's made no profession of religion; yet there was more frankness, strict integrity, and cheerful good-will in his services: and it is greatly to be feared that the farmer was hardened in his indifference to religion, and almost led to conclude that a man is better without it than with it, by observing in the professor of religion, those little deceits, of which an honest, generous man, who made no such profession, would have been utterly ashamed. Another fact, which led him to this false and dangerous conclusion, was, the detection of his dairy-maid in regularly handing out cream at the dairy window for the washerwoman's tea, without her mistress's knowledge. The girl

who was guilty of this, and several other sly, dishonest tricks, made a great pretense of being religious, and was very clamorous for liberty to enjoy her religious privileges, even to a degree incompatible with the discharge of her ordinary duties. "Well," said the farmer, "I am sick to death of religious servants; and, if I can have my will, I shall never have another Christian in my service!" In consequence of this prejudice, several deserving people were kept out of the farmer's employ, solely because they were known to be pious: and what is still worse, the honest farmer and his honest man flattered themselves that they should do exceedingly well without religion, and went on in the self-satisfying delusion to the end of their days!

Very different was the effect produced by the conduct of a truly consistent apprentice. This youth was awakened to deep concern about the interests of his immortal soul; and a striking change was manifested in his general conduct. His parents regarded this change as a heavy calamity, fully expecting that, by thus taking to serious religion, their son would be unfitted for common duties, and would neglect his worldly interests. In the hope of preventing these evils, they determined to remove him from the society and connections which had thus (in their esteem) ruined him, and to place him apprentice in another town. The lad willingly complied with the wishes of his parents, and declared his readiness to obey his master and mistress, and to serve their interests to the utmost of his power; but that he must stipulate for liberty to serve God according to the dictates of his conscience on the Sabbath. His parents, thinking that opposition in this particular might defeat the whole scheme, begged that for the present he might be indulged; observing, that when once the indentures were signed, the master might oppose his folly, if he were not wholly cured of it. "Nay," said the master, "if he minds my business, I shall not interfere with his religion, provided he does not bring it home to turn the heads of my family."

At this time, the master and mistress, and their family, lived in total ignorance of God, and neglect of his worship. They had some confused idea that it was a very bad thing to have too much religion; and as this was alleged to be the failing of their new apprentice, they expected to find him proud, morose, and insolent. Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth: a more diligent, faithful, civil, obliging lad they had never seen, and withal so cheerful and contented, that it was a pleasure to do anything for him, or to have anything done by him. The master and mistress, notwithstanding their prejudices, could not help approving and loving him; and the little children, too young to share the prejudice, clung fondly round his knee, or climbed his chair in the evening, to hear a pretty story or to enjoy a merry jump.

At the time appointed, his father came over to bind him, if approved. All parties expressed themselves satisfied and willing.

"And how is it," asked the father, "about his religion?" "O," replied the master and mistress, "we have not seen anything at all of that. He is always minding his

business, and always cheerful and happy." True enough, they had not seen his religion, which, like the roots of a tree, lay hid in his heart; and it had not yet occurred to them that all this good conduct, and cheerful, pleasant temper, were the natural results of it, just as much as the leaves, and blossoms, and fruits of the tree.

Several months elapsed. The youth continued steady, faithful, and diligent in business; but, at the same time, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. He never neglected his duty to his master; but he delighted to redeem time for the service of his God; and on the Sabbath, especially, it was observed that no proposal of pleasure could seduce him from the house of his God, or the sacred retirement of his chamber.

At length the mistress said to her husband, "Well, I cannot imagine what there is so much amiss in John's religion. I am determined some day to go and hear for myself." She did accordingly. She was impressed with the solemnity of the worship, and the sacred truths she heard enforced; and she went again and again, first taking one child with her and then another: and all seemed pleasingly surprised at what was so new to them. At length she ventured to propose to her husband to have a cold dinner on the Sundays, that she might be enabled to attend public worship in the morning. This proposal aroused his suspicion and anger.

"No," said he; "I work hard all the week; it is hard indeed if I can't enjoy myself on a Sunday. If this is what your religion comes to, I will soon put a stop to it." He declared she should attend public worship no more; but was at last won over by the gentle persuasion of his wife and his apprentice, first to go once—just once—and hear for himself. He went, and from that time, so far from attempting to hinder others, he became himself a constant attendant in the house of prayer—a diligent inquirer after salvation. The aspect of the whole family became changed. Family worship was established; family order maintained; children trained up in the way they should go; and servants instructed to keep the commands of the Lord: and all these blessed effects might be traced, under God, to the steady, unobtrusive, consistent piety of an apprentice boy, who adorned the doctrine of God his Savior in all things. Nor was he left without hope that his prayers were heard, and his endeavors succeeded on behalf of those still nearer and dearer to himself. The opposition of his parents was in time subdued. They often took sweet counsel with the child they had so bitterly censured, and walked to the house of God in company, entertaining the delightful hope of a happy meeting at last in the house eternal in the heavens.

Let all who profess piety be thus humble, consistent, modest and exemplary. Let their religion be rather seen and felt—than heard. If heard, let it rather be in the gentle expostulation of love, than in angry reproach and clamorous disputation. True religion will regulate the whole deportment and temper; it will teach its subjects to walk in wisdom and in kindness; and it will lodge a testimony in the

bosoms of observers, that there is such a thing as true religion; that it is a blessed thing; and that those they observe really possess it. Thus will they be constrained, by your good works which they behold, to glorify your Father who is in heaven.

ADVICE FOR CHILDREN

I have many things which I wish to say to children. Some things, perhaps, will amuse them; and I hope they will feel interested in what I write. But, more than all, I hope they will remember and profit by what may be related; for it is for their improvement and good that I write.

In these days almost all children have the opportunity to attend Sabbath schools, and some of the richest pious privileges, which they enjoy, come through this institution. Children, however, we fear, do not sufficiently feel their responsibility for these privileges.

I recently met, somewhere, with the following description of the members of a class, written by their teacher. My young readers may perhaps learn a useful lesson by perusing it.

