

CHAP. VII.

Example.—Emulation.—Effect of personal Character of Parents.—Deceit.

THERE is one additional stimulus to be used with children: it is that of *example*.—We all know how powerfully this is recommended as a source of good by our holy religion. Jesus, our Saviour “was given us as an example, that we should follow his steps.” What Christian, who contemplates that blessed Example with holy affection, and who feels a warm gratitude for the unutterable condescension of his Divine Master, in affording to him this help in his spiritual course, will not exert himself to give his children all the benefit he can, from the example, not only of Christ, but of those who, however inferior, are yet his true servants! He will extend his view further, and, from the mass of characters of a lower description, he will select examples to be placed before his children. Here, indeed, he will proceed with much cau-

tion, and employ much discrimination. But as he will observe, even among persons of this class, many who are eminent for some amiable disposition, or useful habit, or praise-worthy attainment, so he will not fail to draw the attention of his pupil to them; and, in pointing out to him what may be effected by the force of very inferior motives, he will impress on his mind what ought to be the efficacy of those which flow from the religion of Christ. He will also hold out, but with more reluctance and reserve, not only those who are, in the most emphatical sense, vicious characters, but also those who have grossly neglected means of improvement, and those whose conduct, whether through error or thoughtlessness, is absurd or mischievous, as warnings to deter from like courses. There are many and great advantages in conveying instruction in this way. What is holy, estimable, and amiable, or the reverse, will be better understood, and especially by children, when exhibited in action, than when described in the abstract. It will also be far more likely, according to its real quality, to engage the affections, or create disgust and abhorrence, when so exhibited; for it is a general, though by no

means a universal truth, that, to an unsophisticated mind, virtue in active life will be lovely, and vice hateful. A parent will take care at first, to select instances for his child's observation, in which these appear clearly in their appropriate colours; and afterwards, when his estimate of things becomes pretty just, and his taste tolerably correct, the parent will venture, by degrees, to call his attention to other instances, in which good and bad qualities or habits are so intermixed as to lead a careless observer to wrong conclusions, affording to his pupil the benefit of his own experience in developing and separating the component parts of such characters, and in assigning to each due praise or blame. Such representations will obtain a more easy admission into the youthful mind, if accompanied by proofs of the tendency of virtue to promote happiness, and vice misery. This tendency must be shown, not in any abstract way, but by pointing out effects of this kind in the individual instances which come under review. If, on such occasions, tenderness and delicacy and discrimination are combined with warmth and feeling, the child will listen with much interest, and the parent may hope for

God's blessing, and for excellent fruits from this very pleasant branch of education.

In this course, however, there are serious evils to be avoided.

Praise and blame must be dealt out with *moderation*, and often with *diffidence*. — No human being can be entitled to more than moderate praise; and no man who aspires to love his neighbour as himself, will think himself warranted in unlimited or unguarded censure, or will feel a disposition to employ it. To be prone to extremes in forming a judgment of others, is always foolish, and often highly presumptuous and offensive. Woe be to the parent who leads his child into this error! Next to the child himself, he may be the greatest sufferer from so doing.

He must also be careful not to foster in the child a fastidious or captious, or even a critical, spirit. Let him never fail to inculcate, that the first and great business of every individual is to do his own duty; and that, although there are many reasons for endeavouring to form a true estimate of the character and conduct of others, yet this estimate must always be formed with modesty and charity, and with a recollection

that we are not their judges ;—to their own Master they must stand or fall. If, indeed, children should be unhappily exposed to much intercourse with those whose tempers or habits are blameable, and likely to mislead them, no motive of this nature will justify a parent in neglecting to guard them against the evils to be apprehended. He must hold up the persons in question as warnings before the eyes of his family.

Further : he must hold out examples to his child in such a way as not to excite *emulation*. —To imitate an example is one thing ; to rival any person, and endeavour to obtain a superiority over him, is another. It is very true, as is maintained by the defenders of emulation, that it is impossible to make progress towards excellence without outstripping others. But surely there is a great difference between the attainment of a superiority over others being a mere consequence of exertions arising from other motives, and a zeal to attain this object being itself a motive for exertion. Every one must see, that the effects produced on the mind in the two cases will be extremely dissimilar. Emulation is a desire of surpassing others, for the sake of superiority, and is a very powerful

