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FOR  
EARTHLY HOMES.



1874



*HEAVENLY LAWS FOR EARTHLY  
HOMES.*



HEAVENLY LAWS  
FOR  
EARTHLY HOMES:

BEING  
*A MANUAL OF THE RELATIVE  
DUTIES.*

BY  
EDWARD DENNETT,

*Author of "A Manual for Young Christians," &c.*



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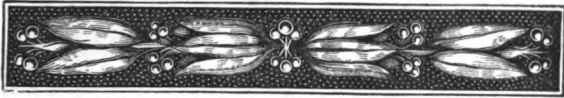
## PREFACE.

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**T**HE following pages have been written as a contribution towards the furtherance of domestic peace and happiness. It is often made a subject of complaint, that both family and household ties have, during these later years, become somewhat loosened. If the complaint be founded on fact, the evil complained of can only have arisen from a neglect of the relative duties; and it is worthy of consideration, whether this neglect may not be partly ascribed to the very common disuse (as compared with former days) of the systematic instruction of the young from

the Word of God. Be this as it may, all Christians will confess that the remedy for the evil, is to be found in the correction and regulation of every member of the family and household by the rules and duties which the Scriptures prescribe and enjoin. It is accordingly to their exposition that these pages are devoted; and may He, by whose Spirit His Word is inspired, graciously condescend to use what has been written, for the instruction and blessing of those for whom the volume is intended!

LEWISHAM, 1872.



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## CHAPTER I.

### *THE FAMILY.*

**B**EFORE proceeding to expound the duties of each member of the family, it seems advisable to treat, in a few words, of the family as a whole. It is the smallest division of the human race. There are nations, there are tribes, and there are families. It cannot but be that God designed some special teaching for men, by thus connecting and binding them up together in family relationships. For the whole race of men, in one aspect, is a family; and the Church of Christ is named "the whole family in heaven and in earth;" and the sign of our being brought into it, is the possession of the Spirit of Adoption (sonship) whereby we

cry Abba, Father; and, everywhere, in the New Testament, we are taught to look upon all the people of God, as our brethren in Christ. It cannot, therefore, be accidental that we have a resemblance between our natural and our spiritual relationships; but rather, it must have been intended that natural families should reveal to us something of Him who ordained them, and be a type, however poor and imperfect, of the great spiritual family of God.

How, then, it may first be asked, is a family composed? It is ordinarily made up of father, mother, and children. But, in the families which are made prominent in the Scripture, there are also servants. There is a reason, as will be seen, for this addition; and, hence, a complete family comprises three classes—parents, children, and servants.

(1) *Parents.* Parents, in some sense, or rather—the father of the family occupies towards his household the place of God, *i.e.*, he is placed there to rule for God according to His Word. But there is the mother as well as the father; and both must represent

a divine idea. If the father, then, should, and would were he a perfect father, be the presentation to the members of the family of the embodiment of God's rule or authority, God's righteousness, the mother must be intended to exhibit the tenderness and the love of God. (*See Isa. xlix. 15*). For the father and mother, being husband and wife, are one, and it is together, therefore, that they manifest (or should manifest) these two aspects of the character of God. And how much may parents themselves learn of God by their relationship towards their children! Are they called upon to watch by the sick-bed of one of them? Then they may understand that word, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Have they to mourn over their evil conduct? Then they can comprehend somewhat how God is grieved with the waywardness of His children. Is one of the number a complete prodigal, seemingly hopelessly lost in sin? They will then know more of how God yearns over the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin. And so, in



every varied phase of parental duty and experience, something may be discovered of the nature and ways of Him who is our heavenly Father.

(2) *Children.* It is at once evident that children in relation to their parents, reveal to us the relation of believers to God, as His children. The object of their parents' love, enjoying freedom of access into their presence, finding them ever ready to grant every good and needful thing, resting without anxiety in their care and provision—all these things teach us of the privileges which, as God's people, we enjoy. How often, indeed, does the faith of a child rebuke the doubt and fear of a believer. Hence it was that the Saviour so often pointed out children to His disciples as examples. It is said that, on one occasion, when Luther was very much tried, sitting by the window one stormy evening, he saw a little bird retire to his roost, on the branch of a tree; and folding his little head under his wing, was soon fast asleep. See, said the Reformer to his friends, how that little fellow teaches us to

rest in God. And so we, as we look upon children, thinking nothing about to-morrow's bread, but leaving all with their parents, may learn our duty and privilege not to be anxious about the morrow, but to leave the morrow with God.

Nor can we forget that Jesus deigns to call Himself our Elder Brother. As, therefore, the eldest son of the family is looked upon as the stay and prop of the house; is he on whom the younger ones depend for much of counsel and assistance, and often to undertake their cause, and to bring them through their difficulties, so is the Lord Jesus in the family of faith.

We have, then, our privileges, as the children of God, their relationship one to the other, and the relationship of Jesus to all whom He condescends to call His brethren, set visibly before us, in the natural condition of the children of families on earth.

(3) *Servants.* Children reveal to us the believer's position and privileges; servants show, no less plainly—his duty, his path of service. It is the master's will that governs

the servant, as it is God's will that governs His people. The servant does not choose his work; it is prescribed to him; and in doing it, he seeks not to please himself, but his master. So with the believer. It is not what he likes, but what God would have him to do; and, following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, he desires to commend himself to God. The place of the servant's work is the master's house; and so with the child of God. With the Psalmist he cries, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," etc. (Psalm xxvii. 4); or with the Saviour, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke ii. 49). It is not the servant's duty, moreover, to provide for his daily wants. Provision for the household belongs to, and is the care of the master. So is it with the House of God. It is God who gives to His servants their daily bread, and appoints to all therein their meat in due season, for He knoweth that they have need of these things.

And masters also may learn much of their

duty to God from what they expect from their servants. Do they expect their will to be law, implicit obedience to their commands, attention to their calls? So does the Lord expect of his servants; and, hence, the Psalmist says, "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God," etc. (Psalm cxxiii. 2).

The contrast, likewise, presented between children and servants is no less significant. Servants are under law; but children are under grace: and as our Lord teaches, "The servant abideth not in his house for ever; but the son abideth ever" (John viii. 35). Hence, if we are in bondage, as to God's service, if we labour from constraint, not yet have we entered into and realised the happy condition and liberty of children.

We need not pursue the comparison into all its details, as much more will appear under the special duties; and enough has been written to show that the whole family, in all its component parts, is full of in-

struction, and that the significance of the whole, as well as the relationships and duties of all its several parts, can only be rightly understood when viewed in its connection with the family of God, by the light of His Holy Word.



## WIVES.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”—EPHES. v. 22—24.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”—COL. iii. 18.

“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed.”—TITUS ii. 4, 5.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”—1 PET. iii. 1—4.

“Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”—GEN. iii. 16.





## CHAPTER II.

### WIVES.

**T**HE Scriptures everywhere acknowledge the honourable position of the wife. They abound in examples, both of those who are worthy of imitation and of those who are made to serve as warnings.

Sarah and Hannah are among the former ; and among the foremost of the latter, are the wife of Job, Michal and Jezebel. And not only have we the personal characters of wives, both good and evil, portrayed ; but, as might be expected, there are several striking instances given of their relative influence—their influence for good or evil upon their husbands. How vast the influence for good which Esther exerted over the mind and



action of her husband, King Ahasuerus. On the other hand, what pernicious consequences have to be traced back to the influence of Jezebel over Ahab, and to that of the wife of Samson, to say nothing of the result of Adam's yielding to the solicitation of Eve in eating the forbidden fruit. Most of the men, indeed, whose lives are detailed in the Bible, are manifestly biassed, if not moulded, by the character of their wives. In one sense, therefore, theirs is the most important of all the relative positions. Hence, no doubt, the large space assigned to their special duties, as well as the fact that they are given in such minuteness and detail. Hence, too (but this is a lesson for husbands rather than wives), the full portraiture that is given of the good wife in the Proverbs, and the solemn assertion that "a prudent wife is from the Lord."

(1) It is very clear, from all the passages that treat of this subject, that the main duty of the wife is that of subjection or obedience to her husband. Only once (Titus ii. 4), and then it is a special class who are addressed,

are they told to *love* their husbands. With the husbands, as will be seen, it is otherwise. They are repeatedly told to love their wives. The reason for the contrast is not far to seek. The wife seldom fails in love, though she often may in obedience. Her love is, therefore, pre-supposed. This is not so with the husband, and hence the injunction, "Husbands, *love* your wives."

The law, then, of the wife is her husband's will. There is one very important limitation to this statement. If the will of the husband come into conflict with the law of God, then is the wife bound not to obedience, but to disobedience. This limitation is indicated by the words, "as it is fit in the Lord" (Col. iii. 18). For God commands the allegiance of both; and thus the husband sins if he interpose between her and her duty to God. With this exception, her duty of submission is absolute. "As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Eph. v. 24). The comparison here used forbids any diminution from the above statement; and let it be care-

fully remembered, that the only thing here sought to be ascertained is what is the teaching of the Word of God. The grounds on which this duty is enforced may be reduced to three:—1. The first is creative—that is, the subjection of the wife to the husband arises out of creative relationships, or is the position assigned to her in creation. This is at once seen from the narrative of the creation of Eve. She is derived from—made out of Adam, to be a helpmeet, or, as it is in the Hebrew, a helper for the man. The Apostle Paul, also, teaches the same thing, when writing to the church at Corinth. “A man,” he says, “ought not to cover his head (*i.e.*, while prophesying or praying), forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man” (1 Cor. xi. 7, &c.). On the same ground—the ground that, in one aspect, as God is to man, so is the man to the woman—the Apostle did not permit a woman to teach in the assembly; for the act of teaching is the assumption of a superior position, and would contradict the relative order of the man and the woman.

2. The second ground is the law which God propounded, after the fall, to govern the relationships of husband and wife. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. iii. 16). This is not to be regarded as a new law, now imposed as a punishment, as is sometimes said, because Eve was the foremost in sin. By their fall all ties of fealty and obedience had been snapped, not only as between Adam and Eve, on the one part, and God, on the other, but, also, as between Adam and Eve themselves. God, therefore, did but promulgate afresh His primal law, with the merciful purpose of securing to man, in his family life, as much of harmony and peace as was possible under his new and sadly altered circumstances. This law, indeed, has been the corner stone which has knit together many a family, on which has been reared many a happy home, and around which have lingered much of the beauty and the fragrance of the garden of Eden.

3. The third ground is redemptive. This is especially set forth in the Epistle to the

Ephesians. "For," says the apostle, "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church" (v. 23); and that this is not a figure of speech is seen from the 31st and 32nd verses: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but *I speak concerning Christ and the Church.*" The doctrine of this passage is plainly that marriage is a type of the union of Christ with His people—evidenced, also, by the fact that the Church is named the Bride of Christ; and, hence, to ascertain the true position of the wife, according to God's estimate, in relation to her husband, we have only to inquire what is the position of the Church relatively to her Lord. If any contingency or circumstances may be supposed in which the Church would be released from obedience to her Lord, so also with the wife—providing that the limitation already laid down, which affirms her duty to God, be not transgressed—in respect of her husband. The words of Scripture are very explicit:

“ As the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything ” (Ephes. v. 24).

It is not forgotten that this duty, as so explained, may be regarded as one of the “ hard sayings ” difficult to receive. But let it be remembered, that while the duty of obedience, thus enjoined, may seem to sound harsh, if not degrading, yet, that in the light of the duty of love, which is incumbent upon the husband, it will become a service which is perfect freedom. If, indeed, the duty imposed on the one, and the other, were faithfully discharged, the marriage union would be perfect, without a flaw. For no union could be complete which admitted of the independence of two wills ; but when one is supreme and wielded through the affections, and the other is in subjection because the heart thus chooses, there will be seen that entire oneness which marriage was intended to secure, and which, when secured, is the glory of the marriage tie, and by which alone its typical nature can be proclaimed and peace in the home be enjoyed.

Such is the ordinance of God: and they are the wisest who, in simple faith, endeavour to translate it into the life; for, in so doing, they will, in this respect also, inherit the promise, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John xiv. 21).

(2) The Scriptures also point out the manner in which the required obedience is to be rendered: "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephes. v. 33). Peter also speaks of the wife's chaste conversation, "coupled *with fear*." The word is the same in both cases, and teaches that there must be a proper recognition, manifested in the deportment, of the position which the husband, in the order and appointment of God, occupies. There is no thought of slavish dread in this requirement, but simply the loving reverence which seeks to please, and fears to offend. This, it will be said, is easy enough when the husband's character is such as to constrain this homage from his wife; but

how can reverence be felt for or exhibited towards an unworthy husband—one whose conduct tends rather to destroy both reverence and affection? Our duties—*i.e.*, the duties defined in the Word of God—to kings, for example, are altogether irrespective of their personal character. As long as they occupy their throne, we are bound to render them honour. So is it with the wife and her husband. He may never be so unworthy; but he holds a certain place, in the appointment of God, and he is to be revered on this account, not for his deservings or otherwise (though it is a blessed thing when the character of the husband magnifies the appointment of God), but because of the source of his position—because the husband, in a sense, is to the woman the representative of God. He is the head of the woman, and she must, therefore, look up to him in this relationship; for, in so doing, she reverences not the unworthy character of the husband, but the authority of God. She does this “as unto the Lord.”

In such a wife, “the heart of her husband



will safely trust. . . . She will do him good, and not evil all the days of her life ;” and he will be thus drawn to confess that, “in finding a wife, he found a good thing, and obtained favour of the Lord.”

