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ABRAHAM
AND HIS CHILDREN:

OR

PARENTAL DUTIES ILLUSTRATED BY
SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES.

BY

EMILY GOSSE.

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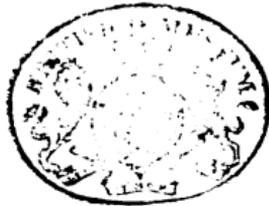
"The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."—PSAL. cii. 28.

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PREFACE.

THE most philosophic of poets has said,—

“The child is father of the man ;”

—and when we reflect that whatever of good or ill we see in the active world around us was formed in the cradles and nurseries of a generation ago, we can scarcely exaggerate the importance of a little child. In him is folded up, as it were, the hope of the future ; like a tiny acorn which incloses the pride of the future forest. And the child, the incipient man, is in *our* hands ; the opening intellect, the budding feelings, the dawning conscience, are committed to *our* care ; that immortal being with all his vast relations, will largely be *just what what we make him*. We hold in our grasp the seal on which the

soft, ductile, impressible wax of infant character is to be moulded.

Educated our children must be ; whether we will or not, whether we think of it or not, we are educating them every day. Perhaps they are not sent to school,—still they are being educated ;—they may not yet know a letter of the alphabet,—still their education is making swift progress. By our speech, and by our silence, by our looks, by the tones of our voice, by our habits and peculiarities, by our conversation with each other, by our companions, by every incident which our little ones witness, they are swiftly and surely educated,—that is, moulded, formed, trained to what they will be hereafter.

How important therefore it is to have right principles of education ! that the training of our children may not be a desultory and uncertain process, dependent on ever-varying influences, and liable to constant change and contradiction, but resemble the work of a skilful architect, who lays no stone without an object, and in whose hands the fabric hourly grows, according to a well-chosen and

pre-determined plan, into a stately and useful edifice.

But here human wisdom is insufficient. The Christian parent at least feels, with intense anxiety, the solemnity of the task which he cannot evade, and desires heavenly aid in the momentous work. And is it not given? The writer believes it is; not grudgingly, not feebly, not uncertainly; but clearly, fully and abundantly: at sundry times and in divers manners, in forms suited to various intelligences and capacities, by precept, by doctrine, by example, by beacon, has God directed his people to train up a child in the way he should go. In the following pages the writer has endeavoured to glean a few of the treasures of divine wisdom on this subject; even the wisdom of Him who is the Father of Lights, and who giveth to all men liberally (James i. 5, 17). May more of the light of his countenance shine on the writer and the reader!

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INTRODUCTION.

It is a great proof of the divine inspiration of the holy scriptures, that they contain wisdom to meet every emergency.

Much wisdom and instruction is conveyed by direct precept, as, for example, in the Proverbs of Solomon, and in the latter chapters of most of the Apostolic epistles.

Other truths are chiefly to be learned by inference. Beautiful and varied narratives are given us, from which it is intended we should gather morals, either for our example, or for our warning.

We cannot wonder that, as this is the

case, we should find in the word of God much instruction respecting the family relationships, and above all, those of parents and children.

Such relationships are most important, and a consideration of them ought to be interesting to all, for all still have, or have had parents: and of those who may read these pages, it is to be presumed that most are already parents themselves, or expect at some period to sustain such a relation.

Let every reader therefore ponder this undoubted truth, that there is no responsibility committed to man on the earth, so great as that which has been placed in the hands of parents. To them are afforded the first opportunities of influencing, for good or evil, a being born but yesterday, and knowing absolutely nothing but as they shall instruct him; and yet one born for immortality, who must carry on into the cycles of an eter-

nal existence, the effects of parental influence.

Very interesting therefore would it be to ascertain, if possible, what helps the Lord God, who created man, has given to him in educating the child committed to his care. These helps are fourfold.

1st—Direct precepts concerning the rule and discipline of children.

2nd—The examples of many holy persons of old who brought up their children aright :

3rd—The warning presented by others who failed in various ways, and whose history serves us more or less as a beacon, to avoid the same shipwreck which they made.

4th—The consideration of the mode in which God himself trains his children in general, and ourselves in particular: which consideration is intended to be impressed on us, by the words, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but

bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

That which we propose principally to consider, is the example of the holy men and women of old, whose early training of their little ones is exhibited to our view more or less in the pages of scripture.

They had not our light ; they had not all our experience ; many of our advantages, arising from an advanced state of society, were lacking to them ; and many moral restraints on the evil of our nature of which we enjoy the benefit, were unknown to them.

Yet many of them were eminently successful, while others signally failed, and failed much in the way that Christian parents usually fail in the present day ; namely, by neglecting to enforce a firm and efficient discipline over their children, and expecting that grace would do every thing, while they themselves neglected to

use the means by which God had commanded them to subdue the evil inherent to their offspring.

Sadly and fatally do we see this false principle of love without discipline carried out by the holy Eli, God's High Priest, and by the true hearted David, God's own chosen and anointed King. And deeply and bitterly do we see the fruits of their selfish and weak indulgence towards their children, as well in their own personal sufferings, as in the sins and consequent punishment of their children.

On the other hand how noble an *example* to parents is set by Abraham, who was both the father of the faithful, and also a *worthy* model for his children in all generations, leaving them an *example* that they should follow his steps!

By his side we see his nephew Lot, a man of God, a converted person, perhaps instructing his children aright, and yet

drawing them down into the world by his own earthly walk.

A generation later, we see all family discipline marred in Isaac and Rebekah, by a want of unison between the parents; an evil made still more flagrant in their son Jacob's case, by a plurality of wives, and a division of affection and interests; bearing bitter fruit in the children's mature age.

As a contrast to this, we notice the unity of purpose and action in the parents of Moses, of Samuel, of Samson; and, in later times, in those of John the Baptist, and in the mother and reputed father of our Blessed Lord himself. In all which cases the mother takes a prominent and honourable place in the early training of her little one.

Sometimes we find the sole care devolving on the mother, as appears in the training of the youthful Timothy, and her signal success ought to prove a great

encouragement to those Christian mothers, who are so unhappy as to be united to partners unqualified to assist them in this arduous task, and to those who by death, or separation, or by other providential causes, are left without the strengthening arm of a husband to enforce the needed discipline, and a healthful example to the objects of her anxious care.

In the case of Naomi and Ruth we find the adopted child, trained by her widowed and childless mother-in-law, and becoming in the end the comfort and joy of her old age.

These direct instances, with many others, where more may be inferred than is expressed, will afford us abundant subject of meditation and self examination; by the consideration of how the holy men and women of a former dispensation guided their families in daily duties, and prepared them for the great drama of life, by rehearsing its lessons to them, and enforcing its discipline on them.

And who is that Christian parent that does not require every encouragement and help that Scripture and experience can afford? For great is the work, and the workmen are ready to exclaim, Who is sufficient for it? Indeed one needful part of our fitness is to feel our unfitness. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? This is what is before the parent when he first has to deal with his little ones. He knows them to be by nature children of wrath even as others. And yet he is commanded to train them in the way they should go, a way in which nature takes no delight, and in which the unregenerate heart of a child will never walk. Yet is the promise annexed, that when he is old he will not depart from it; a promise which includes another, namely, that the Lord will work with the obedient parent, and that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

It is a very common notion, that the

child who in infancy manifests grace will die in infancy ; a notion which may too much tend to make the fond parent content to wait till maturer years, for the manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit in the child, who, he yet earnestly hopes, may in God's own time, as he expresses it, be brought into the gospel fold.

An attentive perusal of Scripture will greatly tend to dissipate this fallacious opinion ; for of the many holy men whose history is there detailed as the result of godly training, the greater part, if not all, so far as we know the facts, began a godly life in infancy and pursued it to old age.

Of course this cannot be expected of the children of ungodly parents ; they are brought up in the service of sin and Satan, and if plucked in later life as brands from the burning, are not the models for the children of the Saints of God : nor should the Christian parent ever wait till late in childhood either to begin the instruction

of his children, or to hope to see the fruits of the seed sown.* “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening, withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” Eccl. xi. 6.

* “Wisely does Solomon direct us to begin at the mouth or entrance of the child’s way, at the first opening intelligence. The more early the training, the more easy the work, and the more encouraging the results. Our character largely takes the form of that mould into which our early years were cast. Much in after life, both good and evil, may be traced back to the seed sown in the days of infancy. It is a matter of experience that what is early learned is most tenaciously retained. It stands the friction of time with the least injury. Far better, instead of waiting for the maturity of reason, to work upon the pliability of children. The gardener begins to graft in the first rising of the sap. If the crooked shoots of self-will and disobedience are not cut off, then the rapid growth and quickly grown strength will greatly increase the future difficulty of bending them. Present neglect occasions after risk and perplexity. We may begin our work too late, but we can scarcely begin it too soon. If the child be too young to learn to read, he cannot be too young to learn to obey.” (*Bridges on Prov. xxii. 6.*)

ABRAHAM AND HIS CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

ABRAHAM

AUTHORITY.

As Abraham is styled in Scripture the Father of the faithful,* both from standing at the head of the long race of Old Testament believers after the flood, and from having set so consistent and bright an example to all who should, in later ages, turn their backs upon this world, and seek another city, even a heavenly; so does he also pre-eminently stand at the head of every catalogue of believing parents, both as the first parent whose training of his family is detailed in God's word,

* Rom. iv. 11, 12, 16; Gal. iii, 7; &c.

and likewise as being, in so many things, a pattern to all believing parents.

We know, from the word of Jehovah himself, that the manner in which Abraham ruled his household was such as was pleasing to Him, and therefore worthy of the admiration and imitation of all succeeding generations.

Isaac, the heir of all the promises, was not yet born, and, in fact, the Lord was himself come to announce to Abraham the speedy fulfilment of the promises made respecting his seed, in the birth of a Son ; when this remarkable testimony to his servant's paternal character was uttered by Jehovah. " Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ? For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do jus-

tice and judgment, that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. xviii. 18, 19).

The chief elements in this Divine description of Abraham's paternal rule, are that he should command his children, and his household, to keep the way of Jehovah, and that he should receive obedience from them as the result of his discipline.

And this is the basis, now, as then, of all godly education; rule exercised, obedience enforced, and *that* in order to the keeping of God's ways.

It has been truly said, that the parent who can not, or does not, command obedience has done nothing in the training of his child. It is of little use for him to ask, "how shall I teach my child to love God? how shall I prepare him for his place in this world, and help him to be fitted for the great change from mortality to immortality beyond the grave?" unless he add to his parental anxieties and prayers,

firmness to enforce a godly discipline in his house, and train up his children in such ways as are consistent with his instructions. This is not sufficiently remembered, or believed by parents, and, we need not say, is not sufficiently acted on. How seldom do we witness a docile and implicit, a willing and affectionate obedience in children towards their parents! And how rarely do we see the efforts of parents, steadily, patiently, consistently and perseveringly directed to this point!

Many do not see the need of this: so long as their children keep within bounds, and on the whole are conformable and tractable, they think it needless trouble to go to the root of the matter in training them. If they have one child more self-willed than the rest, they smooth over the evil by succumbing. Nothing is more common than to hear a mother say, "That boy has a good disposition; you can do any thing with him by using kindness,

but he cannot be driven." This generally means, he can be coaxed into compliance sometimes, but to obey my commands simply because they are a parent's commands, and because obedience is a duty, he has not learned.

Christian parents are especially liable to fail and to err on this point. Grace makes their hearts peculiarly tender to their little ones. They know that nothing but personal faith can save them, and that this can be given by the Lord alone; that He acts as a Sovereign, and gives grace when and to whom He will. Hence we hear them say, "My children are *very* naughty now, but I trust they will be converted hereafter, and then every thing will be changed. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' I pray for them, I teach them what is right, and I hope they will follow it when they are older."

So Eli hoped, so he acted, so he prayed, doubtless; so he remonstrated with his

sons, from the days of their infancy to the day when the news of their untimely death and the dishonour they had cast on Jehovah and his worship, caused him to die broken-hearted and prematurely, though at the advanced age of ninety.*

But God has never stamped such a course with the seal of his approbation. We see what manner of subjection is required from a child to his parent, in the case of the Holy Child Jesus. Surely if any child on earth had a right to choose his own way, it was He, who, though taking upon Himself the form of a child, was indeed the Creator, God, and Preserver of those very persons who were his earthly parents, and who exacted obedience from Him; yet was He ever "subject unto them." (Luke ii. 51.)

* "Eli could not have devised which way to have plagued himself and his house so much, as by his kindness to his children's sin. Parents need no other means to make themselves miserable than sparing the rod." *Bishop Hull.*

And when He was grown to man's estate, and had entered on his public life and ministry, He ever walked in implicit obedience and unfailing reverence to his heavenly Father; in this, as well as in every other respect, "leaving us an example that we should follow his steps."

For the obedience which He rendered to his Father was not a work of supererogation, but that which, as a man, was his simple duty. And we need not prove that what was the path of duty for the first-born Son of the Heavenly Family is also the duty of all other children. And if our Heavenly Father requires implicit obedience from us, we ought to require the same from our children.

Many will doubt this. They will say, "God, of course, is the Sovereign and King, the One whom all ought to obey; all his commands are right and just, and He is altogether good as well as righteous. But with us the case is far different; we

are sinners ourselves; what right have we to be so exacting from our children? We are not allowed to render evil for evil, but must overcome evil with good. We must not strive. The sense of our own failure also often hinders us from saying any thing to our children when they fail."

A great and fatal mistake is involved here. We must not take this place with our children, but we must represent God towards them. This is taught in the words, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That is, "Ponder on the way in which the Lord your God has trained you, and let that be your model in training your children."

Yet chastisement is not education, but only a help and stepping-stone to education. Obedience is not an end, but a means. When obedience is attained, it is like the good soil in which the sower may sow with hope and success, but it is not the seed itself, neither is it the crop.

It is a very great object to avoid the occasions of naughtiness when we can, and to cultivate and cherish a spirit of obedience. When this cannot be effected, rebellion must not be passed over, but corrected. It is not always possible to humble a child at once, but it must be our settled purpose to attain subjection by degrees, if not immediately. In some cases where the child is meek, the parent wise, and the discipline has been commenced early enough, there is little or no subsequent difficulty; but these cases are exceptions rather than the rule: and we must not be discouraged, after reading or hearing of such instances, to find that the habit of cheerful, implicit, unwavering, voluntary obedience in our children, cannot be implanted at once. To attain a will thoroughly subject to God, is the labour of the Christian's whole life;* and can we

* A poor milkman whose wife was lingering in the last stages of decline, was accosted by a Lady who knew

expect it to be implanted and grow up in a day, in the wild unregenerate hearts of our little ones? Not so: it is an object for which we must be contented to labour long, and wait patiently. "We must learn" says an admirable writer, "not to expect too much from our children; nor to be unduly depressed by their naughtiness. Yet we must not wink at their sinful follies. We must love them not less, but better. And because we love them, we must not withhold, when needed, correction from them. More painful is the work to ourselves than to them. Most humbling is it. For since the corrupt root produces the poisonous sap in the

his afflictions. To her question,—“Are you able to feel resigned to the Lord's dispensation, and to say ‘Thy will be done?’” “Ah! Madam.” was his reply, shaking his head mournfully, “I think sometimes that it is the labour of a life to learn that there lesson perfectly.” That which that poor man expressed so simply is the experience of every believer who truly desires to do and suffer the will of God.

bud, what else is it but the correction of our own sin?"*

If we could ever keep this in our remembrance, with what patience, humility and prayer should we discipline our children.

Consider how we deal with their little bodies. A careful mother would avoid exposing a tender child to great fatigue and excitement of body. She would not needlessly throw him in the way of contagious diseases, nor let him associate with those from whom he might receive infection. She would not knowingly suffer him to breathe poisoned air. She would not, in the expectation of hardening him, expose him to sudden changes of heat and cold, for which his tender frame is not prepared, and by which so many children are yearly hurried into eternity.

And shall we not exercise the same wisdom towards our offspring in spiritual

* Bridges on Prov. xxiii. 14.

and moral things? Shall we suddenly throw them into temptation for which they are morally unfitted, and then wonder at their fall, and visit it on them with displeasure?

Disobedience is a disease of the soul not soon eradicated, but it may often be kept under, and gradually subdued. It requires not so much violent, as judicious and persevering remedies.

We know not that our children will ever live to grow up: why should we be too much in a hurry to expose them to temptations, which perhaps by being ward-ed off for a time they may escape for ever? Meanwhile let it be our persevering effort to fortify the mental, as well as the physical constitution, so that if it please the Lord to cast them, as they grow older, on the wide world, without a shield or human guide, they may be fitted so to pass the waves of this troublesome world, as to reach, without making shipwreck, the shore of a peaceful and blessed eternity.

CHAPTER II.

ABRAHAM (Continued).

EXAMPLE.

IF we would succeed in the education of our children we must set them a good example.

This Abraham did in his family. He was an affectionate son. The first fact recorded of him is, that, having received a divine command to leave his kindred and his father's house, he set forth. But we learn that his aged father wished to accompany him; though probably little qualified for the undertaking. Abraham seems patiently to have borne this hindrance, remaining at Haran during his father's declining days, perhaps at a great sacrifice of his own will: for we must suppose that, having faith to realize

the blessedness of the unknown country which was promised to him, and to expect a numerous seed who were to inherit it with him, he was eager to behold that Goodly Land, and counted the days and years of his life that were passing away ere he should become a happy father there. Let parents, if they would be blessed in their children, show like reverence, honour, and tenderness to their own parents; otherwise they have little reason to hope that their children shall rise to call them blessed.

Abraham was also a good brother. He had adopted his nephew Lot into that relationship; but the unhappy strife which arose among their increasing train of dependents sundered the bonds which love had tied. It does not appear that this quarrel troubled Lot, but to Abraham it was grievous. They were strangers and pilgrims, and as "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land," Abraham

would not have the world without to know that there were divisions in his family, neither would he have strife between himself and Lot, seeing that they were "brethren." He was therefore willing to yield his right, as the Elder, and as Uncle ; allowing Lot to choose what he would, so that peace and love might be maintained.

Parents who read this! have you any family feuds? see that they be healed, if you would have success in training your children. Never mind standing on your rights. Possibly you are the elder, and you have right on your side, and your brother owes all to you, and he is very ungrateful. Regard it not! if it be possible, so much as lieth in you, live peaceably with your relations, for your children's sake, if not for your own. How can you teach them to love one another, to yield to one another, to give up their rights, unless you practise these virtues yourselves?

Those who, like Lot, are selfish, grasp-

ing, and worldly must not be surprised if their children's hearts are in Sodom, and if they "be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Those who, like Abraham, are yielding and disinterested, may expect to find in their Isaacs the heirs of their faith, their virtues, their hopes, and their inheritance.

Abraham was a good husband. A bad husband is not likely to become a good father, and if children see that their father despises or neglects their mother, what a fatal effect it must produce on their respect for both!

Abraham and Sarah must have lived together as man and wife the greater part of a century, for the latter survived their removal into Canaan sixty-two years. In all that time Abraham appears to have been a faithful and affectionate husband, and to have treated his wife with deference, esteem, and admiration.

His marriage with Hagar cannot be

adduced as an exception to this character, for it was entirely at Sarah's suggestion, that he formed this alliance: and when, soon after, the pride of Hagar, and the severity of Sarah towards her offending slave, threatened to mar the harmony of the household, Abraham proved that his fidelity and affection were in no degree alienated from his wife, by his refusal to take any part in the feud, and his leaving the whole matter in her hands.

In the same way he acted some seventeen or eighteen years after, when once more there were heart-burnings between Sarah and Hagar on account of their respective children. The trial indeed was now much harder to Abraham, who had for so many years brought up Ishmael as his only son, and had even sometimes allowed himself to hope and pray that Jehovah would accept *him* as the chosen seed, and make him heir to the promises. Yet when Sarah insists that the bond-

woman and her son shall be cast out, Abraham delays only till he knows that it is Jehovah's will also. Then he sends forth the mother of his firstborn child, and that child also, after years of endearment had made him doubly precious; rightly feeling, no doubt, that she, whom he had promised to cherish and love through life, was more to him than all beside, except the child of their old age, the centre of the promises, his infant son Isaac.

And this mutual respect and affection we generally see in those parents whose training of their children is blessed with success.

Look at Isaac and Rebekah. How little of this respect and confidence was maintained in their married life, so far as we are admitted behind the scenes! and how sad in consequence, were the divisions and sins of their sons!