motive to exertion. As such, it is employed in most public schools ; but in none, I believe, ancient or modern, has it been so fully and systematically brought into action, as in the schools of Dr. Bell and Mr. Lancaster. Whatever may be the merits of the schools of either of these gentlemen in other respects, (a question on which it is unnecessary to enter,) in this they appear to me to commit such an offence against Christian morals, that no merits could atone for it. I cannot but think emulation an unhallowed principle of action ;—as scarcely, if at all, to be disjoined from jealousy and envy, from pride and contention ;—incompatible with loving our neighbour as ourselves ;—and a principle of such potency as to be likely to engross the mind, and turn it habitually and violently from the motives which it should be the great business of education to cherish and render predominant ; namely, a sense of duty, and gratitude and love to God. Instead of enlarging on this subject, I beg leave to refer the reader to Mr. Gisborne's remarks upon it, in his " Duties of Women." If emulation is an unhallowed motive, it cannot innocently be employed, whatever good effects may be expected

from it. We must not do evil that good may come. But if any Christian should deem it not absolutely unhallowed, few will deny, I think, that it is questionable and dangerous. Even then, in this more favourable view of emulation, ought it to be used, except it can be shown to be necessary for the infusion of vigour into the youthful mind, and for securing a respectable progress in literature? I can say, from experience, that it is not necessary for the attainment of those ends. In a numerous family, with which I am well acquainted, emulation has been carefully and successfully excluded, and yet the acquirements of the different children have been very satisfactory. I can bear the same testimony with respect to a large Sunday School, with which I have been connected for many years.—I have often heard of *virtuous* emulation; but can emulation ever be so characterised in a Christian sense? Whether it may in that loose sense of virtue which those adopt who take the worldly principle of honour for their rule, I will not stop to inquire.

But it is not sufficient not to excite and employ emulation on plan and system, as a stimulus in education: great care ought to be taken

to exclude it. And great care will be necessary; for it will be continually ready to show itself; and if not checked, it will soon attain strength, strike its roots deep in the heart, and produce bitter fruits, which, in the eyes of a Christian, will be ill compensated by the extraordinary vigour and energy it will give to scholastic studies. When examples are held out for *imitation*, (a very different thing, be it always remembered, from *emulation*,) or as warnings, the child must be made sensible that its state, in the sight of God, is rendered neither better nor worse by the virtues or the faults of others, except as far as they may have influenced, or may have failed to influence, its own conduct;—that it ought to love its neighbour as itself, and to rejoice in every advance made by another in what is good, and to lament over all his faults and defects, without one selfish thought being suffered to check the joy or the concern:—that it ought therefore to wish all its companions all success in their common studies with the same sincerity with which it wishes for its own success, and to be affected by their faults and failures in the same manner it would by its own. It should be made sensible, in proportion as it may give way to

feelings the reverse of these, that its " eye will be evil because others are good ;" and it will act in opposition to the injunction, " Mind not every one his own things, but every one also the things of others ; and to a whole host of scriptural precepts and examples. These things must be inculcated, not by lectures in general terms, but by applying such views to all the little incidents which call for them as they successively arise. The child must also be made sensible how much better it is for himself that his companions should be eminent for laudable attainments, and good qualities ; for that, in proportion to their excellence in these respects, they will be useful and estimable companions, and ought to be objects of his affection. All little boasts of having done better than this or that brother or sister, and every disposition to disappointment when they succeed best, should be checked, and the lesson of "*rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and of weeping with them that weep,*" must be very diligently inculcated.*

* The foregoing opinions on Emulation have been controverted by a writer in the Christian Observer ; and this important subject is likely to undergo much useful discussion in that respectable publication.

Lastly, a parent must take special care always to give *the example of Jesus Christ a most decided practical pre-eminence* above all others.—It is this to which the child's attention must be continually turned : it is this which he must be taught equally to love and to revere ; it is this alone on which he should learn to rely, with unvarying confidence, as always pure and perfect. In addition to the more direct and immediate benefits he will derive from thus flying to the example of his Saviour for guidance in his Christian path, he will, by the Divine blessing, be powerfully led to love Him, whose blessed image is so frequently before his eyes. He will obtain that near acquaintance with his perfections,—that frequent intercourse, as it were, with Himself,—which will call forth increasing admiration, and reverence, and regard. Thus will commence a transformation into a similitude of that excellence which has found a way to his heart : and, “ beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” he will be “ changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

But all endeavours to make right impressions on the mind of a child will very generally be

found ineffectual, if the character of the parent does not correspond with his instructions, and inspire his child with esteem and affection. It is surprising how God honours his own image among men. Faint as it is, even in the best, still its proximity gives it effect, and it exercises a portion of his own sovereign power over the hearts of his creatures. This has been found to be the case in a remarkable manner among savage and idolatrous nations, when holy men have lived for a length of time among them as Missionaries. Every one must be struck with the effect produced by living examples of the Christian graces, on reading the accounts of the Moravian Missions; and still more, perhaps, when in the history of India he finds what a wonderful ascendancy the holy Swartz obtained over the Hindus of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest. But it is unnecessary to look so far from home, to be convinced of this truth. We every day see it exemplified among ourselves in the respect and affection which good men generally acquire, when their light has long shone before the same neighbourhood. If the beauties of the Christian character thus recommend themselves to persons of mature age,