(3) The Scriptures are not silent as to the blessing connected with the faithful acceptance of the wife’s true position. Its largeness and extent are revealed by the Apostle Peter, when he specifies the most difficult case of all, that of a Christian wife who has an unbelieving husband. It is not, thereby, to be supposed that he sanctions the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever. That is prohibited expressly, and by implication, in many parts of God’s Word ; but, in the early Church, it must have continually happened that converted wives found themselves linked with idolatrous husbands. The Apostle Paul gives special directions to such, and it is of the same class the Apostle Peter speaks when he says, “Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands : that, if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the conversation (walk, demeanour)

of the wives ; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear" (1 Pet. iii. 1, 2). This amounts, almost, to a Divine promise that loving obedience and consistent walk shall be blessed to the conversion of ungodly husbands ; or, if not so much as this, it is an assertion that the tendency of such obedience will be to win the husband to the truth. There are instances on record in which this has been the case. One may be given :—

“ There lived at Basle an opulent citizen, whose wife was a believer, but he himself feared not the Lord. His practice was to spend his evenings in a wine-house, where he would often tarry till eleven, twelve, or even one o'clock. On such occasions, his wife always used to send her servants to bed, and sat up herself to await the return of her husband. When, at last, he came, she used to receive him most kindly, never reproach him in the least, either at the time or afterwards, nor complain at all of his late hours, by which she was kept from seasonable rest. Moreover, if it should be needful to assist

him in undressing himself, when he had drunk to excess, she would do this also in a very kind and meek way. Thus it went on for a long time. One evening this gentleman was again, as usual, in a wine-house, and having tarried there with his merry companions till midnight, he said to them, 'I bet, that if we go to my house, we shall find my wife sitting up and waiting for me, and she herself will come to the door and receive us very kindly; and if I ask her to prepare us a supper, she will do it at once without the least murmur, or unkind expression or look.'

“His companions in sin did not believe his statement. At last, however, after some more conversation about this strange statement (as it appeared to them), it was agreed that they would all go to see this kind wife. Accordingly they went, and, after they had knocked, found the door immediately opened by the lady herself, and they were all courteously and kindly received by her. The party having entered, the master of the house asked his wife to prepare supper for them, which she, in

the meekest way, at once agreed to do; and after awhile, supper was served by herself without the least sign of dissatisfaction, or murmur, or complaint. Having now prepared all for the company, she retired from the party to her room. When she had left one of the gentlemen said: 'What a wicked and cruel man you are, thus to torment so kind a wife.' He then took his hat and stick, and, without touching a morsel of the supper, went away. Another made a similar remark and left, without touching the supper. Thus, one after another left, till they were all gone, without tasting the supper.

"The master of the house was now left alone, and the Spirit of God brought before him all his dreadful wickedness, and especially his great sins towards his wife; and the party had not left the house half an hour, before he went to his wife's room, requesting her to pray for him, told her that he felt himself a great sinner, and asked her forgiveness for all his behaviour towards her. From that time he became a disciple of the

Lord Jesus." The narrator proceeds as follows:—"Observe, dear reader, the following points in particular which I affectionately commend to your consideration: (1) The wife acted in accordance with 1 Peter iii. 1. She kept her place as being in subjection, and the Lord owned it. (2) She reproached not her husband, but meekly and kindly served him when he used to come home. (3) She did not allow the servants to sit up for their master, but sat up herself, thus honouring him as her head and superior, and concealed also, as far as she was able, her husband's shame from the servants," &c. —*The Lord's Dealings with George Müller*, Vol. I., pages 125, 126.

Another case, equally striking, may be found in page 390 of the same volume, in which the husband, without the Word, was won by the conversation of the wife.

This shows unmistakably that the blessing of God may be expected when we try, by His grace, to walk in His ways; and that the surest method, under the Divine blessing, for the conversion of the husband, is for the wife

to present continually before his eyes the Word of God in her life.

It is worthy, indeed, of distinct remark that the Apostle does not urge upon the wife *to exhort* the husband to receive the truths of the Gospel. The reason is obvious. Exhortation, as before observed, is the assumption of a superior position, and, therefore, incompatible with the place of a wife. This, of itself, would indispose the husband to listen, if it did not, acting upon and through the carnal mind, provoke his opposition. On the other hand, the calm beauty of a life, inspired with the Holy Spirit, and reflecting the image of Christ, might win insensibly upon his heart and awaken the inquiry, "Whence the transforming power that is daily exhibited before my eyes?" Thus compelled, and "without the Word," to see the effects of the Gospel, embodied in the life, he might, by the blessing of God, "be won by the conversation of his wife."

If, on the other hand, the husband be already a Christian, yet the conscientious desire of the wife to obey these Divine com-

mands will secure for both unspeakable blessings. It will cement and beautify their union—lift it up into the blessed light of the union of Christ with the Church which marriage, as has been seen, was intended to typify; and tend to bind together, with the bonds of peace and love, every member of the household. Christ will thereby be exalted; and wherever He is exalted there must be blessing, and consequently there will be a happy home—a home in which husband and children alike will love to dwell.

(4) There are other directions, to which it is necessary to advert in order to have a complete view of the subject. The main duty has been expounded, and, whenever this is conscientiously discharged, there is little need of further exhortation. Still, as God has been pleased to vouchsafe further guidance, it cannot safely be neglected. The first of these directions is as to dress.

1. The Apostle Peter says, “ Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let

it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. iii. 3, 4). In perfect agreement with this, the Apostle Paul writes, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10). In both places the temptation is recognised, which so often presents itself to the mind of a wife, of appearing as beautiful as possible in the eyes of her husband; and the right and wrong ways in which this may be done are indicated. The wrong way is that of outward personal adornment, consisting in costly raiment and still more costly ornaments; and is not this the "broad way" along which so many wives travel at the peril of eternal loss? How many a home has thereby been rendered unhappy, and how many debts incurred to feed the ever-increasing appetite (when once it is gratified) of



personal vanity? Few can fail to perceive that extravagant expenditure in these directions is one of the besetting sins of the present hour. Even Christians—not merely professing, but real Christians—do not hesitate to follow the lead of the world, so that our assemblies for worship often proclaim aloud the neglect of these Divine commands. And let it be noticed that both apostles speak of the hair: “Not with brodered hair;” “Let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair.” Is it not with the majority of Christian wives as if these words had never been written? Is it, indeed, too much to ask if there is any difference whatsoever, in this respect, between most believers and the world? Two reasons may be found for this special feature being indicated; first, to deprecate the expenditure of time on this adornment; and, secondly, to strike at the root of one of the strong temptations to pride and vanity. It is often said that the Scriptures are silent about dress and costly array. How this can be affirmed in the presence of the passages cited it is difficult to

tell. The language could not be more distinct, definite, or comprehensive; and no Christian wife can lightly disregard it. And if, as a class, they were attentive to it, what marvellous influence would they not exert! The husband, in most cases, would be gratified, and the young people, whether of the family or servants, would be wisely directed and benefited. Extravagance in dress would receive a deadly blow in the Church, and, to some extent, be limited in the world.

The right way is to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety”—to have the adorning “in the hidden man of the heart, . . . the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” to clothe themselves “with good works.” Neglect of dress is not, therefore, commanded. Attention to it is permitted,—yea, directed,—but it must be of the prescribed character—modest apparel, *i.e.*, as the word might otherwise be given, “moderate,” “well-ordered.” It is to be of the kind befitting the meek and quiet spirit, so that there may be a congruity

between the dress and the character. And ornaments are permitted ; they are to be made, not of gold or pearl, but of good works, " as becometh women professing godliness."

Thus the attention of the wife is withdrawn from outward appearances, and directed to the heart and life. She is set down as in the light of God's face ; and, while she has to obey her husband, she has to look beyond her husband to God, that, pleasing Him first of all, she may the more please her husband. Or, if this may not be, yet serving God in her position, she will receive all the favour and love from her husband which God sees fit to bestow, and receiving it from God, through her husband, whether it be much or little, her heart will be content.

2. The remaining direction is that wives should be " keepers at home " (Titus ii. 5), or, according to another reading, " workers at home." The meaning, in either case, is much the same. Wives are reminded that their sphere of service is home, and that no work or pleasures should be under-

taken which would be inconsistent with their domestic position. God has placed them over the house, and they must themselves attend to the duties therewith connected. It is best for themselves that this should be so. For no household can be rightly governed when the mistress is continually absent; and if it could be, yet, the mistress is thereby delegating duties which God has imposed upon herself. They are the duties of the wife; and, hence, she owes it to her husband to be a "keeper at home."

Other special directions need not find place here. Combined with the foregoing, the Scriptures present us with the picture of a perfect wife; and, hence, every Christian woman who occupies this position will use the Word of God as her mirror; and into it she cannot look too often. Then, seeking grace from on high, she will strive to be conformed to the image therein reflected. And in proportion as she is thus conformed, she will enjoy, whatever her outward circumstances, true peace and happiness. Then

she will find her original in the following words :—

“ Strength and honour are her clothing ;  
And she shall rejoice in time to come.  
She openeth her mouth with wisdom ;  
And in her tongue is the law of kindness.  
She looketh well to the ways of her household,  
And eateth not the bread of idleness.  
Her children arise up, and call her blessed ;  
Her husband also, and he praiseth her.  
Many daughters have done virtuously,  
But thou excellest them all.”

PROVERBS xxxi. 25—29.



## HUSBANDS.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself.”

EPH. v. 25—33.

“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”

COL. iii. 19.

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

1 PET. iii. 7.





## CHAPTER III.

### *HUSBANDS.*

**T**HE duty of the husband is quite as simple as that of the wife. As hers is comprised in the word "obedience," his is contained in the word "love." The wife, as has been already said, if a direction sent to a special class be excepted, is not commanded to love her husband. It is taken for granted that she will do this; and, as a matter of fact, she seldom fails in this direction. However harsh the treatment she receives, her love for her husband still survives. If it be crushed and trodden under foot, it yet springs up to greet the first return of kindness with a tender and forgiving embrace. It is an inexhaustible



fountain. It is only thus we can account for the wonderful patience, the utter self-sacrifice which is often displayed by women, when united to men who retain scarcely a vestige, except in outward form, of our common humanity. But with the husband it is otherwise. Of a sterner make, with fewer of the tender emotions, engrossed by a thousand things, and exposed, it may be, to severer temptations, his danger is to forget that he owes the duty of love to his chosen wife. God, therefore, who enjoins on the wife the duty of obedience, lays upon him the duty of love—"Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church" (Eph. v. 25).

(1) It is this duty that has to be examined and explained; and the consideration of the relationship which the husband sustains towards his wife will be its most eloquent exposition. The husband, then, "is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church." Herein lies the ground of his rightful claim to the obedience of his wife. But not only is he the head of his

wife: by the primal ordinance of God, he is indissolubly one with her. "A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. iii. 24). In this lies the foundation of the Apostolic statement—"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Eph. v. 28, 29). The more perfectly, therefore, the true character of the union contracted in marriage is apprehended, the more perfect will be his love, the more spontaneously will his love flow forth towards his wife. As we are taught, by the passage just cited, in marriage, when entered upon rightly, a union is formed as complete as that which subsists between Christ and the Church. All duality thenceforward ceases. The wife is identified with—it might almost be said, absorbed in—her husband. Her whole being (as far as this world is concerned) is rooted and grounded in his; grafted into him, they become but one existence. Not to love a wife, therefore, would argue both insensi-

bility and sin, as well as ignorance of the nature of his oneness with his wife and the position in which he is placed. Not only so; but in the analogy which is drawn, in the Word of God, between the union of Christ with the Church and that of the husband with the wife, the question, at least by implication, is suggested—What led to the marriage? What moved the man to seek out his wife? The answer is plain—that which led the Saviour to seek out the Church, viz.—*love*. If, therefore, the husband should not love his wife, he would, again, be convicted of sin. For what led him to leave his father and mother, and to cleave unto his wife? If he cannot love her, it was not love; and if it were not love, it was some lower feeling, some more sordid motive, which was but the counterfeit of love—and a counterfeit which deceived the wife into thinking that it was love. How needful, then, that the man, before “giving himself for the woman,” should examine himself, lest he should afterwards discover that his whole life is a continuous transgression of the Divine command.

On the other hand, if the union has been prompted by right and holy feelings, sought for, in dependence on God's blessing, love for the wife will be a necessity—and, at the same time, a perennial fountain, whose waters, increasing in volume with the years, will spread over the home life a mantle of freshness and verdure, and make it rich in the fruits of happiness, peace, and joy.

(2) It is not, however, the duty alone which is indicated. The measure of the duty is also given. "So ought men to love their wives *as their own bodies.*" "He that loveth his wife, loveth himself." "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church." Such is the twofold standard or measure of the husband's duty. 1. The measure of a man's love to himself, self-love, is to be the measure of his love to his wife. Now, as this is one of the primal instincts of our nature, and, to a large extent, its governing principle, it is impossible to conceive of a more comprehensive direction. And here, again, is seen the necessity of a true understanding of the marriage union.