Then comes Jacob with a divided interest in his family. Sister envying sister!

One wife jealous of another! And what a scene of sin and misery was his family, as his sons grew up! Well might he say, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been!" for his was a youth of toil and privation, caused by his own and his mother's duplicity, and an old age of sorrow and humiliation, through the sins of his elder sons, and the loss of his younger one.

On the other hand it was not the mother only of Moses, but both his parents, who acted in faith respecting their infant son (Hebrew xi. 23): doubtless her husband's faith and co-operation greatly strengthened her hands, and contributed to her success in the subsequent education of their child.

When Manoah's wife in later times received the revelation from heaven respecting the birth of a son, she could confidently repose in her husband's sympathy and wisdom; and was assisted by his enquiries

how they were to order the child, and bring him up.

When Hannah, still later, was in the same circumstances, she received from her husband Elkanah all that affection, respect, and esteem, which would naturally tend to win, or at least retain for her, the affection and respect of those beneath her. And how full was the blessing they reaped in the early piety and matured virtues of their first-born, Samuel !

Though even in Elkanah's family we see sorrow and division through a want of unity and constancy in this affection. Probably Hannah was his first, as she was certainly his most beloved wife ; but, having no children by her, with the anxiety usually evinced by the chosen people of God, not to leave their inheritance to others for want of direct heirs, he married a second wife. Though gratified in accomplishing the desire of his heart in this respect, yet was the blessing more than

counterbalanced by the sorrow and disunion introduced into his house. She who was the mother of his children, unsatisfied with this privilege and honour, becomes an adversary to the wife of his youth, whose meekness and piety forbade her to retort railing for railing; while Elkanah seems not to have possessed, like his ancestor Abraham, the requisite power, wisdom, and courage to remedy the evil. And thus, had not the Lord mercifully intervened in answer to the earnest believing prayer of his hand-maiden, both her life and that of her husband would permanently have been embittered from this source, as that of many a once happy husband and wife in every age has been, by some relative or dependent who gets a footing in the family, and hinders that flow of unrestrained friendship and quiet enjoyment, which the Lord never intended a stranger to intermeddle with.

David also, though, in many respects, a

true son of Abraham, excelled not as a husband. Wife after wife he took to himself, consulting his own sensual gratification, rather than the effect which the heterogeneous and rival influences would produce upon his children.

The only exceptions, so far as we know, to the melancholy picture of misrule, sin, and chastening which his family presents, are his latest born children, Solomon and Nathan; both of whom were progenitors of Him who is in a special manner "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." (Matt. i. 1.)

These two were the sons of Bathsheba, who, though the cause of so much guilt and sorrow, appears herself to have been innocent in the matter, and also to have possessed qualities, both as a wife and a mother, that secured to her respect and esteem in both relations. She retained not only the confidence and affection of her husband to his extreme old age, but

also that of Solomon her son after he had succeeded to the throne.

Probably to this greater unity and esteem between David and Bathsheba than any that had bound him to his earlier wives, when his affections were divided among many objects, may be attributed in some measure that which was good and wise in the youthful King Solomon.

While to Him who was "a greater than Solomon" was accorded in like manner the happy privilege of seeing the unity, piety, and affectionate co-operation of Joseph and Mary, in their training and guidance of his youthful steps.

Thus did Abraham, and thus did many of Abraham's sons after the flesh, set an example to those who now are his spiritual sons, how they should give honour unto their wives; taking care to choose such partners as are worthy of their esteem and honour, if they desire to be happy and honoured in their offspring and if they seek a godly seed. (Mal. ii. 15.)

CHAPTER III.

ABRAHAM (Continued).

TRAINING.

WE cannot doubt that Abraham's training began early. We are informed that he "circumcised his son Isaac, being eight days old, as God had commanded him." Gen. xxi. 4. Thus did he set an example of using those means which God appoints in the manner and at the time commanded. Had Abraham refused to circumcise his son, he could have had no right to plead the promises in his behalf: though circumcision in itself gave no right to those promises; for Ishmael, as well as all the servants in Abraham's large household, had submitted to the same rite, and yet

never possessed the inheritance, nor received a promise of it.

Let us remember, as we deal with our children, that we must use every means ordained, or suggested, by our heavenly Father; we must ourselves obey, and we must train our children implicitly to obey; but no obedience on our part gives grace, or a right to demand grace for them. Yet we may be almost sure that God will never bless our children while we neglect to use the means which he has appointed. We have on the other hand, every possible encouragement to expect that the Lord will deign to bless us in the use of Divinely appointed means. Means of our own devising, or of man's appointment and invention, can have no efficacy, and have no promise of a blessing.

But when we think we have ascertained what is the will of God in the training of our children, another question may arise, namely,—

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How early can we begin? This is a question which Scripture does not leave unsolved. The Lord declared that He knew Abraham's determination to train his child for Him long before that child was born.

Many servants had been given him who had married in his service, and who had families. These children, upwards of three hundred in number, Abraham trained, or, as we read in the margin of our Bibles, '*instructed.*' Many masters, even believing masters, have little or no care for the moral and religious training of their servants; but this ought not to be the case; and *he* is likely to be the best father, when God shall give him children, who has previously devoted his care and thoughts to the training and instruction of his servants, and of his poorer neighbours and their children.

Had Abraham regarded his household and their little ones, as, in modern

times, an American slave-owner holds his slaves, merely as a source of gain and pleasure to himself, in what a school would Ishmael and Isaac have been trained! Probably no care of their parent could have counteracted the contagion of evil example around them. Instead of which we may well believe that they were all taught to fear and obey Jehovah, to worship Him when their master worshipped, to pray to Him in secret.

We are warranted in believing this, because we have the portrait of one among them, drawn for our instruction. In Gen. xxiv. we are introduced to "the eldest servant of Abraham's house that ruled over all that he had." He was probably the same who is mentioned in chap. xv. as "the steward of his house, Eliezer of Damascus," one born in his house during the time he remained childless, and considered as his heir. This Eliezer, therefore, was probably the eldest of

the servants born in his house; he had been trained by Abraham from a child; and we see him, sixty or seventy years after Abraham's entrance into the land, acting, for his master, as a confidential friend, and, towards Jehovah, as an humble, faithful servant: looking to Him for guidance and blessing in the prosecution of his master's business, praying for success in his mission, (chap. xxiv. 12.) and boldly confessing his allegiance to the God of his master (*ver.* 35) before those who were probably worshippers of other gods (see chap. xxxi. 19, 30).

We have no reason to suppose that Eliezer was an exception to the general character of Abraham's servants, but may rather presume that he was but one out of many good servants (Gen. xviii. 19).

Perhaps some may read these pages who are not parents as yet. Let us ask you, have you, or might you have influence for good over your dependents? if so, are you

using it? If you would hereafter be wise and happy parents, train your minds now by training the minds of those under your control.

Are you the possessor of lands and houses? Great is your power to influence those around you. Are you the master of a house of business; or even one in subordinate authority over others, as steward or manager? See what you can do for those over whom you are set in authority.

Have you the instruction of the children of others as tutor or governess? Have you nephews or nieces? Are you a Sunday-school teacher? Do all you can to train the minds committed to your charge, and be assured that you will not only be rewarded by seeing some success in your present labours, but you will be maturing and disciplining your own mind, and fitting yourself for being hereafter a wise father or mother, happy and successful in the training of your own little ones.

CHAPTER IV.

ABRAHAM (Continued.)

RESULTS.

IT has been said by the wisest of men, under directly inspired teaching, that if we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it.

Many have doubted the applicability of this promise to present days and present circumstances, because of the manifest and frequent examples of failure in the families of the most eminent Christians. But we must not too hastily rush to this conclusion ; for though we are not under the law, yet we have the same God, the same unchangeable One, to appeal to, as those had to whom these words were first addressed. And though undoubtedly some

promises were made to the Jews of old, which suited only their situation and circumstances, as dwellers in the Land of Promise, and enjoying earthly blessings in reward of obedience ; yet, are there many promises addressed to them primarily, which suit the need of all believers in every age, and which therefore are their's to plead and to enjoy.

Thus, Jehovah speaking to his servant Joshua after the death of Moses, in order to assure him of his continued presence and protection, says to him, "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." (Josh. i. 5.)

This passage is quoted in the New Testament, where we read these cheering words, "Let your conversation be without covetousness ; and be content with such things as ye have : for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper ; I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. xiii. 5, 6.)

And may I, as a believer in Jesus, boldly say, "the Lord is *my* helper, and *I* will not fear what man shall do unto me"—because I read that the Lord said unto Joshua, "I will never leave *thee* nor forsake thee"? And does this scripture warrant me to apply to *myself* promises made to prophets and saints of old who had the same need, and were in the same circumstances as myself? Surely it does.

And, if a promise made, under peculiar circumstances, to one favoured servant of God, is thus of universal application to the whole redeemed family; how much more, if possible, do such promises as are not addressed to individuals, but lay down a precept of universal application, append thereto a consequent blessing. Can there be any doubt that it is the duty of every Christian parent, as it was of every Jewish parent, to train up his child in the way he should go? Then why should we hesitate to append to the command the cheering promise, and to trust in it?

The reason is that we walk by sight and not by faith. We say "There is Mr. A., a truly godly man ; for years I have known him as a consistent, self-denying believer, indefatigable in visiting the sick and afflicted, liberal to the poor around him, and earnest in promoting the Lord's work. I know he has watched over his children, prayed with and for them, exhorted them, taken them early to a place of worship, kept them from the world and worldly amusements and associates;—and yet, what is the result? His eldest son is a scourge to the town; and is leading his younger brothers to be as bad as himself. His poor wife is overwhelmed and broken-hearted, and affliction is bringing his own grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

"See on the other hand Mr. and Mrs. B.: how strict *they* were with *their* children! how particular they were! How severely did they rebuke sin! how plainly did they dress their children! How often did they

pray and read with them ! How much they taught them out of the Scriptures ! and yet, now they are grown up, what girls are so gay as the Misses B. What young men are so wild as their brothers ? Even when children, they would laugh behind their parents' back at the advice which was so lavishly bestowed on them.

“ Were not these trained up in the way they should go ? And yet all to no purpose.”

No ! they were not ! Had you been an inmate of the family of poor Mr. and Mrs. A., you would probably have seen that while teaching their children that which is right, they did not *train* them up in the way in which they should go. They issued commands, but suffered them to be disobeyed ; they made them to *know* God's will, but they suffered them to have, and to follow their own. They punished them, but not efficiently ; they shrank from breaking their wills, for fear of breaking their spirit, and losing their love.

“But this was not the fault of Mr. and Mrs. B!”—No! they erred in another way; they told their children their duty, they punished, taught, commanded, restricted; but their rule was not the rule of love, it was not the teaching of the heart which goes to the heart. It was not the training of God, and it led not their children *to* God.

Such failures are met with daily, but they do not impugn God's truthfulness, they do not make it doubtful whether his promise is yet kept. But our present purpose is with Abraham; we have seen that he trained his child in the way he should go, and we shall see that when he was old he did not depart from it.

CHAPTER V.

ABRAHAM (Continued).

RESULTS.

It is interesting to find traces of the results of Abraham's training in his son Isaac. We have seen what Abraham was, how used to command, how successful in the education of his servants, how fitted to set an example of every thing good, as well as to enforce it.

But in tracing out Isaac's character we must not expect to find him equal to his father. The *good* man often leaves a son as good as himself, but it is very seldom that a *great* man leaves behind him a great man in his son. How many kings, and heroes, warriors, statesmen, and men of genius, have expected that their sons in inheriting their names and possessions would also be

heirs to their greatness! But as in the history of the Roman Empire, a king "born in the Purple" was usually a weak prince, so has it been in all ages.

A peasant cradled in the mountains, reared amid dangers and privations, enlists in the army, rises by his bravery, talents, and contempt of privation, fatigue, and death, from one grade to another, till the soldiers, among whom he has served, and who, witnessing his genius and his virtues, think that he alone can save his country from ruin, crown him with laurels and proclaim him Emperor. They are not mistaken; he does save the Empire from her foes, and exercises a strong though salutary rule over his wide-spread dominions.

He has a son; he spares nothing for his education; he desires to see his arm as strong to wield the mighty sceptre, to see his shoulders as broad and athletic, and as able to bear the weight of a huge Empire as his own have been;—but the youth is not

like his father ; his limbs faint under the weight of arms ; his cheek grows pale in sight of the armies of the Barbarian : his dying father with fear and trembling commits into his hands the insignia of Royalty ; but he holds them not long : in the hour of danger he shows himself unfitted for his high post, and the turbulent soldiery elect another among themselves to supply the place of his father.

And why is this ? Because the training required to make a great man, is danger, struggle, self-reliance, self-denial : these bring the hero to a throne, and his son into circumstances of honour and luxury, where he has but little occasion to exercise such virtues or to undergo such training ; or if he do undergo them it is rather as a lesson, than as a necessity, and a reality ; and therefore very seldom effectual.

This was doubtless one cause of the difference of character between the Father of the faithful and his beloved Isaac. The

former was trained in the school of faith ; he had to rely on God's word for every thing ; his fortune was to be made ; his faith was tried, year after year, with repeated disappointments ; he had no human arm to lean upon, either to direct his steps or to sustain his confidence. All this tended to form a great and noble, as well as an amiable character.

But his beloved Isaac was born and reared in tenderness : he was from his birth heir of every thing he could see around him, whether of his father's present possessions, or of the land to the east and west, to the north and south.

It was once the prayer of Abraham to the Lord, "O that Ishmael might live before thee !" Had this request been granted, had Ishmael inherited all that his father possessed, he might have grown up a comparatively gentle domestic man : but he was cast out in his boyhood without restraint, without resources ; and was obliged

to gain his own livelihood, and make his own fortune and family. The consequence was that he became a wild man, bold, self-dependent and courageous: while Isaac, in the quiet of domestic life, and ease, had no such qualities developed.

But if Isaac became not a great man, he was what was better, a good man: pious, dutiful, devotional, meek. He was doubtless reared in tender love both by his father and his mother. We cannot doubt that he was very precious in the eyes of the latter. She said at his birth, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." And again, "Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age." When Ishmael mocked him, she said, "the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." We know also that Abraham's love for his son was very tender. He who

knows the secret thoughts of the heart speaks of him to his father as "thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest."

But tender as was the love of Abraham, it was not an idolatrous love; it was not a love that could not enforce discipline. We see that Isaac had been educated in habits of implicit obedience, by his conduct when grown up. He is supposed to have been five-and-twenty years old when the Lord commanded his father to offer him up for a burnt offering. At that mature age we see in him the subjection of a little child. Indeed there are few little children so docile and subject.

His father takes him with him, without his consent, or assigning any reason for his journey. When they have nearly reached their destination, Abraham, leaving the young men and the ass, ascends the hill in company with his son, on whose back he binds the wood intended for the burnt offering. There is no remonstrance on the part

of Isaac. He does not say that it is not fitting for one of his rank and wealth to carry a burden of fire-wood up the hill, and that the ass may take it, or one of the young men may carry it for him. No! his father simply lays it on him, without thinking it needful to offer apology or explanation, too much used to receive a willing and implicit obedience, to feel any need to explain.

Again we see the same docility, when, as they proceed, it strikes the mind of Isaac that there is no lamb for a sacrifice, though his father appears to have provided all the subordinate requisites. "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father and said My father! and he said, Here am I, my son! And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham his father returned him no other answer than this, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Isaac understands not, but he is

satisfied; his mind doubtless pondered over his father's words in silence, as he walked along, but he would have deemed it unseemly to enquire further where his father appeared to evade a direct answer: and he patiently waits to have his difficulty solved.

Let us ask every parent who reads this, Have you reason to think that your children would act thus under parallel circumstances? Are they accustomed, both in childhood and as they grow older, to this respectful, unhesitating, loving, and unquestioning obedience?

But Isaac's obedience went further than this. They arrive at their destination, and the feeble old man without hesitation binds his grown-up son hand and foot, and places him on the altar; on the very wood which his own shoulders had carried up the hill. We are not told that Abraham enters on any explanation. He may have done so; but he had not anticipated any unwillingness on the part of his son, for he had provi-

ded no expedient in case of his refusal; they were alone together; and whether it was obedience to his father simply, or obedience to Jehovah superadded, still it was obedience, unflinching, unrepining, entire. Equalled perhaps in its completeness only by that of Him who "did always those things which pleased" his Father, and did nothing of himself, but, as the Father commanded him, so he spake and so he did.

As Isaac advanced in years the same filial subjection to his father continued to be manifested by him.

He was full forty years old before his marriage, and yet we see in him nothing but the loving subject son confiding in his father's superior energy and maturer wisdom and judgment, and taking the wife chosen and assigned him by his father under the guidance of Jehovah. It is not every father whose judgment would be a safe guide to a son in so important a matter; but Abraham had not only taught

his beloved son to respect and obey him, but he had so approved himself for wisdom and faith, for disinterestedness and piety, that the heart of his son "could safely trust in him," at that period, and in that eventful crisis of his life where a step to the right or left in the wrong direction has often blighted the fairest prospects in opening life, both for temporal happiness and spiritual progress.

Isaac permitted his father to send into a far country to choose him a wife, himself remaining tranquilly at home, not uninterested in the matter, but, probably, as far as we can judge from the only glimpse afforded us of him during the interval, spending his time in meditation, and prayer, for the success of a mission on which all his hopes of happiness on earth depended. And when he receives the fair being thus committed to his trust, he is disposed to give her his affections. And here comes out another trait in his gentle loving

character, that it was not till he had placed his bride in the tent of the departed Sarah, and made her at home there, that he ceased to mourn for his mother, though it was now three years since the time of her death.

And it was not only during the life-time of his father that Isaac maintained this gentleness of character. When all parental restraint was removed, and he had become himself a father and a master, and waxed so mighty as to be the object of envy and fear, he hated strife and contention, choosing like a true Son of peace, to give up his undoubted rights in the exercise of grace, when the power was in his hands of maintaining them, and of chastising his aggressors (Gen. xxvi. 12—22).

CHAPTER VI.

ISAAC.

SELF-INDULGENCE.

WE have remarked that those who have much energy of character, and have risen in life by their own industry and talent, are not likely to leave to their children, with their name and wealth, the manly virtues which acquired for them distinction. Such children suffer more or less from their parents' successes in life, though on the other hand they may possess, like Isaac, the meek and gentle character so valuable in a Christian. In fact there is no way of obviating the disadvantages of riches, except by using them for God; and whether we have acquired them by our own diligence or by inheritance, if we

would not be injured by them, we must use them for God, and not make self-indulgence and self-pleasing the end of existence. "Ye know," saith the Apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

We have spoken with admiration of many amiable and Christian-like qualities in Isaac, and we would gladly leave untouched any trait of a contrary tendency in his character, but the illustration of our subject requires that we should hint at a failure which seems to be indicated in the sacred narrative.

Isaac was pious, mild and gentle, dutiful as a son, constant as a husband, peaceable among his neighbours, even to his own loss; but he appears to have been self-indulgent, fond of the pleasures of the table. When we consider how much the character of a man is formed in infancy,

we cannot wonder if an only child, cradled in the lap of ease and plenty, the most precious being on earth to every one around him, should have been over indulged in childhood in this respect. Such habits are rarely dropped in after life.

Isaac was peaceful and unenterprising himself; and in this he was imitated by his younger son Jacob, who also was "a plain man dwelling in tents." But his elder son Esau "was a cunning hunter, a man of the field."

Parents often admire in their children those qualities in which they are themselves deficient. And the peaceful Isaac loved his adventurous and enterprising son;—"because he did eat of his venison."

Jacob appears to have had no tendency to these self-indulgent habits: he dwelt in tents, probably tending his father's sheep. When constrained to flee his home and his country, a staff is sufficient by day, a stone serves for a pillow by night; when in Pa-

dan Aram he lives roughly and laboriously: his twenty years, servitude with Laban he thus describes, "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and the sleep departed from mine eyes." (Gen. xxxi. 40.)

The love of pleasure and of ease is highly inimical to that walk of faith, the essence of which is expressed in those words of our Master, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me!"

Isaac never abandoned the tent for the city; but the self-indulgence of his latter years seems to have had an unfavourable effect on his pilgrim walk and heavenly hope.

CHAPTER VII.

ISAAC (Continued).

FAVOURITISM.