whose evil habits are often so confirmed, and whose tastes are so vitiated, it will not be matter of wonder that they should have peculiar charms for the minds of children. Let a parent exhibit this character with consistency and prudence, and he will seldom fail to be loved and revered by his children. And when this is the case, what authority will belong to his example! what weight to all his admonitions! what ready attention will be paid to his very wishes! The difficulties of education will be wonderfully smoothed. Ill-humour, distaste to particular studies, impatience under restraints, eye-service and deceit, a disposition to look on a parent as a hard master, not to mention other evils, will be in a very great degree avoided. If it may be allowable to use the Prophet's language, "crooked places will be made straight, and rough places plain." But in proportion as a parent fails to resemble in character that Divine Being who appoints him, as it were, his vicegerent in his family, this picture will fail to be realized; and in the worst cases it will be reversed. Let, then, every parent look well to himself.—Having touched on this most important subject, when treating of education at an

earlier age, I will not enlarge on it now. I cannot, however, omit to mention an incident, which (thanks to God!) made a very salutary impression on me many years ago. On entering the school-room of a Moravian Family, I saw, amidst some appropriate inscriptions on the wall, intended as mementos to the children, the following one put up by the teacher for her own use: "Never correct in anger." Much might be expected in a young family where the governess was so conscious of the importance of strict watchfulness over herself, as to record, in the face of her scholars, her own condemnation, if she should ever suffer herself to be led to exercise her authority in one of its most delicate and important functions, when disqualified by a want of temper from exercising it properly. Such self-attention could not be confined to a single point, but, having entered the system, would pervade its different parts. My expectations were not disappointed. A more estimable teacher, and better taught, better principled, more affectionate, more orderly, and more happy scholars, I think I never saw. The excellent instructress would find, in her own personal improvement, and in the gratifi-

cation she could not fail to derive from the state of her scholars, and from their respect and love, a tenfold recompense for all her resolute self-scrutiny and self-denial. Let us follow her steps, and we may all humbly hope for a like reward.

It is my object to propose, for the consideration of parents, the general principles in education which appear to me to form the right foundation for such details in practice, as the endless variety in the dispositions of children may require. With one exception, therefore, I shall not enter on a consideration of specific faults. This exception is *deceit*.—I select this vice, not because it is pre-eminent in enormity, but because it cherishes all other vices, by opposing itself to the means employed for their removal. By the secrecy in which it delights, and the veil which it casts over the character, it prevents evils from being clearly discovered; and by assuming a fair appearance of repentance when they are detected; and sometimes even when they secretly exist in great malignity, by making a specious show of the opposite virtues, it baffles the endeavours of relations to remove them, and completely shuts out genuine repent-

ance and reformation. While other vices pre-
dominate in the soul, there are often recurrences
of deep remorse and earnest prayer, and of
very considerable exertions to conquer them ;
—but deceit usually stifles mental pangs, lulls
the soul into a fatal apathy, and employs all
those energies in rivetting its chains, which
ought to be exerted for its deliverance. Other
vices are, generally, neither present at all times,
nor regular in their return: but deceit is
always at work, and scarcely allows of an
interval, in which the soul is so far relieved
from its immediate influence as to be in a state
to be recovered from its thralldom. No wonder,
then, that this vice should possess an awful
pre-eminence in vitiating the character, and
hardening the heart! In our blessed Saviour's
severe condemnation of the Scribes and Pha-
risees, where he accuses them of almost every
species of crime, their hypocrisy is placed in
the very fore-front of their offences, and insisted
upon again and again ; “ Woe unto you, Scribes
and Pharisees, hypocrites!” How anxious,
then, should a parent be to guard every avenue
to such a crime, by checking the first dawnings
of art and deceit, whatever appearance they

may assume, and by encouraging truth, ingenuousness, and simplicity of character in every possible way. The child ought to be armed against temptations to deceit, by being forewarned on what occasions they will present themselves, and instructed by what means they are to be resisted. He should also be strongly reminded, when such occasions actually occur, of the existing danger; and such a course should be pursued by the parent as to facilitate his escape. Thus, when a fault has been committed, or a little difference with a playfellow has occurred, and an explanation is required by the parent, great care should be taken to remind the child of the duty of truth and ingenuousness; and to check that eagerness and haste, in the relation of circumstances which will be likely to lead him to give a false colour to them. The danger of his palliating some things, and exaggerating others, should be pointed out; and while he is kindly warned how grievously his fault (if he should have committed one) would be aggravated by such conduct, the loveliness of truth and candour in the eyes both of God and man, and especially under trying circumstances, should be set before him,

