

Female Piety—The Young Woman's Guide Through Life to Immortality

John Angell James, (1785—1859)

TO YOUNG MOTHERS

"I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your **grandmother** Lois and in your **mother** Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." 2 Timothy 1:5

"Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the **younger women** to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be keepers at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God." Titus 2:3-5

What associations with all that is lovely are connected with that blissful word, **a mother!** To that sound the tenderest emotions of the human heart—whether in the bosom of the savage or the sage, wake up. The beauty of that term is seen, and its power felt, alike by the prince and the peasant—the rustic and the philosopher. It is one of the words which infant lips are first taught to lisp—and the charm of which the infant heart is first to feel. It is a note to the music of which it is difficult to say whose soul most responsively vibrates—that of the parent or the child. Humanity, however semi-brutalized by oppression, by ignorance, or even by vice, has rarely been sunk so low as to have the last spark of maternal love extinguished—or the last sensibility of this kind crushed out of it.

This strength of woman's love to her child must be turned to good account, and be directed in its exercises to the best and most useful purposes. There is this difference, and it is a momentous one, between the maternal care of the animals and that of woman; in animals it goes no further than provision and protection—**training** forms no part of it. The same power which endowed the beasts with the habits which belong to its nature, endows also its offspring. The latter, without any pains bestowed on its education, or any solicitude cherished for its welfare, will learn the lessons of its existence by the instincts of nature, and be capable of rising to its specific perfection, unaided either by parent or teacher. Not so the young of the human species; they also require **provision** and **protection**. But more than this they need **instruction**. And who must be their instructor? First of all, and chief of all—their mother.

But before we reason and descant upon the subject of a mother's duties, let us look at facts. It is universally admitted that scarcely any great man has appeared in our world who did not owe much, if not most, in **the formation of his character—to his mother's influence.** In a very useful little volume, by Jabez Burns, entitled "The Mothers of the Wise and Good," there is a series of biographical memorials of eminent sons of pious and judicious mothers, amounting to about fifty, among whom are included Alfred the Great, Lord Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Sir William Jones, and George Washington, among the illustrious of this world. While Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, Dr. Doddridge, Dr. Dwight, Mr. Newton, Mr. Cecil, Leigh Richmond, and many other eminent Christians—all of them blessed with pious or eminently judicious mothers, to whom they owed their eminence in the church or in the world.

At a pastoral conference, held not long since, at which about one hundred and twenty American clergymen, united in the bonds of a common faith, were assembled, each was invited to state the human instrumentality to which, under the Divine blessing, he attributed his conversion. How many of these, think you, gave the honor of it to their mother? Of one hundred and twenty—more than one hundred! Here then are facts, which are only selected from myriads of others, to prove a mother's power, and to demonstrate at the same time her responsibility. But how shall we account for this? **What gives her this influence? What is the secret of her power?** Several things.

First, there is no doubt **the ordinance of God.** He who created us, and formed the ties of social life, and who gave all the sweet influences and tender susceptibilities of our various relationships, appointed that a mother's power over the soul of her child should be thus powerful. It is God's ordinance, and the woman who forgets or neglects this, is disobedient to a Divine institute. God has made the child to be peculiarly susceptible of the mother's power over his mind and heart.

Then comes **a mother's LOVE, which is stronger, at any rate more tender, than a father's.** There is more of intuitiveness, if not of reason, in her affection. She has had more to do with the **physical** being of her child, having borne him in her womb, and fed him from her bosom, and watched him in his cradle—all this naturally and necessarily generates a feeling which nothing else can produce. Now **love is the great motive-power in, and for, human conduct.** "I drew them," said God, "with cords of a man, with bands of love." Here is the true philosophy of both man's natural constitution and of evangelical religion. **Human nature is made to be moved and governed by love—to be drawn with the cords of affection, rather than to be dragged with the chains of severity.**

And woman's heart is made to love! Love is exerted more gently, sweetly, and constringingly upon her child, by her than by the other sex. It makes her more patient, and more ingenious, and therefore, more influential. Her words are more soft, her smile more winning, her frown more commanding, because less alarming and repulsive. The little floweret she has to nurture, opens its petals more readily to the mild beams of her countenance. Hence, to repeat an expression of Monod, already quoted, "The greatest moral power in the world is that which a mother exercises over her young child." Nor is there much exaggeration in that other expression, "She who rocks the cradle—rules the world." An expression, the truth of which will appear to be founded on the next particular.