“ISAAC loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob.” (Gen. xxv. 28). What can we expect from children, when there is not unity between their parents ?

It is a stronghold into which a mother can run, when she is able to appeal with confidence to her husband's authority and corroboration, in every trial and difficulty which may arise from the various tempers and dispositions of their children.

Rebekah was warned before the birth of her sons, of the difference which would exist in their dispositions, and destiny : she was highly honoured in that the revela-

tion was made directly to herself. From this favour being bestowed on her, we may perhaps gather, that, during this period of her life, faith was in more habitual and lively exercise in her heart, than in that of her husband ; for the Lord delights to reveal himself most intimately to those who wait on him most closely. Rebekah inquired of Jehovah, and received direct information, intimating somewhat of the character and destiny of her two sons.

Can we doubt that, like Mary afterwards, she kept this saying and pondered it in her heart ? And, as time wore on, and the characters of the two boys were gradually developed, how her memory must have clung to the words of Jehovah, and her heart have been encouraged, in speaking to Jacob of the promises made to his grandfather and his father ; of the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, of the heavenly city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is

God! How her heart must have glowed when she held out to him the hope that all these promises might be his! She may not have been able to say absolutely "They are yours," but, as she saw in him the pilgrim-character, more and more developed, and saw him willing to give up present enjoyment for future good, having the promised inheritance before his eyes, as the object to be obtained, if possible,—she could not but feel increasing assurance that her younger son was chosen of God to be the inheritor of his promises.

Could we certainly know that one of our little ones was chosen of God, and the special object of his love and promises, how our hearts would cling to that child! with what intense interest should we watch his budding intellect and affections, and hail every sign of the fulfilment of our hopes, and the realization of that which by faith we expected!

Thus doubtless it was with Rebekah;

her younger son grew up a plain man, dwelling in tents, valuing God's promises, believing God's word, careless about his accommodation and comforts, able to endure hardness, and willing to wait until another life for enjoyment and greatness. Rebekah loved him. And let us ask the Christian mother who reads this, Would you not have loved and prized such qualities in your own son?

Esau, the rough, soldier-like huntsman, shewed none of these tendencies. When young he probably spurned a mother's guidance and instruction, and if she made any complaint to Isaac, perhaps his faults were excused and his part taken by his too partial father.

In vain would the mother plead the virtues and faith of their gentler and less attractive son, and remind Isaac of the promises of Jehovah which seemed to point to him as intended to be his heir; Isaac was blinded by partiality, and could

not read the promise clearly as Rebekah did, and therefore clung to the hope, that Jehovah's love would descend on that son whom *he* loved.

Want of confidence ensues between the husband and wife. Isaac does not take counsel with Rebekah, and endeavours to procure the blessing for his firstborn at any rate. While Rebekah, confident in herself that he is acting counter to Jehovah's will, instead of appealing to Him who, having promised, was able also to perform, loses the simple confidence which would have carried her through all difficulties, and stoops to deceive her husband in order to gain what she believes to be a right end; and what was indeed a right end, though attained by unlawful means.

The instruction to be derived from this family scene in the life of Isaac and Rebekah is most important and obvious.

First, let there be no concealment between parents, no plannings, nor plottings

on the part of the wife, no endeavours to get her way by underhand means.

It is by no means uncommon that the mother should have more wisdom in governing young children than the father, even if both be godly persons: because it generally happens that on the mother devolves the chief care of her little ones. While the husband is engaged from home all the day earning the bread on which they are to be fed, the wife's hands are filled with care for those at home. They are with her from morning till night, she feeds, clothes, educates, plays with her little ones, and of course watches over their opening minds and characters. It is, or ought to be, the study and prayer of her life to be wise and faithful in the discharge of these her paramount duties; and as constant habit makes perfect, she ought to be as much more acquainted than her husband with the best way of dealing with her children's tempers and failings, as she

is more expert in cooking their dinners, and cutting out their little frocks. It is the business of her life to do this, all day long. But the father probably returns home only to take his meals, or to rest after the fatigues of the day: to him the children are not the business of life: but its enjoyment and relaxation. He knows nothing of all the petty trials and vexations of the day; his little ones are his play-things; he likes to see them all clean and smiling and free from business, ready to share with him in his hour of leisure.

And so if possible it ought to be. Work or lessons, or punishments should not needlessly intrude on such an hour; and if they do, the temptation of the father ordinarily is to side with the child, and to feel as if less severity would do as well, for his little playfellows.

A wise wife, and a judicious mother, will guard as well as she can against this danger, both for her own sake and that of

her children: and she will be sure that she has enlisted her husband's feelings and judgment on her side, before she ventures to carry on either education or discipline at such times. On the other hand, a wise and prudent father will ever remember that while he is the sovereign, the head and source of all authority, his wife is his prime-minister, carrying out family government in all its details, and with all its discouragements, for him, and his; and by his own appointment. Therefore in all things and at all times she ought to have his countenance and help; and if he sees failure in her, and has to interpose his supreme prerogative between her and her infant subjects, it ought to be done at such times and in such a manner as shall not weaken her authority, or lead their little ones to suppose there is a division in the cabinet-councils of their rulers.

The parent who reads these histories may exclaim, "O would that I knew that

my children, or any of them, were chosen by God; then could I, like Rebekah, in faith bring them up for Him, and dedicate them to Him in childhood."

To this we would reply, that the great evidence on which alone Rebekah could safely rest in this matter was the character of Jacob. When she saw him love the word and promises of Jehovah, ready to give up things present for the sake of future blessing, she had the best evidence she could have, that he was chosen of God to inherit those promises which he loved and valued.

And when Isaac saw in his son Esau a worldly, sensual, profane character, he ought not to have needed a divine revelation, to assure him that his first-born son had not that renewed nature, which alone can inherit the kingdom of God. God is no respecter of persons, but he is a respecter of characters; and sad will be the reflection of those Christian parents who, while

mourning over the ungodly course, or the hopeless end of their children, are constrained to feel that they themselves, though delivered from all condemnation as believers in Jesus, have yet allowed in themselves those sins in the bud, which in their maturity are more fully developed in the unregenerate hearts of their sons and daughters, and have led them to walk determinately in the broad road leading to destruction. Isaac could not correct the love of savoury meat in Esau; because he had not subdued it in himself. It did not ruin Isaac's soul, because he was a true believer; but for a morsel of meat his son Esau sold his birthright.

Savoury meat, though loved, was not that which Isaac loved best. But in Esau's unregenerate heart the same failing reigned unchecked, and when the hour of temptation came, Satan induced him to barter the birthright for a mess of pottage.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABRAHAM, ISAAC and JACOB.

THE ALTAR.

[ABRAHAM] builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." (Gen. xii. 7, 8 ; xiii. 4, 18 ; &c.)

A very prominent feature in the patriarchal histories is the building of the Altar. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as they travelled about throughout the promised land, pitching their tents in various directions, failed not to erect an Altar to the worship of the God who had taken them into covenant with Himself.

It is not likely that all Abraham's family and dependents had attained to his own maturity of faith; but we cannot doubt that many, if not all, were believers in the God

of Abraham, and desirous to share in the blessings promised to him, and to his seed, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed.

How instructive was the lesson taught to all these his dependents, when they saw *him* to whom the Lord had given so much, as well as promised such great things, buying no land, building no houses, planting no vineyards, seeking no abode in the cities of the Canaanites, but living as a stranger and pilgrim all his days, and *that* because he professed to be seeking a heavenly city!

And how that lesson must have been deepened, when, on a new encampment being chosen, their lord and master's first care was to seek a suitable site for an Altar to Jehovah, and when they saw him, (doubtless being called on to bow the knee with him) worshipping Jehovah his God, in His own appointed way!

And thus will the true sons and daugh-

ters of Abraham in every age command and instruct their children and their households. They will themselves walk as strangers and pilgrims in a world which is not yet theirs in possession, being inhabited by the Canaanite and the Perizzite, though theirs in promise (Rev. v. 10).

“They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.” “Such things” we should often say to our dear little ones; and all our conduct, as well as our words, should declare plainly that we seek a country. If we are mindful of that country from whence we came out, we may have opportunity to return thither. The world and its ways are not afar off, and conformity to its fashions and maxims is not difficult; indeed the difficulty is to avoid slipping into them. Many a parent who would not himself return, practically encourages his son to return, allowing to his children and for his children’s sake, practices and habits, which, at the be-

ginning of his course, he professed to renounce, and to turn his own back upon for ever. Abraham acted not thus. "Beware," said he in his old age, when his servant suggested the taking of Isaac back to the land of his forefathers, "beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again." (Gen. xxiv. 6.)

To walk as pilgrims ourselves, is the most likely way to incline our children so to walk after us. Though the spiritual seed of Abraham are born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, (John i. 13.) yet nothing can be more easily proved, by countless instances, than that children grow up after the example that their parents set them: and though grace alone can renew their hearts, yet it requires nothing supernatural to incline them to follow us in every thing that is evil. Especially if we profess to be followers of Jesus, and children of Abraham, and yet neither take up the cross

after the example of our divine Forerunner, nor lead the life of pilgrims like the father of the faithful, we may be almost certain either that our children will disbelieve our professions of religion, or else that they will copy our low standard, and, if ever converted, will be, like ourselves, stunted and blighted trees in the Lord's vineyard.

Instead of this, if our children see that the parents, to whom they look up as models for imitation, are indeed not only calling this world the place of their pilgrimage, but acting in all things as if they felt and esteemed it as such, we may hope that our Isaacs and our Jacobs, will, if it please the Lord to call them by his grace, be also "plain men dwelling in tents."

We see, by Lot's example, what the believer loses, when he gets tired of the pilgrim-character, and wishes to enjoy both worlds at once; to be the Lord's, and yet to conform to the world. While in Abraham's history we learn that "Godliness is

profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.)

But sad is the fate of the children of believing parents, when their fathers, becoming wearied of the company of those who are leading a pilgrim-life, first approach the plains of Sodom, then encamp outside the walls, and end by dwelling within the gates of the city of Destruction. The father may be saved when the cry arises, "Come out of her, my people;" but what will be the fate of his sons and of his daughters?

Yet such is the conduct of many now who are called by the name of Christ; the cares, the pleasures, the business, the customs of the world entangle them, and though they may "vex their righteous souls from day to day" with the ungodly deeds of the wicked with whom they have associated themselves, yet they have not spiritual and moral courage to burst the

bands that entangle them. They have perhaps entered into partnership with the ungodly—an unequal yoke, whereby the godly is dragged into the ways of the world in spite of himself: they are in business, and fear to offend rich customers. They are rich and fear the scoff of the great, or they are poor and fear to lose the favours of their superiors. But all this will not do; if we would serve God as Abraham did, we must so walk that we may command our children and our households after us, to walk as pilgrims and strangers, abstaining from worldliness, covetousness, vanity, pride, and all fleshly lusts, that war against the soul, having our conversation honest in the world, and above all before our children. Let them see that we love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; let them see that we fear not to be poor and despised for Christ's sake; that we esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the

treasures of Egypt, because we have respect unto the recompense of the reward. So will they early be used to the pilgrim's life, and it will not seem strange or hard to them. So, if we should be gathered to our rest before them, and leave them behind us here, we may hope that they like us will dwell in tents, and, digging again the wells of salvation from which we have so often drawn, may find the same strength and refreshment for which we now thank God, lifting up our heads in hope because our redemption draweth nigh.

But see to it that, wherever you pitch your tent in your pilgrim wanderings, there you rear an altar unto the Lord; and there the offerings of prayer and thanksgiving and praise ascend to heaven; and there, as the Lord shall prosper the work of your hands, you offer of your substance to his cause and people, which shall arise to God an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

It is recorded of the Lord Jesus, during his life, "that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

It was not merely the command and instruction of our blessed Lord that led his disciples to pray, but it was his example that stirred them up to desire to imitate him.

And thus it is with children. Those who in very early life have been constantly present when the family met each morning, and heard God's word read, and prayer addressed to Him, and his praises sung by those to whom they looked up with filial reverence, love, and awe; have learned one blessed lesson which they will never forget through life. But that child who was conscious that his father and mother prayed daily in secret, has learned a further lesson. While he who, in addition to the rest, can look back to his early infancy, and

can remember hearing his father and his mother pray for him, and with him, and that day after day, and year after year, is not likely in future life to be a prayerless man. The little hands soon learn to clasp together, and the little lips to lisp prayers and praises, which doubtless ascend with acceptance to God, and return in blessings to the earth again.

And, in addition to this, those who have early learned to do good and to communicate (Heb. xiii. 16), by having their little hands and feet made the channels of communication between their parents' purse and the Missionary Box, or the cottages of the pious poor, are not likely to forget, in after years, the pleasure associated with that species of sacrifice with which the Lord so emphatically declares Himself to be well pleased (Heb. xiii. 16), and of which He says "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts xx. 35.)

And thus, if we act, teaching our child-

ren as much by our example as by precept, but not neglecting either to live as pilgrims, to live in prayer, or to be open handed and open hearted, we shall have gone a great way to fit them for the enjoyment of the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.

CHAPTER IX.

HAGAR.

THE MOTHER.

THE instruction conveyed by the history of Abraham and his family is chiefly addressed to fathers, as his own character stands so prominently forward in all the transactions of his life, of faith and obedience. Yet it cannot be doubted that he was much indebted to Sarah as mother of his son, and mistress of his family, for the success that attended his training and discipline of those under his control.

The maternal character is one very much illustrated in the pages of Holy Scripture; and though we know not much of Sarah in this respect, yet there are many of her daughters on whom the man-

tle of their father Abraham seems to have fallen, and whose piety, diligence, and success, in the training of their little ones, are well worthy of our consideration and imitation.

It is a remarkable fact, that, whereas several of the holy men of God, whose history is given for our instruction, failed very signally in the education of their children, most of the holy women whose lives are recorded, wholly or partially, are such as are worthy of imitation in the fulfilment of this relationship. The fact is, that to be a good wife and mother is the great earthly business of woman, and if she fails here she fails totally. Whereas man's domestic duties often come in by the way only, and he may be great and good, as a King, a Statesman, a Soldier, a Prophet, a Priest, and in various other characters, while his attention may be very little directed to, and his time very little occupied by, the care of his children.

We have before alluded to the character of Isaac in its connexion with his mother, and to the respect and affection he ever bore to her memory.

The history of Hagar and Ishmael seems at first sight to be merely a foil to these domestic virtues: yet we must not wholly pass by even Hagar, in our glance at the characters of the mothers of Scripture. If Hagar cannot teach us much else, we may learn from her that our unsubdued sins and failures will probably be copied by our children, and that our froward and unlovely tempers will probably descend to them for an heritage.

In the unamiable family-picture presented to us in Gen. xvi., we behold Hagar, elated by her unexpected elevation of circumstances, and by the prospect of introducing the so long coveted heir into Abraham's family, treating her mistress with contempt. It is probable that she possessed a haughty unsubdued temper, though it is

by no means improbable that she was a believer in the God of Abraham, and perhaps a partaker of his grace. For the dealings of the Lord towards her are full of grace and condescension, the Angel of the Lord twice appearing to her, and that for the enunciation of blessing, as well as for direction of present conduct. And she, recognising the divine message, and obedient to the divine command, returns to her mistress, and is fain to dwell with her in the place of subjection for many years.

Yet, doubtless, in all those years the proud spirit was not subdued, the scornful tongue had not learned to speak with humility and meekness.

It is probable that during the long interval that elapsed between the birth of Ishmael and that of Isaac, Hagar secretly cherished the hope and expectation, that after all she would obtain the supremacy in the family, and that the death of either Sarah or Abraham would make her

son undisputed heir of all his father's possessions.

Galling, indeed, therefore, to her feelings, must have been the announcement in the family, of the birth of the true heir, and we have little cause to doubt that she privately imparted her chagrin and disappointment to her son; perhaps little thinking that he would repeat what she said.

Parents are too apt to do this; they express freely, in the bosom of their families, revengeful, contemptuous, and slighting expressions, concerning their relations and neighbours, or even of their spiritual guides and instructors. The incautious hasty nature of childhood often causes these expressions to be repeated, when parents least wish it; and even if not, they remain in the young mind, poisoning and injuring its best feelings and affections.

If the children or servants in a house treat any of those who visit the heads of it with rudeness or contempt, there is,

generally, reason to conclude that they have been accustomed to hear slighting or rude remarks made respecting them in their absence.

If therefore, we desire that our children should grow up courteous to all, respectful to their elders and superiors, kind and considerate to their inferiors, and reverential in manner and feeling towards the ministers of God's Word, it is by no means sufficient that we expect them to follow this course, but we must follow it undeviatingly ourselves.

The conversations which ordinarily take place between friends at the dinner or tea table, are often very prejudicial to the servants who are in attendance, and to the children who are silent listeners. The errors of good people, the defects in the last sermon, the supposed false doctrines of those who differ from them, are far too apt to become the table-talk of those who, just before in their closets, have been be-

wailing their own worthlessness and shortcomings, and praying for a blessing on all around them; and who are ready at the close of their meal, to assemble with the people of God, to hear of the exceeding grace of Jesus in coming to blot out with his own most precious blood, the sins of the vilest.

But these things ought not so to be; and they must not be so, if we desire that our children should grow up in the veneration and love of all that is venerable and lovely. Heedless as we know a lad of fifteen or sixteen often to be, it is not likely that Ishmael would have acted in this unbecoming manner towards Sarah and Isaac, if he had from his infancy heard nothing from his mother's lips concerning Sarah, but that which was dutiful, grateful and affectionate: if she had constantly impressed his mind with the fact that he was not the heir, but that he was to look forward with hope to the birth of one

whom he was to acknowledge as his future superior, and who was the destined inheritor of all his father's possessions and all the promises of Jehovah.

Nor are these things trifles. Ishmael's whole life was changed by that one mocking speech; his mother as well as himself was cast out from the abode of comfort and plenty, from the place where the worship of Jehovah was maintained, from the place of promise, of being sharers in the blessings belonging to him who was the centre of God's love, as then manifested on earth; and cast out into a land of scorpions and dragons, where hunger and thirst, and solitude, and burning heat without a shelter were their bitter portion.

Must not Hagar have felt this in those painful circumstances which the sacred historian so graphically delineates? "When the water was spent in the bottle, she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went and sat her down over

against him a good way off, as it were a bow-shot : for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice and wept." Gen. xxi. 15, 16.

Perhaps she felt she had caused his death by her own conduct and evil example ; and therefore instead of being able to soothe his dying agonies, she was constrained to turn her eyes away from them.

The temporal consequences of our un-governed tongues may not be as grievous to our offspring as those entailed upon Hagar and hers ; but we know not how far the Lord may account us guilty of their spiritual destruction and of their final exclusion from the family of the faithful, if we have been helpers of Satan in his efforts to prejudice their young minds against the truth, and against those who teach it.

CHAPTER X.

REBEKAH.

So much has already been said, in our consideration of the character of Isaac, respecting the faith of Rebekah in looking for the fulfilment of Jehovah's promises to Jacob, and her preference of that which was indicative of the pilgrim character in him, to that which was more attractive to the outward eye in her elder son ; that perhaps we might pass over her now in silence : but that there is another striking lesson to be learned from her history. Indeed so obvious is it, that while few take account of that which was of the Spirit in her, all can see that she used deceitful and unwarrantable means to attain the object of her heart's desire, respecting Jacob.

Excuses may be made, and excuses ought in justice to be made for her, for we must recollect that not only gospel light and morality were then unknown, but even the law of Moses had not yet been promulgated; and we have no right to judge the servant of another, for failure, or omission, until we know whether any commandment or prohibition had been revealed on the subject. Still there can be no doubt that it was faith in God's promise, and intelligence concerning his revealed purposes, that instigated her to act as she did, though a more simple faith, and a fuller assurance that what He had purposed He was able to perform, and would perform, would rather have led her to fervent prayer, and to the pleading of those promises, than to the stratagem by which she brought about the desire of her heart.

The time had been, when, being in perplexity and trouble, she went to enquire of the Lord (Gen. xxv. 22); and she seems

to have enjoyed the peculiar privilege, seldom vouchsafed to one of her sex, of receiving a direct answer from Jehovah to her petition, and a clear promise and intimation of the future history and destiny of her two sons.

The same throne of grace was open to her now, and even greater boldness would have been becoming her, because not only, as in the former case, had she her desire to make known, but she had a full and direct promise to plead. That promise was that her younger son should be stronger than the elder, and that the elder should serve the younger.

