

CHAP. IX

Hardihood. — Moderate Habits. — Artificial Hardships. — Moderation favourable to Elevation of Character. — Rules. — Preparation for Prayer. — Self-Examination. — Prayer. — How long boys should be kept under domestic Education. — Preparation for School. — Governesses.

IN a system such as I have recommended, marked by the absence of harshness and violence on the part of the parents and of contests and collisions among the children, there may appear to be some danger of a want of the hardihood requisite in the troubles and disappointments that will be met with in life. But though the circumstances which in general tend most powerfully to promote this quality are excluded by our plan of education, yet, under the guidance of a parent who turns his attention to this point, those which remain will be sufficient for the attainment of our object. Even in the best-regulated families, troubles will arise among the

children. The loss of a play-thing, a personal accident, a lesson ill learned ; above all, a hope disappointed ;—all these, and numberless other circumstances of constant recurrence, will checker their happiness, and accustom them to difficulties and trials, which it will be the parent's endeavour to convert into lessons of patient endurance, if not of cheerful resignation.

But there is another course, perfectly compatible with that just mentioned, of high importance for arming the young mind against the difficulties and troubles of life : this is, to accustom children to moderation, and to teach them from the first to do as much as may be for themselves, instead of depending on others for their conveniences and comforts. Moderate habits have been celebrated as sources of happiness by Mr. Paley, and with the felicity with which he handles most topics unconnected with his erroneous principle (as I deem it) of general expediency. It is, therefore, perfectly unnecessary for me to enlarge on the value of such habits.* It is apparent, how contented with a little those are prepared to be, whose habits lead them to look for little ; and how large a portion of the

* Vide Moral Philosophy, chapter on Human Happiness.

trials of those who are used to flattery, luxury, and self-indulgence, will pass over their heads. The want of delicate food and a soft bed will not be felt by a child who has been used to plain fare and a mattress; and rising early in the winter will be no hardship to one who has been always accustomed to it. The habit also of shifting for themselves (to use a homely but expressive phrase) will not only stimulate the activity of children, and call forth their ingenuity, and make them more pleased with little acquisitions, as fruits of their own skill and exertions, but it will powerfully tend to preserve them from sources of discontent. There is no bound to the unreasonable wishes of those who are taught to think it the business of others to obtain for them what they wish. They will often appear to wish almost solely for the sake of giving trouble. But whether they really do so or not, the unfortunate person who is expected to satisfy this immeasurable capacity of wishing, will be extremely likely to be of that opinion, and execute the unpleasant task with no little dissatisfaction, if not with ill-humour. These dispositions will be caught by the children, and add greatly to the discontent excited by their posterous and unsatisfied wants. This, I con-

ceive, is one leading cause of the unhappiness of the children, and the unfeeling conduct of the female attendants, so often observable when children of rank walk out in the parks in London. How different is the situation of children who are taught to depend upon themselves as much as possible for their comforts and pleasures! Their wishes will be moderate and reasonable; for they will be bounded by their sense of their own ability to supply them, of which they will form a far better estimate than of the ability of others. What they do obtain will be highly grateful to them; and when they fail to obtain any thing, they will impute the failure to themselves; and this circumstance will serve to stifle complaint, or afford the parent an opportunity of showing its absurdity. The propriety of the system here recommended will be readily acknowledged by children. They will easily understand, that we ought to interfere as little as may be with the happiness of others by causing them trouble; and that indifference to the ease and comfort of those about us argues a want of feeling which must be hateful to our kind and compassionate Saviour.

Natural methods of promoting moderation,

patience, and a due measure of hardihood, will be found amply sufficient, without having recourse to unnatural and artificial austerities and sufferings. These I should exceedingly disapprove, though I fear they are sometimes found in the plans of education adopted by good parents. Surely they are calculated to sour the temper of the child, and weaken filial affection. What God sends, we all learn to bear more cheerfully than what is brought upon us (as we are apt to think) by the mere will of man. Besides, when God is clearly the author of the event, its rigours are tempered and softened in various ways. In judgment he remembers mercy. But when it proceeds more from man, even though man does nothing without the Divine permission, it bears marks of his short-sightedness and violence. Compare the sufferings inflicted by the Inquisition, with those which proceed from natural distempers. Well might David, when allowed a choice of evils, say, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

The habits which have been mentioned, besides preparing children to meet the difficulties and bear the evils of life, will give the mind a

certain elevation. Self-indulgence leads to frivolity; enervates the soul; pampers the lower, and chills and depresses the higher, part of our nature. Our blessed Saviour said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." He well knew how incompatible self-indulgence is with the recovery of the Divine image in the soul. How can liberality, magnanimity, cheerful contentment under evils, and moderation and spirituality of mind in the midst of unforeseen prosperity, be expected from the self-indulgent man? His aims will be low, his conduct marked by meanness; and he will cling to this earth, the only source of his pleasures. If we wish this picture to be reversed, we must omit no means of instilling, by the Divine blessing, an opposite spirit into our offspring.