Let its perfect character be apprehended and his love will follow; for the husband will then no more consider his wife, as distinct from, but as a part of himself—a part of his own organisation and nature. Whatever touches his wife, will touch himself, and his self-love, moving now in a wider circle, includes her, and all that affects and concerns her, within its embrace. But how much is herein involved. All that the husband desires for himself in the way of ease, comfort, pleasure, and enjoyment, he must also desire for his wife; all the care he exercises for himself, he will also exercise for his wife; all that he receives he will desire to share with her. In a word, all the good he seeks, and all the evil he deprecates, he will seek and deprecate for his wife, as for himself; for, together, they are “one flesh,” and, therefore, he that loveth his wife loveth himself. 2. A far higher standard is erected, when the Apostle says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it” (Eph. v. 25). This is not self-love;

but a love which springs from, exists for, and is sustained by self-sacrifice; a love that flows out continuously in acts of tenderness and beneficence, and purifies its object by its blessed and exalted character. This will be seen more clearly, if the question is asked, "How did Christ love the Church?" The answer must be, "Perfectly." In spite of her unworthiness, He loved her constantly, ungrudgingly, immutably, and from eternity to eternity. He loved her with a love that sacrificed all to bestow all—the cost to Him being the Cross, and the gain to her, the Crown; with a love, therefore, that enriched its object out of its own fulness, that thereby she might participate in His glory.

But words, however strong, fail to explain the character of the love of Christ for the Church. But several features may be specified, which will serve to mark more distinctly the husband's duty. 1. It is said that Christ gave Himself for the Church. It was, in His case, the price He paid to secure her eternal possession and happiness. The fact, as showing an example to us, contains

the law of self-sacrifice, utter and complete. Thus, in a sense, the husband, in marriage, gives himself "for the wife." But this act of giving, on the day of marriage, is but typical of the relationship which he, henceforward, sustains towards her whom he has chosen. His life must be a continual giving of himself for the wife; for, while it is true, that she is to be his help-meet, she will become this, just in proportion as the husband gives himself for her. But what is meant by giving himself for her? Is it not contained in those words of our Lord, wherein He tells us that, "He came not to be ministered unto but to minister?" Christ now lives for the Church; for He serves her in all her need, and surrounds her with all that is necessary for her strength, purity, and joy. So the husband lives for the wife, seeking not his own but hers, providing for, watching over, upholding and blessing her with his love. Thus giving himself for the wife, he will win, and train his wife to be the companion which God intended she should be, for His love will subdue her will and make their union complete. 2. No

amount of unworthiness, save the one sin specified by our Lord, can excuse the husband from loving his wife. For the Saviour loves the Church in spite of all her faults; nay, He covers over her faults with the mantle of His perfect charity. So should the husband act towards his wife. In the commonest relationships of life, if failings are harshly condemned, faults magnified, ties are soon weakened, if not completely sundered. Much more is this the case with husband and wife. And there is nothing that so tends to wean from faults as to be constantly met by forbearing and forgiving love. We are slow to learn the lesson, but it is nevertheless true, that love is the great corrector of faults and purifier of character. Let the husband, therefore, never restrain his love; but let it flow forth, robing his wife in its own beautiful garments, and she will soon become in reality what he, through his love, sees her to be. 3. The love is to be everlasting. Jesus having loved His disciples that were in the world, loved them unto the end. It is, indeed,



the everlasting love of Christ for the Church which guarantees her perfect security. The husband's love is to be both unchangeable and everlasting. 4. Once more, the love of Christ ever seeks the eternal welfare of the Church. (See Eph. v. 26, 27.) In the same way, the love of the husband will not be satisfied with seeking to secure the present comfort and happiness of his wife; but it will embrace her spiritual welfare. Thus, he is entrusted with ministry to her soul, in love; and, consequently, he will seek to guide her in right paths, to shield her from temptations, and, in all things, to aid her growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Other applications might be made; but, it is quite possible that what has already been said will excite the thought—What an unattainable standard! And yet *the* standard. If husbands, therefore, fail, as most assuredly they will fail, and are deeply conscious of their failure, how tenderly considerate it will make them for the failings of the wife; and, then, in the exercise of that gentle compassion, which springs from the consciousness of their own

defects, their love will constantly increase, and gradually rise higher and higher towards the Divine ideal. Personal failure will, in this way, by the wise ordinance of God, become as fuel to the flame of love which He has enjoined. Everyone will at once see that only the Christian can even aspire to the example of Christ; and that, the more the Christian has of the spirit of Christ, the more perfectly will he discharge his duty. This is another evidence of the truth, that only the Christian can marry according to the Divine idea; or, to speak otherwise, that marriage, in its Divine ordination and exposition, can only be realised by those whose wills are in harmony with God's—by those who acknowledge Him as Lord. The incidental bearing of this truth on the selection of wives is very clear. "Only in the Lord," is an imperative obligation upon every follower of Christ. To act otherwise, is not only a sin in itself; but it is voluntarily to choose a position in which obedience to God may become, for the rest of life, almost utterly impossible.

(3) The Apostle Peter confines himself to cer-

tain aspects of the duty of love. "Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Pet. iii. 7). To dwell with the wife according to knowledge, evidently means with a proper consideration of their true position, and this from a twofold point of view. (1) Their position naturally is to be remembered—giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel. There is little doubt that this reference is to the more delicate frame and organisation of the woman, requiring and deserving more gentle and tender treatment. As a quaint old divine, while enforcing this injunction, says, "How choice and chary are men of Venice-glasses," comparing the fragile character of the glass with the nature of the wife.

Just, therefore, as weakness constitutes a claim upon strength for consideration and support, so the wife, as "the weaker vessel," has a claim upon the strong arm of her husband both for protection and aid. And even

more. He is to give honour to the wife—*i.e.*, he is to put honour upon her by rendering all the loving care and attention which her weaker nature requires. 2. In grace, as well as in nature, this exhortation is grounded. “And as being heirs together of the grace of life.” In grace, the wife rises to a level with the husband; for in Christ there is neither male nor female (*see* Gal. iii. 28); all natural distinctions, as constituting any ground of relative superiority before God, are abolished. While, therefore, the husband is justified in claiming the natural obedience (that is, obedience in things pertaining to this life) of his wife, he must never forget that, if they are children of God, they are co-heirs of a common heritage; and this consideration, in addition to that above, should remind him of the duty of putting honour upon the wife. Every child of God is, to all other believers, a representative of Christ, and there will be, therefore, mutual reverence between all the family of God; and much more will this be the case between two who are brought into such an intimate

relationship as that which subsists between husband and wife. Not only will he love her with a natural love, but with a love that has been sanctified by the Spirit of God : his natural love will be glorified in the purer love of a follower of Christ. He will love her as one who partakes with him of the same hopes and joys, as travelling together with him to the same eternal home ; and, in this way, he will have no difficulty in putting honour upon the wife, as being an heir, together with himself, of the inheritance of the saints in light, for the joy of true love is in the honour and happiness of the beloved. This is true ; and yet, in the business and perplexity of daily life, many a temptation will occur to neglect the giving of "the honour," or, at least, to omit the expression of what the heart may really feel. Hence the advantage of comparing the conduct with the Word of God, that having discovered the failure, and the source of the failure, the effort may be made, by God's help, to conform the life with the directions there afforded. 3. Attention to these things

is the more needful for the reason given by the Apostle, "that your prayers be not hindered." It is pre-supposed that husband and wife will often unite in prayer; also that unity of feeling—the unity of the Spirit—is a condition of prevailing prayer; also, that failure, on the part of the husband, in the duty specified, would tend to a breach of unity; and, hence, the duty of giving honour to the wife is urged home in order "that your prayers be not hindered."

Thus does the Apostle place the husband and wife in the light of God's face, and remind the husband that, beyond all, the spiritual objects of their union must ever be kept before his mind, and, by implication, he warns him that a prayerless union is an unblest union; that unless he and his wife can go together, in union of heart and soul, to the Throne of Grace, they will fail to receive the grace and the succour, without which their respective duties cannot be discharged. His natural duties will thus become a means of spiritual blessing, if they are rendered subservient to spiritual con-

cerns, and this fact will be a motive for husbands to dwell with their wives "according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life."

(4) There is one thing which the husband is taught to avoid. In the Epistle to the Colossians, there is added to the injunction, to love, "and be not bitter against them." It might be thought that if the love were secured, there would be no place left for the bitterness. But is it so, in the actual experience of life? Are there not many hasty words, often thoughtlessly spoken, which are as bitter as gall to the heart of the wife? The object of the warning seems thus to be, to secure constant watchfulness on the part of the husband, so that he may avoid giving pain and be always tender and gentle, both in speech as well as in the exercise of his authority. Much of the unhappiness which exists, in the marriage relationship, may be traced to a neglect of this command. Harshness or bitterness of speech, though it may be but the expression of a passing mood, both

frets and irritates, and will, if the practice be indulged in, gradually blunt the tenderest susceptibilities of the wife's affection, and prove a source of discord and strife. On the other hand, if the bitterness be avoided and if he remember to speak lovingly, as well as to love, the wife will be blind to his most glaring and repeated faults; for his tenderness will evoke from her that charity which covereth a multitude of sins.

Such is the description given in the Scriptures of the husband's duties; and will not every one confess that they are calculated to secure domestic peace and happiness? It were impossible, indeed, to conceive of any needed addition. No doubt, as before said, they suppose the husband to be a Christian; and it is equally confessed, that he must be a very eminent Christian who would faithfully translate these duties into the life. But whenever God commands, He supplies the grace for obedience; and, hence, whoever tries to walk in the path here shown, will find Him ever at hand both to strengthen and bless; and, consequently, that the path



is one of peace and joy. For therein will the union contracted in marriage be daily realised and strengthened, the embodiment of God's will be presented to the household, and the enjoyment be found of a fellowship which adumbrates, by no means dimly, that between Christ and His people.



## CHILDREN.

“Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother.”—DEUT. xxvii. 16.

“My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”—PROV. vi. 20—23.

Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.”—PROV. xxiii. 22.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”  
EPH. vi. 1—3.


“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”—COL. iii. 20.





## CHAPTER IV.

### *CHILDREN.*

 HIS chapter concerns and is addressed to children. We say children, but it will be well to understand who are included under this term. We propose to include in it all who are living with their parents, from the time when they are capable of comprehending the meaning of their duties up to the age of manhood and womanhood. Not that absence from home exempts from duty. Far from it. Those who are absent as long as they are dependent on their parents,—yea, and as long as they live,—are under filial obligations. When we speak of the duties of children, we speak, then, of the duties that children, as such, especially owe, and which children of all ages, whether under the

parental roof, or not, in some measure, owe to the parents to whom they are given by God. How happy were all children, and how happy the families of which they are respectively the members, if carefully instructed in the right path, they, by the help and blessing of God, would embody the commandments of God in their daily life! Then, indeed, would childhood be the happy thing which we often fondly imagine; whereas, now, many have to confess that its very remembrance is clouded over with many a dark and painful scene. Hence we wish to explain to children what are their peculiar duties.

(1) Children are responsible *to God* for the discharge of their duties. It is God who lays His commands upon them, who says, "Honour thy father and thy mother," and again, "Children obey your parents in the Lord." This, if it were needed, is an evidence of God's thoughtful care and love for children. Does a child say, "Is it possible that God can think of me?" It is actually the case, and the proof of it lies in the fact that He sends you some special messages in

His Word. The Lord Jesus showed during His life, in many ways, His affection for children; and doing this He did but reveal the heart of God. The commandments addressed to you are equal evidences of His care and love. For why does a father or a mother when, for example, leaving home, leave such careful directions and commands, bidding you to do this and not to do that? It is because in their love they are anxious for your welfare. So is it with God. He commands you to do certain things because, knowing the dangers that are round about you, He desires that you should walk in safety.

You are, then, at the very outset of life, brought face to face with God. If, therefore, you neglect your duties towards your parents, you sin before all against Him; for they have the right to your obedience, only on the ground that He gives them the claim. Thus, when the father or mother commands, if the command given be in accordance with the will of God, He speaks by them—they speak with the authority of God. If, consequently,

you disobey, it is His command you disobey, and you are convicted of sin. It should, therefore, never be forgotten that every child is under a direct responsibility to God; that he has not to wait until he leaves the parental roof, but that as soon as he can understand the purport of the commands given in the Word of God, so soon does his accountability commence.

(2) We now proceed to define what are these duties. As might be expected, they are few in number, and very easy of comprehension—*i.e.*, the duties which children, as such, owe to their parents. Over and above these, they have their duties towards God; but, in this place, their attention will be confined to their filial duties. 1. The first is that of honouring their parents. “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Ex. xx. 12). This command was first given to Jewish children: afterwards, it was given to all (Eph. vi. 2); and, consequently, is binding upon every child into whose hands the Scriptures come, or to whom the commandment is read. What, then, does the word “honour”

mean? It is the same word as that used by our Lord when He says, "That all men should *honour* the Son, even as they *honour* the Father. He that *honoureth* not the Son *honoureth* not the Father" (John v. 23).

It is, therefore, a solemn word, because as children we have to regard our parents with feelings similar to, if less exalted than, those with which we should regard God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It will take two or three words to express clearly the meaning of the term. To honour his parents, a child must acknowledge their position—their right of parental control—he must esteem, he must reverence them. It requires submission of mind, the willingness to be subject, as the Lord Jesus when a child was subject to His parents, and the desire to exalt them in their hearts and ways. To honour our parents we must enshrine them in our affections, and love to pay them the outward expressions of homage and respect.

