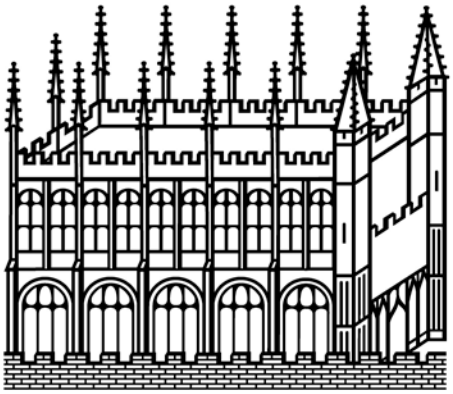

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To
Georgiana Dandey
with
Papa's best love
Nov. 8. 1835.

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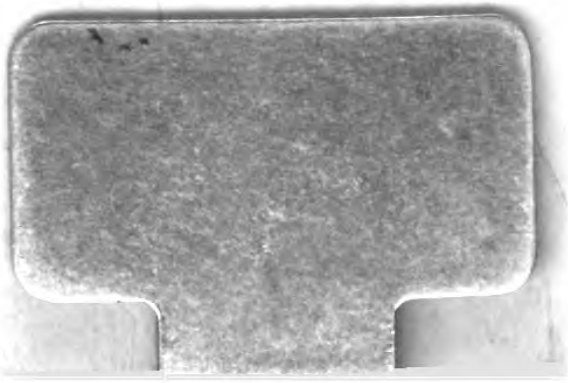

THE FIRE-SIDE;

OR, THE

DUTIES AND ENJOYMENTS OF FAMILY RELIGION:

CONTAINING,

PART I.—COME TO PRAYER.
PART II.—HOME MADE HAPPY.

EDITED BY

JACOB ABBOTT.

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PART I.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASTER OF A FAMILY A VICEGERENT, NOT A SOVEREIGN.

A FAMILY is not a human institution. By certain invariable and perpetual laws of human nature, God has secured the existence of families in all nations and in all ages of the world. Some theorists have endeavoured to overturn this system, but God has laid the foundations too deep and strong for them. Extraordinary efforts may, in some detached and limited portions of the community, produce a temporary suspension of these laws. But what they substitute will be artificial, and when the application of artificial means ceases to be made, society must fall back into the channels which God has indicated for it.

One of the most remarkable features of this extraordinary institution is, the successive changes it undergoes in the course of its history. When the young husband and wife first enter upon the new relation, how little do they foresee what is

before them. As they take possession for the first time of their new house, and enjoy its cheering aspect, its regularity and quiet, and its expression of domestic peace and joy, how little do they anticipate the trials and vicissitudes—the deep and yet unseen fountains of joy and sorrow, which lie in their future way. In a few years, how changed! One after another has been added in various ways to the company which began only with two, until at length they find themselves presiding over a numerous circle of children and relatives and domestics—the father and mother both involved in responsibilities, from which they would have shrunk, had they anticipated them at the beginning.

In a few years, this happy circle must be broken in upon and scattered. Death comes in, and makes one and another his prey. Others gradually arrive at maturity, and leave their father's roof to seek other homes, and to return no more to the ark which sheltered them at first; and at last the father and mother are left alone, to spend their declining years at their solitary fire-side, to look back upon scenes of activity, and trial, and enjoyment, which can never return.

Another peculiar feature of this institution is, the immense power exercised by the head of it. The master of a family has his wife, his children, his domestics, and the other inmates in his power to an extent which is not equalled by any other authority. He has their happiness, and in fact their characters, almost entirely in his hands. He may make his house their quiet and happy home, the abode of peace, and contentment, and piety;

or he may agitate it with continual discord and confusion. He may train up his children in such a way, that they shall love and honour their parents, and be a blessing to them to their dying day, and be joined with them in everlasting happiness in heaven; or he may, by neglect and unfaithfulness, make them thorns in his side while they remain at home, a bitterness and a curse to his declining years, and a source of unmixed and never-ending sorrow in eternity. There is no power like it. The father of a family, though his dominion is bounded by narrow limits, has within those limits the most absolute sway.

The reason is, because it takes hold at once of the heart and the character. That boy of yours is as much under your power as it is possible for a human soul to be. It is not merely that he is now entirely in your hands, that you can control his time, his employments, his earnings, his amusements,—it is not that you can now make him happy by your kindness and care, or render life an intolerable burden to him by oppression from which he can find no refuge;—but it is that you have much that may influence his future years at your disposal, whether misery or happiness shall fill them up. It is true, that in a few years he must leave your roof, and then you must cease to have any direct control over him; but, in the mean time, you may instil principles or cherish habits, which will make him a curse to himself when you shall no longer be able to inflict direct suffering. And, on the other hand, you can so mould and form his character now, that the rich and happy fruits of what you do shall descend

around him in rich profusion, long after you shall have slumbered in the dust. In a word, you may now fix a poisoned barb in his heart to fester and rankle there for ever, or you may apply the balm of the gospel to heal existing wounds, and by the blessing of God secure his perpetual peace and happiness.

The master of a family is thus a monarch, whose power and responsibility are immense. He not only has the peace and happiness of those committed to him almost entirely at his disposal for the time being; but the effects of his influence over them run on through all the years of this life, and often through all the ages of the life to come. It is too much power and responsibility for any man to bear alone. If we could really see its extent, we should all feel that it is too much. God does not intend that we should exercise it alone. We ought to be in our families vicegerents, not sovereigns. God is the Sovereign. We ought to rule under him.

This idea, then, that the master of a family is God's vicegerent, and that in his household he has to administer the government of God, and not his own, lies at the foundation of his duty. If he feels this, and acts on this principle, he is safe. He will be humble. Feeling under a law himself, he will set an example of submission, which will be readily followed. The captain, who obeys his general best, will in turn be best obeyed by his soldiers. If you, the master, rebel against your own Sovereign, how can you expect your children will be submissive to you! His authority will be sustained. Weak, and frail, and ignorant as

man is, if he rules his house in the name of God, and not in his own, he will have authority. But he must do it really in the name of God. He must feel that he acts as the representative, the lieutenant of his Master in heaven ; and if he feels this really, he will be clothed, in the eyes of those under him, with power from above. He will have a guide. Should he act for himself alone, in his own name, and guided by his own wisdom, he will be almost continually in difficulty, if he feels any sense of responsibility at all. Emergencies will often arise, when he will be beset with difficulties, and scarcely know what to do. If, however, he undertakes to administer God's government in his family instead of his own, there is One above him to give him full direction, and to take all the responsibility of consequences.

If the master of a family concludes to surrender himself and his family to God's care, making himself the vicegerent, not the sovereign, he must do it in earnest ; and while he performs his duties in the name and under the authority of God, he must feel that his children and friends, and all his possessions and all his hopes, are really in the hands of God, to be disposed of according to his good pleasure. If such a surrender is really and honestly made, and the master, after it, exercises his power over his household, not as principal, but as the steward of God, he may feel safe and happy, whatever may be the circumstances in which he is placed. And yet some fathers and mothers strangely prefer to live in open irreligion ; to begin their union without committing themselves to God, to receive their children—trusts so in-

valuable—without recognising the hand which bestows them; to bring them up in impiety, to give up their families to discord and sorrow, knowing, too, that the time is approaching, when the must part for ever. And how miserable must their partings be! A father bending over the dying bed of a child, whose eternal welfare he has wholly disregarded—his child sees that he is going before his Judge, and his wretched parent dares not even inform him of his danger—a child bidding adieu, a final adieu, to a parental roof, when no prayer has been offered, the blessing of Heaven never invoked, and God never acknowledged—parents going down to the grave in old age, with children scattered over the earth confirmed in sin, and some perhaps already gone to their final home of sorrow, where the miserable father and mother must soon join them—these are bitter cups! But they must be drank to the last dregs by those who incur such responsibilities as those which come upon parents who do not acknowledge God, and seek his guidance and care.

"I must, I will acknowledge God in my house; I must commit my family to his care, and act under him in the management of it. I must have his guidance, his protection; I must have him to fly to as a shelter when trials and afflictions come upon me in future." Who can refrain from saying this, and acting accordingly?

In efforts to promote the Saviour's kingdom, christians should look, with special interest, at measures calculated to promote the religious welfare of family circles; for, as we have said above,

it is God who has grouped the human race into families. The other institutions and relations of life man has formed for himself; but the ties by which husband and wife, parents and children are bound together, are formed directly by the hand of God.

We may observe that the Creator, in all his plans, looks at valuable results, not at what man deems magnificence in the means of accomplishing them. In a summer evening, the earth is dry and parched, and plants are ready to droop and wither from the heat of the day, and some plan must be devised to refresh and revive them. A human mechanist would have gratified his pride by exhibiting some magnificent machinery to accomplish effects so extensive. God does it, silently and unseen, by the evening dew. Few know how or why it falls, but in the morning, millions perceive its refreshing and invigorating effects. So, in the production of moral effects, God secures the simple principle, which, when secured, will operate every where, and the immensity of whose results depends upon the universality of its application. Man, on the other hand, is prone to look with too much interest at what is magnificent and grand as a means, and to forget what should be the real object, the widest possible extension of useful result. In a word, man turns his attention to a more splendid organization than that which gathers round the fire-side; but God deems it worthy of his attention and care. Man founds empires, organizes armies, erects cities. Jehovah establishes the family, links the husband to the wife, and the parent to the child, and protects the

institution by laws, the observance of which will secure the highest earthly happiness, and the violation of which will be followed by the most acute of human woes.

In taking this course, our Maker has shown that the promotion of human happiness is his great design. For happiness, if it exists at all, must exist in the family. A bad government makes misery enough, it is true; but the woes it brings are nothing, compared with those of bad families. Let piety and peace, mutual confidence and love, reign in all the dwellings of a nation, and how little, after all, can a tyrant do to mar the immense amount of enjoyment, which will gladden the land!

On the other hand, there is no picture of happiness in more bright or permanent colours, than that exhibited by the christian family, whatever may be its worldly condition. Bound by a common band to God, its members are kept more closely to each other; and the scene of harmony and piety and happiness will continue until the first burst of grief comes over them, at the loss of the one whom God shall first summon to another world. Then, it is true, will follow days of mourning, separation, and sorrow, as one after another is transferred to his final home. But the grief, which in other cases is unmitigated and irremediable, is here soothed and assuaged by the feeling that this separation is only for a time; and there comes certainly, at last, the reunion in heaven, ass pirit after spirit joins the happy company above. Yes, the christian family, whether all of its members are on earth, or some on earth and some in heaven, is the happiest family in the world.

THE DUTY OF FAMILY PRAYER.

CHAPTER II.

TO THE PARENTS.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

FAMILY prayer has perhaps more influence than any thing else, in bringing a household under the control of christian principles. Every one whose heart has been touched with love to God will feel this to be his most delightful privilege. Sometimes we hear even a professing christian ask, Where is family prayer enjoined in the Bible? Point me to the chapter and the verse, he says, and then I will obey the command. What a state of heart does this show! Here is a man, who pretends to be a christian, and yet regards family prayer as an irksome task, which is only to be endured, when imposed by rigorous and unrelenting authority. He has no heart to come with his children and bow around the altar of God, commending himself and them to Divine care. If God imperiously and positively requires it, he will submit; but he refuses unless you point out to him the direct command. This is not the spirit of genuine piety. The sincere christian would rather give up a portion of his daily food, or deprive himself of necessary rest, than not have God

recognised in his family. Nothing would give him greater pain than to be debarred from this privilege. He is impelled by his own feelings to go to the Lord, and implore his blessing upon his household.

The Mode of conducting Family Prayer.

I was once passing a few days in the house of a devoted christian, who had a family of small children. Every morning they were assembled, and the father read a long chapter from the Bible, together with all the notes and practical observations of a voluminous commentary upon the passage, and concluded the exercise with a long prayer. A little reflection might have taught this parent, that the exercise so conducted must have been exceedingly uninteresting and irksome to his children. The hour of prayer was to them an hour of weariness. They waited in impatient endurance, till its close allowed them to return again to their sports. Where there are children, it is necessary that the devotions of the morning and evening should be short, and fervent, and simple. Let a short passage of scripture be read. Let the parent throw in such simple explanations as will arrest the attention of his children. Such reflections will occur to every one of common understanding. To illustrate my idea, let us suppose a father, with a family of children of various ages around him, opens at the fifth chapter of Matthew to read at morning prayers. He reads slowly and understandingly the first eight verses, adding such suggestions as occur, so that the exercise is somewhat as follows:

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him."

It seems that such a crowd came to see the Saviour, that no house was large enough to receive them; and Christ, therefore, went to a neighbouring mountain, where the multitude could stand around him, and he could easily speak to them all.

"And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

If we are proud and think ourselves better than others, and despise the poor and the humble, we cannot be received into heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

If we would be christians, we must pray for God's assistance most earnestly. Sometimes, children, you feel hungry, and you come into the house and ask your mother for bread; and you are so hungry that you can hardly wait for her to get it. And sometimes you are so thirsty, that I have to get up in the night and get you some water. Now, God says if you are as anxious to love and obey him, as you are to have bread when you are hungry, or water when you are thirsty, he will make you holy, and prepare you for heaven.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

I suppose, James, that you sometimes hear boys at school make use of bad words. Now, there are some persons who will not say bad words, but who will think them. God says we must not even think of things that are impure and wicked. Our language must not only be pure, but our hearts must be pure, if we would see God in heaven.

Some such simple remarks and explanations as these, which every parent may introduce, will fix

the attention and interest the feelings of the children of the family.

It is not necessary to attempt the explanation of every difficult passage, but merely to explain those which are capable of a brief and satisfactory explanation, and to throw in such remarks as will give interest to the exercise. Above all, we must remember that we must feel really interested ourselves, and really make an effort to interest our children, or we cannot expect to succeed.

Influence of Family Prayer.

The effect of family prayer upon the domestic circle must be very great. Nothing can have a more powerful tendency to soothe the feelings, to promote mildness and kindness, and to induce all the members of the family to be faithful in the discharge of all their various duties. All our devotional duties bring with them temporal blessings.

Family prayer is invaluable, if we regard it merely in reference to domestic economy. It is the oil which removes friction, and causes all the complicated wheels of the family to move smoothly and noiselessly. It is the stimulant which is best calculated to excite to fidelity and exertion. Can the circle which has been cordially uniting in the prayer that God would give them control over all their passions, and make them meek and lowly in heart, become at once transformed into a scene of irritation and strife? No! The influence of the hour of prayer must reach onward through the duties of the day. It must promote harmony and affection.

Suppose a christian father, having assembled his family for morning prayers, offers some such petitions as the following:

O God, we bow before thee this morning as a family, to pray that thou wilt forgive our family sins. If we have been unkind to one another, or impatient in feeling, or unfaithful in duty, wilt thou forgive us. We know that thou dost see all that we do, and dost know all that we say or feel.

Thine eye will be upon each one of us this day, and we pray that we may not forget that thou dost see us. May we all be kind, and forbearing, and humble. May we all be diligent in improving our time, and be continually under the influences of the Holy Spirit, that we may have that calm and heavenly frame which religion requires.

Saviour of sinners, thou who didst die that we might live, we trust in thee. O may we have more of thy spirit. May we more earnestly engage in efforts to do good. Wilt thou, who didst take little children in thine arms and bless them, bless the children of this family. May they be dutiful to their parents, affectionate to one another, and purified from sin. And may we all hereafter meet, a happy family, in our heavenly home. We ask all in the name of Jesus our Saviour, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Now, if such a prayer be feelingly offered, will not its influence be felt in the occurrences of the day? Will not this morning introduction to the Deity, and this recognition of his presence and authority, promote tenderness of feeling and watchfulness of conduct? Most certainly it will. And the testimony of ten thousand happy christian families may be collected in attestation of the invaluable temporal benefits of morning and evening prayer. There is, in fact, nothing which can shed so sweet a charm around the fire-side, which

can make the outgoings of the morning and the evening so cheeringly to rejoice, which can infuse such serene happiness into the bosom of your playful group of children, as that piety which makes the family a family of prayer, and which animates each heart with hopes of heaven. "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

But look a moment at the influence of family prayer upon the spiritual prospects of your children. What can more deeply affect their minds than to see their father imploring forgiveness of God, and fervently commending himself and them to his protection? "Actions speak louder than words." By your actions, they see that you are sincere, and they are compelled to believe that there is a reality in the religion you profess. A few years since, a young lady made a visit of a week in the family of a clergyman eminent for his piety. As she listened to the fervent supplication of the father, as he, morning and evening, implored God's blessing upon his family, her feelings were deeply affected. Each succeeding hour of prayer strengthened and deepened the impression. She became convinced of sin, and in real contrition was led to the Saviour. And upon that domestic altar she offered up her heart a living sacrifice to the Lord. This lady now is the wife of a clergyman, and is an active, useful servant of her Redeemer. But it is unnecessary to multiply examples. Numbers have received their first religious impressions in the exercises of morning prayer, and have first met the Saviour at the domestic altar. Thousands of christian families have been made happy on

earth, and prepared for joy in heaven, by that influence which has been diffused from the morning incense and the evening sacrifice. And unnumbered ransomed saints above, who celebrate the praises of Jesus in the golden city, and bow with adoration in the blest mansions, first learnt "the song of Moses and the Lamb" around the fire-side of their home on earth. If you would have your children love the Saviour, let them see that you love him, and that it is your pleasure to worship him.

If family prayer is *neglected*, how dreadful must be the influence upon the minds of your children! This neglect is to them a constant and powerful declaration, that you deem religion emptiness, and a life of prayer unnecessary. The exhortation of their minister or sabbath-school teacher has perhaps arrested their attention, and softened their feelings. They go to their prayerless home, and meet their prayerless father. The evening comes, and there is no prayer to fix and deepen the impressions received. Your child goes to bed, saying to himself, "Father does not pray, why should I?" He awakes in the morning, but no morning prayer greets him. His worldly father hastens to the business of the day, and leaves his poor child in weakness and temptation, unsupported by parental precept or example. Nay, more: he is lured by a father's example to banish serious thoughts, to grieve away the Spirit, and to plunge more recklessly into all the sins of a thoughtless and irreligious life. Oh, when that great day comes, in which the secrets of all hearts will be revealed, how many parents will be found to be

the spiritual murderers of their children! Professing christians! how can you bear the thought of the reproaches of your lost child at the bar of God? Shall he be permitted to say, "It was your neglect of duty which induced me to neglect religion, and ruin my soul; and now, in consequence, I must take up my abode in the eternal dungeon, with eternal despair!" If there be a prayerless father among the readers of this book, let him look forward to the judgment-day, and think of the scenes he then must witness.

We ought, however, to remember not only that it is the natural tendency of prayer itself to promote the piety and happiness of the family, but also that *God hears and answers prayer.* God confers favours upon us in answer to our requests, as really as any earthly father regards the expressed wants of his children. And it is this consideration which makes prayer of such vital importance. The benefits we have alluded to, rich and abundant as they are, are incidental to the exercise. They are connected with it by the natural operation of cause and effect. But over and above this, there are special blessings which God bestows in answer to our petitions. Because we ask, he grants. He averts calamity, and relieves from sickness and pain, and sends prosperity, and dispenses spiritual gifts, in answer to the prayers which ascend from the domestic altar. We should call upon God, if we would have his blessing. He who does not recognise God in his family, must expect that they will be unprepared for the entrance of the destroying angel, and that his children will live without God, and die without God, and remain

in sin, and misery, and woe, through the ceaseless ages which are to come.

Reasons assigned for neglecting Family Prayer.

How many and how trivial are the excuses occasionally offered for the neglect of family prayer! They are frequently, in reality, the most powerful reasons for its faithful performance.

Are you so crowded with business, so urged on by the pressure of worldly cares, that you know not how to spare the time for morning and evening devotion? If you are struggling in such a whirlpool as this, are you not in danger of being swallowed up in its devouring depths? Is it not peculiarly necessary for you to cry earnestly unto the Lord, that you may be preserved from these dangers which threaten your spiritual destruction? Really, if there be a man in the world, who can safely neglect family prayer, you are not that man. If there be a professing christian, who is in danger of losing his spirituality, and of losing his soul, *you* are the professor. *Your* temptations are peculiarly great, and the necessity for constant and fervent prayer is peculiarly strong.

It is, also, altogether an erroneous notion, that time is lost by imploring God's blessing upon our time. It is true economy of time and of labour to prepare our hearts for the toil of the day. Other things being equal, he will be most successful, who leaves his house in the morning with his feelings soothed by the influence of prayer. He will most calmly and successfully meet the exciting scenes of life. A stage coach was a short time since passing along the road: it was a warm

summer's day, and the coach was filled with passengers, all impatient to arrive at the city whither they were going, at an early hour in the evening. The excessive heat rendered it necessary for the driver to spare his horses more than usual. Most of the passengers were fretting and complaining that he did not urge his horses along faster. But one gentleman sat in the corner of the coach calm and quiet. The irritation which was destroying the happiness of all the others, seemed not to disturb his feelings in the least. At last the coach broke down as they were ascending a long steep hill, and the passengers were compelled to alight and travel some distance on foot, under the rays of the burning sun. This new interruption caused a general burst of vexatious feeling. All the party, with the exception of the gentleman above alluded to, toiled up the hill, irritated and complaining. He walked along good-humoured and happy, and endeavouring, by occasional pleasantry of remark, to restore good humour to the party. It was known, that this gentleman, who was extensively engaged in mercantile concerns, had business, which rendered it necessary that he should be in the city at an early hour. The delay was consequently to him a serious inconvenience. Yet, while all the rest of the party were ill-humoured and vexed, he alone was untroubled. At last, one asked how it was that he retained his composure under such vexatious circumstances. The gentleman replied, that he could have no control over the circumstances in which he was then placed; that he had commended himself and his business to the protection of the Lord, and that

if it were God's will that he should not arrive at as early an hour as he desired, it was his duty patiently and pleasantly to submit. With these feelings, he was patient, and submissive, and cheerful. The day, which to the rest of the party was rendered disagreeable by vexation and complaint, was by him passed in gratitude and enjoyment. And when, late in the evening, he arrived in the city with a serene mind, he was prepared to engage in his duties.

Here we see the legitimate influence of prayer. This is not the peculiarity of an individual case, but it illustrates the genuine tendency of prayer in all cases, and under all circumstances. He whose feelings have been calmed, and whose resolution has been strengthened, by the devotion of the morning, is prepared to meet with tranquillity the excitements and disappointments of the day. And surely he will discharge the duties more happily and successfully, if he can engage in them under the influence of this calm and heavenly frame of mind. The fact is, that no man can afford to live without prayer, and the more numerous our cares, and the more arduous our labours, the more indispensable it is that we should fervently seek the Divine blessing. It is necessary; for our own souls are in danger of being swallowed up with worldliness. It is necessary; for we need the soothing influence of prayer to guide us safely and successfully through the troubled waters of a busy and anxious life.

Every christian is liable to variations of feeling. Sometimes his affections are languid, and he *does not feel that deep interest in prayer*, which he knows

he ought at all times to possess. Perhaps under such circumstances he says, "It is better for me not to pray at all, than to pray while in this wrong frame of mind. My prayer this morning will be but formality, and cannot be acceptable to God." But is it not a sin to be in such a state of mind as this? Must not God frown in displeasure upon that man who has no disposition to pray to him? Can there be a more powerful temptation of the adversary than that which entices you to cease calling upon God? The very object of prayer is to draw down from God those blessings which we need, and, above all, those spiritual blessings which are indispensable to our happiness. This is the hour of awful temptation—of most melancholy ingratitude—of fearful sin. It is the time in which, above all others, you should most earnestly cry to God for help. If light is again to dawn upon your mind, and spiritual joy to illumine your bosom, it must be through the influence of prayer. The longer you neglect to call upon God, the farther you will wander from him, the darker will be your heart, the more troubled your spirit. If you do not feel in a devotional frame of mind, it is then more necessary than at any other time whatever, to go to God, that he may renew within you a right spirit.

Perhaps, some one who reads these pages will say that he has a very large family, and does not feel sufficient *confidence* to lead in prayer in the presence of such numbers. This feeling exists, in a greater or less degree, in the bosom of almost every christian. But Christ requires of every

disciple that he exert all the influence in his power. This is a trial, which he is called to endure. This is a conflict in which he is to engage. He is a soldier of the cross, and he must not from timidity neglect the open exhibition of his attachment to the Saviour. If your family is large, it is vastly more important that your example should be that of an irreproachable christian.