When therefore she perceived that her husband's affections were fixed on Esau, and that he intended to give him his dying blessing, which would entail on him all the promises belonging to her younger son, the true and perfect course for Rebekah would have been, again to make supplication to Him who had promised,

and to plead with Him to make his word good.

And wherefore did Rebekah act otherwise? The reason seems to be that having believed she understood the Lord's predictions, she threw her whole soul into them; and in desiring their fulfilment she fixed her affections on him who was the subject of them; and having done this she desired Jacob to obtain the blessing, not only because the Lord loved him, but because she herself loved him.

It is written "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light;" and as long as we keep this rule in view we shall not be tempted to turn aside into crooked paths. We shall not only desire that which is God's will, but we shall use no means to accomplish that will, except such as are according to truth, simplicity, and uprightness. We shall not be willing to go one step to the right or left, nor to do evil that good may come.

In ordinary cases it requires only ordinary integrity and moral rectitude to speak the truth, and to walk in the paths of uprightness. Occasions, however, do occur sometimes, suddenly and unexpectedly, in which the choice seems to lie between a great evil, and a small deviation from the right path. Thus Rebekah thought that if she did not frame her deceit, and persuade Jacob to practise it, the whole tide of promised blessing would flow away from the godly Jacob, and centre on the profane Esau. But sad as the alternative seemed, faith might have whispered, "What God has promised He is able also to perform; and *that* faith would have been counted to her for righteousness.

A Christian lady some years ago was placed in somewhat similar circumstances; she had been converted subsequently to her marriage, and her husband still remained an enemy to the truth. Her life from thenceforth was one of petty persecu-

tions of various kinds, for her husband omitted no opportunity of crossing her will, and of trying to make her act contrary to her conscience.

These persecutions, instead of overcoming her faith, caused her to walk more simply and closely with God; and she was enabled to do many things in simplicity, as acts of obedience to her husband, for the Lord's sake, which she could not have done to please herself, without stepping out of her Christian character. She would sit at the head of his table when the house was filled with his gay companions, and be courteous to all, but she would also speak of the Lord to those who sat next her, in spite of her husband's frown.

Years rolled on, and her husband's enmity was unabated; but her children were beginning to grow up around her, and in them she hoped to find a solace for all her sorrows. She trusted to be permitted to lead them to the foot of the cross, and

to find, in their infant hearts, the response of faith and love so pleasing to the Lord, so cheering to the Christian parent.

At this time her husband, who had in vain persevered in every plan of personal annoyance, and found himself constanly foiled by the grace which had enabled her ever to yield whatever could be yielded with a good conscience, bethought himself of a new trial of her steadfastness.

One day, entering her sitting room, he found her with her Bible before her, and her little sons clustering round her, drinking in from her lips the words of eternal life.

“I can never suffer this,” he cried ; “I won’t have my boys brought up to be Methodists. You must solemnly promise me you will never again speak a word to any of them on religion, or I will take them away from you, and have them educated as I please, and you shall never see them again.”

Great was the consternation of the unhappy mother, for she had no reason to believe that her husband would recede from his threat; she could make no immediate reply, but after mature thought she resolved to abide by her husband's conditions. She was well able to educate her boys herself, and she determined never to send them to school, hoping that her example, and her prayers might avail for their conversion; even though her lips were evermore to be sealed on the one subject nearest her heart.

She therefore gave the fatal promise, and kept it; year after year passed on, and her boys never heard from her lips the glad tidings of salvation, but from their father's they imbibed principles of infidelity, which blasted all her hopes. From him they were taught to scoff at their mother's faith, and to rush into pleasures in which she could have no part.

What would have been the result had

she acted differently, when the hour of temptation first arrived, it is impossible to say. But she would then have had nothing to reproach herself with. Had she said to her husband, "God who gave me these children, commands me to bring them up in his ways, to teach them out of his word, and to lead them into his truth. I ought to obey God rather than man; and though I willingly obey you in all lawful things, this is not lawful, and I cannot obey you in it."

The Lord would then have been on her side, as she would have been on his; and He would either have softened her husband's heart, so as to cause him to alter his resolve, or else if her children had been taken out of her hand, she would have felt that duties were hers, and results with Him whose ears would ever have been open to her prayers for her poor lost ones.

Whereas in the path she chose she neither had a clear conscience, nor even

the satisfaction, like Rebekah of old, to feel that her dereliction from the path of duty had been attended with blessing to those for whose sake she had erred.

May we never be thus tried! But if we should be, let us seek grace to keep the straight and narrow path of Christian duty, before the most specious schemes of human expediency.

CHAPTER XI.

LEAH.

OF the mothers of the twelve Patriarchs, and the manner in which they trained their numerous offspring, we know but little. A family containing four wives, and their respective children, with all the heart-burnings and jealousies consequent on such a state of social life, is but a poor school for education; and sad indeed must the training of Jacob's family have been, if we are to judge by its results.

It is probable that Leah was a true believer. We behold her acknowledging Jehovah's hand, in the gift of her children, and naming them with reference to his dealings with her; but the unhappy way in which she became Jacob's wife, and the

rival of her own sister, was not a favourable prospect for the development of what might have been good in her. The same disunion and jealousy that subsisted between Leah and Rachel, we see acted over again with more virulence in the hatred of the sons of Leah, towards their brother Joseph.

But Leah, beside her six sons, had also a daughter, probably the only girl in the family. In the education of her daughter, if any where, a truly good mother shews her wisdom and skill. Her sons may be boisterous and unruly, and get beyond her management and control, especially if the nature of their father's occupation be such as to take them early into the field, to tend his cattle, or into his fishing boat to share with him the perils of the deep; or into any other sphere of labour that draws out the physical energies of youth, and makes them early feel their independence.

Such was probably the case with Jacob's

sons. They soon learned to tend their father's flocks, and perhaps spent but little time with their mother at home. But she had the constant companionship of her little daughter, and the opportunity of training her according to her will. How far she availed herself of this privilege, and how far she was qualified to discharge this duty wisely, and well, we know not; we can judge only by results. We know this, that the youthful Dinah grew up lovely to the eye; and that, being in the neighbourhood of the Gentile inhabitants of Canaan, she went out to see the daughters of the land.

No doubt Leah framed many excuses to herself for allowing this. "Dinah is young, and it is natural she should like a little gaiety. She has no sisters, or female companions of her own age. If she always remains immured at home she will never know anything of the manners and fashions of the world. She is very young; a

little amusement will not hurt her ; she will settle down all the more steadily hereafter, for having enjoyed a little harmless indulgence. And though I should not like to trust her quite alone, yet as these are very nice young women with whom she is desirous to associate herself, she will be very safe with them. It does not do to be so very strict : it makes children hate religion, if it is made an excuse for restricting them from every pleasure. And beside, these young people are so well connected ! She will be introduced to the king's son, and she is so very lovely that he *may* fall in love with her and marry her. To be sure, he is not of our race, nor a worshipper of the true God, but he is so very good and amiable that he might be converted if he got a good wife ; and so my child might be made a blessing to many."

In some such way, perhaps, if she reasoned with herself at all, did Leah excuse her own sin and folly in permitting

her young and inexperienced daughter to go out, unprotected and uncared for, into the society of those who knew not God, and who had not his fear before their eyes.

And who knows not the sad result? Her once innocent and lovely child returns to her disgraced and dishonoured herself, and the sad means of bringing destruction and death on the whole city into which she had so unadvisedly entered.

We hear no more of Dinah. Whether she died early, the victim of shame and disgrace, or whether she lingered on a lengthened existence, in her mother's tent, vainly regretting the sin and folly of her youthful love of pleasure, we know not; but we never read of her being given by her father in marriage, we read not of sons and daughters rising up to call her blessed. Her name is only represented in connexion with sin, and sorrow, and shame, and death.

What must a mother's feelings have been when she received her child back

again, lost and degraded, and *that* in great measure through her own laxity of discipline, and conformity to the ways of the world? If Leah had preserved a proper restraint over her child, if she had early instilled into her mind a sense of the difference between the world and God's people, and enlisted her heart and feelings on the side of the truth, we can hardly believe that such results could have followed, even if she had been left to her own guidance after the death of her parents. It is quite certain, however, that if Leah had done her duty, she would never have permitted her to enter such society while living beneath her father's tents, and under her mother's eye.

It is comparatively easy to rule over children while they are in the nursery and school-room: at least the consequences of our misrule are not so glaring and apparent. They live with us, and look to us for all their little pleasures. But as they grow

up they begin to think and act for themselves ; and it becomes not only the path of wisdom, but a matter of necessity, that we in some measure slacken the reins of authority. Frequently the desire for liberty and pleasure becomes clamorous, and the poor parents are often as much at a loss how to act, as the timorous hen is, who after having tenderly reared a brood of ducklings, sees them venture hardily on the lake, which would be her own destruction. There is this essential difference, however; the water is the natural and healthful element of the duck ; while the world, though the natural element of unregenerate man, is likely to be the place of destruction to our young ones : if continued in, it is certain to be so.

How is this ruinous course to be prevented ? This is a question of most serious importance, and one which cannot be answered so as to meet every case.

One preventive obviously is, to teach our

children early to love our own society, to let them find us their kind and condescending companions and their sympathizing friends. Thus will they, as they advance in years, have less need to seek other associates, and will require higher qualities from those young persons whom they may seek as their intimates.

Again, let your example and your instructions be ever on the side of that which is exalted in Christian morals: so will their taste become assimilated to that which is truly good.

Let them never hear you so praise the unconverted for intellect, greatness, or riches, as to lead them to think you set an undue value on the possession of these qualities.

If you are poor, let them not perceive that you hold men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

If you are in business, let them never see you, for the sake of some temporary gain, imitate the deceitful, covetous prac-

tices of those who make haste to be rich, by any and every device.

If you are rich,—I had almost said, dispose of your superfluous wealth before you begin the education of your children—so much is wealth a hindrance to every hope of success : but at least I would say, if you are rich, let your children find it out rather by seeing the results of your liberality, and the blessings that your wealth extends to others, than by the grandeur of your house and equipage, the luxury of your table, the costliness of your attire. What can a Christian parent teach his child respecting separation from the world, self-denial, and heavenly mindedness, while the world is on his person, on his table, and all over his dwelling. One great motive for the Christian to forsake such vanities is, that their presence attracts the world, and makes it the more difficult for us to shut out those who are of it.

How early do some mothers suffer their

children to go unattended to children's parties, perhaps ending in children's balls! Is this a likely way to make them willing to forego such amusements when older? There are few companions that can benefit a child who has been properly trained, and it is safest for even these to play with them under your own eye.

There is often a great difficulty with respect to relations and family connexions, especially to those living in little country towns. Probably the majority of such are unconverted; and you lose your hold on your children very soon if they are permitted to associate at will with all who claim kindred to you. You will offend, you think, by refusing: perhaps so: but if you value your children's salvation, be firm, be consistent: the offence will not be permanent, and even if it were, is not your child's character of more value to you than the temporary favour of your uncles, cousins, brothers, and nephews?

We were once requested by a friend to visit a young person, whose mother was very anxious about her soul. Lucy M— was the child of pious parents and had herself, once made a profession of godliness. But it was but as the morning dew; and she at this time quite followed the ways of the world and the devices of her own heart; and would not listen to any admonitions or intreaties, offered by her afflicted parent.

Her father had been some years dead, and the only hope to which Mrs. M— clung for her children's salvation was, the prayers of a godly father.

“But have all your children turned out ill, Mrs. M—?” said we.

“Alas, all of them,” she replied; “my sons are worse than Lucy; they ought long ago to have taken my business off my hands, and supported me in my declining years, but they will none of them help me; indeed, I hardly know where they are, or what they are doing.”

“But this is strange; you say your husband was a godly man, were you not also a Christian, and did you not teach them what is right in their infancy?”

“I did indeed, we both did; as long as my poor husband lived, he brought them up in the fear of God, and after he died, I gave them all the instruction in my power.”

“This is very strange and unaccountable. The word of God says, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.’ I should not have expected all your children to turn out ill when you brought them up well.”

“It is no more than what I ought to have expected,” she replied, “and so you will say when I tell you all. It is not God’s unfaithfulness but mine that is the cause. My husband died after a long illness, in which his business went almost to ruin. He left me in ill health and poverty, with five little children. But we

had on both sides rich and kind relations, and they enabled me to keep on the shop. They were also disposed to be very kind to the children, continually inviting one and another to see them, and they made them valuable and useful presents.

“But all these people were in the world, they laughed at our strictness, and encouraged my children to lift their heads higher, making many promises as to the future.

“My conscience at first warned me against the evil course I was pursuing; I knew that my poor husband never would visit these people, nor allow our children to associate with theirs. But I thought of my poverty, of their substantial kindness, of their liberal promises; I thought what an advantage it was to the children, to be introduced into genteel society, instead of being immured at home.

“I therefore resolved to continue to teach my children every thing good, to store their minds with striking texts, Scrip-

ture narratives and hymns, to take them to hear a gospel ministry, to pray with and for them, and ever to set them a Christian example.

“At the same time, I encouraged their visits to their uncles and aunts, for I thought they could get no great harm with their cousins, who were very well brought up as far as this world went. I was in hopes my brothers would get situations for my boys when they grew old enough to require them, and I thought it would be a great thing for my girls to have such an introduction to the world. I doubted not but that my prayers and instructions would be blessed to their conversion, and that I should have the satisfaction of seeing them provided for in this world, as well as safe for the next.”

“You have not succeeded in poor Lucy’s case.”

“No, indeed” continued poor Mrs. M—, “nor with any of my children, they all

despise *me* and *my religion*; and when I speak to them they cast it in my teeth, that I was so inconsistent in their education, teaching them practically to love the honours, riches, and vanities of the world, while I pretended to abjure them."

"But at least you got your temporal reward, I presume."

"No! far from it! My relations would do nothing for the children, unless they took the whole control of them, because they said my Methodistical cant would unfit them for the world. Bad as I was, to yield so much, I was not base enough to resign my children altogether to those who I knew would bring them up for the world; and so they turned their backs upon us, just when their help would have been most acceptable; but not before the minds of all my children had been poisoned to the truth, and taught to despise me and my instructions."

Poor Mrs. M—'s eyes were nearly blind

with constant weeping, but she could not recal the past; Lucy was too far gone in wilfulness and folly to heed the kindest intreaties, or the most cogent argument; and after a few fruitless visits we saw her no more. The shop is still open, but another name is on the door, and no one in the neighbourhood knows where Mrs. M— and Lucy are gone. The former possibly, if alive, suffering the extremity of poverty, and the once simple and pretty Lucy, too probably leading a life of misery and degradation.

CHAPTER XII.

JOCHEBED.

THUS far we have traced the history of Abraham and his family walking as pilgrims in the land thereafter to be theirs, owning not an acre of it as a present possession, though by faith holding it as their own.

Still they were in the land; they were free, they roamed about at will; if they dwelt not under their own vine and fig-tree, they pitched their tents and fed their flocks where they would: they had servants to relieve the more toilsome part of their labour, they were rich in the good things of this life, they were able to bring up their children according to their own ideas of what was right and fitting, and to

keep them at their side as long as they saw it good.

But as we proceed a little further, and read on from Genesis to Exodus, we suddenly find all changed. The few have become a great multitude, the free are enslaved. Those who were rich are ground down to degrading poverty. Instead of wandering at will, they are driven out by taskmasters to their daily toil. They labour in vain, and bring forth for trouble. Not only they cannot educate their children as they think good, but they are not suffered to bring them up at all. The emissaries of a ruthless king seize their new-born babes, hunt them out of their concealment, cast them into the river.

The Jewish race bade fair to cease in the land. None could resist. And in only one instance do we hear that the law was evaded. This was the act of a man of faith, with a wife of faith. They knew what God had foretold respecting Israel—

they trusted his promises ; this faith quenched their fear of the king's commandment : they braved all consequences ; they concealed the birth of their son as long as they could, and then cast him on the waters of the deep wide river.

They believed God, and therefore were encouraged to use every means in their power ; and thus they saved their little one, who lived to be the head of his nation, its deliverer, lawgiver, prophet, and governor.

However adverse the circumstances in which the people of God are placed, faith is able to surmount them all.

Parents should never despair of the salvation of their children. Satan may rage ; there may seem nothing more for them to do ; they may be obliged to cast them forth on the wide world, expecting that the enemy will surely make them his prey. Yet is there hope ; while there is life there is hope : *that* life which *we* could not save in the bosom of a quiet

home, may be safe even in the vortex of the world, in the camp, the court, the ship of war, the great city. The Lord can watch over and save the child of our prayers, and restore him to us in peace and joy.

Only let us be sure that it is at the will of God that our child is sent forth, not to gratify our own ambition, pride or avarice.

Children are often cast out on the wide world by the death of their parents, but if cast out in faith, we may surely expect that He will be with them, who preserved the infant Moses, and raised him up a friend in the house of his enemy. The celebrated John Newton was an eminent example in point. Though his godly mother died when he was only seven years old, and his father left him to himself and sent him early to sea, yet did the good care of his mother's God follow him in all his wanderings, till he was brought to the foot of

the cross, and made a devoted servant of the Lord to the end of his days.

It would be very interesting to know with precision upon what the faith of the parents of Moses rested when they resolved to save their beautiful babe from the grasp of Pharaoh. But that it was faith, and not merely parental love, we are expressly informed; and honourable mention is made of them in that glorious list of faithful ones enumerated in Hebrews xi.

They had however a faith in God concerning their child, which led them to use and devise every possible means to save him: and herein they are an example to us, that if God has given us faith respecting our little ones, it is not that we may be careless, and leave everything to Him, but that we may strain every nerve, embrace every opportunity, shield them from every danger, and watch over them, if we are obliged to trust them to the care of others.

God honoured the faith of Jochebed, and

restored to her the son, whom she had, with tears, and trembling, and doubtless with many prayers, committed to the waters.

The language of Pharaoh's daughter has often been quoted, and applied to the Lord himself, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." And however we may feel about so using the words, it is doubtless true that we ought to consider every child given us by the Lord, as a charge committed to us by Him. And if we are faithful to our trust we shall not fail of our recompense, both in the joy we experience in our children, and by the more direct reward which the Lord will bestow for every faithful service performed to himself.

Of the manner in which Jochebed trained her little loved one, thus wonderfully restored to her arms, we are not informed: but we may be sure that if she nursed him for Pharaoh's daughter, she trained him to be the Lord's servant; and

though the details of her instructions are not given us, we may surely gather the outline of them, from their results : for it is written, " Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap : he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.)

We see in Moses' character many traits that come not naturally to man, and many of which are often lacking even in the regenerate, which certainly were not learned in Pharaoh's court : and while we know that grace is the spring from which every thing that is really lovely in the believer must proceed, yet we do so constantly see, that the bent of man's disposition is taken in the nursery, that we cannot but guess what was the scope of Jochebed's teaching, while she held on her knee the infant heir to the regal dominion of the greatest kingdom then existing in the world.

We may believe that she early taught

him who and what he was, filling his infant mind with glorious pictures of the land of his forefathers, from which he and his people were banished ; of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; of God's promises to them and their seed ; of the cause of their coming down into Egypt ; of the grandeur of Joseph ; and of the privileges accorded by Pharaoh to all his brethren for his sake. She must also have informed him of the solemn promise of Jehovah to visit them and restore them to their land ; of the glorious hopes held out to them by the dying Jacob ; of the solemn charge left by Joseph, that his brethren should preserve his dead body, and take it with them when they should return to their own land. Perhaps she made him to understand that the time of their sojourn in the land of their captivity had been measured out by Jehovah, and that the period was fast drawing to a close. Doubtless also, she, who lived by faith herself, failed not to toll

him of the Seed of the woman, first promised to Adam, then to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was to be the Deliverer and King of his people. And without doubt also, she informed him of the certainty of the resurrection of the body, and of a life of immortality and joy, which should be the inheritance of all those who clung by faith to the God of their fathers.

For we are told that the reason why "Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" was this, that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season : esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

We see clearly by this account, that Moses' parents had given him what we should now call a Scriptural education, so far, and so long, as he was under their care ;

that they had succeeded in inspiring, in his youthful heart, faith in God's promises, affection for God's people, sympathy with God's work on the earth, and a conviction that it was wiser, better, more glorious, to cast in his lot with them, than to retain the highest place in the court of a Gentile monarch.