• Rules are necessary in every young family, and, perhaps, for no purpose more particularly than for the promotion of self-denial and moderation. They should be simple and definite, and not needlessly numerous; for there never ought to be room for question, when one is broken, whether it could be easily understood and remembered. But rules should always be

considered as so connected with the principles from which they flow, that they must be interpreted rather largely, and regarded as extending to every thing *manifestly* of the same kind with that which is expressed by their letter. All cunning methods of evading them, and all special pleading as to their meaning must be decidedly suppressed. A child must be early taught to look to those general principles and motives, which are the guides of the advanced Christian; and by no means to consider every thing allowable which is not forbidden by a specific rule, and nothing as a duty which a rule does not prescribe. In laying down rules, the parent will accommodate them to age and sex, and in a measure also to individual character. He must take care that they shall not only be reasonable, but that, if it be possible, they shall be seen and felt to be so by those who are to obey them. It is obvious, therefore, that they should not be formed hastily, and much less when a fault has just been committed by a child, and the mind of the parent may be less serene than is usual. When established, they should not be lightly changed. But it is better to change or annul a rule, than to wink at the breach of it;

—a mode of proceeding which must produce the worst effects on the principles and habits of the child, and must undermine the authority of the parent.

My readers will expect that I should say something on the subject of prayer; but, important as that subject is, I am desirous first of adverting to a subject perhaps still more important,—the preparation for prayer. I imagine that coldness of heart and wandering of thought in prayer proceed more from a want of due preparation than from any wrong system in prayer itself. If this is the case with persons of mature age, it is likely to be much more so with children, whose minds are so lively and volatile, and whose self-command and habits of piety are so weak and imperfect. Consider what it is to make a child pass immediately from its play to its prayers, with scarcely the interval of a moment to quiet its mind, and with no endeavour on the part of the parent to bring its soul into a frame fit for addressing its Almighty Maker and Redeemer. And yet this case, I fear, or one very like to it, is not uncommon. Surely this practice must be offensive to the Lord of heaven and earth, and lead the

child to look on prayer, not as an exercise of pious affections, but as little more than the decent repetition of a good form of words. At times, when the mind is in a more favourable state for prayer, it is often scarcely, if at all, raised to God, because the attention has not been called to the nature of the duty to be performed. A few words from a parent, before the child falls on his knees, would frequently give, under God's blessing, the spirit of prayer to a service which may appear likely otherwise to be little better than a mere ceremony. How deserving, then, is this point of a parent's attention! Our Liturgy sets before him an excellent example, in the address preceding the Confession; the object of which is to prepare the congregation for the service which follows.

But another most important preparation for prayer remains to be mentioned. This is, self-examination;—an exercise of the soul indispensable, I think, to every Christian, and requiring to be begun at a very early period. Of course, its circumstances must depend on the age of the child, but its substance ought by no means to be omitted. A very young child (one of two or three years old) cannot be expected to examine

himself; but the parent must remind him of one or two faults, or one or two victories over pressing temptation on very recent occasions, and lead him to right feelings respecting them. By degrees, if this call to recollection is regularly practised once or twice a-day, the exercise, though *extremely* short at first, will become a little longer, and the child's feelings will be drawn into the habit, first, of being more easily led into the right course, and, after a while, of taking it of their own accord. Next, the child will begin himself to recollect what his conduct has been in some few leading points, and that with less and less help from the parent: and so he will proceed, till at length he will extend his view to more points, and require no assistance. In all the stages of this process, great caution should be employed not to fatigue or harass: and it will be better to advance too gradually than too rapidly: to do too little, rather than too much. It is also extremely important, that this incipient religious exercise should be made to wear as gentle and amiable an aspect as is compatible with the holy dispositions which should accompany it. As it is one which, after a time, the child is to carry on in silence, and