"A. has been with me nearly three years. In that time she has been absent only twice, morning and afternoon. I cannot speak decidedly as to her piety; but there is a love to the school shown by her that is highly gratifying; while diligence in learning, readiness in answering questions, attention to her teacher, and respectful behavior, mark her character. A. does not wait until the clock has struck, but is generally seated, with a smiling face, before her teacher's arrival. You will perhaps say she is a favorite; true, but then I have several.

B., sister of the above, but younger, strives to imitate her sister in regularity and punctuality, but is not her equal in ability. There is great difficulty in drawing an answer from her; and sometimes there is an appearance of something like sullenness. She has more trouble in getting her task than the others; but no excuses are made, and the timid little girl, with a pale cheek, who is occupied all the week in nursing an infant, stands up to repeat her lessons with her more gifted sister.

C. has been several years in the school; and she once occasioned her teacher much pain by her trifling conduct; but there is a marked change in her behavior, and the blush that overspreads her face, and the tears which glisten in her eyes, if she is reproved, argue a degree of feeling that is quite encouraging. Her parents are extremely poor, and, though young, she has to work for her bread; but the delight shown in her countenance when she enters the school, after being absent but once, is very pleasing. She is quick in understanding, and often surprises me by the correctness of her answers. I do hope this school will prove

a blessing to this little girl.

D. is a little giddy gossip, whom I have much difficulty in restraining; but when I see her sparkling eyes, after her long walk, and as early as any, I confess I am pleased. She is very shrewd, and has little difficulty in learning correctly. As far as I can judge, this child has very few advantages at home: her parents are continually changing their residence, seldom remaining a month in one place.

E. is the only child of her mother, who is a widow. She is a very interesting little girl, of gentle, pleasing manners, and an intelligent countenance; she takes great pleasure in reading the books from the library, which are also read by the mother. I trust the one thing which is lacking, will be supplied by Him from whom all good things proceed; and that will be a sure preservative against what I grieve to witness—the unwise fondness of the mother, displayed in the fine dress of the child.

F. has the misfortune to possess parents, who, with a large family, care little for their children's real welfare. Destitute of religion, and lovers of pleasure themselves, their children are greatly to be pitied; and while F.'s behavior at school leads me to trust that her attendance will be useful to her, I cannot but hope that the books obtained from the library, which are read at home, may have a beneficial tendency on the family as well as on her.

G. is a girl of considerable ability; but conscious of this, she displays a degree of conceit painful to witness. She possesses advantages over the others in point of circumstances, and I often observe her contrasting her own dress with the plainer clothes of the others. My ardent prayer for her is, that she may be clothed with humility, and have the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

H. is quite a contrast to the last. She has been with me but a short time, but bids fair to be my best scholar—early in attendance, diligent in learning, neat and befitting in her dress, respectful in her behavior, humble and teachable in disposition. I hope for solid, lasting fruit from such hopeful appearances.

But the flower of my class is K. Young in years, her manners and appearances would proclaim her much older than she is. Her modest, unassuming conduct, her willingness to learn, her meek and quiet spirit, render her quite a pattern. I trust there is indeed some good thing in K., though her reserve has not permitted her to communicate her thoughts and feelings on pious subjects at present.

Little L., the youngest in the class, and sister of the above, displays abilities far before her years. This little girl loves her teacher, and I am sure you would be as pleased as I am, to see her eyes glisten with delight when she enters her class. I am afraid I love this child too well; but I believe I do not show it to the others. K. and L. possess pious parents; and this in some measure accounts for their superiority.

And now, having faintly sketched the character of my youthful charge, I confess the feeling of responsibility presses heavily upon me, and the inquiry escapes, "Who is sufficient for these things?" When I reflect on the fact so forcibly stated by Mr. James in the "Teacher's Guide," that "Every child who passes the threshold of our school on a Sunday, brings to our care, and confides to our ability, a soul, compared with whose worth and duration the sun is a bauble, and time itself but as the twinkling of an eye;" I deeply feel the solemn engagement of a teacher. When I remember that the character of these young ones is now forming, I pray earnestly, that He who loves little children may be their guide and friend forever, and that he would make me "apt to teach."

Children should be diligent and attentive in all their studies, as well as in those of the Sabbath school. In fact, success in any pursuit depends far more upon the habits of attention and perseverance which are formed, than upon genius or any extraordinary endowments of nature.

A friend of mine has a little girl, whom I shall call Maria, whose character well illustrates what I mean. She is a persevering child: by this I mean, that she is not soon frightened with difficulties; that she endeavors to overcome all obstacles, and to give satisfaction to her friends. Maria has not very great abilities, and is not naturally so quick and sharp as many of her companions; but she has a strong desire to improve, and this carries her above them all. When she finds her lessons hard, she is so much the more desirous of mastering them and of giving greater diligence. She is not only persevering in lessons, but in all that she undertakes. She is a poor girl; and if her mother tells her to scrub and clean anything, she will make it look well, or she is not satisfied. If she sits down to needle-work, that must be done well also, or she does not feel pleased. Her motto always seems to be, "Persevere;" and you know there is an old saying, "Patience and perseverance will accomplish all things."

Thus I have drawn Maria's character; and so far as it is praiseworthy and suited to us, I hope we shall follow it. But there is such a thing, you know, as perseverance in evil and sin. I need not tell you that I do not recommend this. Persevere in all that is right; but we should set our faces as a flint against sin. We have some lovely examples of perseverance in the Holy Scriptures, and those scriptures contain many exhortations to this duty. Christ Jesus has said that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" with respect to increasing in knowledge, we are told, "get wisdom, get understanding, forget it not," and we are commanded to "press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling;" and sure I am, my dear little reader, that you will never be a clever child, or a good child, or a kind child, or, what is far above all, a *pious* child—unless you are persevering. You must not give up as soon as anything goes wrong; you must try all the harder for that; for, believe me, you will never get any more forward by sitting down and crying over your trouble. But, above all, allow me to entreat you to persevere in the path of holiness. You are young, and exposed to Satan's

temptations: "he goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Be earnest in praying for God's strength; and may the Redeemer bless your soul, give you ability for your proper employments, preserve you from all evil, and lead you at last to a happy home above.