Suppose a young man is so connected in business, that he has several mechanics in his employ, and who board in his family. He becomes a christian, and he sees that he must in his family exemplify religion. But he is naturally diffident, and therefore omits family prayer, hoping to appease conscience by privately praying in his chamber with his wife, morning and evening. What are the consequences? His own conscience condemns him. He feels that he is under that fear of man which bringeth a snare, and is disquieted and unhappy. He knows that he is not living in the discharge of duty, and, consequently, cannot at any time go to God with frankness and affectionate confidence. Instead of making advances in the christian life, he is continually growing more timid and less spiritual. He is unwilling even to converse with his family upon the subject of religion, for his conscience reproaches him with neglect of duty; and he fears that they will also upbraid him, and say to him, "Physician, heal thyself."

And what is the effect of such neglect upon those around you? They see that you fear them more than you regard God. They are unfavourably impressed as to the reality of that religion

which you profess to enjoy. They go out in the morning, and there is no voice of prayer to remind them of their obligations to their Maker. They come home at night, and retire to rest, with nothing to suggest to them the thoughts of death, of judgment, and of eternity. Your influence, instead of leading them to heaven, is hardening their hearts, and teaching them to regard religion as but an empty name. How will you feel at the day of judgment, when some poor lost soul shall look back to you as he is going down to the regions of despair, and say, "I lived for weeks and months in your family, and never heard the voice of prayer! It was your irreligious life that led me to disbelieve the reality of religion, and has consequently led to this most terrible and eternal destruction." Are not these the consequences which naturally, and almost unavoidably flow from the neglect of family prayer?

But let a man take a different course. Suppose, as he meets all the members of his family at the breakfast table in the morning, he says, "I have become convinced of the impropriety of the manner in which I have been living, and have determined to live a different life. I hope I have become a christian, and feel it to be my duty to establish morning and evening prayers in the family. I shall be happy to have all the members of the family remain a few moments after or before breakfast, while I read a short passage of scripture, and implore God's blessing upon us during the day." Having thus taken the first step, and broken silence, he feels that peace of mind which invariably follows the discharge of

duty. The christian has gained a signal triumph over himself, and he feels encouraged to press onward to further spiritual conquest. His first effort to conduct family prayer may have been painful, but every day it grows more easy and delightful.

He now, without fear of reproach, can converse with others upon their spiritual concerns. He is not restrained by the consciousness that his own life contradicts his professions. His prayers at home are preparing him to take a more active part in religious meetings, and are thus increasing his influence and usefulness.

And, oh, how powerful is the effect of the fervent prayer of the christian upon a thoughtless family! Many an infidel has been thus reclaimed. Many an irreligious man has been convicted of sin, and learnt to pray, by attending the devotions of a christian family. The truth is, the larger your family, the more imperious are your obligations to have the influence of religion seen and felt.

I once passed a few days in one of the most extensive hotels in a large city. The house was thronged with company, continually coming and going. But at an early hour in the morning, a bell was rung for prayers, and all who were in the house had the privilege of being present. And many a passing traveller there had his thoughts guided to the concerns of eternity.

The man who has a large number residing in his family, instead of thinking that he may, therefore, neglect the duties of family religion, should feel that this very fact renders it the more neces-

sary that these duties should be faithfully performed. God has introduced you to a wide field of usefulness. He will not hold you guiltless, if you neglect to improve the field. He has committed to your care many talents, and you must be accountable for the manner in which they are used. If you are unfaithful, under these circumstances, the more extensive is the desolation which your unfaithfulness causes. O disciple of Jesus, if you would share in the triumph above, you must bear your part in the conflict here below.

Sometimes a christian family is visited by friends, who are not interested in religion, and a person may be tempted under these circumstances in some degree to waive the ordinary religious arrangements of the household. There is now lying upon my table, the copy of a letter written by a lady to a gentleman, in whose family she had made a visit; and who, in deference to her presence, had postponed the exercise of evening prayer till she retired for the night. The lady and her husband were of high rank in life, and of polished manners and intelligence, but not professed christians. The family in which they were visiting ordinarily maintained family worship, but on the occasion of a visit from their friends, they thought it would be more agreeable to them, to retire before the exercises of family prayer. How must this christian gentleman have felt reproved in receiving from the lady the following letter!—

"Now that circumstances have parted us, I cannot help regretting, my dear friend, that notwithstanding we sympathized so well in many things, there was still reserve

enough between us, to prevent you from pursuing your habitual conduct, while we were at your house. I assure you that although we are not accustomed to daily family prayer, we regard it as very commendable, and both my husband and myself would heartily have joined you, if you had allowed us to stay. Instead of which, we only kept you up late for nothing. I cannot say but that you did very wrong."

The remainder of the letter showed that the lady had become much interested in the subject of religion. She would have esteemed it a privilege to have united with the family at devotion, and her feelings were just in that state in which they were most liable to be influenced by the exercise. It is false modesty and false politeness, which induces us to swerve from the straightforward path of duty. The consequences, which may result from a neglect of duty even in the most trifling particulars, far surpass our comprehension. Some little things may lead an immortal soul to glory, or confirm it in sin, and ruin it for ever: and the reproaches of that lost immortal may reach our ears from his dying bed, and perhaps pierce our hearts at the judgment-day.

How important, then, is family prayer as the means of influence! The family is a part of the field of labour which God has intrusted to the care of every christian parent. Family prayer is one of the most important of the means, which are to be used for the cultivation of this field. As you value your peace in a dying hour, and as you value the decisions of the judgment-day, let no combination of circumstances, let no temptation of the adversary, induce you to lay aside your christian armour, or to remit your watchful-

ness. Let your home on earth be a christian home, that you may be prepared for a holier and happier home in the mansions not made with hands.

Family prayer is, however, the commencement, not the termination of the christian's duties in his family. He must feel that ingenuity is requisite to devise plans of usefulness. Cotton Mather appropriated a few moments every day while he was dressing in the morning, to consider the question, "What can I do this day to benefit my children?" It is not enough that we go on continually in the routine of the same recurring exercises. We must seize occasions, improve providences, and adopt expedients to excite interest and affect the heart. The christian father should often have his child upon his knee, explaining to him the interesting truths which the Bible has made known to us. He should hear from a father's lips that there is reality in death, and solemnity in judgment, and scenes of surpassing joy and sorrow in eternity. The father should in the twilight of the evening lead his child among the tombs, and talk to him of the termination of life; he should point him to the glories of the evening sky, and warm his youthful heart by speaking of that home which is above the stars. Your family is your peculiar and appropriate charge. Its temporal and its spiritual interests are as entirely intrusted to your guardianship as God ever intrusts any privilege or any duty to created beings. And there is no christian minister more loudly called upon to be untiring in effort, and eloquent in earnestness, than is the christian father.

There is no want of peculiar and appropriate occasions which a father may improve for the purpose of inculcating religious principles. One of the most eminent of the English clergy was led to the surrender of himself to the Saviour by the following interesting circumstance. He was a little boy, and, like other children, playful and thoughtless. His father was accustomed to converse with him, as favourable occasions could be found, upon his religious duties. The evening of his birthday, when he was ten years of age, his father took him affectionately by the hand, and reminding him of the scenes through which he had already passed, urged him that evening to begin a life of piety. He told him of the love of Jesus, and showed him, that he must perish unless he trusted in his Saviour, and gave his life to his service. The interest of the occasion caused the child to listen with tearful eye and feeling heart. The father and mother then retired to their chamber to pray for their child. And the child also went to his chamber to pray for himself. Sincerely he gave himself to his Saviour, earnestly he implored forgiveness, and most fervently he entreated God to aid him to keep his resolutions to refrain from sin. Angels looked with joy upon that evening scene. The prayers of the parents and of the child ascended as grateful incense to the throne, and were accepted. And from that affecting hour this little boy went on in that path, which leads to usefulness, and peace, and heaven. A short time since, he died, a veteran soldier of the cross, and is now undoubtedly amid the glories of heaven, surrounded by hundreds who have

been led by his instrumentality to the abodes of bliss. Oh, what a rapturous meeting must that have been, when the father pressed forward from the angel throng, to welcome his son as he entered heaven!

How happy must that father feel, who in a dying hour can look around on his christian family, feeling that he was the guide whom God blessed in leading them also to piety and peace! and oh how grateful and how reverential must be the feelings of those children, who gather around such a father at the hour of his death! He is honoured with an affection which is heavenly in its nature and its purity. Surrounded with the blessing of his children, he is borne home to the bosom of his Saviour. Who would not give more for such joy in death, than for all that the world can bestow of wealth or honour? And if we look forward in imagination to the judgment-day, when the family are again assembled and have a new house assigned them, what heart can conceive the bliss of such a meeting—the rapture of such a home!

THE NATURE AND THE DUTY OF INDIVIDUAL PRAYER.

CHAPTER III.

TO THE ELDER CHILDREN.

I CAN best convey to you my views, in regard to the nature and influence of prayer, by relating some stories, with which I have recently met. I shall make some remarks upon each. The first is as follows:

The Gate of Prayer.

AN ALLEGORY.

Having been employed one evening in reading the first part of the 11th chapter of Luke, which contains various excellent directions and pleasing encouragements relative to the duty of prayer, I leaned back, and fell into a gentle slumber. I fancied that I was standing opposite a large and ponderous gate, which was the outward entrance to the palace of the King in the country. At the top of this gate I observed the following inscription written in large golden characters. "KNOCK, AND IT SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU."

A gay gentleman, elegantly dressed, soon approached in a beautiful phaeton. He stayed for a

few moments; but on reading the inscription, he exclaimed, "I have no inclination to knock or enter this gate. I am too much engaged, and I think all the beauties of the palace would not repay my trouble, if I were to go and examine them." Saying this, he dashed away down the broad road which was opposite.

The next person I observed was a man of demure appearance, who seemed to have an affected gravity of countenance. He went up to the gate in a fearless manner, and appeared secure of admission; for he said he knew the porter at the gate, that he had associated with many who had been at the King's palace, and had received many proofs of his Majesty's kindness. He, therefore, called out to the porter, and desired him to open the gate for one who was a friend to the King, and who was well known to many of his best servants and officers. To this request, which was repeatedly made, no answer was returned, and, at length, he departed from the gate, disappointed and confounded.

The third person who attracted my attention marched up to the gate with an elevated mien and confident step, as if he possessed a right to enter, and was conferring a favour on the Prince by approaching his mansion. He read the inscription on the gate, but seeing that the knocker was towards the bottom, and that he must stoop to reach it, he resolved to content himself with striking the door with a stick which he held in his hand; but he could not obtain admittance, and went away with indignation.

When I observed these unsuccessful attempts,

I was much discouraged, and thought it was useless for me to try; I was, therefore, going to depart; but, on looking up, I saw the inscription written so plainly, and signed by the seal manual of the King, that I resolved to stay a little longer.

Soon a pilgrim appeared journeying towards the gate. His eye was fixed intensely on the inscription, but he was not sufficiently careful in choosing his way, so that he often stumbled. He knocked at the gate, and it was immediately opened; but in his hurry, he fell down, and it was shut by the porter, who said to him, "Watch and pray." However, he knocked again, and being more careful, was then admitted.

I next noticed a poor weary beggar, almost destitute of clothing, and nearly perishing with hunger. When he came to the gate, his eyes glistened with pleasure at reading the inscription. He kneeled down on the ground, and took hold of the knocker; but on looking at himself, and seeing his unworthy condition to appear before his Lord, I saw tears drop from his eyes; but he soon wiped them off, and resolved, "If I must perish, I will perish in the act of seeking admittance." So he lifted up the knocker and gave a rap, when the gate was immediately opened, and he was admitted with many cheerful welcomes, while he exclaimed, "Open to me the gates of righteousness I will go in to them, and I will praise the Lord; the gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." Psalm cxviii. 19—21.

After this, I saw another person, somewhat

similar to the former, though with much more boldness. He continued knocking for a long time without any success; but he was not discouraged, and repeated his efforts with ardour and importunity. While he was thus employed, and appeared to meet with no success, he pulled from his bosom a scroll, and read these words aloud: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." John xvi. 23. "Yes," exclaimed the pilgrim, "these are the precious words of my Divine Redeemer, who shed his blood on the cross for my salvation, and who is now exalted to heaven as my great Intercessor." Then he turned to his scroll, and read, "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was, in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 15, 16. As he read these words, he lifted his eyes to heaven, the tears rolled down his cheeks, and he grasped the knocker, and made the gate resound again and again. Still he appeared to be unnoticed, the gate remained close shut. He seemed to hesitate for a moment, his knocks became fainter; but he again pulled out the scroll from his bosom, and read, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke xviii. 1. "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thess. v. 17, 18. As he read these words, he knocked with still greater energy and importunity. At length he obtained a happy

entrance, when he cried out, "This is the gate of heaven." Gen. xxviii. 17.

On again looking round me, I beheld at some distance a traveller advancing towards the gate. As he approached, he was accosted by a man of a haggard look, and frightful countenance, who told him it was of no use for him to seek admittance; because such a person as he was would not only be refused, but be punished for his audacity. The traveller made no answer, but continued his course. Soon after he was solicited by one with whom he was formerly intimate, to go with him down the broad road opposite; and on his refusal, he was reproached and abused. When he arrived at the gate, and was about to knock, he began to feel his courage failing, and many fears arose in his mind lest he should be refused admittance: he was almost inclined to depart; but when he looked at the glorious promise just above him, and saw that a strong light from heaven seemed to shine upon it, he took courage, and knocked, and was immediately received. He arose from his knees with comfort and joy, and triumphed over all his enemies and all his difficulties.

Having witnessed these pleasing scenes, I resolved to apply for admission. I accordingly went up to the gate, and gave so loud a knock that it roused me from my slumber. I was then enabled to reflect on the folly of neglecting prayer, —on the sin of performing this duty in a hypocritical, proud, or unwatchful manner—and also on the benefits of an humble, importunate, and faithful spirit of devotion. Blessed are they who watch daily at the gate of prayer, and wait at the posts of her doors! They shall be received into

the presence of their God, and shall obtain eternal happiness, through Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life."

Such is the first story; and before you read the remarks I am about to make in regard to it, I wish you would look it over again, and consider what characters are intended by the various individuals described there; and then, as you read my explanation of the parable, observe whether your interpretations were correct.

1. The gay gentleman in the phaeton.

How many such there are! Lucilla, for instance, knows that she is immortal, that she has a soul, which, thousands of years hence, is to be happy or miserable, and yet she has no desire to pray for its salvation. A walk, a party of pleasure, a visit, a worldly companion, can engross all her interest, and she goes on down the broad road.

2. The demure man, who *called* upon the porter for admittance instead of knocking at the gate. I once heard a young man expatiating on the mercy of God, in a company where the conversation turned on the duties of religion. He was honest, he said, and upright, and no man could complain of him. He reverenced his Maker, and obeyed his laws, and he knew he had nothing to fear. Poor man! The question for you is, "Do you *pray?* Have you knocked at the gate of mercy through a Saviour? Do you daily pray for forgiveness and acceptance in his name?" If you do not, you must be disappointed and confounded at last, when that Saviour shall say, "I never knew you." A great many young persons of amiable and gentle dispositions, and unimpeach-

able morality, think that they shall reach heaven at last, without knocking at the strait gate.

3. The third case was that of the proud man, who could not stoop to become a christian. How many such lofty spirits there are! Alfred is such a young man. He has many companions, who look up to him with high regard; and though he secretly cherishes a wish to become a christian, he is ashamed to avow it. He reads his Bible secretly. He prays by stealth. He conceals the little interest he has in his own salvation. He is too proud to stoop to the knocker of the strait gate. He ought to read Mark viii. 38, and consider it well.

4. The pilgrim, who stumbled and fell at the gate, has many like him among religious inquirers. The young man who seeks reconciliation with God must be willing not only to give up all known sin, but to watch carefully against it. Salvation consists not in pardon merely, but also in purification. It makes us safe, it is true, but the great point is, that it makes us holy; and he who does not desire holiness, and is not willing to watch and strive for it, will only stumble and fall.

The other cases do not need a particular explanation, except, perhaps, that I ought to say that there must have been something wrong about the one who knocked a long time without obtaining admittance. It is, indeed, sometimes true that the soul of the sincere convert does not for some time find peace; but its prayers for forgiveness are always heard, if they are offered aright; and reconciliation with God is secured, though the mourning soul may not at once become conscious

of it. God will always at once receive every returning sinner who comes in the name of Christ, and with sincere desires for forgiveness and sanctification.

Some persons excuse themselves from the duty of prayer by saying, that, as God knows perfectly well what we want, it cannot be necessary for us to ask any thing of him. Now, although we ought at once to comply with every condition which God may think proper to impose, even if we cannot understand the reasons, still we may, properly and profitably, inquire into those reasons, if we do it with a proper spirit. Why then does God require us to pray? He knows what we want; why does he insist upon our asking for it, before it can be bestowed?

One great reason is, to keep up an intercourse, an acquaintance, a feeling of dependence and affection in human hearts towards him. Suppose a mother had such a perfect knowledge of the wants of her boy, that she could always anticipate them with absolute certainty. When he is tired, she always has a chair ready for him, and she foresees his sleepiness before it comes, so as always to send him to bed just at the time he would have wished to go. In the same manner she always has water at hand when he is thirsty, and bread when he is hungry. She brings playthings when he wishes to play, and lets him stop when he is tired, and is so skilful in anticipating and supplying every want, before the boy shall have time to express it, that, during all the years of his childhood, he never had occasion to go to his mother to ask a single thing. To make the parallel com-

plete, we must suppose the mother to do this in unseen ways, so as not at all to attract the child's attention to her. What would be the consequence? Why, the child would lose all interest in his mother, and all attachment to her. He would consider her as he would almost any other person around him; and though he might, by reflection and careful observation, have perceived that she was the source from which his comforts and enjoyments proceeded, still he probably would not do this, but would feel as little regard for her as most persons do now for God.

But children are not exposed to this danger. God has so arranged the circumstances of their condition, that, by the wants which they continually feel, and for the relief of which they are obliged continually to *go themselves* to their mothers, they are constantly reminded of their dependence, and they see continual proofs of her kindness and affection. This keeps the flame of gratitude and affection constantly alive in their hearts; and they are drawn closer and closer to their parents by every fresh instance in which they go to them for the means of happiness, or seek in their protection a refuge from danger. If men would go as frequently to God with their wants and trials, it would have the same effect upon their feelings towards him.

Besides, a favour bestowed from God is twice as valuable if it comes in answer to prayer; or, rather, it has intrinsically twice as much value, and that value is felt by the soul twice as strongly; so that the real increase is four-fold. For instance, your little brother, your only play-fellow and

companion, is sick, and lies helpless and suffering, and in danger of going down soon to the grave. Now, suppose you wait in anxiety and sorrow and fear, earnestly hoping for his recovery, but do not pray for it. If he does recover, you feel relieved and happy, it is true; but, not recognising the hand of God in it at all, you feel as though some good chance only had happened to you, and your heart is cold still, though its painful anxiety is gone. But, if you are accustomed to look to God in all your troubles; if you have been reconciled to him, and feel that, through Christ, your sins are forgiven, and that you can come with confidence and affection to his throne; then, when you beseech the Lord to restore your sick and suffering brother, if it be his will, and he grants your request, not only is your anxious fear gone, but your heart is warmed and filled with the glow of gratitude and love. You take back your brother as *from God's hand.* You feel that he has been rescued by a friend, and restored to you as a token of love; and you see in him afterwards not merely his value as a means of happiness to you, but there is added to this the higher value which every gift possesses, as a token of the kindness and affection of the giver. Yes, the command that we should pray, that we should hold habitual intercourse with God, and *ask him* for what we want, is admirably adapted to the principles of human nature and the moral wants of man, and is exactly calculated to accomplish the great object which God has in view—to link all the hearts he has formed, by the bonds of affection and gratitude, closely to himself.

The reader will observe that I have spoken above of the necessity of being reconciled to God, in order to be able to approach him in the right way. Persons very often, especially young persons, fly to God when in any great anxiety, or alarm, or trouble, merely from fear. They ask in such cases, and receive not, because they ask amiss. If we cherish iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear our prayer. That is, we cannot expect to love sin, while sin is agreeable, and then to fly to God for protection from its sorrows when they come upon us, with the design of going back to sin again when the calamity shall be overpast. Hence the first real sincere prayer implies the entire renunciation of the world and of sin; and accordingly, it is often attended with a struggle. Sometimes this struggle is severe, and I presume that the consciences of some of the readers of this chapter will urge them, while they read it, to begin to pray; but sin and sinful pleasures will urge them not to do it. Now, sin must be renounced, and forgiveness sought in the name of Christ, if a life of prayer is to be begun. I close this chapter by another story, in the hope that, while reading it, the heart of my reader may melt into contrition, and that he may himself offer his first prayer, and surrender himself to God, in the words which he shall read.

The first real Prayer.

—— "Walter," said the dying young man to his brother, who was a lad fifteen years of age, "you are very fond of books; almost as fond as I have been; but, my dear Walter, don't follow my

example in opening all other books but the Bible. I put it off for a long while; and it is only through the amazing love of Him who 'so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'—it is only through his mercy that I am now enabled to rejoice. Take that Bible, my Walter, as my last gift; make it your chief study; 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.'"—"Mother, dear, dear mother," he said, "may I rest my head on your bosom, and there fall asleep?—not to sleep either," he added with a faint smile, "but to wake up in light and life. I entreat you," he said, fixing his dim eyes on her face, "not to mourn over me as dead, but as gone a little before yourself to join our dear father. You both took such care to teach me when a child, and the seed has sprung up." He shut his eyes, and remained silent a short time. Then again he spoke. "'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid!' My own mother, I feel the truth of this. The Divine Comforter is with me now. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ'"—he paused, and seemed to answer to himself—"Yes!—'the love of God'—God, my heavenly Father?—Yes! 'The fellowship of the Holy Spirit?'—Yes! God also will comfort you, my mother, my brother, my friend;"—and he put out his hand to me—my kind and faithful friend!—"Mother," he gently turned his head, as a child when going to sleep,—"he fulfils to me that promise—'As one whom his mother

comforteth, so will I comfort you.'" He did not speak again

The departure of this spirit to the unseen world had some effect upon me. I should have been strangely insensible had it not. I was deeply impressed for a time. Still I do not know that the Spirit of God spoke to me in that event, more than in the ordinary mercies and warnings of my life. I often see that the case of Elijah is illustrated in God's dealings with men. He is not in the "whirlwind," nor in the "flame of fire," nor in the "earthquake;" but in the "still small voice." It was after I had lost the first vivid impression of this scene, that I trust I offered *the first real prayer.*

I had retired one evening at a late hour, for private prayer, into a small inner chamber, which I used as a study, beyond my sitting-room. All the doors around me were closed, and a profound stillness prevailed on every side. I knelt with my Bible open before me, and was seeking with words and thoughts, though not with a desire of a broken and contrite heart, to be heard. I was not praying with a written form, but according to an arranged form, which I had gradually made a dead form. I soon discovered that my heart was occupied with a mere worldly subject; and, alarmed at my solemn mockery, I endeavoured to address myself in truth to the Lord. I burst into tears; a deep sense of the forbearance and love of Him whom I had so often slighted, rushed over my whole soul. I felt hopelessly wretched. I did not rise from my knees, but found neither words nor thoughts for prayer; I could only lay

my head on my clasped hands, and weep. The sins of what seemed to me a long life rose up to my recollection. I was again with my father and my mother, looking up in their faces, listening to their words. I remembered particularly one evening when I had been spoken to seriously by my dear mother after behaving very ill: I had made many promises and professions that same morning. "This is the fruit," she said, "of your ready promises, of your boastful resolutions this morning. I warned you; but I saw that you thought yourself very wise and very safe. You seemed to think that you had only to declare your intention of amendment, and that your amendment would follow of course. You have yet to learn that of yourself you can do nothing. How often you have heard this from your father and myself; and now again you come to me with promises! You tell me so solemnly that you will become good. Indeed, my child, I have no power to make you good: I can punish you for bad conduct, but God alone can make you good."