In all this, she is a bright model for the imitation of the believing mother in every age. Let us strive to imbue the hearts of our little ones, from the very dawn of their understandings, with such sentiments and feelings as these. Let us not forget our true position and character as believers. We also are the Israel of God, dwelling in the midst of Egypt. We may not now be outwardly persecuted, as Israel then was, but he who is the prince of this world, and reigns spiritually over the Egyptian darkness of this world, is secretly as bitter a foe to us, as Pharaoh was to Israel; and we ought never so to forget our interest,

our position, and our prospects, as to settle down quietly here, like those who have no hope beyond the grave.

But we must be in earnest, and whole hearted, as Moses' parents were. He who is destitute of enthusiasm in his own mind, will never succeed in stirring the heart of another. Had Moses' mother contented herself with coldly teaching her son these things as matter of duty only, they would have excited but little attention, and produced little fruit. But no; we may be sure her heart glowed within her when she described that glorious land and Lebanon, which her son in his own age panted so much to behold ere he died: it was with no cold propriety that she dwelt on the wrongs committed on God's people in the land of their captivity.

It is by no means unlikely, that the parents of Moses were informed by divine revelation, that this their son should be the deliverer of his people, and that this encou-

raged them to endeavour to save his life ; for when he was come to age, “ he supposed that his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them ” (Acts vii. 25). From this statement we must gather, that his appointment to be their deliverer had been made a subject of direct revelation. We do not know, that any such divine communication had been made to Moses himself at that time, and it is possible, that some promise to his parents, previous to his birth, stimulated their faith in all that they subsequently undertook to do for his preservation.

No such special promise can be claimed by any of *us* for our encouragement, yet the general and catholic promises which belong to all God's family, and especially those addressed to believing parents, stimulating them to bring up their children for God and engaging to work with them and bless them, are firm enough, and glorious enough to engage

all our hearts' energies on behalf of our children.

Jochebed probably knew not the day or the hour when her little nurseling might be torn from her arms and introduced to all the luxury, superstition, and idolatry of Pharaoh's court. And *we* know not, from day to day, but that the lesson we are giving to our sons or our daughters may be our last: death may take us away, and leave them exposed to all the temptations and follies of the world, without our being able to interpose a word of warning or instruction. Let us then lose no opportunity of prepossessing their affections and faith on the Lord's side. It was not the enforcement of stringent rules and heavy penalties, that gave Jochebed her power, but her own faith and spiritual affections, inoculating the heart of her youthful scholar.

And thus we must act, if we would have the impress of our faith stamped on the coming generation. We must love the

truth ourselves ; we must ourselves be willing to suffer affliction with the people of God ; we must eschew the pleasures of sin ; we must bear the reproach of Christ ; we must have respect unto the recompence of the reward ourselves ; if we have any desire to be made the means of exciting our offspring to live a like life of faith hereafter.

And here we would address a word of counsel to those parents, who are, from circumstances, obliged to entrust the early education of their children to others. It is a common mistake to think that it is of little consequence what kind of school a child is placed in when very young : that any one can teach the rudiments of learning, and that when the scholar is further advanced, then will be the time to procure a good tutor or governess.

This is a great error, and one which we do not fall into in lesser matters. We do not think it unimportant whether the food on which we feed our infant

is pure and nourishing ; we do not say, 'as he grows up, I shall give him more wholesome food.' No, we know well that unless we give the pure milk and the fine flour to the babe, he will probably die, or be a sickly youth ; but that if we watch carefully over his tender years, he will be more hardy, and will gradually be able to digest food even less pure and nutritive.

The first requisite, in one who is to be our deputy in this important matter, is true piety : nothing else can indemnify for a lack of this. In subordination to this all important qualification in a spiritual nurse, whose office it is to feed your babes with the sincere milk of the word, you must endeavour to procure in your substitutes those moral, spiritual, and intellectual qualities that you value most, and most desire to possess yourself. It is not so much what the instructress *knows*, as what she *is*, that is important for your children, and if you find such an one as meets your

requirements, remember the words of Pharaoh's daughter to Jochebed, "Take this child and nurse it for me, *and I will pay thee thy wages.*" There are innumerable children ruined by the parsimony of their parents in this respect, both in home and school education; especially the latter, for the following among more obvious reasons. The lower the remuneration the parent pays for his child, the more the school is open to the children of those who can afford *only* a poor remuneration. It is true that wealth in the parents does not by any means insure such qualities, in their children, as would make them suitable companions to your child. Yet, on the other hand, as children are very much what their parents are, you cannot let your child associate indiscriminately with the children of those who have had little intellectual, moral, or spiritual training, without soon finding a deterioration in their manners and language.

CHAPTER XIII.

MANOAH'S WIFE.

CENTURIES had passed away since the death of Moses, and Israel had shewn themselves so unworthy of the blessings vouchsafed to them, that the Lord had from time to time sold them into captivity to the surrounding nations : but still, the laws of Moses were their guide and rule of life, and by his laws their conduct was approved or condemned : still, though degenerate, Israel lacked not a godly seed in the land, and of this number were Manoah and his wife.

The wife of Manoah was placed in circumstances peculiarly grievous to a Jewish matron ; she had no child. She might have wealth like the Shunamite

(2 Kings. iv. 8) ; she might possess the first place in her husband's affections like Hannah (1 Samuel i. 5) ; or she might live in evil times, when Israel was delivered for their sins into the hands of their enemies: still to be barren was the severest trial, and the prospect of embracing a son was the highest joy, and richest recompence that could be presented to her heart.

That which was a sore trial to the Jewess, ought in spirit to be the great source of sorrow to the Christian mother. That her children may be born from on high, ought to be the chief object of her hope and desire. No amiability of natural temperament, no beauty in outward form, no progress in secular learning, no endowments of natural genius, no inheritance of temporal wealth, ought for a moment to blind the eyes of the parent, to the fact that the life of the body is not life properly so called, unless the life of the soul be superadded.

But this is not ours to command ; it is at God's sovereign disposal. True, but so, also, we must remember, is the natural birth of our children, and as we do see, so repeatedly in Scripture, that by prayer the barren woman became the joyful mother of children, so is it in the kingdom of grace.

We are not however informed whether the mother of Samson prayed for a son. It appears to have been her custom to sit alone in the fields, and twice was she there favoured with a revelation from the Lord himself. It is not improbable that meditation and prayer was her object in seeking this retirement, and that the gift of a son may have been in answer to her prayers. However this may be, it is striking that the promise of the Lord is connected with very strict injunctions to the mother, rigidly to conform, previous to the birth of her son, to those habits which the Lord had enjoined on him as his rule

of conduct through life. Her son was to be a Nazarite to God from the day of his birth unto his death : and, in prospect of his birth, his mother was not to eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither to drink wine nor strong drink : “ all that I command her let her observe,” said the Lord who appeared unto her.

Thus let the mother act, who has faith to believe that God will give her a spiritual seed among her children : let her examine herself, whether she be in all things that which the Lord has commanded his little ones to be, so that if she be permitted to be the channel through which God's grace flows into the hearts of her children, it may not enter there choked, and adulterated, and half obliterated by that which is of the old nature in herself. All that the Lord has commanded, let her observe ! from all that the Lord has forbidden, let her refrain ! all that the Lord has revealed, let her with a simple faith believe ! So

may she hope that the spiritual life in her little ones will not be obliterated or diluted, by the image of the world in herself.

Then may we hope that the Lord will give us, in his grace, spiritual children, for those which are only of nature : that they may not only be born of God, but may grow in grace, and that the Lord may bless them ; and if they be not early all that we wish, still may we be comforted by seeing that the Spirit of the Lord begins to move them at times. "(See Judges xiii. 24, 25.)

Samson, we may well fear, disappointed his godly parents in many respects, after he grew to man's estate. He was raised up to conquer the enemies of the Lord, and under pretence of fighting them, he entangled himself with the snares of a wicked world ; he was shorn of his strength, and his testimony was marred. He lost his eyes, and his liberty, and died a captive to those Philistines whom he was

born to destroy. Yet he died not under the cloud that his sins had raised around him.

“ He gave a good hope at the end of his days,
Of rising in brighter array.”

Many a tear and many a sigh he may have cost to his more faithful parents; and they may have died in fear that he was lost to them and to God, yet Jehovah had not forsaken him, and suffered him not to depart hence in his sins, but spared him till he had recovered his strength (Psalm xxxix. 13).

Happy is that parent who has the privilege of watching the dawnings of grace in her infant, and of seeing them expand with his expanding intellect, and grow with his growth in stature, till, as the natural frame reaches maturity, grace is still increasing more and more. But every parent whose child's heart seems early given to God, has not this privilege.

The world often mars what the believing parent had sown with so many tears.

It is related of the Rev. E. D. Jackson, that his heart was very early open to the love of heavenly things; the public worship of God was his delight; he knew the throne of grace as a place where prayer is not only made but answered. He felt himself a sinner, and accepted that only way of salvation revealed through Jesus. His believing mother cherished these hopeful dispositions, and indulged the pleasing hope that her little Edward would grow up like another Timothy, chosen early for the service of God, and, like Obadiah (1 Kings xviii. 12), would fear the Lord from his youth. But when he left his mother's fostering care, "mingling with wicked boys and profane workmen, he lost his youthful piety, frequently broke the Sabbath, attended the theatre, and delighted in vain and sinful amusements." This sad de-

clension lasted till his sixteenth year, when, being brought again under the sound of a faithful ministry, it became happily the means of restoring his soul. He very early began the work of the gospel, and from that time till his death devoted himself to the service of the Lord.

The case of the Rev. John Newton we have before alluded to. After the death of his devoted mother in his seventh year, the seed she had been permitted to sow died down, and in its stead grew up a crop of the rankest weeds that ever luxuriated in a sinful heart and bore fruit unto death. But in time his course was arrested, his heart changed, the weeds were torn up and the early seed sprang up anew and bore fruit an hundred fold.

It is not given to all to see an uniform growth in their children; yet our hope and ambition ought to be, to see our sons, like Timothy, following the Lord in an undeviating course. Should

they, however, prove, like Mark, weary of the work of the Lord after a time, or, like Samson, entangled in heart with Philistines, against whom they ought to wage an unsparing warfare; still let us take courage, and trust in that God who made Mark again to be "profitable for the ministry;" and who restored Samson's strength before he died; causing "that the dead which he slew at his death should be more than they which he slew in his life."

CHAPTER XIV.

MICAH AND JONATHAN.

IN the Chapters of the Book of Judges subsequent to those which detail the life of Samson, and the faith of his parents previous to his birth, we read of a mother of a totally different character; one of those "who in the land of uprightness will deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord" (Isaiah xxvi. 10).

During the days that the Judges ruled, or rather, during one of the intervals between the death of one Judge, and the raising up of another, there dwelt in Mount Ephraim a man named Micah, who, as far as we know was the originator of idolatry in Israel; and the effect of whose evil conduct was stamped on his people so

strongly, that it was never effaced, till the captivity of the land, many centuries later, swept away the evil with the good, in one indiscriminating stream.

The mother of Micah was one who worshipped graven images and molten images. Instead of consecrating her gains to the God of the whole earth, and honouring Jehovah with her substance, as it was her duty and privilege to do, she hoarded her money for the vile purpose of making an idol.

What could be expected from the son of such a woman? In the first place he was a thief: he stole the eleven hundred shekels of silver, which his mother had hoarded. His conscience, however, seems to have smitten him, probably in consequence of the imprecations which she had uttered against the unknown thief; and he restored her the money.

True to her wicked purpose, she proceeded to give part of the silver to the

founder, and two images were made; these images were placed in the house of Micah, who thus "had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest" (Judge xvii. 4, 5).

All this wickedness springs from the evil conduct of one mother. She loves idols. Her son has a house of idols. Her grandson becomes priest in an idol's temple.

Had Micah been blessed with a godly mother, how different might have been his history! In the same locality in which this woman brought up her son in sin, dwelt, in after ages, the pious Hannah, who dedicated her son to the Lord from his birth to the day of his death, and bequeathed to the nation a Deliverer, Prophet, Priest, and Governor.

If we would have our children to become Samuels, to live and die in the service of God, we must be Hannahs and

Elkanahs ourselves. This we cannot have too strongly impressed on our own hearts. There are few parents so depraved as not to wish their children to be good, even if they have no heart to do what is right themselves; while Christian parents are but too apt to allow in themselves evils which they desire to check in their children.

But are there none among those who name the name of Christ, who hoard their money, not for the service of the sanctuary, but for the service of the world? Who cherish idolatry of some sort or other in their hearts, the idolatry of money, of dress, of fame, of show, of intellect, of self-indulgence: not in those gross forms, not to that excess, which would draw remarks from the world, or censures from the church, but in those subtle forms which defile the spirit and vitiate the service in the sight of Him who loves a single eye, and who accepts not a divided heart.

And, while we are doing this, our youthful Micahs are watching our conduct, and imitating our worldliness. In vain we say "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son" (Judges xvii. 2). The blessing comes not from such idolatrous lips, while the curse which our tongues would shrink from uttering, cleaves to our posterity, not judicially, but as the natural consequence of our faithless conduct in their training.

But this sad story of apostasy does not end here. Sin is a spreading leprosy. There never was one, except the blessed Lord Jesus, who could touch it without contamination; and there are none except those who are united to him by faith, who can approach sin now without being infected by it.

A young man, a Levite, passed by the house of Micah. He was not an idolater, but he was not one who loved Jehovah, and therefore there was nothing within him to resist temptation when it was pre-

sented to his mind. This young man was without excuse for wandering about in this manner, for his place as a Levite was to do the service of the sanctuary. He had no need to be seeking an inheritance, for the Lord himself had promised to take the tribe of Levi as his own, and to accept the service of their sons (Numbers iii. 6—43).

There was a special reason, moreover, why this young man should have been faithful to Jehovah, for he was the son of Gershom the son of Moses* the man of God, and the servant of the Most High, the lawgiver and boast of Israel.

* In our English Bibles the text runs, "The son of Gershom the son of Manasseh;" but it is known to every Hebrew scholar that the word is "Moses" in the original. The Jews, feeling probably the disgrace of having such a story connected with the name and genealogy of their great lawgiver, have inserted the letter **n**, not in the text, for that they did not dare to do, but above the text, between the initial letter **m**, and the letter **s**—and so by changing the points, they read the name as Manassch.

Moses' grandson yielded, as it appears, to the first solicitation, to become an idol's priest; perhaps thinking such an office superior to that of a Levite in Jehovah's service. Nor was he less willing to extend the apostasy to a tribe in Israel, for when the ferocious children of Dan invited him to be *their* priest, "his heart was glad," and he assumed with ready alacrity his place as the head of a long line of idolatrous priests, that reached even to the Assyrian captivity.

Thus does evil spread, far beyond the sphere and the intention of those who originate the evil: and thus does the descendent of a godly stock soon forget his father and his father's God. If once he leaves the place indicated to him by God, and slights His service, his next step is to sojourn with those who fear not Jehovah. If our children will thus wander, let us do all we can to fill their minds with godly principles while they are yet under our

control. Let us impress their youthful minds with the dangers of evil example. "My son," said the wise man "if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." "My son, walk not thou in the way with them" (Prov. i. 10, 12). Shew them the blessedness of the man "that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" (Psalm i. 1).

We are not told of any reason why the descendents of Moses proved so degenerate ; he who could govern a great nation ought to have governed his own family, and brought them up in the fear of God : but it too often happens with those who occupy a very prominent place in the service of God, that their own children are neglected, and turn out ill. They are so much occupied with the service of God out of doors, that they make his service in their family a secondary consideration, and their children degenerate accordingly. For it is not sufficient for a man to be a Christian, nor even a zealous servant of

God, to make him the father of a godly race, as many poor ministers of God have found to their disgrace and sorrow: they must be good fathers if they would have good sons, they must devote themselves to the nurture of their children if they would stamp the impress of that which is good upon *them*.

If from their pressing avocations this is impossible, how all important is it that their wives should be helpers of them in this respect; women of faith and prayer who can carry on at home that work of faith and labour of love which their husbands are prosecuting in the world and in the church.

Such a woman, we fear, was not found in Zipporah, Moses' wife: the only record of her conduct as a wife and mother, apparently exhibiting her as having resisted her husband when he would circumcise Gershom her son (the father of the Levite Jonathan of whom we have been making

mention). If it was thus her habit to counteract, if not to contradict her husband in the discipline and education of their family, how can we expect anything save declension in the second generation?

Would every Christian man, and above all every minister of the Gospel of Christ choose for his wife, not her who most attracts his eye, not her whose wealth will change his poverty to competency, not her whose connexions can help him in the world—but her who is most calculated to strengthen his own faith, and to bring up his children after a godly sort, we should soon see piety descend from generation to generation, and the mantle of the father fall on the son, and the son's son: not because the new birth is “of the will of the flesh,” but because God delights to honour those who honour Him, and because He has said, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart

from it." Christian parents, who read these pages! are you contented to forego such a blessing as this, if it be indeed within your grasp? And with the Lord's favour, and by his grace, you may trust it is.

CHAPTER XV.

NAOMI AND RUTH.

GREAT as is the mother's care and responsibility when her sons are young, these are often increased manifold as they advance in years and enter the world. She may not have had grace and wisdom to bend their wills in infancy, and they grow up self-willed. Or, if not this, they act foolishly from the force of temptation and want of wisdom. Rebekah declared that she was weary of her life because of the daughters of Heth, whom Esau had married without consulting his parents in the choice of a partner for life.

A somewhat similar fate befell Naomi and Elimelech in the days when the Judges ruled ; their two sons married two

Moabitish women. The parents could not but feel that they were more to blame than their sons in this matter, for they had left the land of their fathers, their kindred, and the worship of Jehovah, and removed to the land of their enemies because there was a scarcity of bread. This was surely not the part of faith in the Bethlehemites, and does not seem to have been necessary to the preservation of their lives, for Naomi found Boaz and the rest of the inhabitants of her native city still alive and prospering, on her return from her self-imposed banishment, while she herself was reduced to widowhood, loss of children, and poverty.

These Israelites learned, from sad experience, "that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Deut. viii. 3). Naomi complains, "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home empty; why then call ye me Naomi (or

pleasant), seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me.

She went out in easy circumstances, a happy mother and wife: she thought little probably of the effect on herself and her family of constant intercourse with idolaters, of separation from the assemblies of the saints, of the loss of the privilege of going up yearly to Shiloh, to worship, and to share in the forgiveness promised every year to those whose sins were borne away on the day of atonement. Perhaps the fault lay rather in her husband than herself; it may have been his will to go, and on that account he may have been cut off in the prime of life, for Naomi was soon left a widow in a strange land. But she still remained there, her sons grew up, and married among the daughters of the land. Possibly, when Elimelech died, his sons were already old enough to be their own masters, and chose to remain where they

had formed friendships, and where habit had made them at home.

But the Lord's blessing enriched them not; they married, but the Lord gave them no heirs, and they both died before long, leaving their mother desolate, and their wives widows. Can we fail to see in all this the Lord's disapprobation of the whole proceeding? And is it not a lesson to parents in the present day, who are rushing from the sphere in which they were born, far from the means of grace, from Christian society, from Christian education, from the prospect of forming Christian alliances for their children hereafter, for the sake of enriching themselves, and settling their children in countries where they have no expectation that they will either hear the gospel preached, or see its precepts carried out around them.

Far from wise would be the assertion that it is a wrong thing in itself for Christians to emigrate; but if it be

likely to involve such spiritual privations as these, far better would it be for our children to live in poverty in a land where the truth is acknowledged, than to amass all the gold of Australia, if at the price of a good conscience, if our children are to be corrupted by the idolatry of the world, and if they form alliances with the daughters of Heth, or the daughters of Moab.

It is not improbable that Naomi was the only faithful member of the family. If so, what a life of sorrow she must have led in the country of Moab, witnessing the evil effects of unbelief in those most dear to her, without being able to remedy the evil. How many mothers and wives are in these unhappy circumstances! but they are not hopeless circumstances. It is impossible for believers to be placed in any situation, by the providence of God, in which they may not find a blessing, and in which they cannot be useful to others. It is not the part of wisdom to sit down in vain regret about

that which cannot be remedied, but to make the best possible use of present opportunities. Many a woman would pass her time in such vain reflections as these,—“If my poor husband had remained at home, all these misfortunes would never have occurred. If my sons would have listened to me they would have returned home after their father's death, and married among our own kindred.” But such does not seem to have been Naomi's character. She must have regretted, as a godly woman, to see her sons bring home Gentile wives; but she did not sit down and make herself miserable; she did not contradict and oppose her daughters-in-law in everything, and make them dislike her. She did the contrary to all this. She adopted them into her heart, and did every thing to secure their affections. This we see from the manner in which they both behaved, when the ties of relationship which held them together were loosened. When they

found that she was about to return to the land of Judah, they both arose to go with her; and it was not without many entreaties that Orpah was induced to return to her own kindred, while Ruth clave unto her, notwithstanding all her arguments to the contrary.