I am always pleased when I see children careful of their little property; especially I like to see them keep their own little books neat and clean; yet I am persuaded many do not understand what it is to take proper care of their Bibles, and other good books, such as hymn-books or prayer-books. A lady had lent some linen to a laborer's wife when her youngest child was born, and in the box was a Bible for her use while she was confined to the house. When the lady called to see the poor woman, she remarked to her, "I am glad to see you getting so well, and it pleases me to see you reading the Bible." "Why, ma'am," said she, "I was very glad to find it among your things; I have read in it a great deal, and must try to buy myself one, for I have not one of my own." "I am surprised to hear you say you have no Bible. I thought you had received several at the church." "O yes, ma'am, and so we have; my three boys have each obtained one for saying their catechism well; but then they belong to the children, and they will not allow any one to *read* in them. They keep them locked up in their own boxes."

"When they go out to service, or in any way to live from home," said the lady, "it will be quite right that each boy should have his own Bible with him." "To be sure," said the woman, "it is a good thing to have it in a house." "It is indeed," replied her visitor; "but only good when used. Bread is a good thing when used; but what good would it do you to lock the loaf in your cupboard, and never allow it to be cut or tasted?" "Not much, to be sure," replied the laborer's wife. "None at all," said the lady; "you might be starved with bread in your house. Just so, a Bible must not be looked upon as a charm that everybody ought to possess in the house. It should be our constant support, like daily bread; and though you should not deprive your children of their own books, given them as rewards for diligence in learning, yet, until you have one of your own, I think you ought to read theirs, which you may do without injuring them."

Now, do any children who read this possess a Bible, whose parents are destitute of one? and do they, like these boys, lock them up from their relatives? I hope they will see their mistake, and help to get one for their parents in some other way; and until they have one of their own, lend them theirs, if they can read, or read it to them if they cannot. They worked hard to get you bread; and where would you have been if they had locked it up from you before you were old enough to labor? Some children do help their parents in many ways. Now, consider, I ask you, how you can help yours: it is God's command you should do so.

I have something to say upon a subject which you, perhaps, may think of very little consequence; but which I think a very important one—it is that of **dress**. I have often been much grieved to see many children at church and Sabbath

schools dressed in a very improper and unbecoming manner; that is, with very mirthful gowns and ribbons, and a great deal of trimming on their bonnets. Now, I dare say, those little girls who wear such things are quite proud and delighted to be dressed so much like fine ladies, and fancy that all the teachers and scholars, and everybody, will think them more worthy of notice than children who are more plain and neat, or even badly clothed. How much surprised and mortified they would be, if they could hear the remarks upon them, and see how much they are ridiculed for that very dress they are so fond of, and how much *less* they are really thought of by every sensible person! I have often heard ladies remark, "What a pity it is that little girl is dressed so! Poor thing, she would be quite a nice-looking girl if she were dressed in a plain, neat, colored frock, and without all that trimming on her bonnet; but now she looks quite awkward."

My dear children, you know the Bible tells us to be "clothed with humility:" now, though this text is generally very properly understood to mean that we are to be humble in mind and heart, yet I think it may also mean, that we are to be dressed according to our station in life; for it would be equally improper for a young person, whose parents are fully able to afford it, to be dressed like a poor person's child, as it is for them to attempt to appear like young ladies; for according as God has placed us in this life, so ought we to appear; if servants, let us be servants; if masters, as masters; for both are admonished and directed in the Bible, and should be faithful in their appropriate duties. Now, you know, on the Sabbath day, we ought to try and forget the world as much as possible, because God has set apart this day for his worship, and to prepare us for a future state after death, and has given us the means of learning our duty towards him, and the way to heaven, on this day, by attending at school, and going to his house. Now, let me ask those children who are always so much smarter on that day than any other, if they are not generally thinking more about their fine clothes than anything else. I can always see that they are, for we can judge of people's thoughts by their actions; and when I see girls taking up their *white* frocks for fear the bench should soil them, tying and untying their bonnets, putting their sashes in order, and every now and then taking their eyes from their books, to look at their fine clothes, I am quite sure they must be thinking about their dress, rather than what their teacher or minister is saying. And do you not know, my dear children, that God will bring us to account for every opportunity of worshiping Him, and learning our duty, which we have neglected? And while you are thus thinking of your dress—how can you worship God, and learn your duty?

Now, how different it is with an attentive girl who is dressed befittingly; she has not this temptation to be inattentive; and I generally find that those who are neatly and plainly dressed are the best scholars. But do not mistake me; I dislike a slovenly dress, as much as a fine one; I like always to see you in clean frocks, and hands and face, on the Sabbath, for it is more a disgrace to be dirty or untidy on this day more especially than any other, though it is a disgrace on any day. Perhaps some of you will say, "I cannot help wearing my fine frocks, because my father and mother buy them, and bid me put them on. I know that this is the case;

but when they do, it is very often in order to please you; but if they saw you unwilling to wear them, and you were always better pleased with neat, plain clothes, I am sure they would never go to the expense (for it is a great one) of finer ones; therefore you have it greatly in your power to prevent it.

Should any parents read this, I would advise them, as they regard the welfare of their children, to keep them from the love of fine clothes. This has been the first step to the ruin of many a poor girl, and the pride of human nature should be checked, not encouraged. But while you guard against the *outward* appearance of vanity and pride, remember that the heart must be changed by divine grace, or it will never be truly humble. Let all, then, both parents and children, pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Such a heart will always be humble, and the outward appearance will agree with it.

Mary Merton was one of the prettiest little girls that ever was seen; her eyes were blue and bright; her lips and cheeks were red as a ripe cherry; and oh! if you had seen her flaxen hair hang around her neck and forehead!

She sometimes dressed more showy than a Sunday school girl ought to dress; for neatness and cleanliness are much more creditable than fine clothes; but her mother used to indulge her in many things.