As it had been with the child, so it had become with the man. I had acted in the spirit that my mother condemned, ever since. I had indeed yet to learn that of myself I could do nothing! I had sometimes thought, that because I had made some advance in the knowledge of spiritual things, I was becoming spiritually-minded, and should remain so, resting safe in the progress I had made. Alas! as well might to-day depend upon the light of yesterday, and say to the sun, "I shall not need thy fresh beams every morning." In fact, in many ways I had been resting out of Christ,

who tells his disciples so plainly, John xv. 5, "Without me," or apart from me, "ye can do nothing."

I felt now suddenly driven out of all my strongholds, or rather, they seemed all to fall in ruins around me, and to leave me defenceless and unsheltered. I felt more helpless and more wretched than when I was first left a weeping orphan in my childhood. The more I thought, the more utterly wretched I became. I drew my open Bible near me, and turned to a very searching and convincing page, the parable of the Talents. I considered it deeply, and then hastened with fearful eagerness to that of the Prodigal Son. As I knelt, passage after passage of scripture came before me: well known they were in one sense, for I had been instructed in the letter of the Bible. I thought of the son who received his father's command to work in his vineyard, and who answered so readily, making the show and profession of obedience: "I go, sir;" but "went not"—and felt how much more dutiful was the conduct of the other son, who refused at first to obey, but afterwards repented and went. I saw that all my life long I had held back my heart from God, that I was a sinner justly condemned, and could be pardoned and saved only through Christ, who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." I appealed to Him as my hope, my strength, and my glorious Intercessor; and felt that I must renounce every sin, and receive him as my All. Imperfectly as I have since lived, from that time my aim has been higher. My natural independence was at once cut down and rooted out, and a new

dependence upon Divine assistance was deeply implanted. The end and object of my future life seemed suddenly simplified. I felt in one sense like the ruined man, who, sitting down upon a hill, from whence he could behold, on every side, the rich and fertile fields that had once been the portion of his forefathers and of himself, at once, but most deliberately, resolved that he would have *but one object* in view for the rest of his life—that he would never rest till he had regained the whole of those immense possessions; and who accordingly, from that moment, left no labour unperformed, no means untried, stopped at nothing, till he had actually regained to himself the whole. So I resolved, that, God helping me, I would henceforth have but one object—to honour Christ in the extension of his kingdom in the world. This object I resolved to pursue with a settled purpose, and with all my heart, as long as life should continue. I trust I committed myself, soul and body, to God as my only keeper, and felt that for ever after I must look for strength and happiness only to him.

A TALK WITH JOHN.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR THE LITTLE CHILDREN.

"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."

Come, little John, come and sit with me; I want to tell you something. I am not going to tell you a story, but only to give you some advice. It is not to amuse you, but to teach you your duty. Some boys do not want to know what is their duty; for if they knew, they would not do it. But I suppose you wish to know: listen, then, attentively to what I have written here. Your mother, or perhaps your elder brother or sister, will read it to you.

Did you ever think what it is to pray? In family prayer, you all assemble in the parlour, and, after reading the Bible, you kneel down, and your father talks aloud; he seems to be speaking to some one. Who is it that he is talking with? It is not with you, or your mother. Who is he speaking to? I once heard of a little girl, whose parents were poor and bad people. They never sent her to school, not even to the sabbath-school; and she grew up a wicked girl, entirely ignorant of religion. When she was about fourteen years old,

she went to live in the family of a pious woman. The morning after she went to this family, just before breakfast, one of the little children came running into the kitchen, saying, "Susan, papa wants you to *come to prayer.*" Susan did not know what was meant by *prayer*, but knew that they wanted her to *go in;* so she followed the little boy into the parlour. The family were all seated round the room, still and quiet. The father read one of the psalms, in a serious and attentive manner; they then all kneeled down, and the father asked God to bless the whole family. Susan afterwards said, in describing this scene, that "he talked to the wall;" and soon after asked the lady what her master was talking there for so long. She did not know what it meant; but the lady explained it all to her.

Now I do not suppose you are as ignorant as Susan was; you *know* what family prayer is for: but still, I know a great many children, who feel and act during the morning and evening prayer of the family, just as they might properly do, if the father was doing nothing more than talking to the wall.

I suppose you know what prayer is. It is simply asking things of God. Whether we pray secretly, or in the family, or in public, or on the sabbath, it is simply *asking favours of God.* You very frequently ask favours of your father. In the summer, you wanted a straw hat, because it was hot; you asked your father for money to buy it, and he gave it you. When the winter comes, it will grow cold, and you will want a pair of gloves, and a coat, and perhaps a cap; you

will ask your father for them, and, if he thinks it best, he will get them for you. It is just so in prayer to God. We ask favours of him. When Jesus was here on earth, he taught us how to pray; he said we should look to God as our *Father in heaven*. And among other things that we were to pray for, he said that we should ask him to "give us this day our daily bread." There, you see, we are to ask blessings from God. We are to ask him for those things that are necessary for our comfort.

The reason why your father prays is, he wants God to bless him,—to bless you,—to bless the whole family. He knows that it is proper to ask God to do it; so every day, you all come together in the parlour, and he asks God for those things that he wants. Now, how should you behave at that time? How should your little brother act?

I recollect, once I was in a house where there was a boy about two years old. When the family came together for prayer, the mother told the boy to sit still upon the stool; he sat down, but began to stamp upon the floor with his feet, and strike the chairs with a whip which he had in his hand. His father began to read, his mother whispered to him to be quiet, but he paid no attention to her. Presently, just as they were kneeling, the cat came into the room; up jumped the boy, ran whipping the cat all about the floor and out into the entry. He disturbed the family very much; we could hardly hear his father speak.

On another occasion, when I attended family prayer, there was a boy of about the same age,

but very different from the one I have just mentioned. He sat close by my side, on a stool, holding a picture-book in his hand. He was very still while his father was reading; and when they kneeled, he did just as the others did; he put his hands upon the stool, and his face down upon his hands, and remained so while his father was praying, only moving his head and his knees a little as he got tired. And so it was with all the others; every one was still and quiet while praying to God.

Now, you see, at once, which boy behaved most properly, and which family prayed to God in the most acceptable manner. And so it should always be. Whenever we worship God, we should be *still* and *quiet, serious* and *attentive*. It is very plain that it ought to be so, and whenever we are present where God is so worshipped, we are pleased with the regularity and order.

I once heard a gentleman speak of a visit to one of the benevolent institutions near Boston; I think it was the House of Reformation, in South Boston. He was very much pleased with all he saw, but spoke particularly of the religious exercises; he was pleased with the regularity and order that were then observed. There were a large number of boys, who were seated in rows upon benches. When the moment for prayer came, they together rose, kneeled, and rested their heads upon the benches, while the superintendent offered up a simple prayer for them. The gentleman was struck with the seriousness and attention which was apparent, and he wondered that all should be so orderly. He supposed that there would, at

least, be one or two, who would look about, and see what was doing; but instead of this, every boy had his head down, and seemed very attentive. But just as he was thinking thus, one boy raised his head and looked around him. Now it was very evident that he was not joining in the prayer, and even this single instance of disorder did a great deal to injure the serious and solemn effect.

If you wish then, John, to do your duty, take care to be always quiet and still and attentive at prayer.

But it is not enough to be still and in order when at prayer. God requires more. Think what you are doing—you are asking blessings of God. Now God is a real Being; he is actually near you; he hears your language, and knows your thoughts; and the whole family have come to him to ask some blessing—perhaps, that he will restore a sick sister to health. Now, how should you behave during the prayer? I will mention two ways in which you can act, and you may say which is the right one.

First: you may all kneel down together, during the whole prayer; you may be perfectly still—as still as though no one was in the room—and every thing may be done in perfect order. But while your father is making his request to God, you may be thinking of what a good game of ball you will have after breakfast, or of what you and your brother will do on the next Saturday afternoon; or perhaps you are watching an insect that is creeping over the floor, thinking that you will kill it after prayers.

The second way is, for you to kneel down, to

do as the others do, to be still and in order as before; but instead of watching the insect, and thinking of your ball, just shut your eyes, and think of what your father says; remember that God is close by,—that he is in the room,—and hears your father; and then in your thoughts join in the prayer. Now God sees the heart; he knows your thoughts and feelings; and to pray in this way is just the same to him, as though you should all say aloud the same words.

Which of these two ways do you think is the right one? I suppose you will say, The last one. But the only difference between the two is, that in the last, you join in the prayer. In both cases you are very quiet and orderly, but in the last, you, *with your heart and thoughts*, ask God to grant the request.

This is what you should always do. Whenever you attend prayers, you should not only be orderly and quiet, but should engage in the exercise with your thoughts and feelings.

I said, a little while ago, that prayer was asking blessings of God; and so it is. But there are three kinds of prayer; or, perhaps, I should say, there are three different things that we do in prayer.

1. We thank God for his past goodness. 2. We ask more favours of him. 3. We confess our sins.

Now I should like to have you put your hand on your left side where your heart is. Do you feel it beat? Perhaps you cannot.

Will you run across the room two or three times, and then try it? Now I suppose you do.

Well, I wish you would try to stop its beating, will you? You say, I suppose, that you cannot.

Well, try again. Can't you stop it? "No," you say, "I cannot."

Well, make it beat slower; can you not do that? "No," you say, "I can't do that either."

But can't you do any thing with it? Have you no power over it? "No," you say.

You know that if your heart should stop beating, you would die; now I want to know who makes it beat. It is not you: you say you can do nothing with it. Well, who is it? Who kept it beating all last night when you were asleep? Who kept it beating all last week, when you were playing with your playmates? Who kept it beating all last winter and summer? Who has kept it beating ever since you were born? Why, God. Well, ought you not to *thank him?* If he had not watched over you, and kept it beating, you would have been dead long ago.

God has blessed you in other ways. The other day, I was walking in a street, in a large city, and met a little girl: she was bare-footed, but had on an old bonnet, and a torn shawl about her neck, and a gown so thin that the wind seemed to blow through it. She was *very* cold, and asked me for some money to buy some wood to warm herself and mother. She was not *your* sister; your father is able to buy all those things that are necessary to keep you comfortable. And it is God that enables him to do it. Ought you not to thank God? So it is with every thing that you have; all comes from God. I hope you

will remember this; and to-morrow morning, when your father thanks God, for keeping you all safe through the night, and providing for you in the morning, I hope you will join with him, and in your heart thank God for his goodness.

You should also ask God to *continue his favours;* for if you do not, he may at any time take them away. He may stop your heart's beating, and cause you to die; or he may take away your father's property, and leave you cold and hungry. He can take away these blessings, and he often does; and he may from you, unless you ask him to continue them. I know some boys, who once had a father and mother, who were very rich. They lived in a fine large house, the largest house in town. They had a beautiful horse and chaise, that they might ride. But now their parents are both dead, and the boys have moved out of the house, and they often suffer for want of things really necessary for their comfort.

I mentioned, also, that in prayer we *confess our sins.* You should join in this, with all your heart. I think you will find, that you do every day a great many things that are wrong. If you think of what you did yesterday, you will probably recollect that you sometimes disobeyed your father, or, perhaps, was angry with your sister; I dare say you will find, that you did something that was not exactly what God required you to do. You should remember every thing of this kind, and unite with your father, at family prayer, in confessing your sins. If you do thus sincerely unite in the worship of God morning and evening,

God will bless you, and make you happy in this life, and the life to come.

What I have written now is enough for once. So the book may be put away, and perhaps to-morrow you may read or hear the rest.

Well, my boy, what do you think of what I have said about order at family prayer, and your joining in the exercise *yourself?* Is it true, or not? or do not you think much about it? I think you will see that it is all correct; and that you *should do as* I have described. And now I wish to tell you some of the *advantages* of engaging with sincerity in family prayer.

Perhaps you will not think as I do about it. If you do *not*, and what I say is not true, you must not regard it. I wish, however, you would read this carefully, and if you think it is true, act accordingly.

Are you ever happy? "Yes, indeed," I suppose you will say, "I have had some famous games at ball, and have been as happy as I wish to be; if I can always be as happy as I was then, I shall be satisfied." Well, I believe you; I suppose it is so, that you are generally happy when playing with your ball, and also when engaged in your sports. I recollect that playing at ball, and fishing, and sliding down hill, and skating, have made me happy many an afternoon. But I have another question to ask you,—are you *always* happy? I do not mean to ask, if you are ever sick, and therefore unhappy because you have the head-ache? or whether you have lost a friend, and are unhappy on that account? But suppose nothing

extraordinary happens, and that things go on smoothly during the day: are you then always happy? I think you will say you are not.

Your feelings, I suppose, are something like this. You wake up on a fine pleasant morning; you walk to the front door, and look about; the sun shines forth warm, and every thing is clear and bright; a robin comes flying past you, and lights upon the fence near by, and there sings a sweet song; every thing seems happy. But how is it with you? you enjoy it in some degree, I suppose; you had rather see such a morning than a gloomy rainy day; but are you really happy within, in your very soul? or do you feel uneasy —a little unhappy? You do not know why it is, perhaps, but you feel a little uneasy somewhere,— and somewhere in your heart too. Is it not so?

Well, now, on Saturday afternoon—how is it then? After you have risen from dinner, you ask your father if you may go and play; he says, Yes. You put your hat on and run; you find a troop of boys kicking a foot-ball; they choose you upon one side, and you have a fine game all the afternoon; your side, perhaps, beat five times out of seven.

While engaged in play, you are happy: but soon you go home to tea, and after tea sit down upon the steps and think; how is it then? Sometimes, I suppose, you are happy, for your father comes to the door and talks with you, and tries to make you happy. But are you not sometimes unhappy; and that too, when you are well, and every thing has gone on through the day as you would like to have it? do you not then feel a

secret unhappiness within? I am afraid it is so sometimes, and I think I can tell you the reason.

You know, John, a good deal about religion. You know that there is a God; that he made you, and all that you see about you; and that we are all dependent upon him for our daily life. You know too about his holy law; how he tells us to act and feel towards him, and how, towards our fellow-men. And you *feel* that this law is right. You feel that you *ought* to love God, and do his will all the day; that you ought to feel grateful to him for the many comforts which he gives you. And as to that part of the law which teaches us how we should act towards our fellow-men, you feel that *that* too is right; that it is right that we should love one another, and do good to one another, and make one another as happy as we can. You know all this; and you *feel* all this; and you *feel* that you do not do all this; and that is what makes you unhappy. You feel that you do not know what God requires; you feel that it is wrong; and therefore you are unhappy.

Take the case where I supposed you stood at the door on a fine summer morning, when every thing was cheerful and bright. You had been sound asleep; God had given you sweet rest, and you had awaked strong and healthy. You felt the warm beams of the sun upon your cheeks, and the fresh morning air gave you new life; the pleasant view before you, and the cheerful singing of the birds made your heart glad. You know that God did all this; that He sent the sun to warm you, and the birds to cheer you by their song; every thing about you made you think that

God was good and merciful; and you felt that you ought to love him for these his blessings: but you felt that you did *not* thus love him; and it was this thought that made you unhappy. You leaned against the door, and as you looked into the parlour, you saw your father reading by the window; your younger sister was playing upon the floor, and the table was set, showing that a breakfast was preparing for you. You knew that all these came from God; that He had given you a father, and a mother, and a sister, for friends; that He was preparing food to supply your wants; and you knew that you ought to love this God: but you felt that you did *not* thus love him, and it was this thought that made you unhappy. God has surrounded you with blessings so that every thing you saw made you think of his goodness: you could not help thinking that you ought to love him, but at the same time you felt that you did not; and this it was, I think, that made you unhappy. I do not suppose you had precisely the same thought and feelings which I have now described, but you felt that something was wrong within, an aching somewhere, an uneasiness of the mind, and an indistinct fear of something, you did not know what. You felt thus, because you knew that the feelings of your heart were not right, and feared that God was not your friend.

So it is after you have had fine amusement in the afternoon by fishing. It is almost dark; your playmates have just left you, and you walk along alone; you have in your hand the fish you have caught; you think how glad your mother and sister will be to see them, and of the fine breakfast

you will have in the morning. As you are thinking and rejoicing thus, you cast your eyes off to the right, and see the white twilight of the west; you see, too, a star peeping forth bright and red like a coal of fire. That star makes you think of God; you recollect that he has kept you alive during the afternoon, and that it is he who has given you the pleasant home to which you are going. You recollect, too, that you are unmindful of Him, that you seldom pray to him, and do not do your duty when it is contrary to your own wishes; you fear that He is not your friend: and this makes you unhappy again. Now, John, I want you to think if it is not so? I do not mean, whether you have had these feelings just as I have described them,—but is not the case pretty much as I have said?

Suppose now, that, instead of living as I have described, you engage in sincerity in family worship; what will be the result? We will consider. You awake in the morning; and after an hour, the family come together to worship God. You remember that God is present, though you see him not; you know that he hears the language of the lips, and knows the feelings of the heart. Your father thanks God for giving you all sweet rest during the night; that you are all now well and healthy; and he thanks him for the comforts that you now enjoy; that you see the light of a pleasant day, and have food and clothing. You unite with your father and the rest of the family, and inwardly thank God for your comforts. But when you reflect upon all God's goodness to you, and your conduct, you feel that you are a sinner, and

know not how to appear before him; you fear that God will not accept you, for your sins are great. But you recollect that Christ died for sinners; and that God has declared that, for Christ's sake, he will forgive the sins of all that come to him with penitence, and trust in him for salvation. You believe this, and join with your father in confessing your sins, and imploring forgiveness for Christ's sake. You trust God's word, and find peace in believing what he has said of his willingness to forgive us, when we have done wrong. You believe that, for Christ's sake, God is your friend, and this thought makes you happy; it soothes the uneasiness that you before endured, and removes that secret fear. You feel that God is now your heavenly *Father*, and you ask him to take care of you through the day. You walk to the door, and the warmth of that sun, that before made you feel your guilt, *now* sends peace and gratitude to your heart; and the notes of the merry robin make your whole soul glad. The whole scene reminds you of the goodness and love of God; you feel that it is all the gift of your heavenly Father, who is now your friend. Your little sister comes to the door, and calls you to breakfast, and you go into the parlour, and really enjoy that meal with your father and mother, because you feel that God is now your friend. And the breakfast that you are eating, and the father and mother whose presence you enjoy, are proofs of His goodness and love.

So it will be in all your sports, which God has not forbidden. When you have enjoyed your play in the afternoon, and walk home at night, the

evening star will not remind you that God is angry with you; but it will tell you, that the God whom you asked to take care of you during the day, has heard your morning prayer, and brought you to its close. You will thank him for his goodness, and be happy: for you will feel that God is your friend.

I wish, now, to tell you a story; and then I will talk with you again.

The Story of James.

James Smith was about twelve years old; and he had a brother who was four years younger. James was a boy who *generally* engaged with solemnity in family prayer; though he was sometimes inattentive; and whenever this was the case, he felt that he had done wrong, and was unhappy until he confessed his sin to God, and asked his forgiveness. One day, about twelve o'clock at noon, Mr. Smith was sitting at an open window, reading; he presently heard two boys running along, keeping step together exactly; they ran clap, clap, clap, on the smooth, hard foot-path. He looked up, and saw James, with his younger brother close behind him, running at full speed; they were just returning from school; each had a book in his hand, and away they ran, clap, clap, clap, round the corner of the house into the yard. They soon came back, each one driving a hoop, and down they went to the common, where they met a dozen other boys, who had assembled for play.

When they came to dinner, Mr. Smith said, "Well, my boys, have you had a good drive?"

"Yes," said James, "we have had a capital game of play; we went away up to the top of that hill by Mr. Jones's; it is as much as a mile from here; and then we all started together, and came down the hill as fast as we could run."

"Yes, papa, and I kept up with them all the way too," said Samuel, "I was a very short way behind them; but I wish my hoop would keep up better, it keeps tumbling down on level ground."

"To-day is Saturday," said their father, "and I suppose you wish to play this afternoon, but I have some work that I want done very much. You know, James, it is high time to weed our carrots; they are up quite high now, and the sooner it is done the better." "All the boys will drive hoop this afternoon," said James, smiling, and wishing that his father would defer the work until Monday.

"Will they?" said his father, "I wish I could let you go and join them, but I think this work had better be done to-day. There are two beds, and I want you to weed them both well; your mother and I are going to ride, and you may do it while we are gone." The boys said they would do it, and after dinner set down upon the steps to rest themselves. James wanted to go and play very much, and began to be discontented because he could not. As he was thinking, however, he recollected one verse of the chapter which his father read at prayers in the morning; it was this —"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." His father had explained it to them in the morning; he said it meant, that children should obey their parents with cheerfulness,

—with willingness,—with their hearts; it was not enough to *obey* merely, but we must obey them *in the Lord*, that is, in the fear and love of the Lord, so as to please *Him*. Now God, said he, looks at the heart as well as the outward act; and whatever command we obey, we must do it *cheerfully* if we would please Him. So, if we would obey our parents, in such a manner as to please God, it must not be done gloomily and discontentedly, merely because we *must* do it, but we must do it readily and cheerfully, remembering that God sees us, and that this is something that *He* will have us do,—that in doing this we are serving God. James remembered this, and knew that, in being discontented as he was, he was sinning against God. In his thoughts he asked God to forgive him, and prayed that he might now obey his father *cheerfully;* he then went into the house, thinking how good God was to him, how kind his parents were, and how he ought to obey God and his parents. Soon he assisted his father in getting the chaise ready; and after his parents rode away from the door, he and his brother went to work in the garden.

They had been at work almost an hour, and had just begun their second bed, when they heard a great many hoops, rattling along by the outside of the garden fence; in half a minute a whole troop of boys came trundling their hoops round into the yard. As soon as they saw James they called out, "Halloo there! what are you weeding carrots for *this* afternoon? come and get your hoop, and let us have a drive."

"I can't," said James; "father wants me to

weed these beds; he is gone out to ride, and wants me to do it while he is gone: I have got one done already."

"One!" said one of the boys; "how long have have you been about it?"

"O, about an hour."

"An hour! and got to work another hour too? If I were you, I would go and play; I hate to work in the garden. Come, James, get your hoop and go, and tell your father you were tired."

James recollected this verse again, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." He recollected also his father's explanation of it, and knew that God saw him, and that it would be wrong for him to disobey his father."

He thought all this to himself, and told the boys he could not go. "Well, James, I'll tell you what," said one of the boys, "you've got your work half done, and you can have a little play now, I know; so get your hoop, and we'll all have a short run up as far as the tavern, and see the shows, and then come back again."

"Show! is there a show there?"

"Yes, there are three; we stopped there when we came down; and one of them has got both a giant and a dwarf."

"I have a good mind to go."

"You had better, for you'll not see them unless you go now; for they'll not stop long. Besides, you will work so much the better when you get back."

James considered the case again. He thought that his father had gone to ride, and set him to

work, intending that he should work until his return, or till he had got both beds done. His father had not yet returned, and his beds were not yet finished; so James thought he ought to work. But he began to think about the giant and the dwarf, and thought that perhaps he could go and see that, and get the beds done too, before his father returned; and then his father would not know that he had been away—he would not know any thing about it. James had a good mind to go; but he still recollected the verse which his father had read in the morning, and the explanation which he gave of it. He knew that God required him to obey his parents, whether they were present or absent; and that he ought to obey them, *because* it pleased God, and *for the sake* of pleasing God, with a *desire* to please him. He knew that God saw him, and required him then to obey his parents. He recollected also that, in the morning prayer, the family committed themselves to God's protection; asked him to take care of them during the day, and said that they wished to do his will, to serve him; and prayed that he would assist them in time of temptation, that they might not disobey his command, or do any thing contrary to his will. James recollected this, and that he had joined in the prayer. He felt that he was now tempted to do wrong: he felt that he ought not to go away, but that he ought to stay and weed his beds. He resolved that he would do it; and in his mind prayed to God that he might do it *cheerfully*. He told the boys that he wanted to go with them; but he thought his father would rather

have him stay and work, so he could not go. The boys trundled away their hoops without him, and he went cheerfully to work.

In an hour the second bed was done, and James and Samuel seated themselves on the steps to rest, and wait for their father. In a short time he returned, and the boys with their parents walked into the garden to see the beds. James had hold of his father's hand, and Samuel of his mother's. They walked up the wide part of the garden, till they came opposite to the beds which they had been weeding. Their father and mother were very much pleased when they saw how well and neatly they had done the work; scarcely a weed could be seen, and every carrot was standing straight and regular; the weeds were all wheeled away from the path, and every thing was ready for the first shower that should come.