The mother has most to do with the character, while yet in the flexible state in which it receives its shape. The earliest exercises of thought, emotion, will, and conscience, are all carried on under her eye. She has to do not only with the body in its infancy, but with the soul in its childhood. Both mind and heart are in her hands at that period, when they take their first start for good or for evil. The children learn to lisp their first words, and to form their first ideas, under her teaching. They are almost always in her company, and are **insensibly to themselves and imperceptibly to her, receiving a right or wrong bias from her!** She is the first 'model of character' they witness—the first exhibitions of right and wrong in practice are what they see in her. They are the constant observers of the passions, the graces, the virtues, and the faults—which are shown in her words, disposition, and actions. **She is therefore unconsciously to herself educating them, not only by designed teaching—but by all she does or says in their presence!**

Children are imitative creatures. During their early years, **imitation** is the regent of the soul, and they who are least swayed by 'reason', are most governed by 'example'. Learning to talk is the effect of imitation—not intuition. And as children so early and so insensibly learn to repeat **sounds**, so may they also learn to copy **actions** and **habits**. This applies to the mother in a fuller sense than it does to the father of course, just because she is more constantly with the children in the early stages of their existence. It is therefore of immense importance that everyone who sustains this relation should have an accurate idea of her own great power over her children. She should be deeply and duly impressed with **the potency of her influence**.

This has peculiar force in reference to the mothers of the middle class, and still more to those of the working classes. In the upper circles of society, the task of educating the infant, is usually entrusted upon servants. The nursery is not much, it is to be feared, the resort of many titled or wealthy

mothers. Aristocratic habits, in some cases, can scarcely be made to square with maternal ones. Happy are the women who are not lifted by rank or wealth out of the circle of those tender and constant diligences which an infant family requires—out of whose hand 'fashionable etiquette' or 'luxurious indolence' has not taken her responsibility to train her young children.

Mothers then should be thoroughly acquainted with the work that is allotted to them. I speak not of the *physical* training of the children, that is not my department; nor primarily of their *intellectual* culture—but of their **social, moral, and spiritual** education. **A mother's object and duty, are the formation of character.** She has not merely to communicate knowledge—but **habits**. Her especial department is to cultivate the **heart**—and to regulate the **life**. Her aim must be not only what her children are to know, but what they are to **be** and **do**. She is to look at them as the future members of society, and heads of families of their own—but above all as probationers for eternity! This, I repeat, must be taken up as **her primary work—the formation of character for both worlds!**

Teacher and tutors will most probably be employed in the future intellectual training—but **a mother's part from infancy, is to form habits of godly character.**

Many have no other idea of education than the communication of knowledge. Much has been said of late years on the distinction between instruction and education. They are by no means synonymous. The etymology of the two words is worth considering. To "instruct," is derived from a Latin word, which signifies "to put on," or "in." To instruct is therefore simply to put knowledge into the mind. The word "educate," comes also from a Latin word, which signifies to lead or draw forth. To educate, therefore, means to draw out the faculties of the soul, to call into exercise and invigorate its intellectual and moral powers. Both together constitute the duty of those who have to form the character. Ideas must be poured in, and the recipient must be taught what to do with them.

We hear much said about 'educating children for worldly accomplishments', which may be well enough in their place and in their measure, but they are only subordinate to something higher and better. They are not the whole of education, nor even the best part of it. They are only the polish of the surface—there should be solid gold for the substance. The intellectual part of our nature may be considered as merely the casket—the moral part as the jewel. Yet many leave the diamond uncut and unpolished, while they are careful to load its case with tinsel!

A mother should look upon her offspring with the idea, "That child has to live in two worlds, and to act a part in both; and it is my duty to begin his education for both, and to lay in infancy the foundation of his character—and happiness for time and eternity too. What ought to be my qualifications, and my diligence, for such a task?" Ah, what? Deep thoughtfulness certainly on the momentous nature of your charge. It is a awesome responsibility to be a parent, especially a mother, and to have the training of men and women—both for time and for eternity! A distinguished philosopher has said that "all the world is but the pupil and disciple of female influence!"

Every mother, therefore, has, so far as her individual influence goes, the world for her scholar. O woman! your child's welfare for all time and all eternity too, depends much upon your conduct towards him during the period he is under your influence in the first years of his being. To you is committed the care of the infant's **body**—the healthfulness, the vigor, and comfort of which for all his future existence upon earth depend much upon you. What would be your feelings of poignant remorse, if by any neglect of yours, if by a fall, or an accident, the result of your carelessness, the poor babe was injured in his spine, or distorted in his limbs! Oh! to see that young cripple injured for life in bodily comfort—ever presenting to you the sad memorials of your guilty neglect!

Yet what is this to the sadder spectacle of a deformed and crippled **soul**—a character distorted into crooked and frightful shapes, and to have the tormenting reflection, that this was the result of your neglect!

The poor child in the former case may have his compensation in all the sweet influences and consolations of saving faith—and the distressed mother may assuage the anguish of remorse by the thought that her neglect may have been among the all things that worked together for good to her son—but where in the latter case is consolation to be obtained, or who can wonder that such a Rachel mourning over her lost child, lost through her neglect, refuses to be comforted?