Strange it is that we should pride ourselves in adorning this sinful body, which will so soon moulder in the grave; and neglect the soul, which Jesus Christ died to save, and which must live forever!

This Mary Merton went to the same Sunday school that Sally Gardner attended; and many a time have I seen them trotting along the green fields with a little bag of books in their hands, to be in time for the opening of the school.

Sally Gardner was very different in body and in mind from Mary Merton. She was rather short, of a pale complexion, and her hair did not curl at all: in short, I never heard anyone say that Sally was pretty.

There is no gift useless that God has given; and fine eyes, and fair faces, and beautiful hair, are gifts not to be despised—when united to a humble heart, and a spirit that fears God. But when possessed by the vain and proud, and those who scoff at God's holy word and commandments, they become sad snares. Though beauty is not given by God in vain, nothing can be more foolish than to value ourselves for possessing it; because it is a thing that may in a moment be destroyed, and never can be expected to last long.

E'en as the frost, in hapless hour,
Will nip and blast the freshest flower,
So grief and pain will soon displace
The roses from the fairest face.

Ofentimes did the squire's lady observe Mary Merton and Sarah Gardner, as they returned from the Sunday school; and as often did she exclaim, looking at Mary Merton, "What a *lovely girl!*" But the squire's lady knew nothing of the dispositions and conduct of the two girls.

Now, it happened that one of the maid-servants at the squire's house became ill and unable to work; and the squire's lady sent to the Sunday school to know whether the little girl with the flaxen hair would come to her house until her servant was better.

The mother of Mary Merton was glad to hear that such notice had been taken of her daughter; so little Mary prepared to go to the great house in the park. Had Lady Rose known the temper of Mary Merton, she never would have chosen her to be in her house. Whether it was that Mary had been praised for her beauty, or whether her mother indulged her too much, I cannot say; but surely there never was a more proud, passionate, obstinate, and idle girl. There was no girl in the school half so intractable; and had it not been for Sarah Gardner's kindness in getting her to school, and in persuading her to amend her conduct, she never could have remained so long at the Sunday school. Sarah Gardner, though not pretty, was just what a Sunday school girl should be. Whether at home, or at her class, she was always diligent, respectful to her superiors, and kind to her equals. She loved her teachers, and her young heart was devoted to Christ. She was not very wise, but she had been taught that the first step towards wisdom is "the fear of the Lord." She did not know a great deal, but she knew that she was a sinner, and that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." The advantages of pious parents, kind teachers, and a godly minister, had been blessed to her; so that in very deed her soul "magnified the Lord," and her "spirit rejoiced in God her Savior."

When Sarah knew that Mary was going to Squire Rose's, she gave her very good advice, and earnestly besought her to pray to God, for Jesus Christ's sake, to control her passions, and to enable her to be a faithful servant; but Mary paid very little attention to the advice of her friend.

Though Lady Rose was delighted when Mary Merton made her appearance at the hall, dressed in her best gown, with her fine flaxen hair curling around her brow, yet it was not the same with the servants of the house; for they saw that Mary prided herself upon her beauty, and were determined to mortify her as much as possible. "What a *lovely girl!*" said Lady Rose, as Mary walked from the parlor where they had been talking together. Mary heard the words, and was silly enough to hold up her head higher than before: this was immediately noticed by the servants.

The troubles of poor Mary now came thick upon her: it was a part of her duty to wait on the sick servant; but this she did so carelessly, and showed so many airs,

and flew into such passions, that complaints were made of her continually: every fault she committed was made the most of; for she found no friend, neither, indeed, did she deserve one.

Lady Rose found, at last, that though Mary was a *lovely girl* in her looks, she was lovely in nothing else; and as she had something to do besides admiring her, so Mary Merton was sent home in disgrace, and application made at the school for a girl who was more likely to suit the situation. Sarah Gardner was sent directly; and though Lady Rose did not call her a *lovely girl*, she soon found the difference between a pretty, vain, passionate, idle girl—and one who was humble, meek and diligent, though with a plain set of features.

I dare say, that you have often remarked, however pretty a face may be, that, if there be a bad temper in the heart, the face has been far from pleasing; while, on the contrary, a good temper, a cheerful spirit, and a contented, grateful heart, have made a plain face very agreeable.

While Sarah Gardner was gaining the good opinion of all around her, Mary Merton was visited with affliction. She was taken ill with the small-pox, and her face was covered all over with frightful blotches. Mary had no patience, and could not control herself, but picked her face so much, that, when she recovered, instead of being pretty, she was as plain a girl as I ever saw. During her illness, Sarah Gardner visited her frequently, and comforted her. On these occasions, she never forgot kindly to tell Mary of her faults, pointing them out not as trifling errors, but as great sins; and directing her, in simple language, to "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." When Mary Merton was well, her mother was silly enough to tell her that, though she had not so pretty a face as she once had, yet she had the finest head of flair of any one in the parish; and Mary became as proud as ever. But poor Mary's troubles were not ended, for in this world we cannot sin without sorrowing; "God is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity," and he is too good to look to his creatures to allow them to sin without chastising them.

Thus when a flock has gone astray,
And wolves are watching for their prey,
The shepherd still, his flock to hold,
Will fright them back into his fold.

Mary Merton was asked out to a party of young people, at a distance; and though it rained very hard, she obstinately persisted in going there, with light clothing and thin shoes. Mary's principal reason for going was to show off her fine flaxen hair. She got wet, took a cold, which was followed by a fever, and all her beautiful hair fell from her head. Deprived of the gift she had made so poor a use of, she became fretful and repining, tormented her silly mother by her bad passions, and was as well known for her ill temper as Sarah Gardner was for the sweetness of her disposition.

Remember, my dear young readers, that we were to try to improve this year; learn, then, from this account, how much more valuable is the mind adorned with Christian graces, than the body adorned with fleeting beauty. Like Sarah Gardner, be diligent in every duty you perform; but, above all, seek the grace of God; for had not Sarah Gardner done this, she had never shown so many Christian graces as she manifested in her life. A life of faith in the Savior will probably be followed by a peaceful death, and is sure to be followed by an eternal life of peace and joy. Remember how closely the present life is connected with that which is to come, and give your young hearts to the Lord your God, for his power is great; his truth extends from one generation to another; and his mercy "endures forever."