When the boys saw how pleased their parents were, they also were very happy; James was happy because he knew that what he had done was pleasing to God.

When he went to bed, he thanked God that he had enabled him to resist temptation that day; and prayed that he might ever be attentive at family prayers, and that, by engaging with his heart in these devotions, he might be preserved from sin.

Now, I think it very probable that many boys, on reading the above story, may think that James's case was a hard one. But God requires us to do our duty in hard cases as well as in the easy ones. Children very often think that their parents' com-

mands are unreasonable when they are not so: but sometimes, perhaps, they are so. In all, however, the child is to comply with a submissive and dutiful spirit, and the peace and happiness arising from having done your duty, and pleased God, will far more than counterbalance the loss of play.

You will find it so, John, if you give yourself to God, and worship him sincerely in private, and in the family. You will find that God will guide and strengthen you, and guard you continually from the temptations to which you are exposed. Besides the advantages I have mentioned, there are others which those enjoy who engage in family worship with sincerity, and which give them a quiet and peace which cannot be obtained in any other way.

You are often, very often, exposed to danger. If the danger is small, and your father is near, you feel safe, because you think he can protect you from harm; but in times of greater danger, you feel troubled and fearful, even at your father's side. There are times when you feel that even your father cannot protect you: you need some one stronger than he; you need to feel that God is your guardian and friend. But how can you feel this, if you have no regard for him, and neglect to call upon him? In the morning your father assembles the family together, and they ask God to take care of them for the day; you refuse to join in prayer, and pay no attention to the worship. Suppose now that, in an hour after, your father should send you away on horseback to do some business for him; the horse gets frightened, and

runs away with you; he darts from the road into a rough and stony field, and you are thus carried along at his will, in danger of being cast headlong against a rock. Can you, at such a time, feel calm and peaceful? Do you feel that God is your friend? Do you believe that he will deliver you from death? or can you, without fear, think of meeting God, in case he should at that time call you from this world? But suppose you are a boy of prayer; suppose you have given yourself to God, to serve him during the day, have asked him to take care of you, committed yourself into his hands, that he may do with you as he pleases; in that case you would feel calm. You would not, indeed, know that God would save your life, but you would know that you were safe in his hands: perhaps he would take you to another world; perhaps he would save you alive: whatever happened, you would feel safe, for you would know that God did it all, and that he was your *friend.*

THE FAMILY CHANGED.

CHAPTER V.

A STORY FOR ALL.

I WAS very young when I left the parental roof, and was separated from my mother. My father lived in one of the finest regions in France, and passed all the year upon his estates, which obliged him, for the sake of my education, to separate me from him, when I had attained my ninth year, and to place me in a college at Paris. Until this age, my mother had the sole care of my education. Each day she devoted several hours to giving me lessons, and often made me read, after her, portions of the holy scriptures, which she afterwards explained to me in a persuasive and touching manner. This exercise, and the prayers I had been accustomed to repeat morning and evening, together with the sermons which I heard on sundays, were the only means of improvement which I enjoyed. I had been three years in college, when my father requested one of his friends to bring me to Languedoc, a province in France, to pass the time of my vacation there. The health of my mother was so much impaired, that the physicians felt the greatest anxiety on

her account. She was so changed that I hardly recognised her. Although very young, I felt the deepest sorrow, and could not bear to fix my eyes upon those pale and faded features that I had formerly seen animated with such an expression of happiness.

One day my mother sent for me earlier than usual, about six in the morning. I found her sitting in bed, and leaning upon the pillows. She held the Bible open before her, and an expression of peace and hope shone in her pale countenance. The window was open, receiving the perfume of flowers, and the song of a thousand birds celebrated the infinite greatness and goodness of God, the Creator of the universe. My feelings were strongly excited, I hardly dared to approach the bed of my mother: she stretched forth her hands, clasped me affectionately to her bosom, and when I kneeled beside her, she raised her eyes towards heaven, and prayed fervently. "My dear child," said she to me, with a calm and firm tone, "I wished to see you early this morning, because there remain to me now but a few moments to live. Do not let this trouble you; even the longest life is very short, compared with eternity! We shall soon be reunited for ever, my son! God will not forsake you, but you must consecrate yourself to him to serve him."

My mother's voice ceased for a moment, a tear dropped from her eye, when she added, with a trembling voice, "You must serve him better than I have done." I looked surprised.

"Yes, my son," replied my mother, "and at this moment, when the world is receding from

me, when I am going to render an account to God of my works, I can say, that the Lord allows me to go in peace; that I commit my soul into his hands, with a firm assurance of having part in his mercy; for the blood of my Saviour has atoned for my offences, and it is only by him that I am justified. Still I regret one thing, which I hope to repair by the promise I wish to obtain from you." Then my mother pointed with her finger to a verse of the holy scriptures, which I read: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

"See what I ought to have done," continued she, "and what I have not done. I have served God in my heart, but have never established his worship in my family. Oh! what blessings this sacred duty would have conferred upon me, and upon us all! I thought I loved God, but forgot to serve him! My son, perhaps you will one day become the father of a family; promise me that you will call to mind the last moments of your mother, and that then you will honour the Lord by daily family worship." Bathing my mother's hands with tears, I promised to comply with all her wishes. She seemed satisfied, and enjoined on me not to forget my promise.

I will not retrace the afflictive scenes which followed this interview: my mother slept in Jesus. A few weeks after, I again left my father's roof: it was the abode of sorrow, but had become dearer than ever to me. I had a sister, three years younger than myself, and two brothers of an intermediate age: they understood not the loss they had sustained; alas! I knew it not myself.

I resumed my studies, and several years glided away before I returned to Languedoc. My father came to Paris yearly to visit me. These journeys served to divert him from the grief which time had not diminished. When I was eighteen years of age, I left college, and returned home. I had not seen my brothers and sisters since the moment of our sad separation, and I found them so much grown, that I had, as it were, a new acquaintance to make; but a tender affection soon united us perfectly.

My sister bore a striking resemblance to my mother. The faculties of her mind were early developed; she sought, as far as was in her power, to fill the station, and discharge the duties of a mother. But all her efforts were insufficient, and I was deeply grieved to observe the absence of that order, peace, and harmony, which once prevailed. A melancholy sorrow settled down upon my father's heart, which indisposed him for domestic duties; he, however, devoted most of his time to the superintendence of his children's education, but this was chiefly confined to their intellectual instruction.

During the hours of study, he exacted an indefatigable application; at other hours, he imposed no restraint, but left them to grow up without any care, except for their protection.

He left his domestics still more to themselves; and they abused his confidence, quarrelled with one another, and set a bad example to the inhabitants of the village. One evening, feeling dejected on account of some unhappy scenes which I had witnessed, I desired to visit my mother's

chamber: it was generally locked, and I entered it with an emotion of awe. Every thing remained as it was: my heart beat with violence, as I took a view of the objects around me: I fell upon my knees near the bed, and wept freely; the last words of my mother rung in my ears; I heard her trembling voice, saying, "My son, you must consecrate yourself to God; you must serve him." "Yes, Lord," I cried, "I make this sacred engagement; but how many difficulties surround me! How shall I fulfil the wishes of my dying mother! Assist me, O God; sustain my weakness."

I remained a long time, imploring the assistance of Him who is strength and power; by degrees, my feelings were calmed, and an inexpressible peace came over me. I arose full of confidence, and seeing the claims of duty, I went without hesitation to my father, who, at this hour, was always alone in his study. I was embarrassed and troubled as I approached him; but raising my heart to God, I felt strengthened. As I approached my father, he perceived my emotion; looking kindly upon me, he inquired the cause of my agitation.

"The fear of reawakening your grief has often hindered me from speaking of my mother; but now duty urges me to speak of her, and mention circumstances of which you have been ignorant." My father appeared desirous that I should proceed. I recounted to him all that had taken place, without omitting a single word of my mother. I finished the recital with a calmness of manner, which proved to me, that we never ought to

doubt the assistance of God; he will grant it to all who need it.

My father could not immediately answer, but soon replied. "My son, why have you communicated these painful particulars? Do you depend upon me to accomplish the last wishes of your mother?"

I replied, "Yes."

My father paused; he seemed to be lost in deep and troubled thoughts. To establish family worship, especially to take it upon himself, seemed impossible, though he expressed a wish that it might be done. "To-morrow, my son, I will give you a decisive answer; meanwhile, leave me to myself."

I left my father; but before retiring to my chamber, I went for my mother's Bible; which I found in her room, upon the same table where she always kept it: I took it with me, and employed the greatest part of the night in perusing the same passages which she had often explained to me; they were all marked and underlined with her own hand. While thus employed, I felt that we were not separated, but that my mind was united with the already happy and glorified spirit of my mother. The next day, I was very calm, and when I met my father, it was with the firm assurance that God would direct all things for our greatest good. My father led me into the garden, and spoke a few words, nearly in these terms:

"I cannot, my son, comply with the desire that you expressed yesterday; I desire that my children should love religion, and obey God; but I

ought to guard against every thing that will give to their piety an appearance of pride and ostentation. All that God requires of us is, to serve him cheerfully, by conforming our hearts and lives to the precepts of the gospel. Any thing more than this, I think, tends only to exalt the heart with pride and self-sufficiency."

I was very much grieved at this reply of my father's; but felt that I could not change his opinion, or touch his heart. My only resource was prayer. My father perceived my sorrow, and, taking my hand, continued:

"It is impossible for me, in the midst of my domestic employments, to attend to the duties of a pastor; this ought not to surprise you, my son: still, I do not object to your sister's attending to these things when you are away, and doing for your brothers all that your mother did for you; she may read the Bible with them; she may pray with them, if she desires it; all that I shall wish is, that it be done without confusion, and with the greatest simplicity, and in a private manner."

My father left me as he said these words. I hastened to my sister, to whom I related all that had passed between us. She listened with interest and attention; and desired me to guide her, in a matter so solemn. It was from the holy scriptures that I endeavoured to make her understand the importance of the charge that was intrusted to her.

The next day we met again, in the chamber of my mother, and humbly prayed to God to accept our worship, and to teach us himself, by his Spirit, to serve him every day of our lives. I then read

a chapter in the Bible, and closed by again calling upon the Lord. For some days, I performed this duty with much pleasure; but it was soon necessary for me to quit my home, and again return to Paris, to attend to the study of the law. My sister promised to persevere in praying, and reading the word of God. As yet, however, our hearts were not affected by divine truth: we were actuated rather by a deep feeling of filial respect, than by a desire to please our heavenly Father.

On my return to Paris, I persevered in the plan of commencing each day by an hour of prayer and meditation. By degrees light shone into my heart; I felt my misery, my state of sin, and condemnation before God; I felt anguish of soul, at the thought of meeting my God in judgment; but soon I felt the joy of deliverance, and I received, with eagerness, all the assurances of mercy which were presented in Jesus Christ. From this instant, every thing was changed within me; an invisible power calmed my troubled passions, and diffused quietness, peace, and happiness through all my being. It was a new life to me, and I felt guided by the hand of God, though I had often cause for sighing over my ingratitude and spiritual want.

The following year, I returned to Languedoc, and then I witnessed fresh manifestations of the Divine mercy. For some time past, the letters of my father and sister had led me to anticipate the joy which I was soon to experience; for they always closed with expressions of a serious and religious cast. From the moment of my arrival, I was struck with the change which a few

months had made in our family. The mild and modest air of the domestics, their becoming and grave demeanour, the extreme neatness of their clothing, at once attracted my attention. My sisters and brothers received me with joy: inward happiness was exhibited in all their looks. My father received me with great tenderness; his eyes were filled with tears; but the sweetest smile animated his countenance, instead of that dark expression of sorrow, which had so long settled there. As soon as I was alone with my sister, I eagerly questioned her upon what had passed during my absence.

"O my brother," said Henrietta to me, "how grateful you will be, when you know what the Lord has done for us! How true are the words, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving.' Col. iv. 2. 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.' Matt. vii. 7. After you left us, I continued the performance of family worship; our brothers were every day more and more interested in my reading: they became more attentive, and sought to understand the meaning of the scriptures. Often, during the day, they conversed together; and when a particular passage struck them, they repeated it to their nurse. She soon asked permission to be present at the exercise, and appeared to listen with attention. Soon after, she begged me earnestly to lend her a Bible, and commenced reading it with great interest. Soon the attention of the other domestics was awakened, by the change which they observed in her; for, instead of wasting her time in idle conversation, she retired frequently

to her chamber to read the sacred word. At first they mocked her, but she replied, with calmness and firmness, that she had a soul, and must attend to its salvation; she then spoke of the reading of the Bible, and mentioned the impression it had made upon her. I know not what expressions she made use of, but they were such, that almost all her companions expressed a strong desire to unite with us in our morning service. I was much pleased when Marianne told me this, but at the same time I thought that our father would disapprove of it. I asked his permission, however, and, after a little reflection, he consented. The first time, when I saw myself surrounded by so many, I felt a good deal embarrassed, and was even much troubled: for I was called upon to speak to those who had lived at a great distance from God.

I sought in the scriptures for those passages, where the Lord speaks of the hardness of the heart, and invites us to repentance; it was for my hearers that I read these words, but God caused me to see that they applied equally to me. They revealed me to myself, and made me know my sin and my misery. I felt what cannot be described; that the whole heart is opposed to God, until it has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and reconciled by the blood of our Divine Saviour. The words of the scriptures which speak of our corruption, the constant rebellion of natural and unregenerated man, appeared to me perfectly just and true. I understood then, the admirable work of *redemption*. I have felt, I trust, what it is to be reconciled to God. A deep feeling of my weak-

ness and frailty has convinced me that of myself I can do nothing; that my works, however good, cannot rescue me from condemnation; that the doctrine of free salvation by Christ can alone quiet the troubled conscience, allay the terrors of the soul, and inspire us with a sincere and true love for our God and Creator. This God of mercy has heard my ardent prayer; his grace has penetrated my heart; I feel that Christ has become my salvation; and my heart is full of happiness and peace.

That the Lord has blessed our worship and our family, is daily visible. Our domestics, formerly so rude and quarrelsome, have become peaceable and quiet, and, we hope, new creatures in Christ Jesus; and the aspect of our family has entirely changed.

My father noticed the improvements, and, one evening, requested me to tell him when I commenced prayers the next day. When all the family were assembled, I went to my father's room; he was agitated, and said that this day was the anniversary of mother's death; that he desired to unite in our prayers, and to see me fulfil her dying request. He added, that he hoped I should make no change in the exercises on his account; but go on just as usual. I acted accordingly, and when the prayer was finished, my father appeared much affected, and immediately left the chamber. When we met again, he said nothing of the exercise, but merely wished that I would give him notice when we commenced to-morrow. Since that time, he has regularly attended.

When my sister ceased speaking, we both united

in prayer and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father. The following day I assisted in the exercise which God had blessed so much. When we were all assembled, and after some moments of silent and serious meditation, my sister arose, and we followed her example. She asked that God would be in the midst of us, by his Spirit, according to his promises; that he would fix our attention, and touch our hearts, and bless the reading of his word. We took our places, and my sister read a chapter from the holy scriptures, to which she added an explanation of those phrases and words which could not be easily understood. She also repeated other passages, which rendered still more plain the portion which she read, and ended with some simple and touching reflections, on the application we might make of the truths we had just heard. She then selected some verses of a psalm, which we all sung; and then, kneeling down together in prayer, we thanked God for all his benefits; we confessed our sins, and asked him to forgive them, and to sanctify us by his word, and to send joy and peace to our souls.

I was much moved by the attentive and thoughtful air of the children and domestics; but especially by the calm and solemn expression which appeared on the features of my father. I followed him as he left the room: he saw what my feelings were, and, smiling, said, "My child, your desires are gratified, you see that I consent to your plan of family worship; and I can increase your joy by telling you, that these moments of meditation and prayer are the happiest of my life. Perhaps your sister has already informed you of the effects

of the family worship, which you have established; but, probably, she has not told you of the deep impression her example has made upon those who know her. Fulfilling her duties with still greater care, her mildness and goodness increased every day. She has become an example to all, of charity, patience, and humility. Surprised at her rapid improvement, I observed her with more attention; I saw that one desire only filled her heart; that her supreme object was to do good; that she daily became more cheerful, and more kind and attentive to the wishes of others. The domestics, and inhabitants of the village, always spoke of her with affection. I wished to see her in the performance of family worship; and while she prayed and read the holy scriptures, I felt an unknown pleasure pervade my heart—this heart which had been so long oppressed with sorrow. I returned the next day to the same relief, and it is thus that I have learned to draw consolation from the only true source. Till then, I had opposed His will, who had taken from my side her whom I loved. I murmured in my sorrow: I accused God of injustice: I felt not how full of compassion he is, even when he afflicts us. I was professedly a christian, but did not understand the extent of the obligation which this name imposed upon me. Filled with the idea of a sophistical and proud philosophy, I confined my views of christianity to the narrow limits of my own unenlightened reason. I treated with indifference or contempt, all those who laid stress on any particular belief, and considered the precepts of the gospel only as a code of the purest and most complete

morals. I trusted to my own strength, thinking that the claims of virtue and duty would keep me right. But this system I found to be vain and insufficient in the hour of affliction. It did not afford me the consolation which I needed. A hope of immortality cannot soothe such sufferings, if it is only the result of our own reason and meditation. Affliction and sorrow come upon us, and we need something more than human, to comfort us: we need the word and the promises of God: we need truth revealed upon his authority, to sustain and support us, on all such occasions. The words of the evangelist to those who are of a broken heart, evince such deep compassion, so much sympathy and piety, that after having felt their influence, the heart cannot be satisfied with any other consolation. If all unbelieving men, whose hearts are a prey to sorrow, would open this book with humility, and would seek there the consolation which God has prepared for those who mourn, they would feel an inexpressible relief. By its mild influence their troubled passions would be calmed; their fluctuating thoughts would be firmly settled on the truth of God's word. But the gospel must be received in all its truth, as God has given it to us; proclaiming the fall of man, his corruption, and misery; the necessity of repentance: of a Divine atonement, and of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, which alone can establish a constant communication between the infinite and perfect Creator, and feeble and sinful man. My son, God has dissipated the darkness which obscured my understanding: he has opened my eyes, and I have felt his pity. May all who are

unhappy receive the same favour which God has granted unto me, in answer to your prayers."

I asked my father why he did not himself serve God, by conducting the family worship, instead of leaving it to my sister. He replied, "I was prevented by a false shame; but, from this time, I will overcome it: to-morrow, I will perform with you the most sacred and the sweetest of duties."

In short, my father commenced, on that day, a regular service, which God blessed more and more to all those who were admitted to it. His example was quickly followed: and in almost every cottage in the neighbourhood, family worship was established. Many souls were called to the knowledge of salvation; they served the Lord with reverence and godly fear, enjoying the blessings of this life, and having hope of the life to come.

PART II.

HOME MADE HAPPY.

CHAPTER I.

LOVE OF HOME.

It was near the close of an afternoon in the early part of May, that a gentleman travelling slowly and on horseback in a retired part of the country, observed the decisive indications of an approaching storm which were visible in the heavens, and began to look out with no little anxiety for a lodging which might receive him for the night. For some time his wishes were vain, and he rode several miles over a lone and unfrequented road in which he was travelling, without much prospect of a shelter from the rain whose drops were beginning to fall, and from the wind which was fast rising into a furious gale. At last, however, he emerged from a long and dreary wood, and his eye sparkled as the view opened upon a beautiful valley, through which his road wound, and in a distant part of which, was pleasantly situated a farm-house of unusual cheerful and happy appearance. The numerous and extensive out-build-

ings with which it was associated, the fields in a considerable degree beautiful by the verdure of spring, which surrounded it, the forests in the back ground, and the distant hills which completed the view, would, had it not been for the gloomy influence of the weather, have constituted an enchanting picture. As it was, it promised him relief from his uncomfortable situation; and as he approached the dwelling, all the discontented thoughts with which his dreary ride had inspired him, were banished by the bright light which shone from the windows, and the prospect of comfort and enjoyment which it afforded within. He was met in the spacious yard by the master of the household, who, after being informed of his situation, gave him a hearty welcome; and the master and his guest entered the dwelling together.

They came into a room, which, as appeared from the happy faces of the family, and the preparations for supper which were going forward, was answering the double purpose of kitchen and parlour. The mother of the family and her daughter were busy together at a back part of the room; in a corner were two ruddy-cheeked children, amusing themselves by drawing pictures upon a slate; a third was reading aloud from a little book; and a fourth, younger than the rest, was playing with a dog and a cat upon the floor. These several occupations were interrupted by the entrance of the stranger, and all seemed pleased to see him. The traveller sat down by the fire, and began to play with the children, which he gathered around him. Warmth was soon restored to his limbs, and gladness to his heart.

The arrival of a stranger was, in this retired place, one of those remarkable occurrences which occasion an alteration in the usual family arrangements; and after a fire had been kindled in the front room, the traveller, together with the children and their father, resorted thither. The preparations for the evening repast were soon completed. The children, with happy looks, gathered to their respective seats, the parents and the stranger resorted to their places: the blessing of Heaven was solemnly implored, and the little circle partook of their food in gratitude and love.

The short evening passed rapidly away in this happy domestic circle, and at an early hour the father gave notice that it was time for their customary evening devotions. The family collected their Bibles, and gathered around the bright fire which was glowing upon their hearth. The traveller was seated at one corner, at another were the father and mother, looking into the same sacred volume, and the children arranged themselves together in pairs, in front, turning their backs to the fire, that its strong light might shine upon the books they were to read.

At a notice from their father, the youngest began, and in a slow, artless manner, read one verse of a chapter; the next and the next continued; the mother, the father, the guest, took their turns, until the chapter was concluded, and they then knelt in silence and solemnity together, while the stranger, at the father's request, offered their evening tribute of penitence, thanksgiving, and praise.

A few moments after the exercise was com-

pleted, the children came to the stranger one after another, and standing before him, with their hands in his, repeated some simple verses and the Lord's Prayer, with much apparent seriousness; they then bid him and their father good-night, and with cheerful and happy looks followed their mother from the room.

"You have a happy family," said the stranger, when he found himself alone with his host, "and I should think that you possess many sources of real enjoyment."

"Oh yes, sir," replied the farmer, "I have every thing to make me thankful. But it is to religion, to religion alone, I am indebted for all this."

"I have no doubt that religion is the source of your greatest and purest enjoyment, but you do not mean that religion has placed you in the prosperous situation and circumstances which you enjoy."

"Oh, yes, sir; I owe every thing I possess to the power which the gospel has had upon me. Ten years ago, I was without God, and without hope in the world, and, I may say, without joy too; for although I was engaged with great earnestness in the pursuit of pleasure, I was in reality the most wretched and miserable man alive. I was then on this farm, but it was very different from its present appearance. I was an idle, dissolute man, and my vicious course was fast making my farm a desert, my wife broken-hearted, and myself a wretched vagabond. My wife has always, since my acquaintance with her, been a pious woman; and it is, through the grace of God,

by her means, that I am not now a ruined man—ruined in soul and in body."

"But how did she exert so great an influence over you?"

"Oh, sir, by her whole conduct; every action, every word, every look was a meek, but powerful reproof to me. You cannot conceive how her kind eye would pierce my very soul, when I came home, late at night, from some scene of riot and dissipation. There she used to sit in that corner, and when she rose to meet me, there was such an expression of grieved and saddened feeling, and yet such a look of mildness and forgiveness, that it always filled me with a momentary anguish. And sometimes on the Lord's-day, when I was sitting in a most melancholy mood, I used to hear her teaching some verses of the Bible to little William, and they seemed sometimes so pointed and full of meaning, that I was frequently disposed to be angry, from the suspicion that she designed to convey some rebuke to me in this indirect manner. But then I would soon reflect upon the perfect proofs I had, almost every hour, that she wished my happiness. I believe, sir, I could have borne any thing but this mild, forgiving spirit: it made me constantly miserable; conscience soon began to upbraid me, and, in short, sir, it pleased my heavenly Father, as I humbly trust, to show me my guilt, and the way of salvation through a Redeemer."

"What was the guilt which you then saw in yourself? the vices and crimes of which you spoke?"