solely by his own reflections, if he becomes at all disgusted with it, it will either be neglected entirely or performed superficially and without advantage. Let the tenderness and patience, no less than the persevering assiduity, of the parent be in any tolerable degree proportioned to the high importance of the habit which he wishes to see established, and there is the fairest prospect of success. The object should be, to lead the child to think over the principal events of the preceding day; to recollect his faults with contrition, and his blessings with thankfulness: and then, to consider a little the day which is commencing, and with a disposition to behave well through it—to avoid past faults, and to be grateful for expected mercies. Every care should be taken to infuse cordiality and piety into this course; and to guard it against every shade of insincerity, by turning the eye of the child from the parent to God, and from outward appearance to the heart. Every thing should be accommodated to the mind and habits of a child, and made to wear an easy and a simple dress. Even the name is of consequence: and if the long term, “self-examination,” can be made to give way to one more intelligible, there

will be an advantage in the change. The time preferred by me for this exercise is just before the morning private prayers of each child. Even after the child is able to examine himself without assistance, the watchful eye of a parent will be wanted to see that he in the main keeps his thoughts rightly employed, and does not fall into a habit of letting them wander to things of a different nature from those which ought to engage the mind. A parent may, from time to time, inform himself, or rather *herself*, how far the child has been engaged in the appointed duty, by asking him what has been the subject of his thoughts. Here, however, great delicacy is requisite, and the inquiry must be sparingly repeated, lest it should lead to falsehood and hypocrisy. If the thoughts appear to wander, the exercise, though always very short at the age under consideration, must generally be shortened, and a right direction must be given to it, by suggesting, before the child begins to think, the general subjects (two or three only) on which they should be employed. When there happens to have been any thing very remarkable in the child's conduct, it is always advisable to

point its attention to the fact for two or three succeeding days.

The great advantage of the practice which I am recommending, not only as a preparation for prayer, but on other accounts, is apparent. As a preparation for prayer, it must produce, with the Divine blessing, the most salutary effect in spiritualizing the mind, and turning the thoughts to faults, and wants, and weaknesses; and also to motives for gratitude and praise. In other respects, it must produce, in a measure, the benefits which are the fruits of holy self-examination in adults. It must promote self-knowledge, watchfulness, and a tender conscience. Thus, we may humbly hope, that God will render it an important barrier against the inroads of evil, and a guardian of all that is good. On what vantage-ground does a parent stand, when, on observing a fault, the child can be reminded how much at variance it is with his resolutions and his prayers, after recollecting, in a former self-examination, a similar fault; and what pain the present transgression will cause him when he reflects upon it at the next season for reviewing the incidents of the

day, and saying his prayers! Instances of good conduct will give rise also to very useful observations resting on the same foundation. Children are so volatile, so eager in their pursuits, so forgetful of good lessons, and so disinclined to self-denial, that it is of the highest importance to introduce as early as possible a habit of religious thought and recollection at stated times. Is not, then, self-examination particularly desirable for children; and ought parents to think any pains ill-bestowed which may promote it? And I fully believe, from experience, that, if their endeavours are well-directed and persevering, and, above all, conducted in a right spirit, they will not be used in vain.

The prayers for young children should be very short, and extremely simple. As soon as an infant can lisp, its mother will let it kneel in her lap, and repeat after her a *very* few words, addressed to God, after it has seen its little brothers and sisters at their prayers. It will like to follow their example. By degrees it will require less and less assistance in offering up its little prayer, and that prayer will be, in a very small degree, extended. The mother's leading object will be, to initiate her tender

period, a moderate share of knowledge and ability will enable parents to educate their son, and the mother will be likely to have a due ascendancy over him. But at the age which I have mentioned, in order to keep pace with other boys, he ought to begin to employ a large proportion of his school-hours in studying Latin; and his father will seldom have leisure to superintend that study regularly and sufficiently; and, what is more important, his mother will generally find that he has become too large and robust to be easily managed in the father's absence, and that the welfare of the boy, if not her own comfort, requires that he should be placed in other hands. Scarcely any thing can be so mischievous to a boy, as to be master of an individual, whom, in the regular course of his education, he is bound to obey; but the evil is extremely aggravated when that individual is a parent. When this shameful and unnatural scene is presented, how totally reversed are those provisions which the Divine Being has made for the progress of children in knowledge, and in right dispositions, and for the usefulness and the comfort of parents! We know in what abomination a rebellious son was

held under the Jewish law ; and certainly he is not less offensive to correct judgment and right feeling under the Christian system.