Sarah Gardner remained at the hall respected by everyone; for she continued to be not only a faithful servant to Lady Rose, but also a servant of the Most High. One day, as Lady Rose looked out of her drawing room window, she saw Sarah Gardner walking down one side of the shrubbery with Mary Merton, who had called at the hall. "Ay," said Lady Rose to herself, "if I had known as much of these two girls when they were at the Sunday school together, as I do now, I should not have called Mary Merton a *lovely girl*, but Sarah Gardner."

REMARKS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In a call I once made on a lady well known as a humble Christian, and much devoted to the care and pious instruction of her children, the conversation turned upon this interesting and important part of a mother's duty. Her children seemed early ripening for heaven; and she could calmly view the approach of sickness and death, which had taken two of her lovely children from this world; for she knew they had only "gone before" to a happy inheritance.

I inquired how she thus early obtained such an influence over her children, and interested them so strongly in their duty, and in pious instruction. She replied that she had always supposed it of the first importance that mothers should have the entire confidence of their children; that into all their little troubles, as well as pleasures, a mother should enter with ready sympathy. She made a point of devoting a few minutes to them as soon as possible after she returned from a walk, a meeting, or a visit, and endeavored to relate something which should interest all, even the youngest. This habit also improved her own powers of observation and attention. Her mind was on the alert; no little incident passed unnoticed, which might be made to convey some moral or pious lesson. She never attempted to give pious instruction to a child *merely* because she herself happened to be in a frame for it; but if the circumstances were such as to render the opportunity favorable, she endeavored not to let it pass by unimproved. If any act of kindness or benevolence attracted their notice, she would give it its due commendation, and bring to their minds the greater benevolence and kindness of

God to them and all his creatures. If they witnessed or heard of a scene of suffering or distress, she would hear their story, and then lead their awakened feelings to the scene of Christ's sufferings and death; and I believe the opportunities thus watched and improved were blessed, in an uncommon degree, in calling up their attention, and impressing their minds with the importance of the subject.

If a child committed a fault, she would gently explain to it that it had done wrong; but she would endeavor, if it was one which exhibited unkindness, ill humor, or impatience, to convince it that the greatest sin in conducting thus was committed against God; and he only could bestow that forgiveness which would give them peace and happiness. In such a case, she would, if possible, pray with them, or, if circumstances were such as to make it proper, the elder child would pray with the younger.

If a child, through carelessness or accident, did any mischief or injury to anything, she thought that in many cases immediate punishment would give the impression that it was the injury done, far more than the habit of inattention or carelessness, that was noticed; and great caution should be used in such cases. If the child had been previously *forbidden* to touch or play with the injured article, and the case was one of *decided* disobedience, she inflicted punishment for that, and not for the harm done; if an act of forgetfulness had occurred, or an instance of the lack of care, the child in fault was deprived afterwards of some pleasure or indulgence which it valued, and, by calmly explaining the reason, the lesson was more strongly impressed. The following is an example.

"May I have on my hat and go with Jane?" said a little boy of four years old.

"No," said the mother; "I want you to go upstairs with me, while Jane is out."

After they were alone, the mother says, "Charles, you like to walk with Jane very much, and see all the things in the street. I like to have you go out and be happy; but yesterday you were disobedient. I let you go in the court to play, for you promised me you would not go out of it; and you disobeyed, and went into the street."

"I forgot it, mamma."

"I know you did; but you must learn to remember; and so today you must not go out, but stay in my room while Jane takes her walk. I am now going to be busy. Here is a little book which has some pretty pictures in it; now you may sit down here, and be still until I am ready to go downstairs."

With regard to very early pious instruction, my friend made some remarks which pleased me much.

She said it seemed to her, that, in attempting to begin to store the minds of young children with pious truth, there was one great and irreparable mistake. As soon as a child begins to speak, it is taught hymns, or short texts of scripture, or even a simple prayer, in which the name of God is introduced; and these he is allowed to repeat in a light and careless air, entirely inconsistent with the words he uses. "Every parent knows," continued my friend, "with what interest the first lisplings of childhood are watched, repeated, and made a subject of amusement. Children are continually brought forward to tell a visitor what they have learned from the Bible or hymn-book. This kind of display is wrong where even the sentiment uttered is one, at which we may innocently smile, and is understood by the little prattler; but it is far more injurious when solemn and serious words, taught to a child at this early age, are repeated in such a way. As it grows older, can you expect any exhortations of seriousness to produce the desired effect? You talk to the child of God. He is told, perhaps, that God sees him when he is naughty; that he is displeased with him for disobedience or bad behavior. All this is felt by the mother, and is said with a seriousness which the solemnity of the truth would naturally produce; but if the words employed have before been often used in a light and playful manner, which has called forth many a half-smothered laugh or suppressed smile, they will not easily afterwards make any serious impression. If a child learns words only to express ideas, or, rather, only as fast as they can be explained to him, and the first pious truths are simply conveyed, in a serious manner, and when he is not engaged in play, how much greater is the probability that they will sink into his heart, and hereafter bring forth the desired fruit!"

Let all who have anything to do with children remember how important is every step. It is no easy thing to eradicate ideas once given; and every parent should be doubly watchful lest, in endeavoring to bring her child to God, she does not, either by precept or example, do away the effect which she intends to produce.

In my frequent visits to different families, I have, with interest, watched the various methods and ways of giving children pious instruction, or leading them to their duty, which have been very useful; and I shall give some anecdotes which will interest and instruct some of my readers, who have the important charge of immortal souls, not merely to train and instruct for duty in life—but for eternity.