"Yes, sir, I had a much stronger and deeper

sense of these, but I soon found that they did not constitute the foundation of the evil. They were rather the signs of guilt in my heart, than the guilt itself. It was my heart, sir, that wanted purifying. I had before thought, that although my actions were wrong, I could, at any time, alter them, and then I should be as good as my wife. But I soon found that there was something fundamentally wrong in the state of my affections towards God, and that unless these were altered, I should never be holy or happy. I cannot describe my distress, when I found that for the control of these, I was so utterly dependent upon a higher power. I was, however, at last brought to the Saviour, and I hope he has commenced a good work in my soul."

"Well, how did you recover your affairs from their embarrassed condition?"

"Religion, sir, and industry, can accomplish any thing. I made the text, 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,' my motto, and every thing soon began to go well, and you see how happy a man I am now."

Here the good wife of the farmer came in, and gradually joined in the conversation; the hour passed rapidly, but profitably away, and the stranger was then shown to his place of rest.

The wind was roaring, and the rain descending in torrents without, as the gentleman knelt down by his bedside, and poured out his soul before the Author of his being, in grateful remembrance of the mercies he was then enjoying; and as he rose from his knees, and prepared to retire to rest, he thought that all his labours, his dangers, and

fatigues, would be amply recompensed, could he occasionally become an inmate of such a happy family, as that whose roof was then protecting him from the storm. He was soon, like the other inhabitants of the house, sunk in forgetfulness; and the dwelling was like the soul of the good man in this world of disorder and wretchedness, surrounded with storm and tempest without, with peace and tranquillity within.

The night and the storm passed away together, and the eyes of the stranger opened upon the beams of a delightful morning. The wind was hushed, and the sun was breaking forth from the clouds, and sending its animating rays through the windows of the apartment. The gentleman arose from his resting-place, repaired to the family fire-side, joined in the morning devotions, sat down once more to the hospitable board, and then betook himself again to his journey. All nature was alive, and vocal in the loveliness of spring, and the traveller went on his way rejoicing.

Such, substantially, will be the influence of piety in every family to which it finds admission.

But then it must be genuine piety, not merely the form of it. In very many families, there are all the external exhibitions of religion, while there is very little of the spirit of it in the hearts of the members. The mother, for instance, will make the children learn their Bible lesson or their hymns, and yet let them hear her scold her domestics, or fret because a basin is broken, or because a chimney smokes, day after day. No, it must be real, genuine piety,—touching and controlling the heart,—and not the mere empty form;

or it never can purify the atmosphere of the fireside, and establish the reign of peace and happiness there.

There is one point which ought to be especially noticed here, for it is one which, at the present day, is very often forgotten: we mean the duty of the father, in respect to the moral and religious training of his children. Ours is a busy country, and christians catch the spirit of activity and enterprise which burns all around them. They gradually and insensibly lose the impression that the first and most imperious of their duties is, to secure the salvation of the members of their household. How often is this duty neglected or postponed, and the whole burden of family government and instruction devolved on the mother, who ought not to be expected to bear it alone.

It is generally conceded that the mother has duties at home, but as to the father, "Why, business is so pressing," says he, "and money is so scarce, no one can expect me to be at home much."

I know a good mother, a kind and christian mother, I would fain hope, who is willing to work, early and late, for her dear children, and who hopes and prays that they may become the obedient children of God, and yet they frequently disobey her.

"Richard, why don't you obey at once," says the father, "when your mother speaks to you? My love, you know I leave the children entirely to you."

"I know you do, my dear;" is the reply, "but I can't help thinking you ought to govern the boys."

"You are at home, my love, all the time: and

really you ought not to expect much from me, occupied as I am continually; business pressing from monday morning till saturday night. I want to be quiet when I am in the house."

We might proceed through a variety of scenes indicative of this state of things in a family, where the father is a man of business, and feels authorized to rest the burden of training up a family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, upon the shoulders of an affectionate wife. But how comes this? Is he not an affectionate husband? Oh, yes; but he is engaged in extensive business. He loves his family; is a *domestic* man, in the common acceptation of the term; he desires nothing but the happiness of the family, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. He is willing to work early and late to accomplish these objects; but really you can't expect him, he thinks, to attend very much to the education of his children, he must leave that with their mother.

"No man liveth to himself," are the words of the apostle; "whether, therefore, ye eat or drink," &c. "True," says the man of business, in reply, "*you* are bound to glorify God in preaching, *I* in the prosecution of business. *You* are bound to do all that you do, heartily as unto the Lord, to do it with your might; and so am *I*. I labour hard in my business, that I may acquire property, to be employed in the service of the Lord."

Here lies the root of the evil. The man in question is perhaps really a christian, and contributes largely to the treasury of the Lord; but it is a fatal error which has crept into the bosoms of our men of business, that they must, at all events, do an *extensive business*. God has devolved upon

man a variety of obligations; and he who contends, that he must embark his every energy in the accomplishment of any one duty to the neglect of every other, errs egregiously.

Let us suppose a case. A. B. is a merchant; he has a wife and six children; is a leading man in the B. church; a prominent man, a good citizen, and a worthy member of society; he is a thinking man, an active man, a liberal man, and an esteemed, consistent christian. But A. B. is not altogether a happy man; he is distressed to see four or five impenitent children around him, and there are many things in his family that do not please him; and he may be taken away suddenly. But why does he not set about a reform, and place things in such a state as to remove all occasions of disquiet? Why, he is engaged in an extensive business, that requires his undivided attention; often he is kept awake whole nights by anxiety on account of it, and though he loves his children dearly, he sees them daily acquiring evil habits, and yet does not see how he can do any thing more for them than he has done. He has sent them to the best schools in the land, furnished them with books, clothes, privileges of every kind, and "certainly," he says, "if they don't turn out well, it must be their own fault."

And thus days pass away, and weeks, and months, and years; the father having always such a press of business on hand, that he has no time to attend to the improvement or happiness of his family. His engagements in trade must be met; and as to the children, "why, Mrs. ——— must attend to them."

Now what is the influence of the man who passes through life thus? Is he the light of the world? Are all constrained to recognise in him, by his consistent, well-balanced character, and habits of life, a friend of Jesus, a pilgrim, and a stranger on the earth? What is his daily influence? This is what stamps the man; it is not how much he gives to this object, or that; but what is his temper and spirit every day and hour?

This temper and spirit must be cultivated at home; and thus home is the sphere of every man's first and highest duties. No pressure of worldly business is sufficient to excuse any one from their performance; God has assigned them to us all, and we cannot escape the obligation.

But home is not merely the first field of duty, it may be the scene of a man's highest enjoyments: and we shall devote the remainder of this chapter to considerations showing the importance of cultivating *a love for home.*

In the pursuit of happiness, in which all are to a greater or less degree engaged, we not unfrequently overlook the source of the purest and most substantial of all earth's joys. We rove far, and toil hard, for that which may most easily be obtained at our own fire-sides. Home is the congenial soil of the purest affections, and the noblest virtues of the heart. Why has God filled the earth with these little bands of united individuals, called families, if he had not, in this arrangement, designed to promote the virtues and the happiness of men? If there be any thing that will soothe the agitating passions of the soul, which will calm that turbulence of feeling which the din and

bustle of the world so frequently excite, it is the soothing influence of a cheerful fire-side. If you would find the noblest specimens of human nature —if you would find warm sympathy, and overflowing kindness, most harmoniously united with unyielding integrity, with manly independence, you must go to the man whose affections lure him to the serene enjoyments of domestic life—who goes out into the world to discharge his duties, and returns to his quiet home for happiness and repose. The feelings and affections which are unavoidably cherished by the influences of domestic life, are totally at variance with the envyings, and jealousies, and towering ambition, which have scattered desolation over the world, and have sent weeping and mourning into so many families. Home is the citadel in which we are to select our weapons, and gird on the armour which shall fortify us against the temptations of the world; and it is with the utmost difficulty that any one can acquire or retain those feelings of sympathy, of generosity, and of enlarged philanthropy, which at times adorn our species, if there be not the influence of home to give birth to these affections, and to nurture them. The wisdom of God is most manifestly exhibited in the restraint which home almost inevitably throws around us. You can hardly find in the world an abandoned man, who has not abandoned the joys of domestic life. There is something in the very atmosphere which surrounds the family hearth, which will not allow vice to luxuriate there. If you wish to find the profligate, and the degraded, you must turn away from that holy sanctuary, and seek them in haunts of

revelry. On the other hand, if you find a young man who does not love home, whose taste is formed for other joys, who can see no happiness in the serene enjoyment of the domestic circle, you may depend upon it he is not to be trusted. And the unfortunate being who is bound to him by wedlock, must pass her solitary evenings weeping over her husband's broken vows. But he who has, in early life, acquired a fondness for fire-side joys, and whose heart is panting for a home of his own, will find that joys bloom brightly enough there, to allure his presence. He will go out into the world to transact his business, and return to his home for his rest and his joy. He will have no inducement to seek pleasures in scenes of temptation and vice. If a parent would cherish principles of virtue in the bosoms of his children, he must endeavour to surround home with those charms, which will call back their hearts, when exposed to the cares and temptations of the world.

There is a young man, who is a weather-beaten sailor, pursuing whales in the Pacific Ocean. A few years since, he was the child of indulgence, and in the elegant parties of his father's house, he saw the most refined company the country could afford. A few months since, in one of the sea-ports of America, he entered a warehouse, and said to the clerks, while weeping like a child,—"Can you not give me some work to do? I have spent all my wages, and am almost starved." The clerk accompanied him down upon the wharf, and gave him a few hours' work in rolling barrels of oil.

The clerk, who had known this young man under the very different circumstances of his for-

mer years, said to him, "What would your sister think if she should see you so dissipated and wretched?" He sternly replied, "Don't mention my sister's name to me. I cannot bear to go and see her; you ought not to mention her to such a wretch as I am." His heart, degraded by every scene of vice, was still sensitive at the recollection of a virtuous home; and this recollection was the only restraint he felt. I cannot conceive any influences, independently of those principles of religion which make us new creatures in Christ Jesus, calculated to produce so powerful an impression in preserving from sin and in guiding to purity and peace.

It is the want of this taste for the pleasures of home, which is the fruitful source of insensibility of heart, and the incentive to every crime. Look at Napoleon, heading the armies of Europe, gigantic in intellect, impetuous in passion, yet a man without a heart and without a home;—the two go together. A cheerful home might have given him a warm heart. A warm heart would certainly have led him to sigh for a cheerful home.

Look at the homeless and heartless Byron. His imagination would bear him upon a wing which, at times, seemed as tireless as an angel's. He was formed with capacities to drink in unbounded delight, from all the poetry with which creation is filled. He might have made his home one of the happiest and brightest that ever bloomed on earth:—but in his early years he had an unhappy home. He became dissatisfied with domestic scenes. He sought pleasure in excitement; he plunged into vice. And now he is known

only to be detested. He has gone through the world, leaving behind him the desolation of the whirlwind, the distress and corruption of the plague.

The weather-beaten sailor, the child of danger, nursling of the storm, is almost proverbially dissolute. And why? Because he has no home. He is surrounded by no influences to foster virtue, to elicit pure affection. When he returns, tempest-tost, from his weary voyage, no confiding wife bids him welcome; no rejoicing children gather around him. The homeless man is cut off from those restraints which preserve others from the vice into which he so recklessly plunges.

But home is also the scene of the purest *enjoyment* that can be found on earth. When "Winter comes to rule the varied year, sullen and sad, with all his rising train, vapours, and clouds, and storms," oh! where can we find richer enjoyment than in the united family, sheltered from the driving storm in their own peaceful home? The tempest rages without, "wrapt in black gloom." The wind whistles around the dwelling, and oh! how sublime is the mournful melody of its song. The snow beats fiercely against the windows, magnifying the warmth and the comfort within by contrast with the desolations of the storms raging without. The fire burns brightly, sending its cheerful light around. Ah! who has not been constrained, in seasons like these, to say, "There is no paradise like home, sweet home!" How heartless, in comparison, are the joys of him who, in illumined halls of gaiety, or amid the festivities of the midnight club, endeavours to escape thought,

and, by transient excitement, to satisfy the desires of an immortal mind! Such an one may have the semblance of happiness, but not the reality. The momentary gleam passes like the lightning in the cloud, leaving blackness and darkness behind. It is not all gold that glitters; it is not every smile that proclaims joy in the heart.

> "If happiness have not her seat
> And centre in the breast,
> We may be wise, or rich, or great,
> But never can be blest."

It may by some be considered an unfortunate reference to point the attention to Cowper as an example of the enjoyment which domestic life affords. All will admit that no one could have written "The Task," whose heart was not warm with the relish of domestic joys. The delicacy of mind, the fervour of feeling, the expansion of benevolence, which characterize that most interesting poem, could only have been cherished under the influence of fire-side scenes. A ruder contact with the world, immersion in its pleasures or ambitions, would inevitably have blunted those fine sensibilities.

Is it said that Cowper was, to a very unusual degree, a man of despondency and sorrow? His private history is but a mournful relation of mental sufferings of the most acute nature. This is true. Every fibre of the poet's soul seemed to shrink instinctively from contact with the world. He was constitutionally sad; and it was the fire-side which afforded the only retreat he could find to soothe the nervous excitement of his

feelings. The constitutional despondency of his mind could find no soothing, but in the peaceful routine of domestic life; and there he did find comfort.

The tinge of melancholy which suffused his mind, deepened into the gloom of the most deplorable delirium, as soon as he was exposed to the excitements of bustling life. The delicate feelings of his soul could not endure the contact with earth's cold blasts.

How beautifully has he described the ushering in of the winter's evening; the closing of shutters; the wheeling up of the sofa; the cheerful blaze of the fire; "the loud-hissing urn;" and the "cups that cheer, but not inebriate." And what an insight does he give you to his own heart as he says—

> "'Tis pleasant, through the loop-holes of retreat,
> To peep at such a world: to see the stir
> Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd:
> To hear the roar she sends through all her gates,
> At a safe distance, where the dying sound
> Falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear."

Where is the heart that does not beat responsive to such a strain as this? Love for such scenes is planted deep in the nature of man. The finger of God points to home, and says to us all, Here is the place to find your earthly joy.

Shall we appeal to the testimony of those who have sought joy elsewhere? We have but one answer from them all—that the search has been fruitless. Who aspires to a loftier elevation of

honour than that attained by Burke? And yet he says he would not give one peck of refuse wheat for all that is called *fame* in the world. What is the declaration of Byron, after having drained the cup of earthly pleasure to its dregs? It is, that his life has been passed in wretchedness, and that he longs to rush into the thickest of the battle, that he may terminate his miserable existence by a sudden death. And Chesterfield, with rank, wealth, talent, polish, and power, after having stood for half a century the brightest luminary in all the European circles of elegance and fashion, has left his most decisive testimony of the heartlessness and emptiness of all those joys he had so eagerly pursued. As we go through this world of trial and of change, we can find our only joy in a life of piety and domestic peace.

It is not essential to the happy home that there should be the luxury of the carpeted floor, the richly-cushioned sofa, the soft shade of the astral lamp. These elegancies gild the apartments, but reach not the heart. It is neatness, order, a cheerful heart, and mutual kindness, which make home that sweet paradise it is so often found to be. There is joy as real, as heartfelt, by the cottage fire-side, as in the most splendid saloons of wealth and refinement. What a lovely picture has Burns given us of the return of the cottager to his home, after the labours of the day.

"At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree.
The expectant *wee things*, toddling, stagger through,
To meet their dad, with fluttering noise and glee.

His clean hearth-stone, his thriftie wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does all his weary, carking cares beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil."

The refinements and elegancies of life are not to be despised: they are to be received with gratitude to Him who has provided them for our enjoyment; but their possession does not ensure happiness. The sources of true joy are not so shallow. Some persons, like some reptiles, have the faculty of extracting poison from every thing that is beautiful and sweet; others, like the bee, will gather honey from sources in which we should think no sweet could be found. The cheerful heart, like the kaleidoscope, causes most discordant materials to arrange themselves into harmony and beauty.

It is narrated of a celebrated monarch, that he was one day galloping about the room, upon all-fours, with one child upon his back, and chasing another little urchin, who was laughing at the top of her lungs at the gambols of her royal father. While thus engaged, one of his ministers was announced. "Come in," said the king, "you are a father, and so I will have my race out;" and he continued his sport with his children. We do not doubt that this moment was among the happiest of the king's life. There was more real heartfelt joy in that undignified parlour frolic than he ever felt while seated upon his throne, glittering in splendid robes, and surrounded by all the pomp and pageantry of royalty. It is the influence of such scenes as these which softens the heart, and makes a man feel for his fellow-men.

There is no suffering more acute, than that felt by an affectionate and sensitive mind, mourning over the violation of nuptial vows. This suffering is not confined to the unhappy woman in the dwelling of poverty, who, at the midnight hour, trembles, as she hears the approaching footsteps of her drunken husband. You may go into many an elegantly furnished abode, and find the broken-hearted wife and mother, surrounded by every external comfort, and yet in solitude, and silence, and tears. There is nothing that will compensate for the loss of those we love. "I have seen," says a quaint writer, "the accomplished wife, before twenty moons had waned since she changed her name, sitting alone and solitary as the sparrow on the housetop. Perhaps her health was now so delicate, that the nourishing and cherishing care of her partner was almost necessary to her existence; but he was gone away to some political, literary, or perhaps to some dissipated club. Perhaps he returns at midnight, breathing the fumes of wine, and steaming with smoke of segars."

You call him a brute, who breaks his wife's head, so he also is a brute who breaks her heart: and how many an unhappy wife sits friendless and alone, during all the hours of the evening, and even of the night, when her faithless husband is seeking his pleasures in other society. How painful must be her reflections on thus finding her fondest anticipations disappointed, and the fire-side, at which she hoped to be blest with sympathy and society, deserted and desolate. That man deserves not the generous affections of a wife, who will not invite her love by the respect and honour of per-

sonal attention. It is not a few gaudy trinkets, and occasional freaks of fondness, that can give your wife a happy heart, and make her home a happy one. There must be real, substantial kindness, the unequivocal evidence of love for the society and joys of home.

It is not unfrequently that a wife mourns over the alienated affections of her husband, when she has made no effort herself to strengthen and increase his attachment. She thinks because he once loved her, he ought always to love her, and she neglects those attentions which first enchained his heart. Many a wife is thus the cause of her own neglect and sorrow. That woman deserves not a husband's generous love, who will not greet him with smiles as he returns from the labours of the day; who will not try to chain him to his home, by the sweet enchantment of a cheerful room and a cheerful heart. There is not one man in a thousand so unfeeling as to withstand such an influence, and break away from such a home.

Almost every individual must, of course, pass most of his time in active employment, away from home. He must do this to support his family, he must do this to discharge those duties which he owes to society. He cannot love home, or any thing else, who is a lazy lounger, from morning to night, around the fire-side. He has neither heart nor life to know the meaning of the word *enjoyment*. No man can be happy, who has not constant employment to engage his heart and his hands. This arises from a necessity connected with man's intellectual, and moral, and physical nature. And unless we can find, at least, contentment, with our

individual employments, the great portion of our earthly existence must pass away in disquietude and sorrow. But this business of life, in which necessarily most of our hours must be passed, is but a means for the attainment of an end, and that end is happiness. To illustrate this remark, let us take the case of the statesman, immersed in all the cares of public life. The gratification of ambitious feeling is what, in his view, constitutes happiness. He engages in all the drudgery of business that he may obtain this object. Now such a man is sure of meeting with disappointment and chagrin. Even as far as earthly happiness is concerned, he is pursuing a wrong course. We will take the case of another man, who is engaged with equal ardour in public life. Duty has placed him in these scenes ; but his object is not the gratification of ambition, but well to discharge his part in life, and to leave behind him an influence beneficial to the world. In his seasons of recreation from the pressure of care, he returns to the bosom of his loved family. There is his heart; and there are his joys. This man can hardly be disappointed. If his schemes of usefulness fail, he finds a solace in the quiet retreat of home. The more a man loves home, the more serene will be his mind, the more labour he will be able to perform, and the more powerful will be the influence he can exert upon society around. This is an influence which rests and invigorates the spirit for new achievements.

It is home, after all, to which we must retreat from the bustle of life, if we would find enjoyment. It is in the serene employments of that blessed

sanctuary, that we must fortify our spirits against temptation, and prepare for a better world on high. It matters not what may be our situation in life, or how deeply we may be engrossed in labour and care, we ought with assiduity to cherish a fondness for home; and to try to promote the happiness at least of that little portion of the human family, with which we are most intimately connected.

The Bible has informed us, that the time will come when the sorrows with which the earth is now filled, will pass away like the clouds of the morning. A day of glory, bright and beautiful as the morning of earth's creation, is yet to dawn upon our globe. And when that millennial day shall come, earth will be filled with happy families. There will be here below the foretaste of the pleasures of a home in heaven.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIBLE TO BE STUDIED.

In order that home may be made happy, THE BIBLE must have a prominent influence. If the father, the mother, the children, the domestics, are governed by its precepts in their intercourse with each other —if the motives which it presents lead to *faithfulness* in their various and appropriate duties, *home* will indeed be a happy place. But that the Bible may produce its due influence upon the intellect and the heart, improving and enriching the one, and regulating and controlling the other, so as to fit it for heaven, it must be so read and studied, that it shall be considered an interesting book, an agreeable study; while its truths, sinking deep into the heart, will spring up and bear fruit unto eternal life. One would think, that it needed but to be known that the Bible is the word of God, the only guide to heaven, to ensure its being read with the deepest interest. But it is not so. Many who believe it to be the word of inspiration, consider it a dull book. They would not say so in words, but their practice proves it. It is read in reality as a task—a duty which conscience will not suffer them to neglect. They would gladly have it otherwise, but how to awaken interest they know not. The rich treasures of the Bible, treasures which may be

found by the wayfaring man as well as by the gifted intellect, are hidden from them.

Some methods of studying the Bible we shall describe. The solitary and social study of it are both attended with peculiar advantages. The first can and should be pursued by every christian, whatever his circumstances may be—the second should never be neglected where practicable. In the first, the soul may more fully realize that it is listening to the instructions of its Maker,—the attention is more undividedly fixed upon the truths before it, it is more ready to see and to feel how far it falls short of the requirements of that pure and holy standard of action, and fervent desires are awakened, that its spirit and principles may reign in the heart. Perhaps this method of study is to be preferred for the devotional and preceptive parts.

There are various ways of studying the Bible alone. One is, to select some topic, and collect all the passages that relate to it. Take, for instance, the omnipresence and omnipotence of God. With the aid of a concordance, find all the passages that tell us that we can never, for a moment, fly from the presence of our Creator, either in this life or that to come, or conceal a thought or feeling from him. If a concordance cannot be had, slowly turn over the Psalms and the epistles, or any portion of the Bible where you think you may find texts relating to these truths, and write out on paper every one that meets your eye. Such passages as these will occur, "Thou, God, seest me;" "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;" "There is not a word in my

tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether;" "God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil."

Now if such passages as these are transcribed, and their solemn import considered in solitude, their influence will be felt in the busy scenes of life,—amidst temptations to forget God and our accountability to him. The subjects that may be examined in this way are innumerable; and no one, who honestly wishes to increase his acquaintance with the Bible, can pursue this method of study without becoming interested in it. One very important advantage that results from it is, it enables us to classify our knowledge of particular subjects. If the passages which describe the unrenewed heart are collected in this way, and written out, and their meaning considered, they will become impressed upon the memory, and, by the laws of association, so united, that when one occurs to the mind the others will follow. Let a collection be made of the express invitations which Christ himself gave to the burdened sinner, such as, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," &c.; or the most striking texts from the epistles, which teach us that salvation is to be obtained only through our great atoning sacrifice, and they will be similarly associated. Refer also to those texts which speak of the influences of God the Holy Spirit in all his renewing, invigorating, purifying, and sanctifying offices. Pray earnestly that you may be habitually kept under these influences,

and directed by them. Knowledge of any kind is of no use, unless we have it at our command. Classification of it gives us command over it to a great extent. A ready recollection of texts of scripture upon particular subjects, will be very valuable to the christian; and it may often enable him to give a word of timely reproof to the sinner, of admonition to the wanderer, of wise counsel to his fellow-pilgrims in difficulty, or of comfort in affliction. It will assist him to grow in grace, by enabling him to adapt more constantly his spiritual food to his own spiritual wants.