The child that honours his parents cannot be careless of his manner in their presence, cannot be rude, cannot treat them with



levity. This will appear more plainly if the other side is stated. A child may easily dishonour his parents. But how? By bad conduct of any kind. If a child is known to be habitually guilty of bad behaviour, he is said to disgrace his parents. We thus read sometimes of wicked children bringing down the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave. They committed some crime, the disgrace and dishonour of which their parents felt so keenly that they died with broken hearts. If, therefore, children would reverence their parents, they must honour their counsels and instructions, obey in their absence, as in their presence, avoiding everything that could give them pain or sorrow; they must exhibit for them a reverential and self-sacrificing love—a love which will rejoice to defer to their feelings and wishes; and they must, in all ways and at all times, act so as to exalt them in the eyes of others. They must honour them because of the position which they occupy, by the appointment of God, and because of the innumerable obligations under which they are daily laid

by parental provision, protection, and care. 2. The second duty is that of obedience. The two duties are closely connected; for obedience is essential to honour. We, indeed, honour by obedience. Still the two are, in some aspects, distinct, and, on this account, must be separately considered. As to the meaning of obedience, this will be understood by the youngest child that is ever likely to read these words. It is to obey the commands of the parents—to do what they enjoin. But this is not all; for sometimes obedience becomes disobedience. That is, obedience, out of time and place, is not reckoned as, for it ceases to be, obedience. In other words, true obedience must be prompt; that is, to obey as God commands, children must obey *at the time* when they are commanded. This is a point of great importance. For as soon as a rightful command is given, the obligation to obedience commences; and every moment's delay is a moment of disobedience. And it sometimes happens, that very grave consequences follow upon postponed obedience. The obedience when rendered is too late, and

fails to serve the purpose for which it was demanded. Suppose now a brother or a sister were suddenly seized with serious illness. The parents bid one of the children to run for a doctor. Instead of doing so at once, he leaves the house, begins to play, and then at the end of a half hour, fulfils the errand on which he was sent. The doctor has left his home, and another delay occurs; and when, at length, he arrives he finds that the sick child is dying, beyond his help. If he had been an hour before, he says, the child's life might possibly have been spared. In this supposed case, although there is obedience to the parent, yet delayed as it was, it was worse than disobedience, as in that case, another messenger might have been sent. Every child, therefore, should see not only that it is his duty to obey, but also that he is bound to obey promptly. If he does not, he fails to do his duty to his parents as enjoined by God.

There is another essential to true obedience. A command may be obeyed, and promptly obeyed, and yet there may be no true obedi-

ence. Obedience to be rightly rendered must be *cheerfully* rendered. If children grudge the service they pay,—if they do it murmuringly or unwillingly,—their hearts are in a state of disobedience, even while they are doing the thing commanded. The true principle of obedience is laid down by the Lord Jesus, when He says to His disciples, “If ye love Me, keep my commandments” (John xiv. 15; see also 21st verse). This is also expressed in two lines of a hymn,—

“ Love makes our willing feet  
In swift obedience move.”

It is exactly so. There must be love in the child's heart, and out of that love to his parents must flow ready and cheerful compliance with his parents' commands. Indeed, love will go farther than this. It will lead children to desire to be employed by their parents, and to deem it an honour to receive their commands. It is so with the angels in heaven. Their happiness is in doing God's will; and, in like manner, it should be the happiness of children to do their parents' will. The Lord Jesus is their example in this, as

in all other respects. It is written of Him, when a child, that He was "subject" to His parents (Luke ii. 51).

*Is the child's obedience, then, to parents to be unlimited?* Not quite. There is, indeed, one very important limitation, and it is that we will now explain. The command in Ephesians runs, "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*: for this is right;" and we must evidently take this as a qualification of that in Colossians, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (iii. 20). Obedience, then, is to be unlimited, as long as the commands given do not come into opposition with the commands of God; when this is the case, disobedience is not only justified, but also becomes a duty. We have an exemplification of this in the life of the Saviour. When He left His parents, and remained behind in Jerusalem, Mary, when she found Him, reproached Him, saying, "Son, why hast Thou dealt thus with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Luke ii. 48). These words at least imply a charge of filial

neglect or disobedience. How did the Saviour meet the charge? By pleading His prior duty to His Father in heaven. "He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business." The same difficulty occurs in actual life. It is not infrequently the case that God brings the child of unconverted parents to a knowledge of Himself. It is laid upon the child's heart to confess Christ, because confession is demanded of all His followers. The parents forbid the step to be taken. What shall the child do? His duty is plain. It is, in this case, to disobey the parent, for if he obeyed, it were not "in the Lord;" and the Saviour has said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37). Whenever, therefore, the authority of the parent clashes with the authority of God, the former is to be disregarded; for a child can be no more than a man excused from his individual responsibility to the Lord.

(3) The question may be asked, How is this duty of perfect obedience to parents to be dis-

charged? A most important question, for the youngest of children will feel that it is utterly beyond their power. And so it is; and, consequently, it must be stated that only by the grace of God can it be done. In other words, unconverted children cannot obey their parents in the Lord. They will neither obey their parents, as they ought, nor will they qualify their obedience by having regard to their obligations to God. Why, then, is such a command given? To teach even children their need of a new heart—of being born again—of their need of salvation. This is what God designs to impress upon them, as soon as they can comprehend their responsibilities—their lost condition. While, therefore, there may be many good and obedient children in the eyes of their parents, who are not saved, they cannot, as long as they are in this condition, enjoy, as the Lord Jesus did when a child, the favour of God and man. Every child, then, equally with men and women, stands in need of the cleansing blood of Christ, and the regenerating influences of the Spirit. Do they say, “We do not under-

stand these things?" If so, let them read God's Word and examine what is here written—by what is there said; and let them ask God to teach them the meaning of what they read. And on the supposition that some, at least, may see their evil condition, and may be led to inquire—"How are we to obtain this new heart—how are we to be changed—saved?" we record that there is but one way of salvation, and that is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear children, you trust in your parents to watch over and provide for you, and you expect your food at their hands every day. You have no money to buy these things for yourselves, and yet you believe that they will give them to you, and you are not disappointed. In the same way, having nothing wherewith you can buy salvation or a new heart, look to Christ, put your trust in Him for these things, for pardon, for life, for a new heart, for power to do what He commands, and, in like manner, you will not be disappointed. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is thus a necessary qualification for obeying your parents in the Lord.



(4) We shall now ask children to consider the fact that God's special blessing rests upon those who are obedient, and His displeasure upon those who are disobedient. First, we take obedient children. The commandment reads, "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus xx. 12). The Apostle Paul citing it, and re-affirming it, says, "which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayst live long on the earth" (Eph. vi. 2, 3). That is, he tells us that this is the first of the commandments which has a promise annexed to it—and the promise he repeats and applies to children for all time. A proof that a blessing does rest on obedient children is found in the Book of Jeremiah. The prophet tells us of the sons of a man whose name was Jonadab, the son of Rechab. By God's direction, and for the purpose of rebuking His people, Jeremiah assembled this man's children, and set before them "pots full of wine and cups," and said to

them, "Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever. . . . And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever" (Jer. xxxv.; read the whole chapter). It is very plain from this narrative that God blessed these men because they obeyed their father. And so now, even though children are not converted, if they, to the best of their ability, honour their parents, a blessing will be theirs. For God will honour, in its degree, all the honour that is rendered to Him—though the honour may even proceed from an unchanged heart. Hence, everywhere, it will be found true that blessings—probably temporal blessings, though not

limited to these necessarily, will fall upon the heads of good and obedient children. For God hath been pleased to connect a promise with obedience to His command.

But it is also true that His displeasure rests on such as are disobedient. For not only is a promise connected with disobedience, but it is also written, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother" (Deut. xxvii. 16). The Saviour, likewise, most severely condemns those who excused themselves from the duty of honouring their parents (*see* Matt. xv. 4—9). The Apostle Paul, also, stigmatises disobedience to parents as one of the characteristic signs of the evil of the last days (*see* 2 Tim. iii. 2), and of great moral corruption (Rom. i. 30). And the slightest acquaintance with the facts of life will abundantly show that ungrateful, disobedient, wicked children are often manifestly under the ban of God. They cannot prosper. They may leave their homes, throw off all parental restraint and authority, go to a distant land, and seem, for a time, to succeed in their plans, but no sooner have

they begun to pride themselves upon their success than they are overtaken by disaster, moral or temporal. Write the histories of all the poor prodigal sons and daughters of this land, who are at the present moment seeking to satisfy their hunger with the "husks that the swine do eat," and it will be found that, in almost every case, their wretchedness and misery may be traced back to their commencement in disobedience to parents. Let every child shun this sin as one of Satan's most dangerous temptations, because, if he commit it, he will incur at once God's anger. And let him, also, think of the consequences which often result to parents themselves. It will help him to understand the nature of the sin. No child can understand the depth of a parent's love, how easily he can wound them even unto death by his misconduct. Look on Jacob, as with heart-broken grief, he exclaims, "Ye will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave;" and David, as he cries, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom,

my son, my son!" Many parents have thus bowed themselves down to the earth with unutterable grief as they have heard of the misdeeds of their children; and many have even, as already said, died with broken hearts. By the displeasure of God, and by the wounds you may inflict on your parents' hearts, we entreat every child to seek help to avoid the sin of disobedience, and to be able, in accordance with the commandment, to "honour thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayst live long on the earth."



## PARENTS.

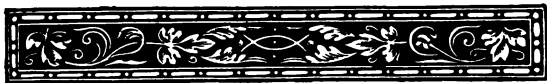
“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”—DEUT. vi. 6, 7. See also iv. 9, and xi. 19.

“For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, &c.”—PSALM lxxviii. 5—8.

“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”—EPH. vi. 4.

“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”—COL. iii. 21.





## CHAPTER V.

### *PARENTS.*

**E**VERY parent knows something of the care and anxiety, and the solemn responsibility connected with the training of children.

From the first dawn of their reason, watchfulness, wisdom, and government, must constantly be in exercise. Evil tendencies have to be repressed, and the good to be stimulated; different dispositions have to be treated by different methods; good habits have to be taught and formed, and, above all, it can never be forgotten that, as children are born in sin, they need, as well as their parents, the cleansing blood of Christ. Altogether, a more difficult field of duty can scarcely be imagined, and yet there are few departments of life which, with God's bless-



ing, yield more blessed results. How many good men and holy women have traced their every blessing instrumentally to pious parents! Some, indeed, of the most eminent saints the world have ever seen, have attributed all they were, and all they did, to the gift, in the grace of God, of praying fathers and praying mothers. When, therefore, we consider the vast influence for good or for evil which parents must exert, it must ever become an anxious question, what is the nature of parents' duty to their children? As in all the practical duties of life, the Scriptures abound with instruction on this point. They teach both by example and by precept. They present for our consideration children—such as Samuel—who are given, at the earliest period of life, to the service of God; they pourtray the evil consequences of parental misrule, and they give precept upon precept, both in the Old and New Testaments, for the guidance of parents who desire to be taught by the wisdom of God. It may, perhaps, be well to collect, at the outset, a few of these, and then we shall be the better

able to systematise the directions thus afforded.

We may, first of all, point out the fact that a special blessing rested on Abraham, because of his fidelity to God, in the government of his family. "For," said the Lord, "I know him, *that he will command his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him*" (Gen. xviii. 19. See the context). We may, also, remind you of the disorders in the family of Jacob, and their obvious cause. And, then, passing on to the Book of Deuteronomy, we have direct exhortations. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. vi. 6, 7. Compare iv. 9, and xi. 19). The warning example of Eli enforces the same lesson. "For I have told him," said God to Samuel

respecting the aged priest, "that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not," or, as it is in the margin, "he frowned not upon them," *i.e.*, did not show to them his disapproval (1 Sam. iii. 13). David affords another conspicuous example of family misrule. A few direct instructions may be added. "For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God" (Ps. lxxviii. 5—8). In the Proverbs of Solomon are, also, many admonitions as to the treatment of children,

“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. xix. 18). “Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (xxiii. 13, 14). One more, “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul” (xxix. 17). We pass, now, to the New Testament. “And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. vi. 4). “Father, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Col. iii. 21).

These passages are but a selection in order to present the subject to our minds. Others will be alluded to under specific points. Let us, then, try to analyse the directions which God gives to parents as to the education and instruction of their children.

(1) It is evident from both Testaments that the primary obligation resting on parents is to train up their children for God. “Train up a child in the way he should go.” “Bring

them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Indeed, this obligation lies at the root of all the exhortations adduced. But, it may be well to have a distinct understanding of what is meant by training them for God. We mean, then, that the main object of the parent's efforts for his children should be their conversion; not, merely, the impartation of religious truth, or Scriptural knowledge; but, recognising their lost condition by nature, the turning of them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. Let this be clearly affirmed that, conscientiously as parents may seek to discharge their special duties, they must never consider the object of their peculiar position realised until their children are converted—saved. It may often be, that the desire of their hearts, in this respect, will never be witnessed by them on earth; but, still, let them ever cherish it, even though they have to die with their prayers still unanswered. This involves, at the outset, the necessity of being themselves Christians, and unless they are, how can they discharge their

duties aright? How can they teach their children right principles, explain to them the ruin of their natural condition, and the method of salvation? And, if they cannot, how solemn is the responsibility incurred; when the training and care of souls are invited and undertaken? The essential qualification of a parent, therefore, is to be saved—reconciled to God through the blood of Christ.

Accepting, then, this definition of the object and end of parental care, it may be asked what are the means to be employed?