MY OWN WAY

There was one little cottage, near Cotman Deen, that attracted my attention: it had not the outward marks of anything like expense, nor even those little indulgences which the poor can often with propriety afford themselves. But a little garden in front was neatly cultivated; the pink and carnation bloomed green on its borders; thyme, daisies, and southernwood, were to be seen; and roses, that scented the evening air with their perfumes, shaded the rustic portico. An aged female sat spinning beneath it.

Tired with my journey, and delighted with the decent look of the place, I lifted the latch of the little gate that led into the garden, and going towards the seat at the door, asked the old woman if she would allow me to sit down, and rest a few minutes. She readily agreed, and we began to converse.

"You have a comfortable, quiet little abode, in which to spend your old age," said I. She expressed her gratitude to God for it, and added, "It is more than I deserve, for I have been a rebellious child to that God who has led me, these many years, in the wilderness."

"How old are you?" I asked.

"How old am I?—ah, Miss! I have arrived at the end of our time here; my strength is labor and sorrow, as the wise man said, for I am fourscore years old."

"And can you not say that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life?"

"Yes; they have followed me, gone before me, restrained, encouraged and brought me to this last stage. I was young once, and, like most, I loved my own way; but God, in mercy, generally embittered it to me; and if I persisted in following it after the sad consequences had been felt, he brought me back with weeping and supplication.

"My good old father and mother often told me, that I must learn to submit my will to the providence of God; but I heeded not their counsel as I ought: I loved the world and its gaieties, and never felt so well pleased as when finely dressed, and in the midst of vain and thoughtless young people like myself. The ball, the fair, and every opportunity of village dissipation, I eagerly embraced.

"Once—I remember it was on a fine summer's day—my poor old father had gone to his work, and my mother was spinning as I may be now: it was fair-day, and I was going there. I came down our little stooping staircase, very smartly attired for the holiday. My mother looked at me from head to foot; I thought she seemed not quite pleased with my purpose, and yet felt a mother's exultation in the appearance of her child.

"Now you'll mind where you go, and with whom," said she, "and be sure you are home before dusk."

"I met my companions, and in the fair, a young man joined our party, who knew some among us. He was very attentive to me, and before I left the company, I had become, perhaps, a little interested in him.

"In a few months after this we were married; but this step was taken against the

advice of my parents, the voice of conscience, and the dictates of common prudence. My husband was in the habit of getting intoxicated; but since our courtship, and for a little time after our marriage, he gave up the alehouse. Then he made such fair promises, and laid such pleasant schemes, that I believed him, rather than my parents, who judged from the past, and dissuaded me gently and kindly from marrying him. But I trimmed my new hat with ribbons, and bought my new gown, and went to church to promise to honor and obey a man, whom certainly I loved as far as passion goes, but whom I could neither respect nor take for my guide through life.

"My poor old father and mother went home with us to a little cottage which my husband had decently furnished, and left us not until God's blessing had been implored.

"I thought now I should be quite happy, and that for once my mother would find *my own way* to be right. Things went on well at first; my husband brought me home his wages regularly, and as I laid them out as carefully as I knew how to do, we lived comfortably, and put aside a part. I added a little poultry; I sold my eggs, and reared chickens: I also prepared my husband's meals with neatness and comfort, when he returned home from work.

"But still I loved *my own way*, and when it happened to interfere with his wishes, I carried my point against all reason. At last my husband used to give up; but I thought he did not seem to love his house so well as before; he was always engaged to play games and cards with his shopmates, which at last I found was nothing but an excuse for going to the public-house. I felt discouraged, and asked why he again gave way to sins he had so faithfully promised to avoid. He said he would mend; but continued to promise and relapse. I had indulged in many purchases of a useless and showy nature in my furniture and dress, that I never saw at home; but the approaching birth of my first infant led me to be more careful; for my husband's earnings, I found, were not all brought home to me, as formerly. I felt joy in the prospect of becoming a mother; and a certainty that his babe would so take his attention, that my husband would be a changed character. My babe was a lovely little creature, and my husband also loved it; he was very proud of it, and liked to stand with it in his arms, and hear folks say, 'What a lovely child it is!'

"The wages were again brought in punctually, and then I felt sure that *my own way* was right.

"But in a few months 'my little son!' was an old story, and again the alehouse was the center of attraction. About this time my baby was very ill; I had given up my poultry, and had therefore no store of my own to apply to. I needed medicine for the child, which was expensive, and little preparations that were needful on such occasions: and now came the first pinch. I saw my babe languishing with heavy eye and feverish skin, and had no money to procure for him the medications I

thought would do him good. I flew into a passion with my husband, and told him his conduct would kill his child and break my heart. He told me I might have had what I needed, but for my idleness in giving up my poultry-yard. This exasperated me, and a burst of tears was my only relief. I sat watching my infant through the night, and, solitary as I was, could not help acknowledging to myself that this was the sad effect of having *my own way*.

"But little Charles looked better at the glad return of morning—his eye was less heavy, his dimple and smile again sweetly cheered my anxious heart. I gave him his scanty breakfast of coarse fare, and he dozed off gently to sleep again.

"My gloom dispersed, I thought I should not care for anything if he but lived. My wish was granted, and God spared the child of an ungrateful parent; and I once again saw him run to meet the return of his poor, unhappy father.

"It was now with difficulty I could provide our table with food, and keep the remainder of our clothes tidy and whole. But the reflections I had, during my Charles's illness, led me not to upbraid my husband so violently as I might have done, had I not seen that all was caused by my having *my own way*.

"The birth of a second child was to put my economy and contrivance to the test. I again strove to provide things comfortable; but it was no such easy matter—very little was brought me by my husband, and I found, that, besides his drunkenness, he was in the habit of gambling. I had, as long as I could, from pride, kept all from my mother; I knew my parents had but very little, and I could not take from them. But now, worn out with fatigue and sorrow, I went to pour out my grief into my mother's bosom. I found her in her neat kitchen, all tidy, though poor. She was reading, 'O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways; I should soon have subdued their enemies. He should have fed them with the finest of the wheat.' I sobbed out the tale of my woe; and I confessed to my mother that I felt my sorrows arose from my obstinacy in having *my own way*. I asked her if God would forgive me, and lead me in his own right way, if I sought him.