There are few situations in which a mother can be placed, more difficult, than those of Naomi. In addition to the usual hindrances, which she would feel in the family of her sons, when she ceased to rule in that family, and had to yield precedence to her sons' wives, she had to walk as a believer in the true God in the company of idolaters. This probably was her first sorrow, and she was, evidently, not unsuccessful in bringing them to the acknowledgement of the true God. Orpah at length proves that the conversion had not been effectual, for she went back unto her people, and unto her gods: but we see in Ruth evidences of true allegiance to Jeho-

vah and his people, and fervent affection to her who had probably been at least one means of leading her steps into the way of peace. What an encouragement should this be to those who unhappily have unconverted relatives. If a son marries foolishly one who knows not God, how blessed to become a Naomi to the poor stranger, and win her, if possible into the ways of God !

All this, doubtless, was done to God without hope of reward; but nothing is ever lost that is truly done from love to Him. Naomi is left desolate, and Ruth becomes her comforter; she repays all her former kindness; she leaves all to follow her; she toils day after day in the burning sun for her support, and brings to her mother-in-law the proceeds of her labour. She adopts her into a mother's place when she marries again, knowing well, from experience, that she will not find a hindrance but a help to her happiness, in sharing it

with the mother of her first husband. And Naomi becomes again a happy mother in nursing the babe of her faithful and beloved Ruth, happier than in the days of her youth.

How rare is such a family-scene ! and why ? because self is put in the first place, instead of God's glory. Too often, jealousy, pride, and contention render this relationship anything rather than a theatre for Christian grace to manifest itself.

Self is at the bottom of all this, as of every sin which makes life miserable : all seek their own, first. Naomi sought nothing for herself, everything for her relations. She was willing to return poor and alone into the land of Judah, so that they might be prosperous and happy ; and when Ruth, who possessed a kindred spirit, accompanied her to Bethlehem, she sought nothing for herself, but only for her daughter-in-law. "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee ?"

And when the aged Naomi took into her arms the child of Boaz and Ruth, well may she have exclaimed, "Who hath begotten me these, seeing that I have lost my children and am desolate, removing to and fro. And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these where had they been? (Isaiah xlix, 21), for her daughter-in-law loved her and was herself better to her than seven sons, and all the blessing wherewith the Lord blessed Ruth, was grateful to her heart, and the child of such a daughter was the restorer of her life, and the nourisher of her grey hairs: "and Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it."

Perhaps we find no fairer picture among the fallen children of Adam, of disinterested, holy, self-denying, patient love; a love seeking no reward, yet rewarded tenfold, even in this life.

Ruth might safely trust the education of her son to one who had taught herself the

ways of truth, and led her steps into them ; had drawn her with cords of love out of the Moab of the world into fellowship with the people of God ; who had transplanted her from the sphere of barrenness and poverty, to riches, fruitfulness, and grace ; who had brought her into union with the promised Seed, and into a participation of the inheritance of the chosen people of God. She who had converted the mother from the errors of her youth, was surely best fitted to train up the child in the way he should walk, as the progenitor of the holy Jesus, and as the seed of godly fathers.

CHAPTER XVI.

HANNAH.

Does not the Christian mother's heart glow with hope and joy, when she thinks of Hannah and Samuel, the very types of a happy mother and son : of early training resulting in early conversion, and the effects of early conversion continuing through a long life of active piety, and useful service to God and his people ?

We can hardly begin earlier than Hannah began ; who while as yet she had no promise of a child, dedicated the son she prayed for to Jehovah. “ She vowed a vow, and said : O Lord of Hosts ! if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid

a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord, and there shall no razor come upon his head." (1 Sam. i. 11.)

Like king Lemuel (Prov. xxxi. 1), he was the son of his mother's vows. Happy mother! when the son of thy womb is the son of thy vows, a dedicated child, a child of many prayers, "asked of the Lord," lent into his service. If there were more Hannahs, would there not be more Samuels? If thou wouldst have, Christian mother, thy child a Samuel or an Augustine, be thyself a Hannah or a Monica. The child of thy prayers, of thy vows, and of thy tears, will be, in the Lord's best time, the child; of thy praises, thy rejoicings, thy richest consolation. Yet thy faith will not end with the dedication of thy child; Samuel was the son of his mother's vows, but also "his mother taught him;" and such is the practical habit of godliness, that faith in vowing quickens diligence in teaching. The child truly consecrated, will be

brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*

Hannah's heart was single—all her desires were comprised in one—and that one she brought before God; not coldly, nor seldom, nor as a matter of form; but her whole soul was absorbed in her request, and till she had reason to think Jehovah had heard and answered her, she had no peace, and enjoyed no repose. Her prayer was brought into the sanctuary, into the presence of the High-priest, and till she could be assured that she had his ear, and that his intercession was added to her supplication, she intermitted not her prayers. Once fully believing in this, she knew that she had her petition, and her countenance was no more sad.

Christian Parents! are you as anxious that your child should be born again? Is it the one absorbing desire of your heart that he should be the Lord's? Do

* Bridges on Proverbs xxxi.

you imitate Hannah in her tears and prayers and longing for this one thing? Are your petitions brought into the sanctuary, and so presented as to be taken up and responded to by your great High Priest?

There are many who desire these things, but not exclusively. They are gratified to have their children admired for their beauty in infancy, for their wit and talent as they grow older. Few are displeased to hear their little ones admired and flattered, for those advantages which are shared alike by the converted and the unconverted. If our children see this, no wonder that they set a greater value on those distinctions which the carnal mind can appreciate, and that they do not really credit our assertions that one thing only is needful for them, without which all worldly advantages are vanity.

This we may be sure was not Hannah's course. She had but one object or aim; she asked a son of the Lord, she devoted

him to the Lord, she brought him up for the Lord, she brought him early to the Lord's presence, and never resumed the gift which she had early devoted to the giver.

Let us examine Hannah's history a little more closely, and examine ourselves by it. We have seen that she was a praying mother, and have concluded that the prayers she offered for the natural birth of her son, should teach us to be as solicitous for the manifestation of the new birth in *our* little ones. Nothing should take place of this, nothing should reconcile us to its delay. Prayers and tears and fasting are even more becoming to us than they were to Hannah, for the worst that she dreaded, was to have no son at all, while that with which we are threatened, is not merely loss of life and blessedness to our offspring, either in this life or the next ; but to hear it said of those we love and cherish, and for whom we would gladly

lay down our lives ; “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” This we must never forget is their birthright—they are “by nature children of wrath even as others;” to us is committed the responsible office of making known to them their state by nature, and endeavouring to arouse that principle of faith in Jesus which is inseparable from the new birth.

This must be our first desire, our constant prayer, our earliest lesson. And from this object no minor consideration must ever divert our minds.

Hannah’s prayer was granted, her child was born, and from the first was dedicated to the Lord. There was no delay in putting in force the law of the Nazarite; from his birth he was trained in that faith which he was to pursue to the end of his course. Thus should we act. Christian Parents, teach your little ones no habits, allow them no indulgence, give them no

license, which must hereafter be retracted. Begin as you mean to go on, and both begin and continue according to the maxims of wisdom, and the spirit of holiness and truth.

Hannah not only prayed for her son but she taught him to pray. He was young when his mother weaned him and brought him to Eli in Shiloh, but it is said of him that "he worshipped the Lord there." How shall we teach our children to pray? While they are unconverted we cannot. But they ought to hear *us* pray, they ought to be silent and quiet while *we* pray for *them*. But I am supposing that they are born again, in answer to a mother's prayers. In this case she will soon find that they "Lift their little hands to pray."

In this a good mother may assist and incite them: she may teach them by example, and by gently reminding them of blessings received, and wants to be supplied,—and she will soon find that

“out of the mouth of her babes and sucklings God has perfected praise.”

Hannah kept her Samuel at her side—she would not leave him with strangers, even that she might go up to worship the Lord in Shiloh. Till he was old enough to accompany her, she considered it her place to remain with him. Who can tell what injury to soul or body he might have sustained had he been consigned for a few weeks or even days to the care of thoughtless servants ?

Happy is the mother who like Hannah is permitted to keep her child constantly under her own eye ; who leaves him not to any care save her own, and that of those like-minded, who love the same Lord, tread in the same steps. Even to such, a wise mother will not needlessly confide her treasure, but form his mind by her own, and feed it from her own lips of love and wisdom.

Hannah took her child early to worship

Jehovah according to his own appointment. We shall surely not neglect this duty if we value God's worship and service ourselves: not choosing to be kept at home in order to take care of them, we shall teach them early to consider it a privilege to accompany us into the assemblies of the saints.

Hannah watched over her son after he had left home. She went from year to year to see him in Shiloh, and she brought him every year a little coat. We know that she made it herself—probably her own hands performed every process in preparing the fabric, as well as making it up. Perhaps it was the employment of her leisure during the whole intervening months from one visit to another. And as her hands were thus employed, how much joy it must have afforded her to feel assured that his limbs were daily acquiring strength, vigour and increased size; and to know that the coat of last

year would be outgrown by the time of her next visit. Thus should the Christian mother look for the spiritual growth of the beloved child of her prayers. She ought not to be satisfied unless she beholds the signs of growth from time to time. It may not be apparent from day to day, but from year to year she ought to be able to discern it; she ought to pray for it, to labour for it, to provide for it.

In fine, if we have prayed for our children to our great High-priest, if we have from Him received the assurance that our petitions are recorded on high, if we have early brought our little ones to Him with the intention of devoting them, from their earliest years, to the Lord whose we ourselves are, and whom we serve; let us not fear to trust them into the tender arms of Jesus, the High Priest of the church, assured that He will watch over them, and keep them from evil. Though those around, who ought to be their exemplars and guides,

go astray, He will keep them secretly in his pavilion from the strife of tongues, and from the evil that is in the world. Only let them keep their place near Him, subject to Him, serving Him, and no evil shall come nigh them to hurt them.

There have been many Samuels since Hannah's days, brought early into the sanctuary and serving there till their old age.

Isaac was forty at least when he left his father's house, and before he ceased to be under his father's eye ; Samuel was cast early into scenes of trial, and passed through them without contamination. Yet let not the mothers of our Samuels trust to this precedent, and send their children early into scenes of temptation uncalled and unprotected. If Samuel went, out it was to be under Eli's eye, and in Jehovah's tabernacle—to serve Him, and to worship Him—not to serve the world, not to attain its honours, and

wealth, not to gain its learning and its manners at the expense of all the innocence, the simplicity and the piety of his parents' quiet home. If a mother voluntarily abandons the care of her little one to strangers, can she ask God's blessing on her act? can she expect it? But if circumstances which she cannot control force her to part with her child, if the hand of death is laid on herself, and she is obliged to leave him, whom she would gladly nurse for God herself, then in full confidence may she confide her nursling to her own Great High Priest, assured that He will watch over him by night and day, and do for him *better than she could have done for him herself.*

CHAPTER XVII.

ELI AND DAVID.

IF we find in Hannah an example to Christian parents, what a contrast, and what a warning are presented in Eli!

Eli was a very good man, he was God's High Priest, he attended to his duties in the sanctuary, he set his sons a good example, he doubtless taught them the will of God when they were children, and he mildly, yet forcibly, reasoned with them about their sins, and God's judgment upon sin, when they were grown up; but "he restrained them not."

A parent has it in his power to enforce obedience, when his children are young and weak. They cannot effectually resist him then; God has made them weak and

small at first, so that they must submit if the parent enforces submission. How many indulgences may be refused to a naughty child: his parents may and ought to chastise and restrict him in any way that will make him feel that he is thoroughly in the place of subjection. Elis' sons were once infants; then was the time to begin their education; and those who begin early and persevere prayerfully, will seldom have to use much severity as their children grow older. But those who unfortunately have not begun early, ought never to despair. While their children live it is never too late to try what can be done. Eli had still power in his hands after his sons were grown up. He could have turned them out of their priestly offices, and he ought to have done so. He was a judge in Israel, and might have exercised legal authority in punishing them. Whatever power God has put into our hands we may use, and are bound to

use, for the prevention of sin and we shall be responsible for not using it. Eli became partaker of the guilt of his sons, when he had power to restrain them and did not exercise it.

Such cases in our own days are not uncommon. Christians who devote themselves to the education of the young, often declare that they would rather have the children of worldly parents to educate, than those of professors of religion. This is a very sad testimony to the want of early moral discipline in the families of the Lord's people.

Not long since, a Christian Schoolmaster had the charge of two boys, sons of believing parents, committed to him. He received for these boys an ample amount of remuneration, which his pecuniary circumstances made a consideration to him; yet after a fair trial he was obliged to send both boys back to their home, lest his whole school should be corrupted. On

inquiring how they became so depraved, it was answered, "Their father trusted that God would some day convert them, but entirely neglected to restrain and correct them himself, expecting that the Lord in answer to his prayers would do for them that which the Lord had commanded him to perform himself."

Still more recently we have known the case of a very godly man, whose eldest son, just grown up, was following every path of iniquity and leading all his brothers in the same way. This good man had left the care of his family to his wife, and she had not the courage to correct her sons, but had covered over their disobedience till they were become perfectly unmanageable. This alas, is a common sin among the Lord's people, not always carried to such lengths, but yet sufficient to be the destruction of their children, or at least greatly to retard and make unlikely their conversion.

The prevailing mistake of our forefathers in their parental relation, was undue harshness and severity; children were not allowed to approach their parents with familiarity, nor even to sit in their presence when they were grown up,—and the rod was the penance for all delinquencies. But we, their descendents, have fallen into the opposite extreme, and we are in danger of losing all parental authority in our fear of exercising discipline on our children.

This is but the ordinary acting of our fallen nature; in endeavouring to avoid one extreme we rush into the opposite.

No personal holiness, no nearness to God, in ourselves, is a warrant that we shall not fail in our parental duties; nor will our personal devotedness to God, screen us from the temporal suffering, and disastrous consequences, both to ourselves and to our offspring, which are the natural result of this failure. David was the man after God's own heart, his anointed king,

his chosen shepherd to feed and rule his people Israel; his devotional habits were extraordinary; he was the sweet Psalmist of Israel; prophet as well as king;—a most eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ: and yet as a father he failed like Eli—and he suffered like Eli. His sons were very beautiful, and David's heart was very tender towards them; he had not resolution to grieve them, even by a reproof, when they were young; and they lived to be the scourges of the sins of his latter days, and to be thorns in the pillow of his dying bed. In like manner, Eli could not "frown upon" his sons when they made themselves vile. But they loved him none the more for his tenderness of heart. Indeed we invariably find that over-indulged children only love themselves, and where one favourite child in a family is allowed to have his own way, that is the child who shows the least affection for his parents. They lavish love upon him, hop-

ing that he will love them in return ; but this result does not take place : for, when in any emergency, restraint or discipline is indispensable, instead of being received with submission and humility, it only excites resentment and evil passions ; whereas, in a child under proper restraint, it would have produced real contrition, and a desire of amendment.

Not that "the rod and reproof" are to be the constant companions of the nursery and school-room. Far from it ! It is the parents' own fault if the rod is often needed, if at all, after the earliest years of infancy. But if unfortunately it be needed, if other remedies will not succeed in producing right conduct, let us never forget that it is God's own appointed remedy, and therefore that we can use it with prayer for, and an expectation of, blessing, if accompanied with and followed by firm, consistent discipline at all times, and such an example as we ought to set.

We must not think, however, that obedience can be obtained by one effort; nor even if we see good conduct for a lengthened time in our children, are we to think that all our trouble with them is over. But as it is, or ought to be, the labour of our lives to detect and correct our own failings, which will still be springing up under new forms in spite of all our care and watchfulness: so must we expect, as long as our children are under our control, that so long shall we need patience, and vigilance in our dealings with them; and when we think we have attained, some new temptation, some unforeseen accident, some attractive new companion, will develop faults that we knew not of, and will seem for a time to neutralize all our former care. But it is not so, habits of subjection and early discipline, if tempered with love, are never lost, and will soon regain their accustomed sway.

We should have thought that over-

indulgence was rather the besetting sin of the mother than of the father; and yet the examples given us in scripture of its ruinous effects are those of the father. Perhaps because firmness in him is specially required to strengthen the weaker hands of the mother, and therefore his failure becomes the more ruinous. In the case of a widowed mother, however, who is required to act the part of both parents, the want of this firmness and power of commanding obedience, is generally attended with the most ruinous results: and in all circumstances a tender mother cannot too narrowly watch herself, to see if she seconds her husband, in enforcing subjection and good conduct from all her little ones. It is a sad thing, as we witness sometimes, that the mother cannot rule her boys when their father is from home, though they appear to submit in his presence.

Parents! if you would not be cursed

with a Hophni or a Phineas, with an Absalom or an Adonijah, gird up the loins of your minds, and resolve, by God's grace, to rule your own houses well, having your children in subjection with all gravity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOLOMON.

IT is clear from the book of Proverbs, that however David failed in the education of his elder children, Solomon had the most careful training, both from his father and his mother: and *that* training, under God's special blessing, resulted in forming a character eminent for early piety, and the most exalted wisdom with which any mere man was ever endowed.

It is a melancholy proof of the depravity of human nature, even when renewed by divine power, that faith often brings a man into circumstances in which he has not grace to walk aright.

Faith raised David from the sheepfold to the throne: and there, surrounded by

greatness and honours to which he was not born, he fell into luxurious indolence, and from thence into open and grievous sin.

Thus was it with Solomon, the child of promise, of whom it is written in his infancy, that "the Lord loved him": when left in early youth heir of a mighty kingdom, he began his reign in faith and humility, and when permitted by Jehovah to ask what he would, his petition was, that he might receive wisdom to govern the Lord's people aright, and he asked not for any thing by which self could be gratified or pride be fed.

The result of this gracious conduct on his part, was such as was agreeable to a dispensation in which virtue was rewarded and the Lord's favour manifested by temporal blessings; Jehovah testified his approval of his conduct and prayer, by promising him riches, wealth and honour, such as none of the kings had before, or

should have after him. This prosperity for a length of time he used aright, in promoting the welfare of God's people and in building a house for the worship of Jehovah their God. He made also the works of God his study, and propounded maxims of wisdom, which have been the wonder of all succeeding ages.

But at length prosperity was too much for his faith; he fell into grievous idolatry, and loved many strange women. Though, if the "prophecy" in Proverbs xxxi. be rightly attributed to him, as the wisdom taught him by his mother, he must have known by the experience of his youth what description of woman was fitted to be the mother of a great prince; and also by his mother's beautiful picture, what kind of wife to choose, yet he profited not by it, and we learn from his own sad confession, that though he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, yet in all that multitude he had sought in

vain for one woman of virtue and wisdom.
(Eccl. vii. 27, 28.)

Is it therefore greatly to be wondered at, that the wisest of kings should have been succeeded by one of the most foolish of sons? One wife of wisdom and virtue would have stood him in more stead than all the host of idolatrous princesses with whom he filled his palace. And thus it came to pass that he who wrote with such divine wisdom, instruction, both for children and for parents, profited not himself by his own lessons, nor did his own son profit by them. Let us learn by this, how little effect will follow our best advice to our children, and our most efficient discipline, if we do not by our own example enforce the maxims of wisdom which we offer to their acceptance.

But while the failure of Solomon was his own, his wisdom was from God: divinely inspired, by the true Son of David, of whose peaceful and prosperous reign

his own history and life was but a faint type. And while his fall produced very disastrous effects to himself, to his family, and to his kingdom, his wisdom has been the guide and strength of generation after generation, from his own days to the present.

Perhaps it might be greatly to the advantage of Christian parents, were they to make the Proverbs of Solomon their continual study. It is usual to quote a few isolated texts respecting the necessity and nature of the discipline of parents towards their children, but this is very far from the whole parental wisdom to be gained from these divine precepts.