In such a case, the parents are seldom blameless, especially if it occurs when the boy is young. The father should exert himself with vigour to support the mother's authority ; and she ought to consider it a Christian duty to support her own, and avoid those weaknesses, from whatever amiable sources they may spring, which tend to undermine it. There is a silent dignity about a woman who does not yield to them ; and a son uncorrupted by bad companions can seldom resist its influence, and conduct himself towards such a mother with disrespect.

In families where a considerable share of the school business devolves on a governess, it is unfit that, when a boy is above her management, he should continue to be her scholar ; and, if a better arrangement cannot be made for his education, he must go to school.

Little needs to be said on the advantage of keeping a boy at home, while he can be duly educated and properly managed. This course is highly desirable for the purpose of strengthening his principles, and forming his habits. I

have already said something on the high importance of laying a sound and broad foundation in these great points, during the continuance of domestic education. A parent who feels on this subject as he ought will be anxious to obtain as many of the first years of life as may be for the perfecting, establishing, strengthening, settling that foundation. He will bear in mind the original indisposition of man to holiness, his levity,—his lively impressions from present objects, his neglect of future consequences, and his dislike of a persevering opposition to the natural bent of his own feelings. He will also bear in mind the force of the temptations which abound in that world (and every school is a branch of it) into which his son must soon be sent; and he will be far more inclined to regret that the period most favourable for paternal instruction is necessarily so limited, than he will be disposed to abridge it.

Towards the close of that period, a boy must be prepared for the new course of things which awaits him at school, and be cautioned in a more particular manner against some of its leading temptations. It would be necessary to

enter into details on these points, if the next period in education, that which is passed by boys at school, were under consideration. Suffice it here to say, that in his lessons he must be taught to look for less assistance, and to accommodate himself to his task, rather than expect it to be accommodated to him. He must also learn to submit to general rules, even when they bear hard upon him; and to expect very few exceptions in his favour. Kindness to those who are less than himself, and patience and good humour under provocations and ill treatment, must be earnestly inculcated. But, above all, he must be warned against falsehood and deceit, those flagrant vices of schools; and increased diligence must be used to strengthen him against temptations of every kind. At the same time, the bonds of filial affection and filial confidence must be strengthened, if it be possible, as barriers against evil, or as conductors, under God, to the right path again, when he has strayed from it.

No distinction has been made in the foregoing remarks between the education of boys and that of girls. During the greater part of the period under consideration, the modes pursued

with the different sexes should be, I think, very similar. In the last year or two, the boys and the girls will begin to separate both in their studies and in their amusements. It is not necessary to be more particular on this subject. In all that regards by far the most important part of education, the training of them, by God's help, for Himself and a blessed eternity, the system will be the same for both.

In many, and especially in large families, education cannot be properly conducted without a governess. In the choice of one, good principles, good sense, good temper, sobriety and firmness of mind, and competent knowledge, are the first requisites; ornamental qualifications hold a second place. Unfortunately, the generality of young women, who offer themselves for that situation, are much better furnished with showy accomplishments than with more solid acquirements; and, for this and other reasons, parents must not raise their expectations high when they take a governess. Much, however, of the disappointment which they too often experience on that occasion, may be owing to themselves. If they do not make fair and charitable allowances for her defects, and con-

duct themselves towards her in a manner respectful, kind, and friendly, and thus entitle themselves to her regard and confidence; and if they do not make a right use of their influence, by leading her gently and gradually into such methods of education as they approve; they must not wonder if they find great evils in the school-room. How can they expect a very important and delicate trust to be well executed, when they do not show proper attentions to their agent, nor put her into the way of adopting the course which will meet their wishes? How can they hope that she, a stranger, will proceed with fidelity, tenderness, and zeal, in spite of the difficulties which she will experience among her pupils, when they, the parents, do not exert themselves to lessen those difficulties, and to smooth her course? How can they hope, that their children will find in her a portion of parental affection and solicitude, when she has found in themselves little support and friendship, though standing in so much need of them? Let parents take a different course, and they may see a very different result. They may then find how active are the exertions of affection, how large the returns made by gratitude, and

how great is the docility and how warm the sympathy of a young woman, thrown on their care, and beyond her hopes, finding in them, as it were, second parents.—However, I would caution those who employ a governess, in the midst of their kindness to remember what place she holds in their family, and to what situation in life she must return when she leaves it. They are bound to avoid any line of conduct which may place her above her station. To act otherwise would be disqualifying her for the duties of the school-room, and doing her a serious injury. They ought to consider eminently good conduct on her part as laying them under an obligation never to be forgotten.