1. They are to *govern* their children for God. As we have seen, God speaks with especial approbation of Abraham's "commanding his household after him," &c. The passages also cited from the Proverbs, urge the duty of discipline, and of enforcing discipline, if need be, by the chastisement of the rod. The parent, in a sense, is to occupy towards his children the place of God; or, rather, in the government of the family, he is to exercise the delegated authority of God. For this reason he must carefully ground his rule on

the Scriptures, and must teach his children that their disobedience is sin, not only against himself, but also, and chiefly, against God. Every regulation made in the household must have respect to the Scriptures, so that it may be enforced by an appeal to the Scriptures. Nothing, therefore, must be tolerated, no conduct permitted, which the Scriptures condemn. If parents were always careful to act thus, and to explain that they so acted, not only would their children render a more cheerful obedience, but they would also soon feel that their parents never acted from caprice, or an arbitrary judgment, but that what they did was enjoined upon them by the authority and command of God. The government of children, in a word, should be a transcript of God's government. He alone should be exalted in the family. So doing, parents would be revealing to their children the character and nature of God, and training them from their earliest moments to acknowledge His power, and to reverence His commands. The gain would thereby be immense. Let us suppose, now, that a child should ask per-

mission to go to any place, or to do anything that might possibly be associated with sin. How helpful it would be to parents to turn to the pages of Scripture, to explain the reason why permission could not be accorded. So, in everything, let parents uphold God's authority, and govern their families according to Scriptural principles, and they will be doing more for the welfare of their children, than could be effected by all the plans that the wisdom of this world could devise or invent. A caution, however, is needed. "Fathers," says the apostle, "provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." There are two modes of government. It were possible to lay down right principles, and yet to govern in such a way as to irritate, "provoke," the minds of the children—in a word, to govern harshly. It is this which the Scriptures deprecate. While, therefore, wise parents will seek to establish God's supremacy in their families, they will constantly seek to win, not extort, their children's obedience. They will endeavour, as far as possible, to avoid giving cause of irritation, so as



not to discourage them from following in the paths of God. They are permitted to seek to please their children within the limits of the Word of God ; and, acting in this spirit, they will train them from their earliest years to choose and to love the authority of God. Most disastrous consequences have often followed from the neglect of this warning. Children have learnt to dislike their homes, and have thus been exposed to all the dangers that lie round about those who are, to all intents and purposes, without parental guidance. Always then seek to govern for, but also in the Spirit of, God. Combine mercy with righteousness, love with authority, and your children will delight to acknowledge the household rule.

2. They are to instruct their children assiduously and carefully from the Scriptures. This duty is enjoined in several of the passages already quoted. In addition to this, the Apostle Paul is directed to notice, in commendation, Timothy's early training in the Word of God. "From a child," he writes, "thou hast known the Holy Scriptures"

(2 Tim. iii. 15); and we infer, from his mention of Timothy's mother and grandmother, that it was by these godly women that he had been so instructed. This duty must not be delegated, for it rests primarily on the parents, and none are so well qualified as they, if they are Christians, to discharge it. But what must they teach from the Bible? They must teach them concerning the existence of God, and the modes in which He has been pleased to reveal Himself; they must teach them their natural relations, duties, and obligations to God; the facts and histories recorded; the Incarnation of the Son of God, and His Work of Redemption; and they must teach them plainly and distinctly the way of salvation through faith in a crucified Saviour; and they must do this in faith, expecting God's blessing to rest on their teaching. Too much attention cannot be given to this point. It is often the case that parents stop short of this. They teach their children to be good, to read the Bible, and to pray; but they hesitate to tell them that they are lost, and must believe in Christ in order to salvation. This is a

fatal mistake. It is often made on the plea that children cannot understand these things. But when this plea is advanced, it is forgotten that the Holy Spirit can and does explain to the feeblest minds the truths of the Gospel; and that there are, throughout the land, hundreds of children whose lives declare plainly that by the grace of God they have been so taught, and have passed from death unto life.

It need hardly be added, that much wisdom is required in the method of instruction from the Scriptures. Many children have conceived a distaste for the Bible, which has lingered about them for years, because they have been compelled to learn hard lessons from it, and sometimes by way of punishment. This danger is to be carefully eschewed. Wisely managed, the Bible can be made almost the favourite book of the child, and then it will be easy to lead him step by step until he has an acquaintance with the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. The injunction to which we have referred is the best guide as to method. "Thou shalt

talk of them (these words) when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." When sitting with their families, relaxing from the duties of the day; when out for a walk with the children; in the evening when all are assembled, and in the morning when all are seated together, then speak of the Word of God. Do not reserve it for solemn occasions, but often make it the subject of familiar discourse, and thus make the pathway to its knowledge as pleasant as possible, and in this way, depending upon the Spirit of God, win them to love and study the Word for themselves.

3. The two duties named involve a third, and that is, the duty of prayer for children. The knowledge that all your teaching will be in vain, apart from the Spirit of God, will lead to this, as well as your concern for their everlasting welfare. Parents should pray much, and often together, for their children; and they should also pray for them when they pray with them, and no parent should neglect praying with his children. How many ex-

amples of blessing resulting to children, in answer to prayer, we have recorded in the Gospels. The Syrophenician woman, the nobleman, Jairus, the father who met the Lord on his descent from the Mount of Transfiguration, all remind us of the efficacy of parental prayer; and hundreds of instances, in modern times, could easily be added to these, to show that there is no surer way of blessing for our children than by continuous applications to the Throne of Grace. Everything encourages us to expect our prayers to be answered. The promises and the Saviour's special love to children alike declare that such prayers cannot be offered in vain.

(2) Another obligation, another class of duties falls upon parents. Above all, they have to train their children for God. It is also true that they have to prepare them for their relationships in this world, for what may be termed their natural duties. Of course, their best preparation for these is, in every aspect, their conversion to God. But they need an education and instruction to enable them to discharge the duties of the

position in life which they may be called upon to occupy; and to provide for this, occasions oftentimes great anxiety and concern.

1. Parents, in pursuance of this end, have to send their children to school. This may seem to be a trivial matter; but how frequently has the whole character of the future life of a child received its bent from the school to which he was sent. Hence the need of much wisdom in the selection. And it is of the first importance, that schools should be chosen that have Christian masters or mistresses. It is lamentable to see how careless parents, and even Christian parents, are in this matter. For the sake of a few educational advantages, or even on the ground of convenience, they will sometimes place their children for years under the care of those who are unbelievers, and so imperil even their souls. No parent who "seeks first the kingdom of God" will fall into this mistake. Another error committed, is to allow their children, at school, to read classical works full of impurity and immorality. It is sad to think that, in hundreds of our

so-called best schools, more time is spent in teaching children—boys and girls—from ancient and modern writings in other languages, which are calculated to injure them morally for life, than in instruction from the Word of God. Nay, in many, the Word of God is only heard occasionally, and then, as a matter of form, while the best energies of the scholars are devoted to the worthless (in a moral sense) productions to which we have alluded. It is claimed that the Bible must not be used too largely, lest the consciences of men should be injured; but have Christians no conscience as to Horace and Ovid, as to Homer and Sophocles, as to the French and German books that find most favour with the teachers of these languages? It is time that Christian parents took higher ground in this respect. It may be, moreover, gravely questioned, whether parents are not neglecting their duty, excepting where their circumstances make it a necessity, in sending their children to boarding-schools. There are cases, in which this is a necessity, and with the proviso that Christians are at the

head of them, the evil is mitigated, if not abrogated. But, if children can be kept at home, surely they should be kept under parental influence. God has given them into the care and keeping of their parents, and the path should be very plainly indicated before they feel justified in delegating to others the duty which has been entrusted to them.

As to the education parents should seek for their children—it should be of such a kind as would be suitable to the positions they are likely to occupy, and especially such as would be helpful to them as the servants of God. To keep this aim in view, would be to glorify God in their education. So far from this being the case generally, parents often, on the other hand, allow their children to learn “accomplishments,” *e.g.*, dancing, and certain kinds of music, which can only be a temptation to them in after life, qualify them for the service of the world, minister to their pride, and which must be laid aside if they are converted. It is no wonder, when we remember this, that so many young



people are drawn into the vortex of worldly gaiety to the peril of their everlasting welfare.

2. Parents have to choose, or to guide in the choice, of situations in life, or kinds of employment for their children. Much care and discretion are needed for this duty—care and discretion, directed by the wisdom which God only can bestow. The tastes and tendencies of children must, no doubt, be consulted; but, with a due amount of prudence, the parent can easily determine the choice of the child. It were very easy to point out the many mistakes which are also made in this matter. Sometimes parents will accept the offer of eligible situations for their children, solely on the ground of the worldly advantages they promise to bestow. Cases are not infrequent of sons, especially, leaving all the influences of Christian homes for spheres, in which almost every evil influence is concentrated. Several illustrations of this may be mentioned. A pious and most consistent Christian received the offer of an appointment in the army for his son. It

was accepted ; but it was no wonder that his son lived and died an unbeliever. A Christian lady received an offer of a situation for her daughter. At the time her daughter was under deep impressions, and the influences round about her were calculated to intensify her convictions. But she was sent to the offered place, and her impressions faded away, like the morning cloud, or the early dew. Let all parents, therefore, make, even in this particular, the spiritual concerns of their children the main object. For if they seek the glory of God, they may safely leave to Him their temporal welfare.

One very simple rule may very much aid in this question. No child should be allowed to enter upon any calling, or situation, where sinful practices prevail ; or even where the temptation to such is very strong. More, indeed, might be said. It were unwise to allow children to enter establishments, where the members are left, practically, without any moral supervision or control. Who could calculate the number of young people that are irretrievably ruined annually in

some of the large London establishments ! This fact, together with the reasons mentioned, should make parents very solicitous as to their children's position and calling in life. The great safe-guard will be found in seeking God's direction and blessing, and in remembering that the everlasting welfare of their children must, in every thing, be their chief concern.

(3) Parents have to decide upon the question of books and amusements for their families.

1. *Books.* In the early stages of life, books play, in many instances, an important part in the formation of the minds of the young. On this account, it is very important that they should come into contact with the best books ; and to ensure this, much parental wisdom is required. For it is very easy to frustrate the object proposed. If, for example, parents convinced of the pernicious character of many tales and novels, strictly forbid the reading of all tales, they will but create in the minds of their children, an intense desire after them, and

tempt them to procure such surreptitiously.

It happened to the writer once, that, when young, he was sitting in the garden in front of the house. A carriage drove past, and a lady threw out a tract. He ran to pick it up. Its title was, "You must not read it." The effect of the prohibition was that he read it as fast as he could. So will it often be with children if you absolutely forbid the reading of novels.

Parents should, therefore, the rather enter into their children's tastes, and select such tales for them as are made to convey sound lessons and Scriptural truth. In this way the taste will be formed and elevated, and they may be led on to read only such books as will contribute to the great purposes of their education.

It will be helpful, in this respect, to form the habit, as far as may be, of talking over with them the books they have read, and, therein, the opportunity is found of pointing out the defects or errors which they contain. Bad books—morally bad books—should never

be allowed to fall into their hands. Such abound on every hand, and in every form, and hence the need of constant vigilance and care. Bearing this in mind, and guiding them to read those that may both interest and instruct, and be helpful to them in after life, parents may find in books useful auxiliaries in the education of their families.

2. *Amusements.* Many worldly amusements must be forbidden in every Christian home. It is of the more consequence that recreations of an innocent character should be permitted. The home should ever be made the most attractive of all places for the young. Where it is not, they are easily tempted and led astray. It would be impossible to lay down rules on this subject. But, it may safely be said, that no amusement should be allowed which is associated by the world with sin, or which might afterwards lead the child into temptation. Dancing, card-playing, and billiards would fall under this description. Further specification need not be given, for if the Christian conscience be exercised, as enlightened by

the Scriptures, the rule may easily be applied. And there are so many amusements which are perfectly innocent—some of which, indeed, may be made to subserve an educational purpose—that very little difficulty will be experienced.

It will be, at once, seen from this imperfect sketch how vast is the extent of parental responsibility; and how onerous is the nature of the duties that parents are called upon to discharge. But He who imposes, both the one and the other, will give all needful strength to fill the position which He has called them to occupy. And how unspeakable the recompense, if He should so bless the faithful performance of their duties, that, when they stand before the throne, they may be able to say, "Here are we, and the children whom Thou didst place under our care." The possibility and the prospect of such an issue of their labours should be a constant encouragement in their work, lightening their load, and filling their hearts with joy and praise.



## SERVANTS.

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”—EPH. vi. 5—8.

“Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh,” &c.—COL. iii. 22—25.

“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.”—1 TIM. vi. 1, 2.

“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”—TITUS ii. 9, 10.

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully,” &c.—1 PET. ii. 18—20.







## CHAPTER VI.

### *SERVANTS.*

**S**ERVANTS occupy a large place in the view of God. There are more words written for their especial direction and benefit in the Scriptures, than for any other class. This is no small honour, and is an evidence of God's love and tender care for all who occupy this position. The reason may, perhaps, be found in the fact that in every age of the Church, from the days of the apostles up to the present time, large numbers of servants have been, by the grace of God, among the converts of Christianity. And since, moreover, from the situation they fill, they must be exceedingly influential for good or for evil, in commending the Gospel to those with whom they live, or in dishonouring the name of

Christ, so many counsels and admonitions are given, that they might be led to see the importance of adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

The term servant, as employed in the Scriptures, is somewhat wider than as used amongst ourselves. "Slave" is the exact equivalent in language, though servant is the best interpretation of its meaning. For the slaves of the east were, in no way, like the slaves of the west. They were, to speak generally, the household servants, whether male or female; differing from our servants in this, that they belonged to their masters, who acquired them by purchase, or by war. But though slaves, they were for the most part kindly treated; indeed, they often became members of the family, occupying posts of trust and influence, as in the cases of Eliezer, the steward of Abraham, and Joseph, in the house of Potiphar. They were really domestics, that is, members of the household: and hence, whatever the actual differences between their position and that of servants now, we shall be most in harmony

with the spirit of the injunctions given in the Scriptures, if we understand them to apply to *household servants*. At the same time, servants of all stations, and of every degree, will find very much in this chapter to apply to their needs and condition. For, whoever is under any earthly master, will find God's will respecting his service, in the directions given in this portion of His Word.