It is a very good plan, when studying the Bible in private, to repeat or write paraphrases, or simple, full, and clear statements of facts which you may find in the chapter you may be reading, in the same style that you describe occurrences of the present day. One advantage of this plan is, that it will assist very much in breaking up the mechanical habits of reading the Bible which exist, to a greater or less extent, in all minds which have been familiar with it from infancy. Try this experiment with some chapter that you have read a hundred times, perhaps till you are almost as familiar with its peculiar phraseology as with your alphabet, and it will increase your interest surprisingly. New and interesting ideas will be suggested that have never occurred before, and you will be amply repaid for your labour. Do not shrink from this exercise because of the difficulties in the way. Remember, that valuable improvement of any kind cannot be made without paying the price of it; and the intellectual and spiritual benefits which attend a humble, careful, prayerful, study of the Bible are

rich, varied, abundant, in whatever form it may be pursued. The more the mind is interested, the greater the benefit.

But I intended to describe this exercise more particularly for my younger readers, and I shall be best understood if I give directions for their re-writing some particular chapter, and they will apply essentially to any other one. The sixth chapter of John is the first one that suggests itself. The sea of Galilee is mentioned in the first verse. If you do not distinctly recollect where it is, ascertain; and when it is fixed in your mind, read over attentively the first four or five verses, observe the reason assigned why the multitudes followed Christ. Form as distinct a conception as possible of the whole scene, and then describe it. Next give an account of the conversation between the Saviour and his disciples, with respect to the way in which refreshment was to be provided for the weary and fainting multitude before them. Imagine, if you can, and then describe the mingled feelings of surprise and distrust and confidence, with which the disciples probably obeyed the directions of their Master, to seat the immense assembly on the grass, while he prepared to distribute among them the scanty portions, which, to human view, five barley loaves and two small fishes would have made even for a very much smaller number. Bring the case as clearly as you can before your mind. Think how the people would look, *seated* in companies, the Saviour *standing*, his disciples around him, the loaves in his hands. He implores a blessing upon the food about to be eaten, breaks the loaves, and gives

them to the disciples, who offer to each one in turn, as much of the bread and fish as he chooses to have. Notice, as you go on, the lesson of frugality our Saviour taught, in directing to have the fragments gathered up; and always in these exercises write out fully and distinctly the meaning of passages which teach some duty to our fellow-creatures or to our Creator. In this way go through with the chapter, or any portion of it, not passing over a single important fact or sentiment, without expressing it in a new form, and more fully than it is in the original. The influence of these exercises would be very valuable in promoting intellectual improvement by assisting to form habits of close and careful observation when reading. An individual possessed of such habits of mind will eventually have a rich store of knowledge. A student of the Bible, one who seeks for its spirit, with such habits will become a bright and shining christian. The word of God will dwell in his heart.

Another method, varying somewhat from the above, is to choose some individual as the subject; for example, Abraham or Saul; examine all the chapters where mention is made of the character you have selected, and then write out a connected account of the whole. General topics may be studied in the same way, such as angels, miracles, acts of kindness, &c. The first of these would be found a very interesting subject. Their number, their order, names, employments, characters, &c. might all be considered; and much more can be learned respecting these spiritual and holy beings from the Bible, than one would suppose, who had not examined it in reference to them.

The social study of the Bible has become much more frequent than formerly. With few exceptions, wherever the glad tidings of the gospel have been statedly declared within a few years, the young have been gathered into Bible-classes. Different ministers, of course, have pursued different plans. Some have been successful in keeping up a lively interest; others have failed. But we leave this subject to speak of the family Bible-class. In every family where the father or mother, or an elder brother or sister, professes to have the christian's hopes, the christian's motives, the christian's aims, we believe it possible, in ordinary circumstances, to have some plan adopted by which a portion, if not all of its members, may become interested in the regular and systematic study of the scriptures. In families the most favourably situated, there are difficulties to be overcome. Time must be devoted to it, preparations must be made for the exercise, mental effort is necessary; but all difficulties vanish before steady perseverance, and really earnest desires to accomplish the object at which we aim. But we see not how any christian parent can leave his children to learn all they know of the Bible from the lips of strangers, except what they may learn from hearing it read at family prayers, or an occasional Bible story. They profess to regard the soul that is never to die, as of unspeakable value compared with its house of clay, which will so soon be but a collection of particles of dust: but what says the practice? No pains are spared to adorn the exterior, or to improve the intellect; but the Bible, upon the reception of whose truths the adorning of the heart

and the salvation of the soul depend, is neglected. No regular systematic efforts are made to have the mind familiar with its historical details, its biographies, or stored with its precepts, its promises, its threatenings. Pressure of business, of cares, is often pleaded in excuse for neglect, and incompetency to interest, oftener still; but, after all, will it not be found that indolence and insensibility to the importance of having the Bible the familiar counsellor, are the real causes why so few engage personally in the duty of teaching the Bible to their children? We will give one or two examples to illustrate modes by which parents and children who are disposed to do it, sometimes perform this duty.

The Children's Bible Class.

Mary and Charles, with their elder sister Harriet, were seated at a table upon a sabbath evening, with a bright fire before them, and an abundance of books for their evening's entertainment. Their parents had left them to attend a lecture; the little ones were in bed, and so they were to have a quiet hour to spend as they pleased. Each had taken a book, and they continued for some time to read in silence.

"I suppose," said Eliza, looking up from the Bible she held in her hand, "that we could understand some, at least, of the symbolical language of the prophets, if we could make out what are the general subjects to which it relates. This chapter I have been reading in Jeremiah seems to prefigure some great calamities that were to befall some people; I don't know when, or how, and

therefore the whole is unintelligible. Why cannot we study the book of Jeremiah together, Harriet? We can understand something about it if you will help us; we shall have time every sabbath evening, or before dark. Charles would like it, I know."

"Oh yes," said Charles, "I always like to have something to find out, better than to learn a lesson by heart."

"I should like such an exercise very much," said Harriet. "I suppose we should find a great many difficulties in the book of Jeremiah, or, in fact, in either of the prophets; but then, as it is, we don't know what the difficulties are. For my own part, I cannot tell what the book is about, to what events the predictions chiefly relate, who the prophet was, for how long a time he was a prophet, or what was his reception among the people to whom he prophesied. We can at least examine the book with reference to such inquiries as these."

"Jeremiah was a very old man, I should think, from the picture we have of him in our great Bible," said Charles.

"He might have been old before he died," replied Harriet; "but perhaps not when he began to prophesy: we will see what we can learn about him. Let us all take Bibles, and find the beginning of Jeremiah."

When they had found the place, Harriet read aloud the first verse: "'The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin.' He was an Israelite, then, it seems, for he belonged to the land of Benjamin?"

Charles. Why, if he belonged to the land of Benjamin, I suppose he belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

Eliza. No; if his father was a priest, he must have belonged to the tribe of Levi.

Charles. Jeremiah was a priest, then, as well as his father, for all the Levites were priests, were they not?

Harriet. No; every priest was a Levite, but not every Levite a priest. The priests were consecrated from the descendants of the family of Aaron only. The other Levites were to fill sacred offices inferior to that of the priesthood.

Charles. Would every man of the family of Aaron be made a priest?

Harriet. I do not know, though I should think not; for some men would not, perhaps, be suitable characters to fill the office. Of the qualifications for the priesthood, I suppose we might find something in the book of Leviticus.

Eliza. I never thought, before this minute, of the meaning of the name of that book. It is called Leviticus because it relates to the priesthood of the Levites, is it not?"

Harriet. It is; but we must go on with Jeremiah. It does not appear from this verse that he had ever been consecrated to the priesthood, though he probably was a candidate for the office.

Charles. But I want to ask why he lived in the land of Benjamin if he belonged to the tribe of Levi. I thought each tribe had a particular territory assigned them.

Harriet. They all had, excepting the Levites. They did not all live together by themselves, but

were distributed about among the other tribes, because they were the priests or ministers for the whole.

Charles. I suppose we can find the place where Jeremiah belonged, upon the map of Palestine.

Harriet looked upon the map in a large Bible, and Eliza and Charles looked over with her; but there were only a few names in each country, and Anathoth was not down. John said there was a large map of Palestine at his school, and that he would look at that.

Harriet. I wish you would; and in order to be able to describe its situation to us, you must ascertain how far it is from some important place which is to be found upon our small maps,

Charles. But how can I tell how far it is?

Harriet. You can tell by the use of the scale of miles you will find at the top or bottom of the map. I can show you here, (pointing to the map before her.) Here, you see, is a double line divided into portions. Each portion represents a certain distance in miles, as you see by the figures. The shortest portion here is about a quarter of an inch, and represents five miles; the other portions are ten miles long, and the whole, which is about two inches, represents fifty miles. Upon your map, which is four or five times as large as this, five miles would be a much larger space. You must ascertain how many miles there are to an inch, and then you can judge how far distant any two places are.

Charles thought he understood it, and said he would try.

While Harriet was making this explanation to

Charles, Eliza had been looking over, in the last part of Joshua, at the account of the first settlement of the tribes in Canaan, to see if Anathoth was mentioned among the cities allotted to the tribe of Benjamin. She found the list in the 18th chapter: fourteen cities were mentioned; but Anathoth was not among them. Turning over the leaf, however, she accidentally met with the name in the 21st chapter. This chapter contains a list of the cities given by lot out of the other tribes to the Levites, and Anathoth was one, given from the tribe of Benjamin.

"It speaks of giving cities to the Levites," said Charles, when Eliza had finished reading the list; "I thought you told us they did not live together by themselves."

Harriet. It seems by this that they lived together in cities, but these cities were scattered among the various tribes.

Eliza. Jeremiah, then, belonged to a city of priests, though in the land of Benjamin.

Harriet. Yes; but let us proceed. (She reads,) "Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah." Let us see what we can find about his father, Hilkiah.

Eliza. First, let me ask if you suppose that these and other scripture names are the christian names, or the surnames, as we say, of the individuals; or had they but one?

Harriet. I suppose they had but one, excepting that, in some few cases, additional names were conferred, in the course of their lives, upon individuals, for particular reasons. Let us try to think of some of the double names in the Bible; Simon Peter is one that I think of.

Eliza. Mary Magdalene is another; and Judas Iscariot; Simon Zelotes, and Simon Magus.

Charles. There was another Simon, the Cyrenian, who helped to carry the cross,

Harriet. Cyrenian was not a part of his name; it only indicates that he belonged to Cyrene; just as we say, Mr. ——, the Frenchman.

Eliza. Do you suppose that the others we have mentioned, Magdalene, Iscariot, and Magus, were family names; that is, that the brothers and sisters of these individuals were Magdalenes and Iscariots?

Harriet. Mary Magdalene belonged, I suppose, to Magdala, and so was called Magdalene, to distinguish her from the other Marys; and Simon Magus was a magician, and so would be called Magus, or magician, to distinguish him from the other Simons. These, then, were not family names. About Iscariot, I do not know.

Eliza. There was such a thing as a surname, for in some places it says, "Judas, who was surnamed Iscariot, and Simon, who was surnamed Peter."

Charles. And in the list of the apostles I learned last sunday, there is Lebbeus, who is surnamed Thaddeus.

Harriet. Yes; but these do not correspond, I should think, to our surnames, for sometimes the individuals were called by one, and sometimes by the other. Simon Peter, for instance, is sometimes called Simon, and sometimes Peter. *Peter* was not, at least, a family name, for it was conferred, as we read, upon Simon, with some reference to the character he was to sustain, Peter

—or Cephas, as in another place—meaning rock or stone.

Charles. Have not all the scripture names of persons some particular meaning, just as Peter has?

Harriet. I suppose they have. You have frequently seen tables giving the signification of scripture proper names.

Charles. Oh yes; there is one at the end of my dictionary: I will get it, and find what is the meaning of Jeremiah.

Charles took his dictionary from the book-case, and found the list.

Charles. Here is Jeremiah: it means Exaltation of the Lord. How curious it seems to have so much meaning in a person's name. Is it now the custom, in any parts of the world, to give such names?

Harriet. Not in any civilized nations that I know of. Among the Indians it is common to give names with some particular meaning to them.

Eliza. Let us ascertain the signification of Hilkiah, the name of Jeremiah's father.

Charles looked in the list, and found Hilkiah.

Charles. "The Lord is my portion," is the meaning.

Eliza. There is a Hilkiah mentioned somewhere else in the Bible; I forget where.

Harriet. Hilkiah the priest is mentioned, I believe, in the account of the repairing of the temple. Hilkiah found the book of the law at that time. Let us find the passage, and see if that is the one.

Harriet looked herself in the book of Chronicles, and asked Eliza and Charles to look in

Kings. Both passages were soon found. "But are both these accounts of the same things?" asked Charles.

Harriet. Yes; have you never noticed that the book of Kings and Chronicles are very nearly alike?

Charles. Why, what is the use of two accounts of the same thing?

Harriet. I can think of some uses; but we cannot go into them now. Let us examine these passages, and see if we ascertain if this Hilkiah was Jeremiah's father.

Harriet looked over the last chapters in Kings, and Eliza and Charles the last in Chronicles; but they could find nothing to satisfy them that the Hilkiah there mentioned was the one mentioned in Jeremiah. And as they could think of no other Hilkiah readily, Harriet thought it was best to leave this question till another time.

Harriet. I do not remember that we have any account of Jeremiah previously to his becoming a prophet. Let us consider if he is mentioned at all in any other books in the Bible.

Eliza. Is not Jeremy, who is mentioned in the New Testament, the same with Jeremiah?

Harriet. He is. We will look, when we come to examine the predictions of this prophet; for those whose fulfilments are recorded in other parts of the Bible. Shall we find his name in any other book of the Old Testament?

Eliza. It appears, from the second verse, that he lived in the days of Josiah. Let us look in Kings.

Charles. Why, I always thought the prophets lived long after those times.

Harriet. It was from the fact that the books of the prophets and Kings are placed so far apart that you received that impression, I suppose. We will see if he is not mentioned in Kings or Chronicles. We must look at the accounts of Josiah, and the kings who came after him. (Each looks for one of the accounts.)

Harriet. I have found the place in Chronicles. Jeremiah is mentioned as lamenting for Josiah. (She reads the verse.) "And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel; and behold, they are written in the Lamentations."

Charles. Why, is the book of Lamentations about king Josiah?

Harriet. I think not. These must have been some other writings, that were not put in the Bible. Probably a great deal more was written or delivered by each one of the prophets, than we have in the Bible. Some of them prophesied for many years, yet most of the prophetical books contain no more than one or two of the sermons do, that we hear upon the sabbath.

Eliza. About how many years do you suppose Jeremiah prophesied?

Harriet. We can tell by the dates, perhaps. Let us look again at the first of Jeremiah.

Charles. There are no dates here.

Harriet. Look at the second and third verses.

Eliza. Oh yes; I see how we can tell. The word of the Lord came to the prophet from the thirteenth year of Josiah, until the eleventh year

of Zedekiah; and we can find in the book of Kings the length of each reign.

Harriet. (Turning to Kings.) I will find how long each king reigned, and you and Charles may take pencils, and write the years as I mention them.

Harriet. (Reading.) "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem."

Eliza. We must take thirteen from thirty, because Jeremiah begins to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah; thirteen from thirty leave seventeen: seventeen, then, we must write for Josiah. Have you found how long the next one reigned?

Harriet. Yes; Jehoahaz reigned three months. Jehoiakim was the next; he reigned eleven years. Next was Jehoiachin, who reigned three months. Zedekiah was the last; he reigned eleven years. How many years does this make in all?

Eliza. (After adding them up.) Nearly forty years.

Charles. Yes; I make the same. I should not have thought of finding out in such a way. Why are not the dates given as we should write them?

Harriet. We date events from the coming of Christ; the christian era, we call it. Thus, 1834 means the eighteen hundred and thirty-fourth year from the birth of Christ. The events of the Old Testament could not of course be dated from Christ. They might, I should think, have selected some one important era in their history from which to reckon uniformly. It seems, however, that this was not the custom.

Charles. Do all nations, at the present time, reckon from the christian era?

Harriet. All civilized nations, excepting mohammedans.

Charles. Oh! I recollect my history tells me the followers of Mohammed compute their time from the Hegira, or the flight of Mohammed.

Harriet. Well, it is now quite time for our father and mother to come home. We had better close our lesson for this evening. Next sabbath evening we will go on with Jeremiah. I would propose that Eliza should take some opportunity during the week to examine this subject, considering carefully every possible question that can come in connexion with it, so as to be able to give us, in her own language, at our next lesson, a full account of the times when Jeremiah prophesied.

Eliza. I should like to take it, if you and Charles will take some other subject, and examine it in the same way.

Harriet. I will take one; and, Charles, you might prepare a narrative from some chapter in writing for a school composition: you were asking me for a subject for next week.

Charles. But that would not be a real composition.

Harriet. It will, if you are careful to write entirely in your own words. Here is a narrative in the 26th chapter of Jeremiah, that seems to be very interesting, (reading the contents,) "*Jeremiah exhorting to repentance is apprehended and arraigned,*" &c. Now, if you will read all this over with the same care and attention that we have

given to the passages we have been examining together, and then, shutting the book, write an account of the transactions just as if you yourself had witnessed it, we shall have a story more interesting perhaps than most of the printed Bible stories that we have read, because this part of the Bible is so new to us. You will take a greater interest in reading the narrative if you are going to write it, because you will be led to take notice of every particular, so that the whole scene, upon the occasion of Jeremiah's arrest, will come up before your mind, like a reality.

Charles said he would try, if Harriet would help him, which she promised to do. She said, too, that if she had time, she herself would study and prepare a narrative in the same way.

They then moved the table back a little, and while Harriet and Eliza put the books and maps in order, Charles made a good fire, that the room might be warm and cheerful when their father and mother should come in from the lecture.

The Mother's Bible Class.

Mrs. Allen was a widowed lady who resided in a small country town in Massachusetts. Her family consisted of two children and one domestic. Ellen was thirteen, and George eleven. They were scholars of the sunday-school. Their mother was a christian; not an indolent and lukewarm one. She was self-denying, and devoted to her duty. She did not feel, when her children were committed to a pious sabbath-school teacher, that the responsibility of their salvation was transferred from herself to another. She well knew

that Divine grace could alone prepare the hearts of her beloved young family for a happy reunion in heaven, but she endeavoured to labour as much as if it depended solely on her own efforts. The Bible had been her guide from early youth; its promises, her stay and support in sickness, when she had herself stood on the brink of the grave, in the prospect of leaving two little ones, *motherless*, in a cold world; and in affliction, still more bitter, when her dearest earthly friend, he who was to have shared with her the responsibility, the cares, and the pleasures of training up their children for God, was called to his long home, leaving her, as the most precious legacy, God's promises to the widow and fatherless. To the Bible she had been accustomed to resort, for counsel in perplexity, for light and comfort in her dark hours of loneliness, and now it was her first and earnest desire to see her children imbued with its spirit, and its light beaming on their path. Her efforts to make them love and prize what had been a lamp to her feet, and the man of her counsel, were unwearied, and the pleasure with which Ellen always seemed to look forward to the family Bible exercise, the hour after meeting on the sabbath, was some evidence, to her mother at least, that her labour had not been in vain.

Mrs. Allen's house was in a secluded part of the town, and the perfect silence, that reigned on the sabbath, was broken only by the song of the bird or the note of the distant church bell; but this stillness and the absence of external excitement did not cause the hours of the sabbath to pass heavily along.

"Mother," said Ellen, as she took off her bonnet, and folded up her gloves one sabbath afternoon, "Mother, I felt very glad, when Mr. S. spoke of the compassion of the Saviour, in his sermon, that we are to have that for our lesson this afternoon."

"I think we shall find it an interesting subject. If you are ready now, you may call your brother. We will meet in the parlour. Open the window, that we may have the cool of the breeze."

Ellen did as her mother requested: she found George standing at the back door, and quite inclined to stand there and watch the *thunder caps*, as he called them, the rounded summits of the dark cloud, that was slowly rising in the west. A few words from Ellen soon induced him to follow her to the parlour.

Ellen asked George to draw out the little table, and put their mother's large chair before it, while she brought a Bible and concordance for her, and a Testament for George, and one for herself. A chair and a Testament were placed for Lucy, the servant, who always made one of this family Bible class. Mrs. Allen considered a knowledge of the Bible as necessary to aid Lucy in the performance of her duties, and to lead her in the way of salvation, as for her children.

"Thank you, my children," said Mrs. Allen, as she took her seat at the table; "which of you fixed this pleasant seat for me?"

"George," said Ellen. George had not generosity enough to say that it was Ellen's plan, but he felt that he did not deserve his mother's kind smile, for, a little disappointed in not being

suffered to remain longer watching the clouds, he had done what was asked him not in a very pleasant way. They opened their Bibles.

"The compassion of the Lord Jesus is to be the subject to-day," said the mother. "He manifested, when on earth, a very tender spirit, sympathizing with sufferers of every description, and always giving relief to those who came to him. We will examine some of the passages, that show this. I will ask each of you in turn to mention one. Lucy, can you think of one?"

Lucy recollected, that Jesus wept over Jerusalem, but did not remember where the account of it was to be found.

"O here it is, mother," said George,—"in the 19th chapter of Luke; shall I read it? O I have thought of another," continued he, in a hurried tone, "'Jesus wept.' That is one whole verse. It was at the grave of Lazarus."

"Stop, George, not so fast," said his mother. "We will hear you read the passage Lucy mentioned, and consider that before we go to another."

George read from the 41st to the 45th verse.

"But, mother, was it not strange that Christ should have wept over Jerusalem? I should think it strange to see a man crying for any thing. I never saw one."

Ellen looked up at her mother, with an expression of sorrow and surprise, that George could ask such questions, and in such a tone too.

"I will explain it to you, my son. Will you look first, Ellen, and see under what circumstances Christ was approaching Jerusalem?"

"It was when he rode into Jerusalem, and the

people spread their clothes in the way before him, and rejoiced because they thought their King had come to reign over them."

"Christ then," resumed Mrs. Allen, "with his disciples and a great multitude, were descending the Mount of Olives. What an animating scene in itself it must have been. The rejoicing multitude believed they were now to be delivered from Roman oppression, and, in humble triumph, were conducting their deliverer into their beloved city, which was spread out in all its beauty and magnificence before them. They believed that before the power with which their Messiah was to be clothed from on high, all difficulties would vanish, and the Jews would again become a renowned and powerful nation. The Saviour understood perfectly the feelings of the people, and knew that their expectations would not be realized. He did indeed come to be their deliverer, but not in the way they expected."

"How was he to be their deliverer, mother?" asked George.

"He was to deliver them from the punishment which God must inflict upon sin, by dying for them. God accepts his death as an atonement for the sins of all who love the Saviour, and trust in him for salvation."

"But, mother, I don't see why God could not forgive us if we are sorry when we have done wrong, without having Jesus Christ die such a cruel death."

"My child, ought you not to obey me?"

"Yes, mother."

"If I were to direct you not to do something

which was wrong in itself, and exposed you to great danger, and should say if you disobeyed me I would inflict some severe punishment, and you should choose to do what I had forbidden, would it be right for me to let you go unpunished? You might come and tell me you were very sorry, and that you would never do so again, but would it be right or wrong for me to withhold the punishment?"

"I know you *would* punish me, mother, and I suppose it would be right."

"Yes, I should. It would grieve me very much indeed; but then, if I did not, I should be unfaithful to my word, and I should fear that you might be soon tempted to do something more wicked still. Well, George, you know perfectly well that you should always obey me promptly and cheerfully, and you know too that there are much stronger reasons why you should do what God requires of you. He wishes us to do nothing, but what we could do if our hearts were right. He is very kind. He tells us how we may be happy. We are all his children. He tells what we must do, and he threatens to punish us with his everlasting displeasure, if we disobey. Now if his commands are disobeyed, he would be unfaithful to his word, if the punishment threatened did not follow. We have broken the commands of God, and so have all the persons that have ever lived. God knows all things that are to take place. He knows now the day and the hour when Ellen will die, and when you will die. He knew that we should disobey him; and in great mercy he contrived a plan, by which we could be

saved from the dreadful punishment of being sent away for ever, to live in the world of darkness and wretchedness. He sent his own Son Jesus Christ into this world to die *for us*. Jesus bore our punishment for us. The Bible says, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;' and as I have just told you, God accepts his death as an atonement for us. He forgives us, not simply because we are sorry, but for the Saviour's sake. If Christ had not died, God could not have been just and faithful to his word, and yet have forgiven our sins."