"'Alas, my child!' she said, with tears in her eyes, 'you have indeed forsaken the fountain, and hewed out to yourself broken cisterns that can hold no water. But yet return to God: he may, he will have mercy upon you. He will seek after and restore the wandering sheep, and has but embittered your own way, that you may return unto him: "I will hedge up her way with thorns, that she shall not find her paths.'"

"I told my mother how ill I was: she soothed and advised me. I told her how I was grieved to see my husband's conduct, and that I feared his inveterate habits would eventually wear him out, for I saw disease already taking hold upon him. I told her I was poor, and had not needful supplies for my situation—she promised to help me, and she kept her word. Above all, I told her I feared God would call

me to judgment at my approaching hour of trial. I felt I was a sinner, and should perish, and leave behind me, perhaps, two dear little helpless children.

"I returned home to my cottage, comforted by my good old mother's conversation. I put my child to sleep, and sat down to work, and when my husband returned, drunk as usual, I made the best of my desolate situation, and tried to recollect the scriptures my mother had read to me. As my term approached, I begged that God would spare my life for the sake of my family, and determined that I would exert myself to support them in some way, that we might not wholly depend on their father for bread. But after the birth of my infant, I continued so ill that I could not put my plan into execution, and I thought God was going to call me to give an account of my actions—I dreaded the thought.

"Day after day, as I lay weak and languishing, did I meditate on the self-will and folly that had brought me to all this. The little nourishment I took was provided from the scanty means of my poor parents. It was a wretched house; for in it drunkenness and swearing abounded, and poverty was pressing hard upon us. Slowly I began to mend, and thankful was I to find myself once more seated in our little room below. But it was not what I had made it when we married. My mirthful carpet had been sold for bread; four of my chairs were gone; and the whole appearance was now bare and comfortless.

"I had now two children to provide for; my husband's health was sinking under excess, and oh, how heart-breaking was the prospect before me! With the little money he brought me I endeavored to manage, until my recovery was completed; and then I knew not what step to take for bettering our condition. I had no money; my baby prevented my going out to seek employment; and I began to sink into despair. At last I bethought me of my mother's remedy—prayer. I determined to beg of God to help me to some relief, and to give me strength to bear up under all my trials. It was evening. I had nursed my infant to sleep, and, as she lay quietly by me, I kneeled down, but I uttered not a word; I could only sigh and weep forth the burden of my heart. The night was tempestuous; the wind, in gusts, shook our little abode, and the rain was pelting violently against the casement. I looked out to see if my husband was returning; but, unable to discover anything, I sat down supperless, to wait his arrival. In the dead of night I thought I heard a deep groan near the door-way, and, looking out, discovered my husband in a state of insensibility; I ran to a neighbor, and obtained assistance to lift him in doors; but was shocked beyond measure to find, on seeing his face by the light, that the ghastly hue of death was spread over it. In his dying moments he had uttered the groan that had roused my attention. My mind was all distraction—I had loved my husband even in the midst of his profligacy, and this, with the distressing uncertainty as to his future state, nearly overcame my reason; moreover I was a widow, and my children orphans. Oh, when I saw the coffin carried from my wretched door, when I found myself alone in abject poverty, then I saw the folly of *my own way!*

"My poor father's cottage received me again, not what I had left it, a blooming, mirthful, thoughtless girl, but a widow, a mother in distress. As I used to sit nursing my baby on the old garden seat, where the play days of my childhood were spent, many a bitter tear has fallen, many a heavy sigh escaped me. To this period, however, I look back with grateful feeling, as one in which I learned much that was good; and while I acknowledged the folly of having my own way, the Almighty turned the curse into a blessing, and led me, in the midst of my distress, to seek refuge in Him. I was gradually enabled to see that in Christ alone solid happiness was to be found; and seeking eagerly from the lips of my mother that instruction I had so often despised, I tasted some of the enjoyments of true religion; but alas I was not yet brought simply to the foot of the cross.

"While I was toiling to assist in our support, my little Charles was growing a fine, tall, healthy boy, turbulent in disposition, and often I found it difficult to manage his temper. My father and mother often told me that I was allowing my children to get the better of me, and that one day or other I should repent it; but I thought they were only like all children, and like what I once was. I loved them so dearly that I made a thousand excuses for them. If they troubled me, I gave them a slap, and talked loudly to them of what I would do; but I never took the trouble to administer proper correction; indeed, my system partook more of idleness than of a wise concern for their welfare. Charles's headstrong temper often made his grandfather sigh, and give some wise counsel to me; but I loved *my own way* still. I thought time would do what I indolently neglected, and that as he grew older he would behave better. His conduct at divine worship disturbed the congregation; in the neighborhood he was mischievous; and to me he was very often tiresome; yet there was nothing about the boy but what, under the divine blessing, timely chastisement might have subdued, and brought into good order.

"My Susan, a lovely little girl, seemed to give fair promise of being my chief comfort. I denied her nothing, whether reasonable or unreasonable; and when she threw her little arms round my neck and kissed me, all the mother's feelings rose tumultuously in my bosom; I longed to bring her up to a higher station, and make her more than her mother had ever been; but my means were few and contracted. I now labored for them, and I hoped to rise and lift them with me into a higher station. I could read, write, and work well, and by the advice of my parents and friends, I opened a school for the village children. Unfit as I was for the charge, I got forward; I had an increase in a few months of so many, that I could afford to place Charles daily with a respectable person, to learn to read, write, and cast accounts, while my little Susan sat by me, and learned, or was idle, as it happened to suit her inclination.

"My father gradually sunk in the valley of years, and infirmity after infirmity crept upon him, until at last, he sunk into the sleep of death. His last hours, like his whole life, were consistent; he had no new religion to seek, but the firm foundation on which he had rested his hope supported him in a dying day. He found consolation in the Savior; the hope which had cheered his life supported

him in his dying hour.