(1) As might be expected, their primary duty is *obedience*. In five different epistles is this duty enjoined, and, as in the case of children, the obedience demanded is almost unlimited. "Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh" (Col. iii. 22). The only limitation is found in matters of conscience: for, although this is not directly stated, it is clearly implied when it is said, "Ye serve the Lord Christ" (24). Up to this point, then, entire obedience is owing from the servant to the master or mistress. We say master or mistress; for everyone will observe that mistresses are not mentioned in the New Testament. This is either because the term master, in God's sight, includes that

of mistress, just as men and women are often comprehended under the term "man," or, because the power the mistress occupies is a delegated power, the master being the true head of the household, but entrusting its care and management to the wife as mistress. It will, consequently, be understood that masters and mistresses are both meant by the former term, and that the obedience spoken of is due to either or to both, according to the position occupied by the servant.

It will, no doubt, be the case that a little shrinking will be felt from accepting such a description of the duty of servants as this almost unlimited obedience. And yet the words of Scripture admit of no narrower interpretation. Examine them as closely as may be, no other reading is possible. It is, in fact, necessitated from the relative position. A master must govern, and the servant, consequently, must obey, or the household would be a scene of continual distraction and strife. This will be more plainly seen, when it is remembered that every family and household were intended to be, in some degree, a repre-

sentation of the government of God. As the servant to the master, so is man to God. The whole family of man occupies the same position in respect of God, as that which all the members of a household occupy (matters of conscience excepted) in respect to its head. The will of both, in their respective spheres, is law. And service were much easier, if this were fully and heartily recognised. For then the temptation to debate the order received, to question its reasonableness, to condemn its unkindness, would be avoided, and a great step to cheerful obedience would be taken. That many hardships, injustices, and even cruelties, may be involved, is certain; but they belong to the position, and the sting of such trials will be nearly extracted by perceiving the plain path of duty. The first lesson, then, that a servant has to learn, is the duty of obedience.

Nor is the obligation to obedience weakened by the character of the master or mistress. "Servants," says the Apostle Peter, "be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, *but also to the froward*"

(1 Pet. ii. 18). The service will, in this case, be much harder. There are masters and mistresses who make their service a pleasure, who so win the hearts of their servants that they esteem the most self-sacrificing demands a pleasure. There are, on the other hand, masters and mistresses who are habitually so inconsiderate that their slightest requirements are deemed a hardship. The temptation to the servant is to fly to obey the one, and to lag, sometimes even to refusal, to obey the other. But this is wrong in the eyes of God. In every relationship of life, duty is irrespective of the character of those to whom it is owing; and so with the duties of servants. It is a subject position; and that, with all its attendant discomforts, must be occupied.

If now, the reader objects and inquires how such a difficult position can be filled, how obedience of such an absolute character can be rendered, the answer is, "Only by perceiving that your service is rendered not to men but to God." Again, and again is this affirmed "not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of

God from the heart, with goodwill doing service as to the Lord, and not to men." (Eph. vi. 6, 7; see also Col. iii. 22, 23). If God were to send a message to us, no one would venture, if he knew the message to be from God, to disregard it on account of the character of the messenger. So, if servants learn the lesson that they "serve the Lord Christ" in their service; that, therefore, the commands they receive come from Him, through their masters and mistresses, they will find their duties both to be more solemn in their character and more easy in their performance. And it is really so; for He has placed them where they are, and given them their respective masters to obey. They should, therefore, look beyond their temporal masters to the Lord, and regard every act of service as done for and to Him. Then, if they are Christians, their work will become a delight, whatever its character, for they will hear His voice in every order received, and see His face while they are obeying it. Hence the characteristics of the obedience required.

1. "*Not with eye-service as men-pleasers.*"



They are not to do their work with the object simply of pleasing their masters; they are not to obey as under their eyes, but as under the eyes of God. This cannot be too deeply treasured up in the mind. There are many servants who could scarcely be better when they are in the presence of their masters or mistresses, but who can scarcely be trusted to do anything properly in their absence. Such are, often unconsciously, men-pleasers. They should eschew this danger; and they will, just in proportion as they remember, and act in the remembrance, that they "serve the Lord Christ."

2. "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, *doing the will of God from the heart.*" "With good will doing service as to the Lord, and not unto men." "In singleness of heart fearing God. And whatsoever ye do do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men." All these expressions mean much the same thing. Being placed in the position by God, render the service to God; and because it is His service do it heartily, throw the whole soul into it. And

there is not one, that will not at once perceive the distinction between service rendered heartily, and as unto the Lord, and the service done without heart, and as unto men. The object of all these exhortations is to produce in the minds of servants that they are under the eye of God, that He demands their service, and thus regards its character. A higher standard could not possibly be erected. But if servants will but take it, as God intends they should, the whole nature of their daily life will be changed. It will be lifted up out of its dull unpleasant routine into the light of God's face. Difficult and unwelcome duties will become means of grace. In saying this much, it is not forgotten that this can only be properly realised by the Christian; for only such can truly serve the Lord Christ.

But here, again, is the love of God displayed. A servant comes—though unsaved—to the Scriptures, to learn what is the will of God in his, or her position of life. As the requirements are read, will not the conviction be produced—"I cannot meet them?" And if so, it may be, by the mercy of God,

that the first feeling of need of a Divine helper may be awakened, and, then, learning more of his, or her state, as a sinner, he or she may further be led to cast himself, or herself, on the love of God as displayed in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, for the forgiveness of sins. It is God's method to reduce sinners to a state of helplessness that they may put their trust in Him. May this be the effect on the mind of every servant who here reads what is the character of the obedience which God requires them to render to their masters!

(2) The next direction of the Scriptures is as to demeanour. This, in fact, is connected with the duty already described; for where there is cheerful and willing obedience, there will generally be propriety of demeanour. But it may serve to place the subject in distincter light, to consider this part of it separately—1. Servants are to “count their own masters worthy of all honour” (1 Tim. vi. 1). They are to hold them in esteem, and pay them all the respect befitting their position. And here, again,

the duty is irrespective of character. Just as God requires of all men to pay honour to kings, and those in authority, because of the office they hold, so He commands servants to reverence the office of their masters. There is no degradation in this, if it is remembered that God assigns to each, the master as well as the servant, their respective positions, and, therefore, that while the master receives the "honour," it is rendered to him, because of duty to God. And the propriety of it is evident. Nothing is more becoming on the part of the servant, and nothing so much adorns his office, as the respectful homage which is here enjoined—if, again, it be borne in mind, that it is paid, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but with good-will doing the service as to the Lord, and not unto men. 2. They are also to exhibit *humility*. They are to obey "with fear and trembling," "with all fear" (Eph. vi. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 18). That is, they must have that humility of mind which fears to offend, and seeks "to please their masters well in all things." They are not to be

careless in this respect ; must not say—"we do not care whether they like it or not ;" but must studiously avoid giving cause of offence, and, within the limits of conscience, do their best to please. For such is God's will in the words just quoted ; and too much attention cannot be given to them, for many a servant hastily forfeits a good place from the want of observance of these rules. 3. Forbearance in word is also a duty. "Not answering again" (Titus ii. 9). That is, not answering harshly, or not contradicting. Every servant knows how difficult it is to carry this into practice. The quick, hasty, and, perhaps, unjust word may be spoken by the master or the mistress, and the temptation is to reply with more quick and hasty words ; and, then, when the fire of dispute is once enkindled, it is not so easily extinguished. Speak to twenty servants who have just left their places, and ask them the reason. It is quite within the bounds of probability, that the majority would say, that it was owing to unkind words spoken, or harsh charges brought by the master or

mistress. And, when this is the case, what more natural than for the servant, in the heat of indignation, to repel the charge, and use language as strong as that to which they have had to listen? It is most natural.

But God shows a better way, and, therefore, directed His servant to write, "not answering again;" and the Apostle Peter, enforcing the same thing, points to the example of Christ. Look on Him, "who when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. ii. 23). That is, He looked to God to vindicate His name, and to redress the injustice, and, thereby, "He left us an example that ye should follow His steps." Oh, let servants, then, try this method of God's, and they may be sure that it will promote their peace of mind—their welfare, in short, in every respect. It is no easy thing to do. It will need constant watchfulness, constant repression of the temper, constant bridling of the tongue. But with constant prayer, grace will be given, sufficient for the need, and then,

whatever the harshness of command, or the injustice of complaints, the soul will not be disturbed, but will be kept in perfect peace because stayed on God.

(3) *Fidelity* is required of servants, "not purloining, but showing all good fidelity" (Titus ii. 10).

We are told of Ananias, in the Acts of the Apostles, who sinned against God, by keeping back part of the price of the possession which he professed to have consecrated to God. This shows the meaning of "purloining," for the word used is the same in both places. Purloining is, therefore, not exactly what is *called* theft, but it is the appropriation by the servant for his, or her own uses, of that which belongs to the master or mistress. Much property—food, clothing, and other things—must pass through the hands, and be under the care of every household servant. God requires of all servants that they should be faithful in this particular, and not allow themselves to take the smallest article without permission. Everything in the house belongs to the master, or mistress,

and must be held by the servant as a sacred trust. Eliezer, the steward of Abraham, and Joseph, in the house of Potiphar, are given us as examples of faithful servants, who did not purloin; while the Saviour describes one of the opposite character in the parable of the "unjust steward." Every servant would do well to take heed to these examples; for, also, in this matter the temptation is often strong, and, if once yielded to, will increase in power, and may prove the cause of total ruin. Let this Word of God's, "not purloining," be the light of the servant's path, and the snare will be escaped.

(4) One special direction is given to meet a special case. "They," says the apostle, "that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren, but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit" (1 Tim. vi. 2). Christianity teaches that One is our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we all are brethren; and that there is no respect of persons with God. It might easily be, especially in the primitive Church,



that those, "under the yoke," misconceiving the new truth, might assert their equality with their masters, and, on the ground of oneness in Christ, be tempted to claim exemption from required service. This exhortation was intended to meet the temptation, teaching, as it does, that earthly distinctions remain untouched by the fact of equality of standing in Christ. It is true, that the master and the servant, if believers, are brethren; but, it is also true that, as far as this world is concerned, they are still master and servant. Social arrangements and distinctions, so far from being changed or obliterated, are preserved and consolidated by the Gospel. "They that have, therefore, believing masters, must not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." The very fact of their oneness in Christ, and of the brotherly tie which, consequently, unites them, should be a new motive to diligent and willing service; for, while in different temporal positions, they can now rejoice in

knowing that it is but a temporal difference which will for ever fade away in the light of eternity. Partakers of the same spiritual benefit, masters and servants alike, will recognise in the stations they occupy the will of their Lord. Attention to this direction will save servants from much disappointment. Even now, those who are Christians, are led to expect too much from their masters and mistresses on the ground of a common Christianity. The master or mistress may not indeed remember this sufficiently, but if so, the believing servant should be careful to show that the only effect produced upon them, by being one in the faith, is to make them both better and more willing in service. For, however exacting the demands that such a service may sometimes make, the service is rendered not unto men, but unto Him whom they delight to call their Lord, and He will give the recompense.

(5) Sufficient has been written to show the minute character of the directions which are given. The question may be asked, What is their object? The answer is twofold: It is,

first, that servants "may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus ii. 10); and secondly, "that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed" (1 Tim. vi. 1). It is, then, that the lives of servants should not be a stumbling-block in the way of, but that they should commend, the Gospel by their consistency. This supposes that they are Christians; and, as has been already remarked, a large number of servants have ever been found in the Church of Christ. In every fellowship, this is the case; and, being so, God lays especial stress upon the importance of their walking worthy of their vocation; for they are subjected, oftentimes, to most searching and unkindly criticism. Their faults are magnified, their virtues depreciated, and nothing short of perfection will convince many masters that their servants are, what they profess to be, Christians. On the other hand, it must be admitted, that believing servants are, at times, very lax in their conduct; and when they are, "the name of God and His doctrine" is often, on their account, blasphemed. Their positions

are very difficult ; but God is faithful, and He will sustain them if they do but cast themselves on His strength in Christ Jesus ; and then, if by their walk and conversation they “adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things,” they will cause the savour of the name of Christ to spread as a sweet fragrance throughout the household in which they dwell. The honour of God is thus really entrusted to their care ; and it should be the object of their daily lives to keep it untarnished.

(6) Together with the exhortations, there are many encouragements. 1. The first of these is that the Lord Jesus Himself took the place of a servant. He took upon Him “the form of a servant,” and He was among His disciples, “as one that serveth.” He came, not “to be ministered unto, but to minister ;” and hence, He said to His disciples, “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. xxiii. 11). As to position, therefore, that of a servant approaches the nearest to that of our Lord. It is lowly ; and is it not on this very account that the Saviour reveals Himself to so many

in this situation? When weary, then, with work; worn out by the constant demands made upon you, remember that He who suffered as you, being tempted, is able to succour those that are tempted, and in that succour you will find rest to your souls.

2. Another encouragement is the opportunity of blessing to the household. How many households will have to praise God throughout eternity for Christian servants! A captain of the army, well-known to the writer, was returning from India in ignorance and unbelief. He had a black believing servant. On board the troop-ship there was much leisure, and the servant seized the opportunity of commending to His master the Gospel of Christ. His testimony was blessed; and his master landed in England as a soldier of the cross of Christ. He forthwith abandoned the profession of arms, and devoted himself to the ministry of the Gospel; and many a time has the writer seen the people to whom he ministered, bowed before his words which were in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power, as the

trees of the wood are bowed before the mighty wind.