The first nine chapters especially, which constitute the primary division of the book, relate almost exclusively to the dangers which beset the young and the virtues to be inculcated on them. Can the parent pursue a wiser course than to have his own mind stored with these les-

sons of heavenly wisdom and sage admonition, so that he may drop them into the heart of his child one by one, here a little and there a little, line upon line and precept upon precept, as the infant heart is able to bear it, and the developing intelligence able to comprehend it? At the same time the parent, if he be truly wise and sincere, will exercise himself day by day to act out before his child's eyes the heavenly instruction he is waiting to instil into his heart. Even as the mother nourishes her little infant, not by filling his mouth with strong meat beyond its powers of digestion, but by strengthening her own frame with nourishing food, that she may be able to supply that same nourishment to her child, in a form suited to its infant taste and powers. In vain will the father and mother attempt to instil into their child principles of action, which are uninfluential on their own lives. In vain will the covetous professor descant on the

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blessedness of liberality, and the deceitful father picture to his child the beauty of truthfulness. We must ourselves feed on the food we present to our children, we must walk ourselves in the straight paths:—it is no of use to say, “*that* is the road, walk ye in it;” it must be, “*this* is the road.” “Be ye followers of God as dear children,” “Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart,” are the words of our great Exemplar and our heavenly Father: and “Follow me as I follow Christ” must be, in our humble measure, our incentive to our children to walk in the narrow road that leadeth unto life.

How continually repeated in this blessed book, is the exhortation to children to hear the instruction of their parents, and how often reiterated is the promise of blessing to those who do so, and how much would our own exhortations to our little ones to obey us, be enforced by a continual reference to the words of inspiration!

Often is instruction tedious to the infant mind; the child loves not to leave his play in order to learn his daily task; but greatly would the parent's efforts to inspire a love of learning be aided, if, on suitable occasions when the child's mind was not indisposed to conversation on heavenly things, the parent lovingly and severally brought before him the exhortations to the love of wisdom, and the search after knowledge, presented by God himself to the youthful mind in these weighty chapters.

Early does the child seek after vain companions, and naturally, if permitted, he becomes contaminated by evil communication. How forcibly may the parent warn him, from this book of wisdom, to avoid such betimes, and to prefer dwelling alone on a house-top, to the company of those whose feet decline to hell!

Such observations might profitably be extended to the size of a volume, but more

profitable will it be if every parent will make them for himself, and store his child's mind with them wherever they apply to his circumstances.

CHAPTER XIX.

REHOBAM.

WHEN King Solomon was dead, and the sceptre descended to his degenerate son Rehoboam, it is recorded that the elders of Israel, with Jeroboam the son of Nebat at their head, presented themselves before him with a petition that he would relax the severity of the rule to which they had been subjected in the latter part of Solomon's reign, promising in return, that they would continue faithfully to serve the son, as they had served the father. And what was the answer of the wise man's son? "My father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." (1 Kings xii. 11.)

The youth, for whose instruction the

Proverbs of the wise man were primarily written, and to whom they were in the first instance addressed, seems to have learned but one lesson from them, and to learned *that* in the wrong way. His father had spoken much on the necessity of discipline for children, and he transfers the lessons to his wider family, and to the government of his kingdom. The result was very similar to that which Peter describes the unlearned and unstable in later days, to have made of the epistles of Paul ; they wrested them to their own destruction (2 Peter iii. 15). Rehoboam, instead of ruling with wisdom and energy, endeavoured to shield his weakness with threatening words, which he had neither vigour nor wisdom to enforce. And so the kingdom fell from his hands, never more to be united, till one who is wiser than Solomon, the true Son of David, shall come to rule in righteousness, and judge with equity for the meek of the earth.

May we make a wiser use of the instructions of Solomon than Rehoboam did, and on the other hand let us not despise them, because they may be mis-used.

It is not to be denied that among these instructions are frequent and very decided exhortations to parents to correct their children when they are rebellious. "He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. xiii. 24). "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (xix. 18). "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (xxii. 15). "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 deliver his soul from hell" (xxiii. 13, 14). "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to

shame." "Correct thy son and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul" (xxix. 15, 17). From all these scriptures, and many others less directly stating the fact, it is evident that the rod has a very decided place in the Lord's system of nursery government; and we shall do well, if we are parents, not to overlook these commands of God, while at the same time we must beware not to use them like Rehoboam, in such a way as to be poison instead of medicine to those who are committed to our government.

It is a very common opinion among parents of the present day, that such precepts as we have enumerated may be altogether overlooked in education, that to use personal chastisement has a hardening effect, and at all events is not the way to manage their own children.

On the other hand, there are those whose only resource is the rod, who,

because God hath enjoined it on the parent as a necessary part of education, seem to consider it the *only* necessary part of education; who have no other remedy for the diseases of the soul, except the rod and reproof. Such act like a man, who because his physician had told him that in severe disorders it was needful to resort to mercury, and that it would be a less evil to apply to its use than to die, should so misconstrue his words as to consider it a universal medicine to be used without danger, without restraint, and without medical advice, in every trifling ailment that might occur. Should we be surprised to hear that such a perverse ignorant use of a dangerous medicine had, in the end, produced injurious, if not fatal, results on the constitution?

A celebrated living physician has been wont to affirm, that as an experienced general would never put forth all his strength at once when he met the enemy, but would

always have some *corps de reserve*, in case of emergency—so a wise physician would seldom produce his last remedy in beginning to treat a patient, but would always have something more potent to fall back upon, if milder and simpler medicines failed. The same venerable authority declares that all medicine was an evil, and only to be used as a corrective to evils more dangerous and pressing

Such should be the feeling of the parent who uses the rod, or indeed any punishment as a corrective of his children's faults. It is a medicine; not food, good in itself and wholesome at all times; it is a bitter medicine, and a dangerous medicine if used in unskilful hands, and if applied where the constitution does not need it.

Indeed, the rod is not education, either good or bad; and this is the reason why so many use it ineffectually, and with only evil results. It is only a weapon to be used in aid of good education. It is not disci-

pline in itself, it is only a means in the mother's hand, for assisting and enforcing good discipline when all other means are ineffectual. This is a very important distinction, so that if we were consulted by a mother in the midst of an ungoverned tribe of little ones, whether she had not better administer the rod to an unruly passionate infant, we should not venture to answer in the affirmative, judging that if her children received personal chastisement at intervals, they would probably be but little better, unless she had firmness and wisdom to discipline their minds, and subject their wills habitually.

As the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, so is obedience to the parent the beginning of education: and to this end the will of the child must be subdued, and he must be made to feel that his parents are his masters. The generality of children require the rod to teach them this lesson, and it must always be a last

resort when other means are ineffectual. But the earlier this lesson in education is learned the better, both for parent and child; at six months it is less injurious than at six years, and if it is still unlearned at sixteen, there is little hope for either parent or child in applying it then.

Few mothers like to entrust such power to the hands of a schoolmaster; and no well-trained boy ought ever to need personal chastisement when he is old enough to go to school; at all events, it is not to the master but to the parent, that such a power is delegated by the word of God, and if the mother has firmness, courage and wisdom to begin her education early, and conduct it consistently, it is very rarely that such a task need be imposed, even on a father's hand. The tenderness of the maternal relationship, exceeding every other on earth, renders her the fittest person to administer this bitter yet needful cup to her child.

But again we repeat, medicine, however potent, will not supply the place of food, and air and exercise, in restoring and procuring, much less in preserving, health. The will of the child must be watched and bent and directed in various ways, for no coercion can single-handed break the will, and cause the child to render a voluntary obedience. But obedience that is not voluntary, and submission that is enforced by restraint and fear only, is not likely to be of long continuance:—and what is the value of that good conduct which is only preserved under the parent's eye. The object to be sought and laboured for is, to form the character, so that the child will act from principle when he is no longer under our eye, and when the hand that now guides him may be mouldering in the dust.

The subject of early discipline has been so efficiently handled by one who has well considered the subject, that I cannot re-

frain from quoting again somewhat largely from his meditations on this topic.

“The discipline of our children,” writes the Rev C. Bridges “must commence with self-discipline. Nature teaches to love them *much*. But we want a controlling principle to teach us to love them *wisely*. The indulgence of our children has its root in self-indulgence. We do not like putting ourselves to pain. The difficulties, indeed, can only be known by experience. And even in this school one parent cannot measure the trials of another. But all our children are the children of Adam. Foolishness is bound up in their hearts. All choose, from the first dawn of reason, the broad road of destruction. And can we bear the thought that they should walk in that road? We pray for their conversion, but prayer without teaching is mockery, and scripture teaching implies chastening. Discipline therefore must be. All need the rod, some again and again.

Yet it must be the father's rod, yearning over his chastened child, even while he dares not spare for his crying. The rod without affection is revolting tyranny.

“But often do we hear mourning over failure. And is not this the grand reason? We do not chastise betimes. Satan begins with the infant in arms. The cry of passion is the first stir of the native corruption. Do we begin as early? Every vice commences in the nursery. The great secret is, to establish authority in the dawn of life, to bend the tender twig, before the knotty oak is beyond our power. A child early trained by parental discipline, will probably preserve the wholesome influence to the end of life.

“But fearful indeed is the difficulty when the child has been the early master; to begin chastening, when the habit of disobedience has been formed and hardened; to have the first work to do when the child is growing out of childhood, and when the

unreserved confidence needs to be established. Rarely indeed does this late experiment succeed : while the severity necessary to enforce it is not less dangerous than painful.*

And again, "Christian parents! carefully study the word of God. See here our Father's wise and loving discipline with his children. Like as a Father He pitieth his children. As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you. Yet when his children need chastening; though the flesh cries, *spare*; though every groan enters into his heart, He loves so well that his soul spares them not for their crying. He uses the rod; yea, if need be, heavily. He will wither their brightest comforts, children, or property, if they turn them to idols; and this, not for his pleasure but their profit." And what child has not blessed Him that He

* Bridges on Prov. xiii. 24.

did not refrain his discipline, till it had done its perfect work ?

“Is not this then our pattern and standard : setting out the sound principle of a Christian education ? Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath ; lest they be discouraged. But let not the rule, Chasten, spare not, be a hard saying.....Far better that the child should *cry* under heathful correction, than that the parents should afterwards *cry* under the bitter fruit to themselves and children, of neglected discipline. Yet much less correction would be needed, did parents govern as they ought to do, by the steady decision of a word, a frown, or a look.

“But the great force of the rule is its timely application ; *while there is hope*. For hopeless the case may be if the remedy be delayed. The cure of the evil must be commenced in infancy. Not a moment is to be lost. Betimes is the season when the good can be effected with the most ease

and the fewest strokes. The lesson of obedience should be learned at the first dawn. One decided struggle and victory in very early life may under God do much towards settling the point at once and to the end. On the other hand sharp chastening may fail later to accomplish what a slight rebuke in the early course might have wrought.

“Is there not often a voluntary blindness that does not choose to see what it is painful to correct? The false notion—‘children will be children’—leads us often to pass over real faults, and consider their tempers and waywardness as too trifling to require prompt correction. And thus sin, winked at in its beginnings, hardens in all the strength of deep-rooted corruptions. Whereas who would neglect their most trifling bodily ailment, which might grow into serious results? If children cannot be argued with, they must be controlled. How often have we found in after life the

evil of fixed habits, which early correction might have subdued with far less cost of suffering. Oh! what grace and wisdom is needed to discipline our minds, judgment, and affections, to that tone of self-government, which will enable us to train our children practically, for the service of God, and for their own happiness."*

But we would again remind our readers that as obedience and subjection of spirit in the child is but the ground-work of education, so these strong and distinct commands of God to enforce it, are not to be considered the only parts of the Book of Proverbs relative to education. The whole of the precepts among which these isolated texts are interspersed, are as important to the education of the child as to the walk of the parent. The whole should be our meditation and guide; and while the precepts respecting discipline are to be the groundwork and basis of our

* Bridges on Prov. xix. 18.

structure, the precepts, not of this Book only but of all Scripture, are to be the building raised upon this foundation.

But once more we repeat, Despise not the foundation: If your child is gentle, and tractable, and loving, if his infant heart seems softened and touched by hearing of the love of Jesus to poor sinners, if you have reason to think that the blood of sprinkling has cleansed and renewed his spirit, be not tempted to dispense with a prompt unquestioning obedience. By neglecting this you are cruel to your child, and cruel to yourself.

A Christian mother, not many years since, took her children to a secluded part of the West of England, for the benefit of sea-bathing. At some distance from her lodging there was a beautiful sheltered cove where she took her little girls to bathe. The sands were firm and the coast safe for a considerable way, but in the distance were quicksands, of the danger of

which all had been sufficiently warned. The day was warm, the water pleasant, and the little girls enjoyed the refreshing pleasure. At length the mother called them to the shore, when one little one playfully ran away, looking back and laughing at the fears of her mother and attendant, who followed her into the water. In vain they called out to her to return; she thought it only play and ran onwards, till she reached the quicksands, when suddenly she disappeared from their agonized gaze and was seen no more.—It was an unspeakable comfort to that unhappy mother, that she had reason to hope that her little lost one had loved the Lord, and that she was taken to be ever with Him. But we have never since seen a little lively infant thus playfully neglect a mother's call, and evade her commands, but it has reminded us of this sad incident, and of the cruelty which that mother shows to her children who suffers them to

play at disobedience. That the results are not always as tragical as in the case above related, is of the mercy of God, and does not at all affect the question of right or wrong, in our own discipline. The sin in such cases does not lie so much with the child, as with the parent; for there is no child, who had been accustomed to unvarying punishment, however mild, in every such case of disobedience, who would run away like that poor little girl, when her mother's desire that she should return had been decidedly expressed.

CHAPTER XX.

MANASSEH.

It has not hitherto been our task to record a single instance of the child of believing parents, trained for the Lord's service, refusing that instruction during his youth, plunging headlong into paths of guilt and degradation, and yet brought back when he is old, in answer to the prayers of his believing parents, long after they had departed this life. Such an instance, however, is on record, and greatly tends to lift up the sinking hearts of godly parents, who are either obliged by death to leave their fatherless children exposed to all the seductions of a world lying in the wicked one, or have the yet greater anguish of living to see them altogether

burst the restraints of home, and of virtue, and follow the ways of evil like the poor prodigal of old.

To such parents the History of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah is a word of strong consolation. This young king lost his father at the early age of twelve years, was probably turned loose on the world, with none to restrain him; his coffers overflowing with wealth, surrounded by flatterers, and courtiers, whose interest it was to keep the young monarch in ignorance of every thing good, and to banish to a distance honest godly counsellors who would have led him in the way he should go.

Thousands have been thus left and have perished for ever; but the father of Manasseh was pre-eminently a man of prayer, and had doubtless committed this son with many tears to the Lord, who had so often heard and answered his own prayers in the day of his distress.

And the manner in which these prayers are answered for Manasseh, is by deep affliction: his career of blasphemy and cruel persecution is cut short, the king of Babylon invades his kingdom, and he who was bold in the day of prosperity, becoming a coward when danger approaches, appears to have attempted no resistance, but to have concealed himself in a thicket; where, however, he is found by his enemy, bound with chains, carried to Babylon, and there secured in a dungeon.

In such a situation there was scarcely more human probability of escape, than appeared for the Prophet Jonah in the fish's belly. But Manasseh, in spite of all his wickedness, could not forget the instruction of his childhood. Then he had learned that there was a God, and that that God was the God of his fathers, and ready to become his God. He had been taught something of his grace, of his character, and his willingness to forgive

the vilest, if they sincerely repent and turn to Him in his own appointed way.

When therefore he found himself in this hopeless state as to this world, he hardened not himself in his wickedness, but besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. From the expression, "the Lord his God," we may almost venture to conjecture that Manasseh, when a child, under the instruction of his pious parents and of the holy prophet Isaiah, had known somewhat of the grace of Jehovah, and had taken him to be his God; to whom now he returns in the hour of deep degradation and abasement, not as a stranger, but as a grievous backslider.

However this may be, it is certain that he knew where to turn in the hour of affliction; that he knew the character of God, as the hearer of the prayer of the most desperate sinner, and that we hear not that the Lord upbraided him with his

sins, but rather that he accepted his repentance, broke off his chains, opened his prison doors, and restored him to his liberty, his country, and his throne.

We learn also that this repentance of Manasseh was not feigned, nor temporary, but that his reformation was lasting; and that in the concluding years of his life, he made every effort to repair the evils occasioned by the sins of his youth; to repress idolatry, and restore the worship of the God of his fathers.

But no man can thus sin, and leave no traces of the evil which he has done, when he himself turns from it. Those whom Manasseh's sins had corrupted were not to be won back by his repentance. His own son Amos, probably born during the days of his sins, persists in his evil courses, and is cut off, after a short reign of two years, without remedy, without space for repentance. But Manasseh had a little grandson six years old at the time of his death,

and we can hardly doubt that, seeing the reckless wickedness and impenitence of his own son, and feeling the hopelessness of softening *his* heart, the aged king used his influence over the mind of his infant grandson, and instilled into his heart those lessons of godly wisdom which he had himself received when a child, though he had so grievously departed from them in his youth. And if so, blessed were the fruits of Manasseh's late repentance, for the heart of the youthful Josiah was tender, and he wholly followed the Lord with his whole heart, and with his whole kingdom, so that all his days they departed not from following Jehovah the God of their fathers.

Can any Christian parents read this narrative, and hesitate to commence early the instruction of their little ones? Like Hezekiah we may be called away early to our rest; we may have to leave our sons and our daughters in the midst of an evil

world without a guiding hand to restrain and direct them. They may like Manasseh go astray, and wander long and deep into the dark mazes of corruption and wickedness. Let us see to it that many and earnest prayers are recorded above for their restoration and salvation. We cannot like Hezekiah know assuredly that our children will be taken captives to Babylon, and be servants to the king of Babylon (see 2 King xx. 18.), but we may and ought so to instruct them, that, if their course should be an evil one, and if the Lord in mercy should arrest them in the midst of it, cast them into poverty, or a dungeon, or a bed of sickness, they may like Manasseh know where to turn for relief, and may know something of the character and the promises of the God of their fathers.

To this end our early efforts in their behalf should be directed: we shall find the natural tendency of our children's

minds to be to look to the Lord as to one who loves those who are good ; and to a certain extent this is true, and must be used as an auxiliary in leading them to endeavour to please Him well in all things. But as their little minds expand we cannot too constantly represent our Heavenly Father as the God of all grace, as having so loved the world as to have sent his well beloved Son to seek and to save those who were lost. Let us speak of hell as peopled by the impenitent rather than simply by the wicked, and of heaven as the abode of those whose sins have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, rather than of the godly. We must represent our God, and that continually, in his true character, more ready to receive than we are to come, who upbraideth not, who is standing looking out for the poor prodigal, ready to welcome him the moment he returns, and to crown him with all the blessings of his house. We must make our children understand

that the good Shepherd seeks out his sheep, and brings them back, without any merit on their part; and that there never was and never will be one soul finally lost, who is made truly willing to return in God's appointed way.

This is God's own declaration of the state of the case between him and the sinner. We fear to state it in its fulness to our children, lest it should make them presume; but this is a needless fear: to be saved by their good works is their natural desire while they are whole-hearted; and to be lost because their sins are too great for forgiveness is Satan's usual lie when he sees the soul oppressed by the load of past transgressions.

The remedy in both cases is the same: it is grace, free grace, grace abounding to the chief of sinners, grace equally needed by the most amiable and innocent, as by the most vile and degraded.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WE might expect that if the Old Testament is fruitful in instructions to parents, the New Testament would not be lacking in such teaching. Yet we must bear in mind that while the former contains numerous laws and detailed instruction, the latter is rather the spirit of instruction than its embodiment. Its precepts are not addressed to men in the flesh, but to men in the spirit, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and indwelt by that Holy Spirit, which was sent down by the great Head of the church, to guide the members of his own body into all truth.

Let us not therefore be disappointed if but little direct precept be found in the

Epistles for our guidance, but let us consider whether the little that is said be not a mine of wealth to enrich us in all wisdom. Let us hear the word, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That is, Let not your discipline be so exercised as to excite their enmity and rouse their evil passions; let it not be of such a nature as to increase the natural evil and the downward tendency of their natures, but consider that you also are children, and that you have a Father in heaven, who has begotten you anew in Christ Jesus, and who, having given you a new and heavenly life, is constantly engaged in sustaining that new nature, feeding you with the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby, and watching hourly and incessantly over your spiritual growth, and education: fitting you for the sphere of heavenly blessedness which He has pre-

pared for you, and ever watching over you to do you good.