"The day after the funeral, which my numerous though humble school enabled me to see decently conducted—I shall never forget it—the clergyman stepped in as we were just sitting down to our tea. 'What an interesting sight!' said he; 'how in the appearance of this cottage circle is the pattern of life portrayed! Here,' pointing to Susan, 'is the dawn of life, knowing no real ill, and sporting on the very verge of a scene of trial, soon to be entered upon, unthinkingly. There,' said he, pointing to me, 'is the traveler in the burden and heat of the day, often overpowered by the toil of the journey, anxious to provide for and rear the offspring God has given. There,' pointing to the corner in which my dear aged mother sat, 'is one who has passed the sultry hours; a few steps farther, and her toils are ended. And there,' pointing to the empty arm-chair, the old stick, and the hat that hung upon the wall, 'there are the staff and sandals laid aside. May each follow close in the steps of this aged Christian, and arrive as he did at the Christian's end. My children, love and fear your aged parents' God: my young friend, walk in the steps of your holy father, and beware of having *your own way*. To you, my venerable friend, what shall I say? Look forward and rejoice that there is a rest awaiting you; and to the happy spirit, were it possible, I would waft the congratulations of a sincere heart.'

"My mother now gave up her labors entirely, and attended only to my little household concerns. I shall here pass over several years of my short, chequered pilgrimage: Charles was eighteen, Susan was seventeen, and not quite so affectionate to her mother as when, a laughing child, she used to clasp me to her with delight. I had allowed her to *love her own way*, when it was only a trifling inconvenience to me; but this temper had grown with her growth and ripened with her years, and now she formed an attachment to a young fellow, which I saw, with anguish, would lead her through the same scene her wretched mother had passed. But Charles was wringing my heart with more bitter anguish—still froward in childhood, he had become ungovernable in youth. A desirable situation, procured for him by our clergyman, was thrown away in a fit of mad folly to go to sea. Oh, when I went with him to the vessel, saw him step upon its deck, and when he bade me adieu with a tear struggling in his eye, as if half inclined to repent, how did I bear it! It was of him I was so proud; for him I had offered my first prayer; for him I had labored many a weary day; his whims I had indulged, his folly in childhood and wickedness in youth I had failed to correct; and now he could blaspheme, and was plunging headlong into ruin.

"I turned away from the scene, sick at heart with sorrow excited to the extreme. It was at the close of the day, in the latter end of autumn; I passed several windows, where the fires were blazing cheerfully, and the happy family parties collecting round the tea-table; but no cheerful fireside was waiting my return. My mother was sleeping silently by my father's side, in the church-yard; my boy was going to dare the dangers of the deep, with all his sins upon his head; and my girl, my lovely, blooming girl, was going willfully to unite herself to a fascinating,

but deceitful man, who, I saw, would bring her to poverty and disgrace. 'And this,' said I, 'is *having my own way*. I was warned, but I would not see, or correct the faults of my children; I brought them up with no consistency; I refused to check their foibles, until they grew into sins, and were past my ability to control. O that I had taken advice, that I had attended to the law of God, rather than to my own way! O that I had taught them to honor me in childhood! I should not now have to weep over their ingratitude, and live to see their ruin.'

"I returned to my solitary abode—it was dark and dreary. My daughter was pleasure-taking with some idle acquaintance; I kindled a little fire to give something like cheerfulness to the dismal room—dismal, not for lack of outward comforts, but from my own mental agony; and I sat ruminating upon my desolate situation; and bitter and cutting was my self-reproach, for I knew that having my own way had brought all this upon me. As I caught a glimpse of myself in an old mirror which hung opposite, I could not help comparing it with the bright, blooming, mirthful girl that used to appear—and the declining, grief-worn widow I saw there. But my mind felt a keener agony when I recalled my neglected duties and self-will.

"Susan, in spite of me, married her wretched admirer, who in less than three months treated her cruelly; and for two years I used to sit, after I had sent away my little flock of children, brooding on her distress, and on the hardships and dangers my boy was contending with. No letter from him arrived, and I began to conclude that God had called him to his dreadful bar of judgment. Susan, pining away from poverty and ill-treatment, was led to her mother's sad acknowledgment, that she had been wrong in having *her own way*. But I saw her struggle against the tide of afflictions; I saw her, with subdued temper, bow at the foot of the cross, and maintain before one, who met her but to abuse and ill-treat her, a line of conduct befitting the principles that now guided her—she lingered long in a decline, and I laid her at last beside the two green hillocks in the church-yard. I had *my own way* with her in childhood, and it ruined her happiness; but while I repented of having my own way, I thanked God, who had overruled my misconduct, and had converted her by his grace, and then taken her to himself.

"But, ah! my poor boy—seven years passed, and I neither saw nor heard from him; I had given up all hope of ever meeting him again. I had just sent away my young charge one summer's evening, and was sitting down to my table, my Bible open before me, my coarse loaf and my tea prepared—a slight-made figure appeared at the door. Hectic was the flush on his cheek, and disease had set its mark upon him; but it was my boy—yes! I knew my Charles—years of foreign imprisonment, hunger, poverty, disease itself, could not obliterate that look by which I knew him. And while I wept at the tale of his woes, and charged myself with his sorrows, by allowing him his own way, I had to rejoice that he was taken from me, to be taught by a stranger's tongue, in a distant land—the error of his way, and *the way of eternal life*.

"Eight months he lay upon a sick bed, sighing over his past follies, yet looking to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy. He lies with my Susan, my father, and my mother, in yon churchyard. One little corner still remains for me; and as the last ebbing sand runs out, I would tell to all around, the wisdom and goodness of God, and THE FOLLY OF MY OWN WAY!"

In putting together these hints and observations for the use of my children, it has been my desire ever to bear in my own mind, and to impress it on theirs, that the only source of real, genuine, abiding excellence of character, is true religion in the heart—a life of faith in the Son of God; and that, wherever this genuine principle exists, it ought, and it will, produce attention to whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, in which there is any virtue and any praise.

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty]of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." "Those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen," in the truly consistent Christian, "do; and the God of peace shall be with you." "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."

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