and he should receive every proper encouragement to adhere to them. When he has done his duty in this respect, whatever may have been amiss in his preceding conduct should be noticed in as lenient a manner as is compatible with a full maintenance of the distinction between right and wrong, and a due sense of the importance of the particular case. He should be made to feel how tenderly he is treated on account of his candour, and how very different his treatment would have been had he acted otherwise. But, above all, he should be made sensible of the terrible load of Divine wrath which must press upon every child who endeavours to hide or excuse a fault by lies, prevarication, or concealment: of the impossibility of pardon without repentance, and of the impossibility of cordial repentance when the mouth will not "make confession unto salvation." Then should be described in mild and sober, but warm colours, (warm from the lively, parental, and Christian impressions whence they proceed,) the infinite blessing of an approving conscience, and of that peace which passeth all understanding, arising from a sense of sin forgiven, and of Divine favour

restored, contrasted with the corroding sense of unpardoned guilt, and of being subject to the frown of an offended God. If the child has been well-educated, his feelings will readily respond to the notes you strike, and you will see in his countenance and air a cordial assent to the scriptural representation, that "the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and that the wicked has no peace, but "is like the troubled sea, which cannot rest."—When a lie has been detected, it should be treated as one of the greatest crimes, and every endeavour should be used to fix its guilt on the conscience, and lead the culprit to deep and genuine repentance. Even much lighter instances of falsehood should meet with very serious attention. Pains should be taken to point out their connexion with lies, and their derivation from the same principle, and, consequently, their hatefulness in the sight of God. The conduct which ought to have been pursued by the child should be particularized, and its beauty and happy consequences dwelt upon and contrasted with the deformity of the fault which he has committed, and the guilt, and remorse, and parental distrust, and Divine dis-

pleasure which he has incurred.—Deceit often takes deep root in a child from such jokes and tricks being allowed as afford it encouragement. Jokes and tricks are not only generally connected with art, but very frequently derive their supposed merit from that very circumstance. Surely this is playing with edged tools! The child, who is allowed to sharpen his wits in over-reaching his companions in joke, will soon acquire a taste for that employment of his faculties, and simplicity and plain dealing will appear insipid to him. From deceiving in jest, he will soon proceed to deceive in earnest; and the pleasure which he has been in the habit of deriving from success in the one course will be felt, and perhaps in a higher degree, from success in the other. Is it not by much the safer course to discountenance, and even forbid, the exercise of ingenuity in the way that has been mentioned? God, in his wisdom and goodness, has supplied an abundance of innocent means of exhilarating the mind, and drawing forth its powers, and many of them are of the most useful kind. Such will present themselves to every parent, and leave those without excuse who permit dangerous habits among their chil-

dren, for the sake of improving their faculties, and promoting their happiness. I would not say, as the poet does of a bold peasantry, that simplicity and integrity of mind,

When once destroyed, for ever will be lost ;

but I believe, that of all good dispositions these are restored with the greatest difficulty when art, and cunning, and deceit, have had possession of the soul. It sometimes happens, that the harsh means used by a parent to eradicate a fault lead the child to deceit. The temptation to deny his guilt, and escape the very severe punishment he expects, is almost irresistible. Sometimes also the methods taken to extort confession when a fault is strongly suspected, lead to a false confession, when the child is really innocent. With what horror have I seen a lady recollect a scene of this kind in which she was engaged when a child !*

One of the most pregnant sources of deceit in children is the art to which those who manage them have recourse. If a parent is dis-

* There is an interesting anecdote on this subject in the Christian Observer, vol. ii. p. 665.

ingenuous ; if he employs false pretences to attain his ends ; if he affects dispositions which he does not feel ; or in any other way violates truth and sincerity in his conduct towards his child, or even in his conduct towards other persons in the presence of his child ; he may be assured that great evil will follow. It is surprising how quick children are in discovering the dispositions and motives of those about them, and in detecting any inconsistency between their practice and their professions. This acuteness and sensibility, however, while they make a bad example in a parent extremely dangerous, give proportionate weight and efficacy to a good one. Let him uniformly adhere to simplicity and godly sincerity ; let him yield to no inducement to violate those fundamental and beautiful branches of the Christian character, by any appearances of present expediency, either in the management of his child or in any other part of his conduct ; and, employing at the same time other fit means to promote the spiritual welfare of his offspring, he may look forward with confidence to a happy result. His example will be a daily lecture of

the most impressive kind. But no soundness of doctrine, no industry in teaching, no ability in persuasion, will be sufficient to afford him a rational hope of success, if his own example is opposed to his instructions, and the child has reason to suspect that he is acting a part.