Let us consider a little in detail how our heavenly Father has been leading and guiding us from the day that he first began to deal with us until now : and see how far we can be imitators of God as dear children. Every mother will see the likeness of the dealings of her God as above enumerated, with those which she is called to exercise towards her infant in the first days of its existence, when to nurse, and feed, and tend, and watch over her babe is the chief and most delightful occupation of her life.

But the task is less easy as we proceed. The Lord's care over us is not limited to the preservation of the life He has given. He has to teach us to value what He has done for us. We have to learn our natural state, that we "were by nature children of wrath even as others : " He makes us feel our sin, our guilt and danger, our nothing-

ness in ourselves, and our utter inability to save or help ourselves. From this we are led to submit ourselves unreservedly to him, to be saved, and led and blessed in the way his own infinite wisdom has appointed for us: not in any way of our own choosing or devising, not in a way to bring honour to us, but only to Him.

Having shewn us that we have destroyed ourselves, He makes us to know that in Him is our help, that he has provided a ransom for those who were ready to go down into the pit, that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin, that to believe this and to be willing to accept Jesus as our Saviour, our only and sufficient righteousness, is all the fitness required by the Father for the complete justification and acceptance of the sinner.

Having made known to us the way of safety and forgiveness, the Lord shews us how we are practically made fit for his kingdom of glory; how He creates us

anew in Christ Jesus, and implants his Holy Spirit in our hearts, by which we are instructed and enabled so to walk as to please God, and even to increase more and more in this walk of faith.

Let us enquire of ourselves, Is this the way we have individually been taught of God? and if so, is it the way we are beginning the nurture of our little ones? Are we leading them betimes to see themselves as poor lost sinners, and are we taking them to the feet of Jesus, to seek for themselves cleansing and peace through the blood of that precious Lamb of God? And do we impress on them sweetly, tenderly, and often, the need of being born again, of receiving that Holy Spirit of promise who alone can lead them into all truth, who alone can teach them to pray aright, who alone can efficiently help their infirmities?

All this we can best do in the form of prayer; do they hear us day by day ask

these things of our God, with an earnestness in any way commensurate with their absorbing importance ?

This is not a work to be done once, and then forgotten. It must be like the continual dropping of water from the rock on the stone beneath, the effect of which, though imperceptible at first, in time wears away the almost impenetrable flint.

In some children there will be an almost immediate response, if the parent has a wise, fervent and loving heart, and appeals to the child's best feelings. In others the effect may not be apparent at first, yet it cannot be lost. He who has said "My word shall not return unto me void," will work with the labourer, and give an abundant harvest in the end. It is certain that many Christians very little believe in this blessed result ; and therefore, can we wonder that their efforts are so feeble, and their success so small ? for it is written " If

ye do not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

In thus working for God we must expect that He will work with us, and day by day we must go forth in this expectation. Yet we must be cautious in expressing the assurance that the Lord has worked in our babes' hearts. However we may hope it, and have good grounds for our hope, we must remember that children are creatures of imitation, and are often moulded into the similitude of those who guide them: therefore, while we rejoice in the infant confession of faith and of love to Jesus, we must do so with trembling, recollecting that the day of temptation is before them, in which the Lord will prove every child's work of what sort it is.

In considering the care of our Heavenly Father over us, as a guide to our care and discipline over our children, let us further recollect that He continually watches over us, that He puts good examples before us

for our guidance, and warns us by the examples and fate of the wicked. That He gives us line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. That He does not lead us faster than our strength will bear, nor expect of us more than according to our knowledge and power. That He is not always chiding, and especially that He does not begin with rebuking us for every failure. At the same time the Lord never passes over wilful disobedience, but always makes us suffer for it in one way or other.

When we rebel, we lose the light of his favour and the smile of his presence, and can only regain his paternal approbation by a full and unreserved submission and confession ; with a turning away from the evil which has ensnared us.

He leads us about and instructs us, guiding us gradually into all truth.

The Lord also, we are told, intercedes

for us, He ever liveth to intercede for us. He teaches us also to pray.

He invites us to teach others what we ourselves know.

He teaches us to deny ourselves, to be kind to others, and to esteem them above ourselves.

He encourages us to believe in his love, to trust in his support and protection ; to confide in his wisdom.

The Lord also sets us an example, not only his own when on earth, when He said "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," but also that of our Father in heaven, who is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, and whose perfections we are exhorted to imitate, as we would be reckoned his children, and glorify the holy name by which we are called.

Many, many such instances might be added, of the care, and instruction, "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" toward us his poor children, and if He has

placed our children in the same relationship and dependence on us as we bear to Himself, and if He would have us bring up our children as He brings us up, how carefully should we study these things ourselves, in order, first, that we may so walk as He has taught us, and then so educate our little ones as we are educated ourselves.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOIS AND EUNICE.

THE anxious mother is ready, perhaps, to exclaim, "O that I knew how Eunice brought up her son Timothy, what means she used to inspire his infant mind with unfeigned faith! For though faith is the gift of God, not to be attained by any unassisted efforts of man, yet the unfeigned faith that was in Lois descended to Eunice, and from her was transmitted to Timothy. Would that I could thus ensure the salvation of *my* child!"

Of the means used we are not left ignorant; the faith of Lois and Eunice was "unfeigned." If we would be, like them, the happy mothers of such sons as Timo-

thy, let us ask ourselves, "Is our faith unfeigned?" I mean not only that we be converted to God ourselves,—if we are not there is but little hope that we shall train up our children in the *fear* of God, certainly we cannot in his *love*,—but even if we have a true faith, Is it in earnest? Is it lively? Is it in exercise? Is it of such a nature as to pervade all our lives, and make them consistent? Is it "unfeigned"? Do we mean all we tell them? Do we feel all we put before them? Do we act in accordance with what we teach them? If we say "Love not the world," do we walk as those who love it not ourselves? If we say "The fashion of this world passeth away," do we walk as if we thought this life a vapour, and that which is to come the only reality? If we say to them, "What shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul," do we let them see that no amount of talent, beauty, riches, natural sweetness,

weighs with us for a moment in the balance against personal piety, and grace? If we tell them that Christ's yoke is easy, do they see *us* bearing it with meekness and lowliness of heart? If we tell them that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness, do they see that *we* are anxious to warn sinners to flee from a coming judgment? If we tell them that they ought to obey God rather than man, do they see that *we* are more anxious to please the Lord than to gain the approbation, or escape the enmity of our fellow creatures? While we repeat to them the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," do they see in us more alacrity in meeting the spiritual and temporal wants of others, than in receiving or welcoming any accession to our own possessions? And lastly, when we tell them that "He that exalteth himself shall be abased," do they behold in us that humility

which the Lord Jesus has so frequently promised to honour and exalt?

That faith only is an unfeigned faith, which manifests its reality by acting on the Word of God as unquestionably true.

The unfeigned, and therefore practical faith of Eunice, led her to feed the infant mind of her child on the sincere milk of the Word, as the Lord himself had commanded: saying,

“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house and upon thy gates: that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the

Lord swear unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth." (Deut. xi. 18—21.)

In the spirit, if not in the letter of this command did Eunice bring up her son, and in the spirit, if not in the letter, of the promise annexed did she reap her reward.

The testimony of Paul to his education is this, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child (the original words are, literally, "from an infant") thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. iii. 14, 15.)

One greater than Paul has said "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." That word had been the weapon used by the mother to subdue the tender heart of her son, and turn him to his God. And

with what blessed results! The Apostle in the passage from which we have quoted above, reminds Timothy of the uses of that word, to encourage him in the preaching of it. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Thus had Eunice doubtless instilled it into his mind, thus had he imbibed it. She had used it for *doctrine*, teaching him those holy truths on which salvation depends. Such are the fall of man; the depravity of human nature; the death incurred by every man, first through the sin of Adam, then through his own sin; the promised deliverance by the Seed of the woman, through the blood of the innocent shed for the guilty; the Messiah, Redeemer, Deliverer, promised through every prophet, shadowed forth in every type. Thus

doubtless did the believing Jewish mother instruct her infant son in the doctrines revealed in the ancient scriptures, concerning Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write ; in the hopes which those scriptures held forth, of a resurrection to future blessedness ; of a time of glory and peace and joy on the earth, when the desert shall blossom as the rose ; of the promise of the Spirit to be poured out on all flesh ; of the new heart and new spirit which the God of Israel would give to his people, enabling them to live after the Spirit, and to walk in righteousness.

Much she would also teach him through the beautiful narratives which are scattered all over the word in rich variety : histories written for our learning and meant for our examples.

And did her docile pupil need *reproof*, the word supplied it ; of whatever nature might be his dereliction from the paths of wisdom, the sin was reprov'd, the mistake

was *corrected* from that word of truth and wisdom, which ever was present to her thoughts and near her heart.

Then, leading him by the hand into the paths of righteousness, she *instructed* him wherewithal the young man should cleanse his way, by taking heed thereto according to God's word (Psalm cxix. 9.); encouraged in her labour by seeing him grow in wisdom as he grew in stature, and by watching the growth of his virtues as the shining light of the dawn, "which increaseth more and more unto the perfect day." For such is the Spirit's testimony, that thus exercising himself in the various uses of the word, "the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Thus was the pious Eunice employed day after day, year after year, in polishing and preparing a living stone for the spiritual temple; and when clearer light shone on her path, and she perceived that in

Jesus of Nazareth, whom her countrymen had with wicked hands crucified and slain, were fulfilled all that Jehovah had predicted of the promised Messiah, she believed in his name, and her son with her became a disciple of Jesus. Not one, who, like the poor converted gentiles, had to be reclaimed from all the vices of heathenism, but one whose heart the Lord opened gently to admit the light, and who, probably both before his conversion and after, was well reported of by his brethren, no less than by those that were without.

Such was the young disciple whom the Spirit of God had prepared to be a son and a comforter to his beloved apostle Paul. And faithfully he fulfilled his allotted task. Touching are the words of the tried and aged servant of Christ many years after, as from his prison he writes of him to the Philippian believers. "I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of

good comfort when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state : for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father he hath served with me in the gospel."

Could we imagine Eunice to have been at Philippi when this Epistle was read to the Church, how would her heart have glowed with delight! "None like my son among the converts and companions of the holy Paul! None like *him* willing to sacrifice his own things for the things of God! None but *he* worthy to be trusted with a service so near his heart! And is this the fruit, the blessed fruit of those Holy Scriptures on which his soul was fed from his earliest infancy!" And if she were permitted to read the two letters addressed by his spiritual father to Timothy his own son in the faith; to witness the confidence with which he consigned to the

hands of his youthful disciple the great work which he had hitherto been carrying on himself among the Gentiles; to see how freely he praises his zeal, and wisdom, and affection; how he looks back to Timothy's early training, and reminds him of the instructions of his holy mother and grandmother, exhorting him to hold them fast, we may believe that her heart would have been too full to contain its happiness. "And all this blessing, all this fruit to the world and to the church, under God, the result of those simple lessons, those broken prayers; those feeble efforts to lead a little child to love and study God's word! Can it be that God has made my humble instructions so great a service to the world, so great a comfort to his aged and honoured servant, so great a strength to the church?"

While there is no saint in the apostolic age of whose early history we know so much as of that of Timothy, there are few

whose after character as the results of that early history are so much spoken of. This is a blessed thing for mothers, and many and many a mother has prayed that she might be an Eunice, and that her son might prove another Timothy.

And the day that revealeth all secrets alone will reveal how many such prayers have been answered. How many of those who, in the present and in all past ages, since the Christian dispensation began, have stood up to declare to their fellow sinners the unspeakable riches of Christ, have been led to choose Him themselves as their all sufficient Saviour by the prayers and instructions and example of a tender mother? Probably a great majority!

Abbott, the well known writer on education, relates that "in a revival of religion when one hundred and twenty young men met together to devote themselves to the ministry of the word, it was found that of their number at least a hundred had

been taught the love of Jesus from the gentle lips of a pious mother. Of this number some had for a time despised and neglected these instructions, had broken away from the restraints of home, and, like the prodigal, had wandered in sin and sorrow ; yet they could not forget the impressions of childhood, and were eventually brought to the Saviour to be a mother's joy and blessing."*

"The cases are very rare," observes another author, "where a judicious tender persevering mother has been disappointed by the objects of her solicitude. It is scarcely in human nature, degraded as it is, to resist the influence of example, the pleadings of tenderness, the admonitions of reason, from a mother who 'openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in whose tongue is the law of kindness.'"†

How cheering and animating to the

* The Mother at Home. † Mothers of the Wise and Good.

faith and courage of the believing parent is it to see the results of such success in others! A Christian mother who has lately departed to be with the Lord, when in the near prospect of death, was asked how she felt respecting her children, and especially her youngest, an infant of between two or three years old. "As to my boy," she replied, "I have no doubt whatever that he is the Lord's, and that if he live he will be manifested as such. The reason of my having this strong impression, irrespective of the dawnings of grace which I believe he already manifests, is this. Some months before his birth I entered a place of worship, and to my great surprise I saw in the pulpit a young man whom I had known very intimately as a child. He was some years my junior, and had been brought up by his pious mother who was a widow. I had lost sight of him, and had no idea of his conversion, much less that he had entered on

the work of the ministry. As I heard him in simple fervent strains tell of the love of Jesus, and hold Him up to the sight of lost sinners, my whole heart and affections were deeply moved, and I mentally dedicated my unborn child to Him, praying Him most earnestly that it might early be converted; and, if a boy, that he might be permitted to serve Him in the gospel of his Son, as He had accepted the son of the widow whom I saw before me."

Thus the success of one Christian mother's prayers and care, stimulates the hopes, and animates the faith of another. Who can tell how many a Christian mother in the apostolic age was stirred up to hope and exertion by seeing the faith of the youthful Timothy, and hearing how the Apostle traced its commencement and cause to the unfeigned faith and scriptural instruction of his grandmother and his mother?

It is not always that a child shews in

infancy the results of this early training ; yet we are not warranted to declare, even when no present fruits are manifested, that all is thrown away upon him. An aged servant and minister of Christ, now between eighty and ninety, has been heard to say, " If ever I am found in heaven, I shall ascribe it to my father's instructions in my infancy, though at the time they seemed lost to me, and though on entering the world I was immersed in its business and gaieties till I was full forty years old. Yet through all this long course of sin and worldliness I never could wholly forget my father's instructions, and when I was brought to the Lord, it was the remembrance of them that was chiefly influential. What principally rested on my remembrance was the manner we passed our Sunday evenings ; when my dear father, being liberated from the business of the week, devoted himself to instructing us out of the scriptures, and examining us

as to what we recollected of the sermons heard in the day. We were excited to emulation by the reward of sitting up to supper with our parents on that evening, if our conduct and answers gave him satisfaction. This little pleasurable incentive served to keep up our attention; and the remembrance of these blessed instructions is to this distant day among the happiest of my life, when my dear parents taught us to join with them in singing the praises of the Lord, and prayed for a blessing on their instructions to their children.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOB.

OUR object in the foregoing pages has not been to give a complete treatise comprehending all our own thoughts on Education, nor all we could glean from others more experienced ; but to collect such lessons from the Sacred pages as seemed most obviously written there for our admonition and instruction.

Imperfect as the success may have been, every such effort has its use if it lead others to continue the search more successfully. And we cannot but be struck in going through these narratives with the almost uniform success which there is manifested to follow godly discipline and training, especially where the example of the parents accorded with their teaching.

We require hope to stimulate us to any strong and long continued course of action, when the present results are trying and onerous. This is especially the case in the education of children, where so much patience and care and trouble are required, and seem for the present often to be without results.

But let us beware of the extremes, of despondency on the one hand, and of presumption on the other. We *must* have hope, we have seen that there is the strongest scriptural warrant for the firmest hope, we cannot do any thing without it. Let us work, and let us expect that God will work with us. But Oh! let us beware of presuming on God's help and relaxing in our own care. We cannot do this for a single day without finding its evil consequences. Satan never relaxes his watchfulness; he is ever watching to sow tares; the unwary hearts of our little ones are ever ready to receive the evil

seed. Let us also watch that we may if possible pluck it up as soon as it shows itself above ground.

We have hesitated to allude to the Holy Job among the children of Abraham, as he probably had no other claim to the title than that which is implied in the words, "They which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham;" but we cannot close these remarks without alluding to his lovely example; even after his sons and his daughters were grown up, and living in houses of their own, still watching over them, rising up every morning to intercede for them, lest they may unknown to him have committed sin.

And we have no reason to suppose that his prayers and watchfulness were in vain. They appear to have afforded a beautiful picture of family love: when they would feast and be merry, they appear to have sought no wider range of companionship than each other's society, and that of their

sisters. And though it pleased the Lord in his inscrutable wisdom to permit Satan to take away their life on earth, we have no reason to suppose that they were for ever lost to Job. The contrary appears almost evident, for the Lord restored to Job double for all he had lost, and yet this extended only to his flocks and herds: for the Lord gave him only the same number of sons and daughters as before. Is it fanciful to presume from this that the other ten were "not lost, but gone before?"

May such be *our* well grounded hope should *we* be called on to weep over the early graves of the dear ones whom now we are endeavouring to train for heaven! May we be able to remember that we never ceased to pray for and watch over them, even when they had by reason of maturer age passed beyond the sphere of discipline! It is easy, comparatively, to watch over our infants: many do so to

admiration who greatly fail as their children grow in years ; and therefore many a bud of promise has failed to expand into a full-blown flower of piety. Who among us is sufficient for these things? Not one! But God is sufficient. In his strength let us begin the warfare, in his strength persevere, and faint not till either we ourselves or our little ones are beyond the reach of earthly solicitude.

During the progress of these sheets through the press, we were favoured with the perusal of a letter addressed by a watchful and experienced Christian to a young Mother. Its sentiments appeared so admirable that we sought and obtained permission to make them public; and we could not wish a more appropriate conclusion than they afford, to the preceding observations.

*A Letter addressed to a Mother on the
birth of her first born Son.*

“DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

“Many important duties devolve upon you, as a wife and mother, to train up the little immortal for Heaven’s glory. Children, and especially boys, are said to be what their mother makes them.

“The instruction, the influence, the prayers, the example, of a mother go with them to a period beyond that which no thought can reach or imagination conceive.

“If the boy is spared to live with you many years, your influence, your deportment, will never be banished from his mind, amid all the vicissitudes of life; joy, or sorrow, sickness or health—by land or water, on his native shores, or in foreign countries—in time or through eternity. If other things are forgotten, a mother never will be obliterated from the

memory. You, mother, will probably be the source of exquisite joy in the world of bliss, or of the bitterest and most heart-corroding sorrow in the world of woe, millions of ages hence.

“What a solemn and momentous thought to carry with you, the next twenty years, if God should see fit to continue you both in life so long.

“In training the child, it is not only a few set hours of the day, called the school hours, in which you are training him, but by every cast of your countenance, by the look of your eye, by the movements of life, by your temper and habitual disposition, by the gravity and cheerfulness of your manners, by your transactions of business, by your deportment in domestic affairs, by all you say, and all you do: by an influence unseen and unfelt by others, but not unseen and unfelt by him, you are daily making him an heir of glory, or of misery, fitting him for usefulness in this

world, or a drone in society, an idle, trifling, worthless character; and entailing upon him unnumbered blessings or cursings.

“ Solemn and most important consideration! you will probably be the chief instrument of his existing for ever in heaven’s eternal sunshine, or in the deep caverns of eternal darkness. O that females did but consider how much is involved in the maternal character!

“ What examples of maternal tenderness and excellence do we find in the word of truth? Who presented Samuel to the Lord? His mother! Who ministered to his wants in the sanctuary, and made his little coat? His mother! Who travelled yearly to Shiloh to witness his behaviour? His mother! Who brought him to minister to the venerable Eli? His mother! Who taught David to lisp the praises of Jehovah? His mother! To whom does he most frequently refer in his incomparable song, but to his mother?

Of whose piety does he boast? His mother's! "I am the son of thy handmaid." Who laid the foundation of Timothy's piety, and prepared him for being the companion of Paul, but his mother and grandmother?

"O mothers! it belongs to you to fill your country with patriots, and the church with members, the sanctuary with ministers, and heaven with saints!"

FINIS.

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