A farmer was living in sin ; and a maid-servant testified to him of the grace of God in redemption, and her master was converted. He also became a preacher of the Gospel, and well does the writer remember his preaching in power on the words, "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them," in the course of which he told of the manner of his conversion. Every reader will also recal to mind the story of Naaman, and the little captive maid of Israel, who was a servant in his household, and how she told of the God of Israel as only having power to heal her master. Thousands of such instances have their record on high ; and the light of eternity alone will reveal how many souls of masters and mistresses have been saved through the instrumentality of believing servants. God setteth the solitary in families, and He setteth such for blessing ; and may He grant that every Christian servant, who reads these words, may realise and fulfil the responsibility of their position !

3. God is their recompenser. He undertakes their cause. It is from Him they are to receive their reward. Paid with small wages here, in His grace and mercy God sends to them messages full of hope and promise. He regards them as His servants. "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. iii. 24). Remembering this, they will seek to please their Lord and live in the light of His face; and, in proportion as this is done, earthly trials and discomforts will fade away, just as the night flees before the sun. Let the prospect of the inheritance thus revealed be for your support, comfort, and encouragement.

(7) By the side of all these gracious encouragements there is one *warning*: "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons" (Col. iii. 25). He, therefore, who promises the reward, warns also of the recompense of evil; for "there is no respect of persons." That is, lowly position, unjust treatment, strong temptations, will prove no

ground of excuse—will not be admitted in extenuation of the wrong done before God. All, whatever the station they fill, will be dealt with on the ground of personal responsibility. “We must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. v. 10). As on the one hand, the promises of God encourage the faithful servant, so, on the other, the warnings should deter from evil. Let the one be a wall on the right hand, and the other a wall on the left, so that the feet may be kept in the narrow path that leadeth unto life. Let the encouragements beckon upwards, and the warnings urge onwards, and so will the feet be swift to run in the way of God’s commandments.

What more can be added? Nothing but to commend to all servants the prayerful study of the words which are written; and if there be one who knows not what it is to take the Word of God for his or her guide, because still in darkness, may it please Him who gave His only-begotten Son to die, that



every one who believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, to guide such an one, even while reading these pages, out of darkness into His own marvellous light.



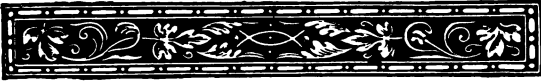
## MASTERS.

“ And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening : knowing that your Master also is in heaven ; neither is there respect of persons with Him.”—**EPH. vi. 9.**

“ Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal ; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”—**COL. iv. 1.**


“ If I did despise the cause of my man-servant or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me ; what then shall I do when God riseth up ? and when He visiteth, what shall I answer Him ?”—**JOB xxxi. 13, 14.**





## CHAPTER VII.

### *MASTERS.*

“ASTERS,” as explained in the previous chapter, is used as a term to include mistresses, and may, therefore, be understood to mean heads of households. A far less space is given to them in the Scriptures than to servants; but while the directions are fewer, they are exceedingly comprehensive and significant. Besides this, many examples of good masters are exhibited, and, consequently, there is a large amount of indirect instruction. This must be combined with the special commands, if we would rightly understand the will of God concerning those whom He has placed in authority over others.

(1) The first thing to be noted is, that they

are held to be responsible to God for the government of their households. The special blessing that God pronounced upon Abraham was on account of his ordering his children, *and his household*, in the fear of God (Gen. xviii. 19). The Apostle Paul, likewise, speaking to masters, says, "Knowing that ye have a Master in heaven" (Col. iv. 1; also Eph. vi. 9). If, therefore, they have servants under them, it is God who has placed them in that position, and they are placed there, not only to do the service required of them by those who are their masters or mistresses, but also to be governed for God. As in the family, so in the household, God's rule must be established; and every master must, in this matter, hold himself responsible to God. Servants, then, must be used, above all, for God; and if this principle be recognised and acted upon, the rule of the household will be such as to draw down a Divine blessing. This recognition will be the source of every detail of the administration of the affairs of the household, and form the basis upon which every difficulty will be decided, every

judgment formed. The truth should sink deeply into the minds of every master and mistress—"We are God's vicegerents, and hence, His will, as expressed in His Word, must be our law, and we must deal with our servants, not as seeking to please ourselves, but God. As we are His servants, so are they; and if we are their earthly masters, we have also our Master in heaven."

(2) Following upon the principle named, masters should seek for Christian servants. David, speaking in the Spirit, says, "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (Ps. ci. 6, 7). This is written for our guidance. Besides, if masters have to govern in the fear of God, their task will be easier, if they have to deal with those who own God as their Father in Christ Jesus. It is, moreover, to be considered, that God's special blessing often rests upon a household for the sake of Christian ser-

vants that are in it. He thus caused Laban to prosper exceedingly for the sake of Jacob ; and Potiphar, for the sake of Joseph. This is no mean consideration ; for in times of trial and sickness, how much may depend upon the prayers of believing servants ! And how often God may protect the whole household from danger on their account ! Sometimes there is a temptation to desire servants who are not Christians. It is said they want more time, both in the week, and on the Lord's-day, in order to attend the services of God's house, and this sometimes proves very inconvenient, disturbing, as it does, family arrangements. Granted, that having Christian servants imposes some sacrifice ; yet it must not be forgotten that this is not for a moment to be put in the balance with the blessing of God which their presence ensures. If they want more liberty, it is for God's service and worship, and by these means of grace, not only is their own spiritual strength renewed, but they are also, thereby, better qualified to do their daily work. It is also said, that Christian servants are

frequently not so useful and industrious as those who make no profession of religion, and that they are far more exacting in their expectations. This may sometimes be the case; but it should be remembered, that all who profess to be Christians are not really so; and that, therefore, it were unfair to condemn all for the failings of a few. The questions, moreover, might be put: Whether too much is not expected from them—too rigid a consistency?—whether faults in their conduct are not severely condemned, which would be leniently judged in others?—whether, in a word, sufficient allowance is made for their circumstances and condition?—for the fact that they have had few opportunities for instruction, few opportunities for Christian fellowship?—and for the fact that their position is one peculiarly beset with danger and temptation? Even if it were that Christians are worse servants than others, yet every head of a household who understands how the light of God's face shines upon the humblest of His children, that His blessing rests upon His people, will choose to have



them rather than those who are without hope and without God in the world, and have no fear of God before their eyes. It should, also, be borne in mind, how important it is to have Christian influences, however weak they may be, exerted upon the minds of the children of the family. Ungodly servants have often done irreparable mischief, poisoned the minds of the young about them, given a bias to their minds which has helped to determine the whole course of their after life.

From these considerations, masters may see that it is both their duty and their interest to choose Christian servants.

(3) Having Christian servants, nothing should be required from them which is inconsistent with their duty to God. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle, after having directed servants to serve as in the sight of God, "with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not unto men," &c., proceeds, "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them," &c. (Eph. vi. 7—9). That is, as they are commanded to keep God

before their eyes, so also do you ; and, consequently, you will not lay upon them any command which will clash with their duty to God.

All masters and mistresses should pay heed to this ; and then they would not think it a hardship to arrange for their servant's opportunities for worship. They would joyfully do so, not so much as conceding liberty to the servant, as doing what was right in the sight of God. It is a lamentable fact, that Christian servants, even in Christian families, are sometimes only permitted to be out, it may be, on the Lord's-day afternoon, or once a fortnight in the morning or the evening. These things ought not to be ; but as knowing that they also have a Master in heaven, every care should be taken to ensure for them reasonable liberty to obey the command of God, binding on all His children, that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

And not only in the particular of worship ; but the consciences of servants should be scrupulously respected. They should not

be expected to do what masters or mistresses would consider of doubtful import, if done by themselves; anything which might have the appearance of evil, which, to others, might seem to be inconsistent with their Christian profession. Masters should raise, as to things required, as high a standard for their servants, as for themselves, and, in both cases, the standard should be regulated by the Word of God. It is true that attention to these things will fetter the liberty of masters; but it is a restraint connected with blessing, because imposed by God. It arises out of the character of the Christian's path—the narrow path—out of which no child of God can stray without harm or damage to the soul.

(4) Masters are exhorted to give unto their servants that which is just and equal (Col. iv. 1). This is a very wide exhortation, and includes both treatment and wages. 1. The matter of treatment may be first considered. They are to be dealt with justly. A direction on this head is found in Leviticus, "Thou shalt not rule over him (a servant) with

rigour, but shalt fear thy God" (xxv. 48). That is, the rule—the government—must not only be just and equal, but must be tempered with mercy. Indeed, the Christian master or mistress will never forget that their rule must, as far as possible, be a transcript of God's; that as God has dealt with them in mercy, so must they deal with their servants in mercy. This must be, as we have before seen, the general principle of their government; but there will be many occasions, on which the principle will be with difficulty applied. It is then that the temptation will arise to depart from that which is just and equal. For example, in disputes between servants and children; when mutual complaints are made, how difficult it is for the father or mother to decide justly; to pronounce a sentence which is "just and equal." The parent's heart yearns towards the child; his affection disturbs his judgment, and hence, the servants have to suffer for the children's faults, or to endure the injustice of the treatment of the children. Every master and mistress knows the commonness

of the case supposed ; and hence, they should watch themselves with extreme jealousy, and seek for God's help, when called upon to deal with it, for He holds them responsible for a just judgment. They must not hesitate to condemn their children when really in fault ; and they must not hesitate to clear the servants when they are faultless. So acting, it will tend to establish confidence throughout the whole household. It will check wilful and unjust complaints ; it will invite trust ; and thus, every member will look up to the head with the assurance that wrongs will be redressed, and faults punished. If not so acting, the bonds which connect the several members of the household together, will soon be broken, and confusion and disorder must of necessity ensue.

2. Wages are also included. Little, however, need be said on this point ; as attention called to it will be sufficient. But it is worthy of notice that in several places in the Scriptures warnings are given that wages, when due, should not be kept back (Lev. xix. 13 ; Deut. xxiv. 14 ; James v. 4). It will at once

be perceived that to do this would contravene what is just and equal; for as soon as wages are due, they become a debt, and the debt should be paid. Besides, servants themselves may have contracted obligations, in the expectation of receiving their wages at the appointed time. If, therefore, they do not receive what is due to them, they will be unable to discharge their debts to others. This is so plain, that further remark is unnecessary; and if once the rule that is just and equal be established in all things, if the servants are always treated on this principle, masters will remove every ground of complaint, and do much to ensure for themselves faithful and devoted service.

(5) "Forbearing threatening" (Eph. vi. 9). This prohibition is already covered by the principles affirmed; but it is too important not to receive distinct notice. It points to sins of the tongue in the government of servants. All know how strongly they are tempted, when displeased by wilful neglect or culpable carelessness, to speak harshly, and to threaten punishment. How many

valuable servants have received notice to leave in this way. The feelings were aroused, and the words uttered ; and pride, it may be, refused to have them recalled, and the servant left. The Scriptures have shown a better path, "forbearing threatening." Let the feelings, the temper, be under control ; so that, though there may be just cause for displeasure, no hasty word may be spoken ; "for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Let calm of mind be maintained under the greatest provocation, and then, if called upon to act, it will be as in the sight of God. Much more influence will thus be exerted on the minds of the servants, for evil stands abashed in the presence of a holy calm of soul, and very much sin will be prevented, for the threatening scolding word may beget other angry words, and the fire, once enkindled, will burn ever more and more fiercely. The Saviour must be the example of masters in this respect, as well as of servants. He, when He suffered, threatened not. Nor must masters and mistresses, in dealing with their servants. Their right-

ful authority must be maintained ; and this object will be most effectually realised by always exhibiting an unmoved demeanour, or rather, a spirit of mercy and love, even when called to deal with most wrongful conduct. The government of our own spirit, is the best qualification for the government of others ; and he who has attained to this will always forbear threatening.

(6) Masters have a special responsibility for the souls of their servants ; for they must remember, that while they bear the distinctive relationship of masters towards them, they sustain this in addition to the common relationships which bind men together before God. And we find, both in the Old and New Testaments, masters caring for the religious welfare of their households. The case of Abraham has been specified ; that of Jacob may be mentioned. He is found saying to his household, " Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments : and let us arise and go up to Bethel (the house of God) ; and I will make there an altar unto God," &c. (Gen.



xxxv. 2, 3). Joshua, also, and David speak of their households before God; and in the Acts of the Apostles there is frequent mention of households being devoted to His service. In all these instances, the masters and mistresses (for there is mention of both) must have been directly concerned for their servants' spiritual welfare; and thus should it ever be. For why has God placed them to serve in families? Is it only to render what temporal service may be required? Is it not also to commit them to the supervision, and care, and guidance, of those who are appointed to be masters? This responsibility was much more largely felt in past years than now. Then it was no uncommon case for servants to be really members of the family. They were cared for in sickness as such; they found in their mistresses their truest friends; they sat in the same seat in the house of God; and they seldom left, except it were to change their condition in life. But now this is very much altered. Masters or mistresses know very little of their servants, and servants know very little of their masters and

mistresses, except in their definite mutual relationships. But, if the duty now urged were undertaken as in the sight of God, a vast change would soon be introduced. If servants were made to feel that their highest welfare was a matter of concern to those whom they served, they would soon be bound to them by the strong ties of gratitude and love. Not in every case; and perhaps not in a large number of cases. In this field of labour for God, as in all others, a large number of disappointments will be encountered; but the believer will labour on, because he has been taught that the reward of his labour is not success, but the approbation of his Lord and Saviour. The Christian master or mistress will undertake the duty, knowing that they also have a Master in heaven.