"Mother, mother," said Ellen, with strong emotion, her eyes filling with tears, "I understand it all, and I love the Saviour, because he loved us so much, and was so willing to die for us. Oh how I wish I could always do and feel just as he would like to have me."

"God the Holy Spirit will assist you to feel and to act as will please your Saviour, if you pray for his influences; and I hope my beloved boy will offer the same prayer."

George looked up, and met his mother's eye. Her tender, affectionate tone touched his heart; his conscience was troubled. He knew that he had thought little and cared little about the kind Saviour whom his mother and sister loved; but pride prevented him from acknowledging it. The mother saw the conflict, and fervent prayer rose in her heart, that the proud spirit of her boy might be humbled, and that from this moment his heart might be given to Him, who had died for him; and it was with a disappointed, yet submissive feeling, that she saw him brush away a tear that

stood on his crimsoned cheek as he exclaimed, in a tone of assumed carelessness, "Why, mother, you have not told me why Jesus wept over Jerusalem."

His mother then told him that Jesus foresaw distinctly that the beautiful city before them would be entirely destroyed; even the ground on which stood the splendid temple, the holy and beautiful house, so much valued by the Jews, would be ploughed up. He thought of the dreadful sufferings of the inhabitants; many would be burned alive, many perish with hunger, many die by the sword, many be put to death by the most lingering torments. He knew, too, what death awaited him; that the multitude who were now conducting him in humble triumph as their king, would reject him, and demand that he should be crucified. He knew how unconscious they were of the fearful doom before them, and he wept over their infatuation. They had hardened their hearts; the Saviour in tender compassion would have gathered them to himself; he would have had all the Jews become his friends, as Matthew, and Mark, and John did: but they refused; they would not. He knew better than any one else, the dreadful consequences of refusing to seek forgiveness for his sake. He wept that so many must endure the wrath of God for ever, because they would not come to him that they might have eternal life.

"We have examined now only one instance in which our Saviour exhibited a compassionate spirit, and our hour is spent. Next week we will take up the same topic again, and the more distinctly we have before us evidence of Christ's affec-

tionate interest in others, his sympathy with all kinds of suffering, the more reason we shall find to love him with all our hearts, and to strive to possess the same spirit that he had."

The Testaments which had been open before them were now closed. Mrs. Allen knelt with her children and Lucy, to implore the blessing of the God of the widow and the fatherless, and the burden of her prayer was, that her own heart and the hearts of those kneeling with her, might be filled with a deep sense of the love and compassion of the Redeemer; that the precious evidence the Bible gives of it, might be so treasured up, that the soul should safely and securely rest its eternal welfare upon it; and that during the coming week love to the Saviour might be burning stronger and brighter in every heart, leading each one to watch against every wrong feeling, every unkind word, or doubtful action, lest their gracious, compassionate, ever-present Friend, the Saviour, should be displeased.

In concluding this chapter, we have a few words to say, on the prevailing neglect of the scriptures, even among christians who profess to make them their only rule of faith and practice. With how many men of business—with how many mothers —with how many who cannot plead pressure of cares in excuse, is reading the Bible a mere form. Pressure of cares, however, can never be an excuse for reading the word of God as a mere form. It may be a reason why comparatively little time can be devoted to it, but never a reason why, during that little time, the heart should not feel that it is listening to the instructions of its Maker.

We cannot suppose any one to be a christian who does not habitually read the Bible. But many, it is feared, read it only in the family, and how is it read there? Without having the mind or the heart interested—its threatenings alarm not, its promises cheer not, and its precepts, intended to guide in the common affairs of life, are unheeded. A chapter is read at family prayers, and the Bible is laid aside; the attention may have been arrested for a moment, but the impression was transient; it fades away as the regular business of the day commences, and is felt no more. The father goes forth to his stated employment; he is governed, to be sure, in all his business transactions, by general, established principles of rectitude, that secure his christian character from any blot in the eyes of his fellow-men, but in what state has his heart been? Has he resisted successfully all temptations to promote his own interests, by means honourable in the opinion of man, but dishonourable in the eye of a holy God? Has "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," influenced him in his intercourse with others? In the few minutes of leisure, that occur here and there in the busiest scenes, have his affections risen to his God, seeking his blessing upon his pursuits?

The mother, who carelessly listened to the chapter read, and yet made that listening a substitute for private reading, engages in her household duties. The portion read contained, perhaps, precepts which, if they had been felt at the time, and remembered afterwards, would have enabled her to preserve a calm, untroubled spirit, amidst

the cares, and trials, and petty annoyances of a housekeeper; but they were forgotten as the sound died away from her husband's lips. And now the impatient tone, the irritated look, the hasty action, are sad evidences that the words of her Saviour have not been hid in her heart—that his spirit is not there.

If parents thus read and hear the Bible, what is to be expected from the children? Can those who never, or who but seldom pray over its pages, and ponder its truths in secret, recommend such a course to others? Can children of pious parents be expected to reverence the Bible, unless they plainly see that it is reverenced and studied and obeyed by those to whom they look up as examples of what is praiseworthy? And who so ready to detect inconsistencies between word and action as children?

Let the Bible be read and studied by christians, so that every one could say from the heart, "How love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day;" "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path;" "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it;" "Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way;" and what a happy change would be effected in the religious community! Let individuals, who have read the Bible only from a cold sense of duty, and to quiet the murmurings of an uneasy conscience, read it day by day, as they would read messages from God, which are to govern them in their intercourse with others, to lead them to form right views of their own character, and of their Creator, to make known their

duties to themselves, to their fellow-creatures, to their God—let them read it as their only guide to permanent peace here, to happiness in eternity; and let it be accompanied with earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit, and then the strong language of the Psalmist will but express the emotions of their own hearts. The Bible will become a precious book indeed. Its influence will be carried into all the relations of life. In trial and difficulty, it will guide alike the old and the young, the day-labourer and the high in office: in sorrow and sickness it will alike comfort and sustain the peasant in the humble cottage, or the monarch on his throne. It takes away the bitterness of death from every age; the timid child and the hoary head, trusting in its blessed promises, alike walk fearlessly through the dark valley, in the sure hope of a blissful home.

CHAPTER III.

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

A FEW years ago, as I was travelling on the very verge of the unbroken forests of America, circumstances rendered it necessary for me to pass a few days in one of the humble dwellings erected by the lonely settler in those frontier regions. It required excessive toil to force my way through the path, for it could scarcely be dignified with the name of road, which led to this region. The thick boughs of the trees overshadowed the path, and demanded the constant exercise of the hands to protect the face. Stones and stumps rendered it impossible for any carriage to pass along. The traveller was even often under the necessity of dismounting, to pass over the rough and dangerous places he was continually meeting. The region was mountainous and romantic in the extreme, and no ordinary spirit of enterprise was requisite to induce any one to brave the hardships and solitude of so remote a district. After travelling many hours through the forest—now ascending a lofty hill thickly crowned with trees, again standing upon some rocky battlement, whose desolation presented an opportunity to view the vast extent of lonely forest, and again descending into some thickly wooded valley, I

arrived at the humble dwelling above alluded to. It was situated upon the margin of a pleasant pond, which had seldom been seen by any eyes but those of the roving Indian. Behind the house rose a lofty hill, the lower part of which was covered with the impenetrable foliage of a most luxuriant forest, while the summit, rocky and desolate, appeared as though it had been drenched by the rains, and battered by the storms of many centuries. In this lonely situation, with no other dwelling near, there appeared a log house. It was built in the rudest manner. The daylight shone in between the crevices of the logs in every part of the house, and a large hole made by the saw through them in one place, was the only window. An old blanket was occasionally hung over the hole, to keep out the driving rain. In one corner of the room, a few stones were arranged, as an apology for a fire-place, and the smoke, after circling at its leisure about the apartment, gradually ascended through a large opening in the top of the house. A few rough boards were laid down for the floor. The furniture of the house was of the same character. A few chairs of most humble manufacture were in different parts of the room, and a rough bedstead, upon which was placed some straw, sewed up in a coarse canvass, afforded the only accommodation for repose to the inmates of this humble dwelling. Uninviting as was the exterior, and cheerless as the reader must imagine the interior to be from the description now given, there was an air of neatness in all the crowded arrangements of the apartment, which showed that the occupants were not entirely destitute of the

idea or of the enjoyments of comfort. The broom in the corner had been faithfully used, no litter was allowed to accumulate upon the rough-boarded floor. The white pine table was clean, and no one could hesitate to sit down at it, or refuse the plain and frugal meal, which neatness had prepared. A large family of small children were gambolling about the door, and the stranger would be sadly puzzled to imagine where they could find a resting place for the night. He would, however, be relieved from this perplexity, as he saw them in the evening clambering up a rough ladder into the garret, and depositing themselves here and there, upon the loose and rattling boards, which continually threatened to let down their precious burden upon the stranger's head. Here peculiar circumstances rendered it necessary for me to pass a few days. The father of the family was absent in a distant town, to obtain some necessaries for his family, but returned the morning after my arrival. These wild lands being entirely uncultivated, and with but here and there a straggling settler, had not received the title of a town. The husband and father returned through the woods about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. It was a bright and beautiful summer's day, and the peculiarly uncultivated condition of his land, from which he was to feed and clothe his numerous family, demanded his incessant and active toil.

Soon after entering the house, and making the usual inquiries, and recounting the interesting circumstances of his journey out into the regions of cultivation and life, he called his family together for prayers. He could not deprive himself of the

privilege of family prayer, though the sun had already reached the meridian. He read a portion of scripture, and then fervently returned thanks to God, that he had been preserved during his absence, and returned in health and safety to his home. He expressed his gratitude that his family had been preserved, and that they all were permitted to meet again round the domestic altar. After this season of prayer, the father went out with a cheerful heart to his daily toil. I could not but be struck with the scene. How lovely an exemplification of real christian feeling; of sincere attachment to his Maker; of correct views of the object and the privilege of prayer. There was peace, there was joy in this humble and retired abode. It was the spirit of piety, the influence of prayer, which took from their hearts all ambitious aspiring for the more noisy scenes of a busy world. In their quiet home they were contented. Their frugal fare satisfied their wants, and there was more heartfelt happiness in that log cabin, under the shade of that lonely, gloomy mountain, than can be found in many a family, whose magnificent dwelling excites the admiration and the envy of thousands, by its architectural symmetry and its rich and imposing show. That humble floor and those rough seats were occupied by those who far surpassed in real enjoyment thousands whose feet press the richest carpeting, and who repose upon cushions of damask. The pitch pine knot threw its bright and animating flashes upon more cheerful countenances, than are often found seated in elegance by the soft light of the polished lamp. What was it that cast such a charm over this dwelling? It was piety.

The feelings of the father were subdued by its power. The mother was animated to fidelity and zeal by its influence. This humble home was the spot in which they were preparing for a more elevated habitation than ever adorned this world. If the influence of piety had been removed, and the cares of the world and the agitation of ambition had taken its place, a blight would at once have come over their hearts, and they must have passed the remainder of their days discontented and unhappy. It is, in fact, in such scenes as these, that we obtain the most convincing proof of the Divine authority of that faith, which sheds joy over scenes apparently the most unpropitious. There was here almost every earthly deprivation. No church, no school, no society. But few could here have found comfort, for all those things were wanting which we generally esteem essential. Yet here the spirit of prayer had diffused that peace, which so often has fled from the parlours of the wealthy.

The frugality and industry of this family has undoubtedly, before this time, surrounded them with many more earthly comforts; but if the spirit of piety has not kept pace with their temporal prosperity, it is very certain that their happiness is not increased. No truth can be more firmly established than this—that it is not external circumstances, but inward feeling, on which happiness depends. The palace of the king can only be cheered by this influence. Discontent stalks through the most elegantly furnished halls, and reposes upon the most luxurious sofas, and remains in the heart, when prancing horses and the gilded chariot bears the sufferer through the most lovely of

nature's scenery, if there be not the calm of piety, the serenity of content. This calm, this serenity cannot be permanently maintained, if there be not a close walk with God, an affectionate confidence in his friendship, and repose in his goodness.

The reader of these pages must search for happiness in the cultivation of these feelings, for it can no where else be found. God has so ordained it. He has declared it. The testimony of all ages has substantiated it. And he must indeed be inexperienced in the trials and disappointments of the world, who has not long since learned this lesson from the changing circumstances of his own history.

When this lesson is once well learnt, and the individual, with a broken heart, has come to God for that peace which the world cannot give, his estimate of the value of temporal blessings is altogether changed. The wealthy man, who thinks that the accumulation of property constitutes the supreme good, exerts all his influence, directly and indirectly, in producing the same impression upon the minds of all others with whom he has intercourse. During all the hours of the day, he is, by his conversation and his example, saying to his children, "Make it your meat and your drink to acquire property, for this is the chief end of man." His children have this impression so firmly fixed in their hearts, that it becomes a second nature.

It is so with the man ambitious of political preferment, or of popular favour. He toils for it with a perseverance of zeal, with an ardour of intensity, which says to all who know him, that in his estimation the acquirement of celebrity and

applause is the great object of life. His children are stimulated by his example, if they are not made giddy and ruined by his fame, and enter upon the same career of care, vexation, disappointment, and chagrin. Life passes in continued anticipation of joys never realized, of hopes perpetually deferred.

But look at the man, whose eye is open to the glories of the eternal world; who looks upon this life, as it is, as a passing shadow, an unsubstantial vapour; who understands the real object of our earthly existence. How different is his estimate of what constitutes good! How different the atmosphere with which he is surrounded! How different the influence he exerts upon society! To his mind there is a reality in death. There is a vividness in his idea of a coming judgment. There is importance, indescribably awful, in eternity. His mind is freed from many of those perplexities which press upon the hearts of others. The mighty objects of pursuit which engross his attention, make the trifling ambitious pursuits of earth dwindle into an insignificance unworthy of that solicitude they often cause. His family insensibly imbibe the same influence. They adopt the same standard. Such a parent exerts all his influence, both by precept and example, to free his children from those desires which lure but to destroy.

But let us turn from this happy log cabin in the forest, and, in imagination, enter the parlour of elegance and wealth. Here we see every thing that can charm the senses. The feet press softly on the rich carpets which are spread upon the floor. Luxurious sofas surround the room, inviting

to rest. The deep-toned organ, wants but the touch of an accomplished daughter's hand, to pour forth its soul-subduing melody. The rich ornaments of the mantel-piece, and the glittering plate of the sideboard, allure the eye. Soft and mellowed light beams beautifully from the lamps, arranged with scientific skill, to add to the splendour of the scene. But there is here no voice of prayer, no recognition of dependence upon God. And are the possessors of this wealth happy? No! Look at that father, seated at the centre table, glancing over the leaves of the new Review. His mind is so much engrossed with other thoughts, that he cannot fix it upon the book he is so listlessly turning over. Where is his son, the heir of this wealth, the hope of this parent? He is far away, tossing on the ocean's billow, an abandoned sailor. Feeling none of the restraints of religion at home, he has grown up dissolute. He has disappointed all his father's hopes. He has sent sorrow to his mother's heart. He has involved the family in shame. And all this wealth, and elegance, and luxury, cannot relieve the heart-ache. The absence of christian principles has enveloped this splendour in gloom, and there is vastly more happiness to be found in the log cabin of the mountains, than can be found in this scene of opulence, which contains all the externals of comfort which the world can afford. Oh, what madness it is, for a family to cast off the restraints of religion, and deprive themselves of the privileges of prayer, hoping to find enjoyment in other sources. If piety do not control the family, there is no safeguard against the most awful ruin, and

the most irretrievable woe. In the cottage and in the palace, it is piety alone which can shed that charm which shall reach the heart. He alone can possess a "calm and heavenly frame," who "walks closely with God." Let any reader consult his own observation, and how many ruined families can he call to mind. A wealthy lady, in reply to one who remarked to her how happy she must be, in having the means to gratify every earthly want, said, "Oh there is many a heavy heart that rides in a carriage." This poor rich lady could take her morning ride, drawn by her beautiful horses, and attended by obsequious servants; but her heart was heavy, for her sons were dissolute. She knew no joy. She might have envied the humble inmates of the log cabin, for they were rich in happiness. Their hearts were at peace with God. They had hopes of heaven. And in their lowly and quiet home, they were maturing for a home in the skies. The other had no world but this to live for. She had no thoughts and no hopes beyond the grave. Her earthly expectations were all blighted, and, consequently, she passed her days in depression, and her nights in gloom.

Such cases are not few. The land is strewed with wrecks of family hopes. And yet house after house is erected, and the voice of prayer is not heard within its walls! And the warning voice which comes from thousands already ruined, seems not to disturb the worldly spirit which so generally prevails! There is a strange infatuation. We all know that piety is the only sure safeguard from vice, and yet knowing this, how many will bring up a family without reference to God. Look at

that elegant house and those highly cultivated grounds, which adorn the landscape at no great distance from your own dwelling. By means of his handsome income the owner has ornamented his lands to an unsual degree. The interior of the house corresponds with the exterior. No rooms in the town are more superbly furnished. The gentleman has a large family, and his sons are foremost among all their playmates. The influence of their father, their superior style of dress, the confidence which the consciousness of their pecuniary superiority gives them, enable them to rule over the sports of the play-ground. There are no children whose prospects seem better than theirs.

But this house is not a house of prayer. The father does not plead with the Father of mercies for the piety of his children; and no christian counsel comes from a mother's lips. The consequence which reasonably might be expected soon comes. Some evening, while the family are sitting as usual in the parlour, an unusual noise is heard at the front door. A servant enters the room, and informs the gentleman that some one wishes to see him at the door. He goes out, and behold—oh what a sight for a father's eyes—his son is brought home by neighbours completely intoxicated. They have found him lying helpless in the street, and in this state have conveyed him to his father's house. Soon he becomes a confirmed sot, beyond the influence of shame or the hope of amendment. His countenance is bloated, his personal appearance becomes slovenly. *He is a drunkard!* When his father is absent, he often throws the family into perfect turmoil and terror,

by his intemperate excess. In consequence, his parents are under the necessity of sending him from home. He embarks on board a ship for a distant voyage, and never returns. The change is great from the beautiful apartments and polished society of his father's house, to the dark cabin and rude manners of the sailor. Surrendered to the dominion of every guilty passion in a distant port, he finds a disgraceful death. Oh, how is every joy of that fire-side embittered, as the parents think of their guilty and abandoned son toiling in the midst of the storms and tempests of the ocean, and exposed to the hardships and the vice of the forecastle. But it is said, that sorrows come in troops. Other members of that family follow the guilty brother's course, till they bring down their father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave ; and the mother is left to weep with woes which know no alleviation.

Sad as is this story, no one will suspect its being exaggerated. We all are continually meeting with even more awful warnings, with more desolating wrecks. And this is the legitimate consequence of neglecting early to inculcate principles of piety, and to surround a family with the influences of religion.

And what is to sustain you in those emergencies, from which no precautions can protect you? We tread amid snares and death. We are surrounded with dangers on every side, which threaten the destruction of our hopes. You have a daughter who has safely passed through the dangers of infancy and of childhood, and now is in the full maturity of her youthful years. Ties of

endearment and affection have entwined themselves around your hearts and hers, so as to link them almost indissolubly together. She welcomes you with smiles as you come to your home. She is the ornament of your fire-side, a solace to your sorrows, and gladness to your heart. All looks bright before her, and your heart is cheered with the pleasing prospect which sheds joy over her countenance, and gives vivacity to her spirits.

Some day you return home, more than ordinarily oppressed with care, and your daughter does not meet you with her usual smile. She complains of slight indisposition: you are not alarmed, for you hope it will soon pass away. You return in the evening; her cheek is flushed, and her pulse throbs violently with its feverish current. The physician is called, and pronounces her to be affected with the symptoms of approaching fever. Your anxiety begins to be excited. You hope that the skill of the physician, and the repose of the night, will throw off these symptoms; but when you rise in the morning you find that the fever has been gradually increasing in intensity during all the hours of the night. Your sick daughter has been tossing upon her pillow, seeking rest in vain. Her cheek glows more deeply with the hue of disease, as she raises her languid and spiritless eye to greet you as you enter her chamber. Oh, what solicitude rushes upon your heart. The physician is hastily sent for again. As he approaches the bed-side, you watch the features of his countenance, that you may, if possible, read the feelings of his heart. His appearance increases your apprehension. Day after day

the disorder baffles all medical skill, and rages unchecked. You approach your daughter's bedside, and she does not know you. You say, "My daughter!" and she gives you no answer. Her eye rolls wildly around the room, resting not for a moment upon any object. The unmeaning gaze of your delirious child passes over your face without any recognition. Her plaintive moaning and incoherent, unmeaning sentences fill your heart with anguish. You walk the floor in a frenzy of feeling. You feel that you cannot submit, that your daughter must not die. But, oh how unavailing is your anguish! She struggles under an arm which no mortal can resist. A few days of agony thus pass away, and all is over. The eyes of your daughter are closed in death. Her cold remains are wrapped in the shroud, and you are compelled to bury her from your sight. You return from the grave to your parlour, but how desolate! how cheerless! It is said of a father who lost a beloved son, that he never smiled again. You feel that your heart would almost reproach you if you should allow another smile to play upon your cheek. Oh, what a blight does this throw over all the prospects of your future years.

Have I here described an unreal scene? Is this an unheard-of calamity? These are the ravages of death to which every family is exposed. And what can sustain you in this hour of trial? Where is earthly solace? What can wealth or honour do to remove the acuteness of such a pang as this? There is no solace but that of religion. If your family be one of piety and of prayer; if your daughter be a disciple of the Saviour, and

your heart be animated with well-grounded hopes of heaven, then you can find comfort. You can rejoice in the prospect of a speedy meeting in a happy home. You can think of your daughter redeemed from sin, and sheltered from sorrow; and your heart may be animated with the hope of again being united with hers, where there will be no fear of separation, and no possibility of death.

The writer has heard of a family which has thus been afflicted. The blow of death descended upon the house like a thunderbolt, and removed a father's pride, a mother's joy. They had been accustomed, on sabbath evenings, to sit around the fire-side, and together to sing a hymn of praise to their Maker. On a sudden, disease entered, and the warmest heart ceased to beat, the loveliest form was consigned to the grave. That circle was broken. And do you think it was with slight emotion that on the sabbath after her death, her parents and brothers and sisters encircled the fire-side to sing their sabbath hymn? Oh, what comfort could they find, but in the hope that their loved one had gone to a happier home,—that she was chaunting the angels' song, before her Father's throne? If they had not the supports of piety, if they had not fervent love to God, which would enable them to say, "Father, not our will, but thine be done," they could have no solace. The world has no balm for a heart so wounded. But there is a balm. Piety can sustain, and triumphantly sustain, in such an hour. The eye of faith can look beyond the gloom of the dying scene, and the cheerlessness of the grave.

Life is full of such emergencies. We are continually exposed to sorrows, from which we can obtain no relief but in the consolations which religion affords. Does not sorrow come in that glad hour in which heart is bound with heart? The tie which binds your daughter to her husband, tears her from you. You rejoice over her opening prospects; you rejoice that she is to be united to one worthy to receive, and ready to requite affection. But is joy the only emotion excited in your heart when the pastor's solemn voice declares, "I now pronounce you to be husband and wife: what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder?" You sit alone by your fire-side, for your daughter is far away. She had been for many years your companion; her presence has cheered your otherwise lonely hours: from her infancy your affections have been entwining themselves around her; and now she leaves you to sit in solitude by your deserted fire-side. She leaves her home, to find another home, and to engage in cares which will afford her but little time to think of her absent mother. Days, and weeks, and months will elapse, and you will see her not. She may sometimes return to make a transient visit, but the home of her childhood is no longer her home. Do not these thoughts fill your heart with sadness, and cause the tears to gush into your eyes, when you struggle to suppress them, and in vain endeavour to light up your countenance with a smile? Is it, indeed, a little trial to parental love to bid adieu to a child over whose infancy you have watched, and whom you have protected in so many scenes of danger? You have

cherished that loved child with a fondness which not even ingratitude and cruelty could overcome. She has returned your affection; has watched over your bed in sickness, and, with all the tenderness of a feeling heart, has tried to solace you in your sorrow: and now that the hour for her departure has come, you may rejoice in her prosperity and happiness, but, oh, you must deeply feel your own loss. Now, where can you look for any thing to cheer? If you have not the feelings of a christian, you can have no satisfying support. But if you can reflect upon the instructions you have given your child, and feel that you have been, to a good degree, faithful in your efforts to train her up for heaven, you can resign her to leave your care, with true peace of mind. If you feel that her heart is right with God, and that it is fortified, by christian principles, to meet the various vicissitudes of life, you then can have comfort, rational and substantial. You know that, with such principles, she can triumph over adversity; and you can be cheered with the hope that the separation will be but for a short time, and that you will meet again. Oh, it is the thought of a reunion in heaven which takes away the bitterness of earthly separations.