(7) Admitting the duty, the question may be asked, how is it to be discharged? Such a question can only be answered fully by each one for himself, or by each one looking to God for the opportunity, and for grace and help to avail himself of the opportunity. Still a few hints may be given which

may aid those who are truly desirous of being found faithful, in this matter, before God.

1. Family prayer may be made a most useful means of grace to the whole household. Nothing should hinder morning and evening prayer in the family; and nothing should be allowed (not even the presence of friends, for they can easily be invited to unite in worship) to hinder its being held punctually. It is also wiser to have it *before* than after the meal. Then all are together; after, it is more difficult to assemble the family, and almost impossible to assemble them punctually. These points being determined, wisdom is required in the conduct of the worship. Let its object be remembered. It is to exalt God, to acknowledge Him as Lord through Jesus Christ; to praise Him for mercies and blessings received, to implore forgiveness for sin, and to beg for guidance and for grace. The Scriptures will be also read, for it is there that God's will is revealed. The character of both reading and prayer should be adapted to the circumstances. The Scriptures should be explained where necessary;

and it is far wiser to read a few verses than a whole chapter. They are more easily remembered, and leave a distincter impression on the mind. The prayer should also be brief and simple. The blessings sought should be those actually needed by the members of the household in their several duties. The petitions offered will, of course, take a wider range, including the subjects in which, as God's people, and as members of different families, they are specially interested. Services so conducted may be made a most effectual means of grace, affording the opportunity for the spoken word and the united prayer, which may become the channel both of instruction and grace. 2. In addition to morning and evening worship, the godly master or mistress should seek for opportunities of direct instruction from the Word of God. If there are children, a weekly class might with great advantage be held, including the servants; and if there be no children, then the servants by themselves might be assembled once a week for this purpose. The Lord's-day afternoon would

be a suitable time ; or, if this be otherwise occupied, then some evening of the week might be set apart for it ; and thus reading and conversing together over the Scriptures, much would be learnt of the servant's special trials and needs, and much consolation, guidance and instruction might be afforded. If the master or mistress has not tried such a plan, they can little imagine how useful it would become to themselves as well as to their domestics. Both, sitting together at the feet of Jesus, would learn more of their common obligations to Him as their Lord, and of their duties one to the other ; and, thereby, each would be led constantly to desire to make the Word of God the rule in all their domestic life. And besides this, the master or mistress might be thus made to their household the ministers of life and blessing, so that all its members would, while respecting and honouring them as their earthly heads, love them still more, as caring for them in the Lord.

3. Those mentioned are special ways in which godly heads of households may care

for the spiritual welfare of their servants ; but if they, in the spirit of their Lord, watch for souls, they will be on the constant outlook for seasons of usefulness. They will look upon their servants as entrusted to them by God, to whom they will, at last, have to give an account. They will, indeed, in all their dealings with them, remember that they also have a Master in heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with Him (Eph. vi. 9). They will, therefore, hold themselves accountable to God for the management of their households, and seek to discharge their responsibility as in His sight ; and doing this, they also will look for their recompense, not in the gratitude and fidelity of their servants, but at the hands of their Lord and Master at His appearing and kingdom.

The right government of a household is thus seen to be a most onerous task, requiring no small amount of wisdom, diligence, patience, and grace. But if those who occupy the responsible position, to which this duty belongs, will but take the Bible as their guide, and cast themselves upon God for

direction and help, they will find that the duty is not only rendered the easier, but also a delight and a means of blessing. They will then look upon their households as the vineyard which God has given them to cultivate, and they will bend all their endeavours to keep it in such a state of order and fruitfulness, as will invite and secure the constant presence of Him who is the vineyard's Lord.

## SISTERS AND DAUGHTERS.

“A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.”—LUKE x. 38, 39.

“Phœbe, our sister, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea.”—ROMANS xvi. 1.

“Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.”—ROMANS xvi. 6.

“Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.”—ROMANS xvi. 12.







## CHAPTER VIII.

### *SISTERS AND DAUGHTERS.*

**I**T seems somewhat remarkable, on the first consideration of the matter, that the Scriptures contain no specific directions for brothers and sisters. The reason of the omission must be sought for in the fact that the duties of both, in their highest form, are to be found in the injunctions given to the children of God as to their mutual obligations. As is so often repeated by our Lord and by His apostles, these obligations are all comprehended in the duty of loving one another. So with those who are brothers and sisters by natural relationship! Love, with all the duties it enjoins, and the ministries of self-denial and kindness which it impels, comprehends the sum total of

their mutual responsibility. They may, therefore, be directed to study for themselves this, their divinely-appointed path, as laid down both in the gospels and epistles. While this is the case, it cannot be forgotten that there are often in families unmarried sisters and daughters who find it very difficult to discover the appointed purpose of their lives. It not unfrequently happens that they prove a blessing to every member of the household. In sickness they are ready to nurse, in trouble or sorrow they are the willing confidants and advisers. At leisure from any pressing personal claims, they are forward to attend to any and every call that may be made upon them by any, and every member of the family. It were not difficult to describe some of this number, as among the most exalted embodiments of the Christian life that have ever adorned the family or the church. On the other hand, when the energies of such are not directed into right channels, they are exposed to manifold and dangerous temptations. It may be that they are fascinated with novels, and so waste their precious

hours in an unreal life of sentimentality and romance, enervating their powers and reducing themselves to an utter incapacity for every good deed and work; or they are ensnared by music, or the gaieties of society, or by some of the innumerable allurements which are spread out so enticingly round about them, and so, living in pleasure, are dead while they live. It may not be without advantage, therefore, to add a few words that may tend to inform them of the mind and will of God, and thereby, with His blessing, to rescue them from a vain and aimless life. It is true, as already said, that there are no direct exhortations addressed to them; but it is equally true that there is much in the Word of God that was intended to arrest their attention.

(1) First of all, then, let them consider the example of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. Why is it that such a detailed account is given of these excellent and devoted women? Mainly, it may be replied, because of their eminent faith, pious devotedness—because, in a word, of their relation-

ship to the Lord Jesus Christ. This, undoubtedly, is so; but it should also be remarked that they are single women, and that, consequently, their characters are so minutely portrayed, their work of faith and labour of love are so fully described, because they are set forth as examples to all in a like condition. And not only Mary and Martha; honourable mention is made of noble women (noble for devotedness to the service of God) both in the Old and New Testaments. Passing by such conspicuous instances as Miriam and Deborah in the Old, a few names may be cited from the new. There were Mary Magdalene, Susannah and Salome, who counted it their highest joy, as well as their greatest honour, to minister to the wants of our Lord during His sojourn on the earth. There was Tabitha, otherwise Dorcas, described as a woman "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did;" there were the four daughters of Philip the evangelist, honoured of the Spirit by being spoken of as "virgins which did prophesy;" there was Phœbe, "the servant of the church which is

at Cenchrea," and further specified by the Apostle as "our sister," adding, "for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also;" and, in the same chapter (Rom. xvi.), there are named Mary "who bestowed much labour upon us," Tryphena and Tryphosa "who labour in the Lord," and many others whom God has thus exalted in the midst of His people. The cause of their distinction was their consecration to His service; the cause of their names being written in the Word of God is, that all who are in similar circumstances may emulate their blessed example.

(2) If then this principle be admitted, there is abundance of instruction for the female members of a family who are so situated as to be without any urgent duties, because they lack a definite purpose in life. The pre-requisite qualification for availing themselves of this Scriptural guidance is that they themselves should be Christians. If they are not, few are in so unhappy and so unblest a condition. With tender and yearning hearts, and hearts that must be fed,

if not with the pure and infinite love of Christ, then with a mere carnal and earthly love; with natures that need a strong arm on which to lean, and which no arm can adequately support but that of Christ; and with capacities that no object can fully develop and employ but His service, they must be poor, and wretched, and miserable, apart from Christ. They must, therefore, deem everything unsettled until they are saved; until, with the consciousness of their sinful condition, they have cast themselves in humble reliance upon the atoning work of Christ, for acceptance with God, and then bowed themselves at the feet of Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. This done, they may see in the lives of the holy women, whose names have been given, their own example in so far as they reflect the likeness of Christ. And what is that example? It is consecration to the Lord's service. All, therefore, in the circumstances supposed, are called to this by God. The methods in which this may be done are various. Each one must ascertain for herself her special

gifts, talents, qualifications, and choose accordingly her department of service. A few of these departments may be indicated :—

1. Visitation of, and ministry to the sick poor. It is a striking fact, that in the orthodox Protestant communions, while there are numbers of labourers for almost every kind of Christian work, there are few who engage in tendance upon the afflicted. It is as striking a fact, that in the Catholic "Church," and in those sections of so-called Protestantism which approximate the nearest to Rome, they have organised sisterhoods for this end. And there can be no doubt that it is the Lord's will that this work should be undertaken. Indeed, it might be said, that this, of all work, is the most blessed. "The poor ye have with you always;" and no one can forget those wonderful words with which the Saviour, in the parable, addresses the sheep on the right hand, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and



ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee ? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink ? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in ? or naked, and clothed Thee ? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me*" (Matt. xxv. 35—40). To care for the Lord's poor, sick and needy believers, ranks in the Saviour's eyes with personal ministry to Himself. What an honour was it conferred upon those holy women, whose names have been mentioned, to be permitted to minister to the Lord Jesus while on earth ! and who is there of His people that would not have delighted in the same service ? The same honour can be enjoyed ; and the same service can be undertaken, since the Lord has been pleased to identify Himself with the poor of His people. Will not the sisters and daughters specified, offer themselves for this

work? With whatever body of Christians they may be united in fellowship, let them take the care of the afflicted; soothing them with the sweet promises of the Lord's grace and consolation; putting blessed draughts of cool and living water to their parched lips; and cheering their hearts by directing their thoughts to the coming glory. None are so adapted for such ministry as they. The man with heavy step, and harsher voice, unused to the sick-room, mars his kindness by no fault of his own; but they, full, even by nature, of love and gentleness, when sanctified by the Spirit of God, are God's chosen messengers for this appointed work; and if entered upon, in dependence upon Him, it will be blessed both to themselves, and to those who are visited.

Here, then, is a field in which the noblest energies of the Christian life may be exercised and developed, and in which the closest fellowship with Christ can be enjoyed. Let every sister or daughter, therefore, whose time hangs heavy on their hands, or whose time is spent on unworthy objects, ask them-

selves whether they are not qualified, and called, by the Lord Himself, to engage in such a work? The Church of Christ will, thereby, be redeemed from a great reproach, and it will no longer be said that those who know the truth are less faithful, in this respect, than those who are entangled with superstition and error.

2. Some ladies have much aptitude in instruction; and this may also guide them to a most important sphere of service. How many ignorant children—ignorant in the ways of God, are there to be found in every locality! These are largely provided for by Sunday-schools; but there are numbers still untouched by this agency; and numbers of the better class who could only be reached by private effort.

Sisters and daughters might, then, in the spirit of their Lord and Master, gather children round about them, to tell them of Jesus. Is the Church not in some danger of forgetting the possibility of the conversion of children? Let our sisters avoid this danger, and, assembling the children, let them tell their

the plain truths of the Gospel, their lost condition by nature, salvation through the blood of the Lamb, and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and God will not leave them without witness to the power of His own word.

3. Others might feel themselves better able to speak to women than to children. Work is also waiting for these. There are workhouses, there are prisons, there are houses of the poor, and there are streets in which such (and how needy!) may be found. And again, it is the ministrations of women that are most adapted for the classes named. The tale of a Saviour's love, as told by them, might touch and melt, by the power of the Spirit, their hardened sisters' hearts, when the message of the man might prove utterly ineffectual. To labour, then, amongst these outcast classes, we call you in the name of the Lord; that those who sit in darkness may see a great light; that those whose hearts are now filled with the sorrow and misery of sin may rejoice in peace and joy in believing; that there may be continual outbursts of joy in the presence of the angels

over the repentance and return of these lost sheep.

No; the work is not easy. It is a path that will require self-sacrifice and mortification; but it is a path that will lead to most blessed results—results of blessed joy throughout eternity.

“ To faint, to grieve, to die for me,  
Thou camest—not Thyself to please;  
And dear, as earthly comforts be,  
Shall I not love Thee more than these ?

“ Yes, I would count them all but loss  
To gain the notice of Thine eye.  
Flesh shrinks and trembles at the cross,  
But Thou canst give the victory.”

4. Making garments for the poor. This is an acceptable work to the Lord, because He has been pleased to preserve for us, in the Scriptures, the memory of Tabitha who thus gave herself to His service. And many may feel that they cannot visit, or instruct, or speak to others; but that they could engage in a work like this.

There is no need of further specification. What has been said, must not be regarded as comprehending all the paths of service

that lie open before the sisters and daughters of our families. These are cited but as specimens; and no one can decide for another what should be their particular path. The one thing that may be affirmed with certainty is that those who are found in the position, here contemplated, have an especial call and opportunity for consecration to their Lord. For, let them ask, why have they been isolated, for the most part, from natural duties? Why have they been exonerated from the heavier responsibilities of family relationships? It is that they might be vessels, sanctified and meet for the Master's use. And if they do but acknowledge God's purpose, respond to His call, and lay themselves upon His altar, they will soon discover that the lot chosen for them is the most blessed and exalted of all; that there is no possible position on earth which they would rather have occupied when regarded in the light of eternity. On the other hand, if they fail to perceive and apprehend the opportunities which God has placed before them, they turn aside from the noblest of careers, condemn them-

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