Said a pious mother, as she closed the eyes of her dying babe, "I wish you joy, my darling." In view of her loved little one entering the heavenly mansion, she could sincerely wish it joy. As, with the eye of faith, she beheld it safely sheltered there, and as she anticipated a meeting where no more separation could occur, she was strengthened to sustain the present conflict. It

is this feeling which can alone give comfort in that sad hour of parting, when friends leave us, to find new friends and a new home.

We would earnestly ask the parent who reads these pages, if preparation has been made to meet such events? Oh, how soon must the most happy and united family be separated! They who were fondled in the same arms, who played beneath the same green tree, who encircled a father's fire-side in the cheerful sports of childhood, must soon be scattered. Their homes far distant, a new world of cares will grow up around them, till the scenes of their early years will only remain in their minds as the indistinct impressions of a dream. And where will be their graves? A poet has endeavoured to follow, in imagination, the wanderings of a family, and in pathetic strains has sung, "The graves of a household." But upon such a subject as this there is no pathos like the truth. Follow out the history of any family of united and affectionate children; what a sad breach does the lapse of twenty years make in their numbers and their happiness. Some are mouldering in the grave. One has perhaps gone amid darkness, and storms, and howling tempests, to the depths of the ocean; another is perhaps far separated from his early friends, and struggling with adversity. Another, who was a playful and light-hearted girl—the life of a domestic circle, is now the feeble mother of a numerous family: her constitution is broken by watching and care; her pale countenance and slender form proclaim to all, that her sands of life have nearly run. The little boy, who was so full of vivacity, and who

repaid a mother's love by so much affection, is now perhaps a victim to vice. You see him, with bloated countenance and palsied limbs, tottering along, a curse to mankind, and a disgrace to his friends. It is difficult to trace out the history of any family, without meeting with much to produce emotions of pain. And when the family scene is closed, and the last lingerer drops in death, how widely scattered lie their graves!

"They grew in beauty, side by side,
They fill'd one house with glee,—
Their graves are sever'd far and wide,
By mount, and stream, and sea.

And parted thus, they rest who play'd
Beneath the same green tree;
Whose voices mingled as they pray'd
Around one parent knee."

Where is the reflecting mind that is not often saddened by these thoughts? for, though this be poetry, it is not fiction; it is real life. And oh, where can we look for any thing substantial for the soul to rest upon, if we have not heaven in anticipation? Then shall these graves soon give up their dead: however widely separated may lie the bodies of the once united family, they all shall hear the sound of the trump, and shall come forth; they shall meet again; they shall have a new home, and be united by more ardent ties of love, and by a bond that shall be ever enduring. Is there not something refreshing to a soul in the views and the consolations of religion? Is it not madness for any family to deprive themselves of such inestimable privileges—of such invaluable

blessings? And yet, how many a family will turn from these true sources of comfort, and seek joy where substantial joy never can be found. They leave home—that name of countless charms—and in the halls of gaiety, with the frivolous and the vain, they endeavour to satisfy the desires of an immortal mind. But, how vain! The immortal spirit cannot be thus satisfied. The hall may resound with gaiety, and bright lights may flash on brighter countenances: but joy forsakes these noisy haunts, and even the pleasurable excitement which here and there plays upon the heart, is as transient as the scene itself. Go into that forsaken hall as the morning sun arises. The revelry of the night is closed. All those fair forms have vanished as the music has gone: the half-burnt candles are extinguished; and here and there a glove or a handkerchief reminds one of the gaudy show which but a few hours before was there exhibited. But how cold, and desolate, and cheerless does the apartment now appear! It is but a fit emblem of the cheerlessness and desolation which reigns in the hearts of those who have been mingling in its giddy mazes. Late in the morning they rise, languid and dejected, from pillows on which they have found no repose. Listlessly they wear away the day's weary hours; and it is not till another morning comes, that they recover from the consequences of a few hours' excess. How different the joy of that family, who, at the close of an evening of serene enjoyment, unite their hearts in social prayer. As they bow around the domestic altar, and commend themselves to the Lord, do they not feel a degree of

peace which cannot be found in the thronged halls of mirth? And as they return to their pillows with a consciousness of a well-spent day, can they envy those whose bosoms are agitated with the passions which are invariably excited in the bustling crowds of pleasure?

It is in the peaceful and prayerful home that the purest joys on earth are found; it is in the heart animated with the love of God, in which the spirit of happiness loves to find her dwelling-place. Elsewhere you may find her semblance, but not her reality.

But let us return again to the subject from which we have thus digressed. We were speaking of the various emergencies in the history of every family, in which the consolations of piety are needed. These emergencies are almost innumerable. A few years since, a young lady, of unusual personal charms, and highly-cultivated mind, and affectionate feelings, was married to a gentleman, who, in manners and in heart, richly deserved her love. Their opening prospects were of the most flattering character. Seldom have any couple set out in life with more reasonable or more sanguine anticipations of years of untroubled joy. The devotedness of their attachment to one another could not escape the notice of others, though there was an evident effort to prevent the display of it. In the lovely village in which they were situated, their home was the happiest. One short and joyful year glided away, and the wife became a mother. She pressed her loved daughter to her bosom with a fervour of affection which but few mothers have felt. Prosperity seemed to

be lavished upon this rejoicing family. The father was successful in his business, and able to supply all the comforts of life. He passed his evenings at his fire-side with his loved wife and child, sharing a degree of joy which but seldom is experienced in the world.

One day he took a cold, which settled upon his lungs. In vain he endeavoured to throw it off: the violence of winter fixed it there. His cough increased, till his friends became alarmed, and his anxious wife had her bosom filled with the most fearful forebodings. Soon the cold sweat, the hectic flush, the hollow cough, told too certainly that confirmed consumption was hurrying him to the grave. He passed the winter in his sick-room, nursed with unwearied care by his anxious wife. She clung to hope, even while seeing him daily grow feebler, and knowing him to be the victim of a disease insidious in its commencement and fatal in its termination. Oh! it was a winter of sadness. The dying father would play in his chamber with his happy child, and the tears would steal down his cheeks as he thought how soon she must be fatherless. And as his wife, with all the tenderness of her faithful heart, watched his wants, and administered those comforts which his situation required, he would imprint a kiss upon her cheek, and his voice would become inarticulate through emotion, as he endeavoured to thank her. He knew that he must soon leave his confiding companion to weep over his cold clay.

One damp and windy day in March, the neighbours assembled to attend the long-anticipated funeral. The agonizing scene of death was over.

The youthful victim, wrapped in his grave-clothes, and deposited in the coffin, was borne to his burial! Oh, who can tell the anguish that rent that widowed heart, as she followed her husband to his grave! Who can tell the desolation of that home, as the lonely widow returned and pressed her child to her throbbing, aching bosom! Her days dragged heavily along in sorrow, and her nights were passed in tears. There was no earthly hope to animate her; she seemed to be so perfectly overwhelmed and confounded with her calamity, that many feared that reason would be entirely dethroned.

In this state of mind, her affections clung around her infant daughter with redoubled ardour. All the energies of almost delirious affections were fastened upon her; she could not for one moment allow her child to be out of her presence: she lived for her. Occasionally a transient gleam of hope would lighten up her mind, as she thought of future joy in the society of her daughter. A few months thus passed away, and her daughter was taken ill. The disease gradually advanced, unchecked by medical skill, and unremoved by prayer. Soon it was seen that the hand of death was upon the child. The agitated faculties of the mother's mind could no longer retain their balance, and delirium rushed over her mind. Clasping her daughter in her arms, she declared that she *should not die*. The scene that ensued, no pen can describe. The lifeless babe was taken from the arms of her frantic, shrieking mother. As they bore the little one to the burial-ground, to deposit her by her father's side, the strength of

many was requisite to detain the distracted mother in her bed. Violent fever accompanied her delirium, and she was brought to the verge of the grave. Life was barely preserved. With shattered intellect, and ruined constitution, and a broken heart, she lived. With pain of body, and with cheerlessness of soul, she existed but as the wreck of what she once was. Oh, what a change had a few short months produced in that happy circle! How could the desolation be more complete?

Though this case is one of more than ordinary sorrow, the earth is filled with family wrecks and withered hopes. I was a short time since walking in a churchyard with a clergyman. As we proceeded from stone to stone, he pointed me to a couple placed side by side. "There," said he, "rest a mother and her daughter. Two years ago I married that mother to a gentleman still living in this place. She was then a blooming, happy girl. Shortly after the birth of this her only child, she died, and soon her daughter followed her, and there they now lie side by side." How many a similar tale is told! The poet has said, in language most beautiful,

> "Upon the sands of life, sorrow treads heavily,
> And leaves a print time cannot wash away;
> While joy trips by, with step so light and soft,
> That the next wave wears her faint foot-falls out."

This is the sentiment of the Bible, and the sentiment of all human experience. How important, then, that we should have a covert to fly to when the tempest beats! Where is that covert? It is God's protection. It is a Saviour's mercy. No where else can we find a home to receive us from

the storm. But oh, let light from heaven beam upon the eye, let the warmth of a Saviour's love cheer the heart, and the sting of sorrow is deprived of its poison. How transient are the afflictions of time, compared with ever-during joy! If we can look forward to a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, we can far more easily bear these comparatively light afflictions, which are but for a moment.

There are but few ordinary incidents in the history of a family more affecting than that in which a son leaves the paternal roof to seek his fortune in the wide world. When your daughter is married, you feel that she is provided for. She leaves your protection for another protector. She leaves the home of her parents, to enter a home of her own. She does not enter into scenes of temptation, but is rather withdrawn from them, as she feels the pressure of domestic care.

With your son it is different: ardent in feeling, perhaps impetuous in passion, you have felt constant solicitude for his future welfare. The period of his childhood has passed, and the time has arrived in which he must leave his quiet home. He goes to a distant town to engage in study, or in the active employments of life. Withdrawn from the restraints and the salutary influences of home, he must meet temptation, and bear hardship. You look around you upon the wrecks of other families. You see the children of other parents ruined. You sit down and endeavour to sum up the number who have fallen victims of intemperance, and are degraded with crime. And your heart sinks within you to see how appalling is the record. It

is, however, in vain to think of keeping your son longer at home. He must go out into the world. The morning for his departure has arrived. The well-packed trunk is ready, and the family is waiting for the arrival of the stage, which is to bear him from your door. No heart can be so unfeeling as not to be crowded with conflicting emotions in such an hour as this. As your son enters the stage, and rumbling wheels convey him from your sight, is it not a relief to be able to return to your closet, and unbosom your burdened feelings before the Lord? If you can thus feel that by prayer and instruction you have endeavoured to fortify the mind of your children against temptation, you have a peace which no other reflection can afford. How manifestly is it the power of religion which is demanded in such an hour as this! It is the influence of religion which alone can strengthen that son for the temptations he must meet. And it is religion alone which can speak peace to parental solicitude.

A son leaves home virtuous, and resolved so to remain. He is, however, in his new situation, thrown into the society of unprincipled young men. He must hear their conversation; he must become acquainted with their habits; and he must adopt their customs, or else brave their opposition and bear their ridicule. It requires no ordinary degree of decision of character for a young man to stand firm, and keep on his way against a current so strong. He yields step by step. He indulges first in trifling sins. Conscience becomes gradually seared. Soon he grasps the wine cup as eagerly as any one, and his voice joins in the chorus of the

boisterous song. The sad tidings soon find their way to his parents' ears, and they learn, when it is too late, that their son is lost.

How many widowed mothers are there now, weeping disconsolate! How many sorrowful fathers mourning over dissolute children! The parents hoped that native virtue would afford sufficient strength to pass safely through these exposures. They neglected to inculcate principles of piety, and to fortify their children's minds with faith and prayer. And behold the result! a result which might have been anticipated, if these parents would learn a lesson from the experience of thousands, who, in a similar way, have had their hopes disappointed. When will the world learn that to love God is the way to be happy; that there is no means of promoting real enjoyment but by obeying the law of God! Why will men continue so madly to expose themselves to the ruin of every hope, when the loud voice of God, and the voice of all experience, warn them of their danger? Do but look at the world, and learn wisdom. There is absolutely no safety but in coming to God, and making a surrender of heart and family to him.

Let your son leave your roof a christian; let him go forth into the world a disciple of Jesus, with faith in the promises of God and with prayerful dependence upon his strength, and he has deep-rooted principle to meet every emergency. You need not fear that he will retain his integrity. He will rise in usefulness and respect. In his own conduct he will reflect honour upon you. And in your old age, joy will beam upon your heart, as in him you live your life over again. But should

he die and leave you childless, to go down the vale of years, you are by no means comfortless. Faith traces the path of your child to brighter worlds. You see him an inhabitant of eternity, with the robe of a Saviour's righteousness, with the crown of redemption, with the harp vibrating in harmony with the angels' song.

How mad to be heedless of such blessings and such consolation! Here is true joy. Depend upon it, it is here. It is no where else. O ye families of the earth, be wise. Are there not wrecks enough around us? Let us, then, avoid the rocks and shoals appallingly whitened with the bones of those who have already perished.

Go into the literary institutions of our land, and almost every room can tell its tale of horrors. Go into the shops, and the stores and the beam from the wall will almost cry out, "Here a once virtuous son commenced his career of sin, and overwhelmed his distant parents with sorrow and with shame." There is hardly a family in the land who cannot point to some near relative as a victim to the temptations of the world. And yet we do not grow wise. We make use of all means, but the right ones, to protect our children. Why do we not listen to the voice from Heaven, and teach them that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom? This is the infallible security. There is none other. This is a guard against every temptation, a solace in every sorrow.

We are all exposed to reverses of fortune. The family which is this year in prosperity, may, in a few months, be in adversity. Go through the streets of our great cities, and inquire respecting

the past and present occupants of the most splendid mansions. A poor country lad goes into the city, and is employed as a servant in some wealthy family. He saves up his wages, and acquires habits of the strictest economy. He advances from step to step in property and in lucrative employment. In time he is spoken of as a man of wealth. His ships visit the most distant lands, and return with treasures to their opulent owner. His sons and his daughters feel the pride of wealth, and profusely lavish that which their father has so laboriously earned. Heirs of their father's wealth, but not inheriting his industry or his economy, they soon scatter what he has collected, and their children take the place of servants. You are now rich. Your grand-children may be poor. Do you wish to bequeath to your descendants an inheritance which shall never fail? You must imbue their hearts with principles of piety. There is many a poor sailor in his dark hammock, who found the cradle of his infancy a chamber of elegance, and had in his early years every luxury which wealth could afford. He was the envied child of rich parents, and domineered over his young associates with all the arrogance which his fancied superiority seemed to warrant. But he is now a friendless wanderer of the ocean, poor and despised. He gains his daily bread by hard toil. The dark forecastle is his only home. Little did that fond mother think, that the son she cherished with so much indulgence, would have so humble a home, and so hard a fare. "That young man," said a sea captain once to me, as he pointed to a rough weather-beaten sailor, climbing the shrouds,

" that young man, a few years ago, was a student in college. His father had immense wealth, and he spared no expense, to gratify his boy. He, however, failed, and his son became dissipated, and has fallen to the condition in which you now see him."

" Is he not very much cast down," said I, " by so great a change in his fortunes?"

" He appears to be beyond feeling," was the reply; " he is, however, entirely reckless of danger, or any thing else."

We can refer to other parents, who, when wealth has forsaken them, have found inexhaustible treasures in their children. Their youthful hearts, imbued with principles of piety, have been restrained from vice, and encouraged to the faithful cultivation of all their powers. When wealth has forsaken their parents, they have clung round them more closely than ever, and with the utmost delicacy have, by their own industry, surrounded them with comforts. Have you never had your heart cheered by seeing a widowed mother leaning upon the vigorous arm of her affectionate son, as he accompanied her to the house of God? And have you endeavoured to conceive the grateful feelings which glowed in that mother's bosom, as her tottering footsteps were supported by the manly strength of her own child? Oh, this is a lovely spectacle to look upon. Let piety universally prevail, and earth will be cheered by more such scenes.

Have you never seen the grandmother, honoured and beloved, surrounded by a group of happy prattlers at a son's or a daughter's fire-side? See

her soft cushioned arm-chair by the blazing hearth. The children are clustering around her with affectionate endearments, and they hardly know whom they love best, her or their own mother. See the respectful attention which she receives from a son, grateful for past kindness. Life's setting sun may go down serenely, surrounded thus by mercies. It is true that here and there instances may be seen, in which children, not decidedly christian, thus endeavour to requite a mother's love. But there is no certainty of a requital, unless the heart is expanded by christian benevolence, and sincere piety rules the conduct. If your children are under the control of gospel principles, it is absolutely certain that they will, in the hour of adversity, rally around you, as your protectors and your friends. No wealth can be so secure and so available, as the affections of your children. It is a fund which death alone can exhaust.

And how transient are all other possessions! Look at the rise and fall of fortunes. Visit the place of your nativity after a few years' absence, and you will find some of the wealthiest families are becoming poor, and some who were then in poverty, now in opulence. The houses will have changed occupants. Hardly any one can be protected from these reverses. A few years ago, there was a lady who lived in splendour: her husband had been highly prosperous in business, and had accumulated large wealth. He had his city house and his country residence. This lady rode in her carriage, and excited the envy of many who coveted the splendour which she was able to exhibit. But a few years rolled on, and her husband

was a miserable spendthrift and gambler, in disgrace and beggary. He not only had to perform the most menial services to keep himself from starvation, but was actually degraded to the extreme of wretchedness and rags. He would beg of former acquaintances the least sum of money. If any one in charity would bestow upon him a sixpence, he would receive it with exultation, and go straight to the dram shop, to drown his wretchedness in beastly intoxication. Where was his wife all this while—the accomplished lady who had moved in splendid parlours, and reposed on beds of down? She was in the poor-house! Her shattered intellect had sunk down into idiocy. She took her tin porringer, and sat down to eat her homely fare, surrounded by the disgusting group usually collected in such a retreat. Former friends, who had visited in her parlour and received her visits in return, beheld her a paupered idiot. In this sad state she recently died.

This is not an exaggerated story, fabricated to give point to our subject. It is a plain statement of fact. Such total reverses seldom occur. But the change from wealth to poverty is far from unfrequent; and if you have not treasures more substantial than any earth can afford, you are poorly provided for. Go to the Saviour; resign yourself to him; consecrate your life to his service; seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit; lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, and you will have treasures which can never take to themselves wings and fly away. You will then possess a mansion never to be forsaken. Whatever may be the changes in your earthly fortunes, your

heavenly inheritance will remain undisturbed. You can peacefully meet calamities, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Cherish these feelings in the bosoms of your children, and they can never be poor. They will be the heirs of a heavenly inheritance. They will be useful and respected while they live, and will meet you again where sorrow and sighing, and separation and death, must for ever flee away. This is an object worth living for. And he who is not living for this object, is living in vain. He is grasping at shadows. He is feeding his soul on vanity. There is a dignity in human nature, for it is an immortal nature.

"The sun is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky:
The soul, immortal as its Sire,
Can never die."

O how degrading is it, then, to devote the faculties of an immortal nature, to the vain pleasures of a transient world! There is no folly more palpable than this. The incidents of every hour are telling us of the uncertainty of all earthly pleasure, and calling upon us to look to a brighter world and to more enduring joys. And yet the crowd rush on, unmindful of their immortal nature.

The most important crisis in the history of the family is when the father or mother is removed by death. You see the mother of a numerous family withdrawn from her ordinary duties, and laid on a bed of sickness. At first but little alarm is felt. Soon, however, the neighbours begin to fear, as they see the disorder gradually advancing, that it may prove fatal. The husband and the children

allow their own ardent desires to blind them to the danger. Though at times dreadful apprehensions will come over their minds, they quiet their fears. A week passes away, and their sick mother lies exhausted, and just struggling with life, upon her dying bed. The truth can no longer be concealed. Husband and children now know that the time has come in which the affectionate wife and the faithful mother must leave them. They gather around her dying bed. They watch every expression of her countenance. In silence they weep, and try hard to repress the loud utterance of their grief. Oh, how do the children weep, as their dying mother gathers them around her, to hear her parting instructions! How agitating are the feelings which press upon that husband's heart as he witnesses the mournful scene! But the dying hour has come. A few faint struggles convulse the frame, and all is over. The cold and lifeless corpse lies before the broken-hearted husband and the grief-distracted children. Oh, what a scene to gaze upon! And yet in how many families of the earth, is this very scene now enacting. The dying groan is this moment poured forth from many a bosom. The loud cries of orphan children are this moment heard in many a chamber. Where is there a scene more heart-rending? And where is the family which is not always exposed to be thus desolated?

Go, in imagination, to the funeral scene; see the father struggling with intense emotion, and his sobbing children seated by his side. Sympathizing neighbours have assembled to pay the last token of respect to the departed, and the silent tear

stands in many an eye. The prayer is closed, and the widowed father with his orphan children go together to the coffin's lid, to cast a last lingering look upon the cold countenance, which so often had greeted them with smiles and love. Oh, how does the chill come from the coffin to the heart! The lid is closed, and that loved countenance shut out for ever from their sight. Follow them in the sad procession to the grave. Is there a spectacle on earth more affecting than the burial of a mother? What heart can look unmoved upon the sobbing children and the broken-hearted father, as they look down into the grave, in which is deposited their dearest friend? The hollow sound of the falling earth sends agony to the heart. The grave is closed over, and the fresh mound of earth marks where a loved mother is buried. The family return to their home; but its charms have fled. They pass the evening in solitude, and silence, and tears. Day after day passes on, and their grief seems more deeply fixed, and more oppressive. Daily they become more sensible of their irreparable loss. Oh, how deep is the gloom in which that household is enveloped!

But every father and every mother must soon die. The most happy and united family is continually exposed to be thus plunged into sorrow. And where can you look for comfort in such an hour as this, if there be not light from heaven to cheer? What consolation can earth afford to wipe the tear from your eye, and to soothe the sorrow of your heart? There is none. Religion is the only balm for such a wound. Oh! if the dying parent goes down to the grave a rejoicing chris-

tian ; if she has been devoting her days to preparation for this solemn hour ; if visions of glory then beam upon her, so that she can exclaim,

> " Lend, lend your wings ; I mount, I fly,
> O grave, where is thy victory ?
> O death, where is thy sting ?"

Here indeed is their comfort. Then can you rejoice, even while you weep. The departing spirit is going to the angels' home. The voice now faltering in death will soon swell with the full melody of the songs of heaven.

And if they who surround the bed-side—the surviving parent and the weeping children—are cheered by the same hopes, oh, how much of the bitterness of the affliction is taken away. Death loses its terrors. The dying mother is, in fact, but removing to a happier mansion and a brighter world, there to await the arrival of her husband and her children. The family will again be assembled. Their love will burn with a purer and a brighter flame. They will bow together in worship around the throne of God. In joys that never can be interrupted, they will pass their eternity together. Is there not consolation in such thoughts as these ? Let the power of sin in the soul be destroyed, and death is vanquished. And, oh, who can conceive the joys of the family meeting in the heavenly world ! Elevated in angelic dignity ; glowing with celestial purity ; soaring on the pinions, which God has given them, with the cherubim and the seraphim in their lofty flight, they enjoy a rapture, which no heart can conceive,

which even an angel's tongue cannot adequately tell. There it is that we must look for our joy. And no family on earth can be called a wise or a happy family, if the members are not preparing for a home in the skies.

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