Qualify yourself for maternal duties above all things by sincere and eminent piety. A mother should never forget that those little engaging creatures which play about the room so gaily and so innocently, with all the unconsciousness of childhood, are young immortals—beings destined to eternity—creatures placed on earth on probation for heaven—and that much will depend upon her, whether the everlasting ages shall be spent by them in torment or in bliss! This is an overwhelming idea! One would almost think that solicitude about this matter would be so overpowering as to extinguish parental delight. But a mother cannot look at the babe that is feeding at her bosom, and smiling sweetly in her face—as if it meant the thanks it had not

yet learned to speak; or watch his slumbers in his cradle, breathing as softly as if he lived without breathing at all; and at the same time feel her soul shiver and shudder in the dark shadow cast over her spirit by such a thought as "Oh, would you live to be a profligate in this world—and a fiend in the eternal world!"

Instead of a reflection so harrowing to every maternal feeling, she exults in the hope that the dear babe will be a holy, useful, happy Christian on earth—and then a glorified immortal in heaven. Such reflections ought to be sometimes in the mind of every parent. All should realize the sublime idea that their houses are the schools for eternity; their children the scholars; themselves the teachers; and evangelical religion the lesson. Yes, with every infant born into the family comes the injunction from God, "Take this child and bring it up for Me!" God sent this child into the world, to be trained up in the way he should go—that is in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Those parents who neglect the religious education of their children, whatever else they may impart, are more guilty than Herod! He slew the children of others—they slay their own children! He slew only the body—they slay the soul! He slew them by hired assassins—they slay their children themselves! We shudder at the cruelties of those who sacrificed their babes to Moloch; but how much more dreadful an immolation do they practice, who offer up their sons and daughters to Satan, by neglecting the education of their souls, and leaving them to grow up in ignorance of God and their eternal destiny!

But can any one, will any one, teach, or teach effectually—that religion which she does not feel and practice, herself? Therefore I say a mother's heart must be deeply imbued with piety, if she would teach it to her children. Without this, can she have the will to teach, the heart to pray, the right to hope? Mothers, can you conceive of a higher, nobler elevation to which in your maternal relation you can rise, than when, to the opening mind of your wondering child, you give the first idea of God? Or when you direct him to that divine babe who was born at Bethlehem; was subject to his parents; and who died for sinners upon the cross? Or than when you talk to them of heaven, the dwelling-place of God and of his angels?

O! to see the first look of holy inquisitiveness, and the first tear of infant piety start in the eye; to hear the first question of concern, or the first breathing of prayer from infant lips! How has many a woman's heart amid such scenes swelled with delight, until in an ecstasy of feeling she sank upon her knees and breathed a mother's prayer over the child of her heart, while he looked wonderingly up and felt a mysterious power come over him which he could neither fully express nor understand!

Mothers! Your religion, if it is genuine, will teach you at once the greatness of the work, and your own insufficiency to perform it aright in your own strength. Your business is to train mortals for earth, and immortal beings for God, heaven, and eternity! Even an apostle in the view of such an object exclaimed, "And who is sufficient for these things?" Your work, as to its design, is the same as Paul's. And you, like him, have to contend with the depravity of your children's nature—and all the difficulties arising from your own weakness and sinfulness. A mistake either in your sentiments, your feelings, or your example, may be fatal to your children's eternal welfare. Cultivate, then, a trembling consciousness of your own insufficiency, and cast yourselves by believing, constant, and fervent prayer upon God. Be in an eminent sense, praying mothers. Distrust yourselves—and by believing prayer, secure the aid of Omnipotence.

Do not forget what I have already said, that **AFFECTION is the golden key fitted by God, to the wards of the lock in every human heart**—to the application of which the bolts that nothing else could move, will fly back and open with ease. Severity is out of place in any one, but most of all in woman. But beware of allowing affection to degenerate into a fond and foolish indulgence! A judicious love is as remote from pampering indulgence on the one hand, as it is from moroseness and cruelty on the other. For if 'undue severity' has slain its thousands, 'injudicious and pampering indulgence' has slain its tens of thousands! Fathers are apt to err in the former extreme—mothers in the latter. And it not infrequently happens that these extremes are played off against each other. The father afraid that the mother will spoil the child by indulgence, adopts a harsh treatment to counteract the mischief of his wife's excessive fondness; while the wife compensates the child for the severity of the husband by her own excessive attention to the child's gratification. Thus, like the sharp frost by night, and the hot sun by day, operating in spring to the destruction of the blossom on which their antagonistic influences are made to bear—the opposing treatment of the parents ruins the hapless child who is the subject of it.

Still, while I enjoin **affection**, it must not be allowed to impair **authority**! A parent must not be a tyrant—so neither must he be a slave to his children. It is a painful, and, to the parents, a disgraceful spectacle—to see a family in a state where rebellion reigns rampant—the father deposed, the scepter broken, and the insurgent children possessed of sovereign rule!

The mother, as well as the father, must be **obeyed**—and it is her own fault if she is not! A persevering system of government, where the reins are held tightly in the hand of love—will be sure to produce **submission** at last! But it must be a mixture of kindness, wisdom, and authority. Submission must be felt by a child to be a duty yielded to authority—and not merely a

compliance won by affection. Authority must not stiffen into severity—nor love degenerate into coaxing. Commands must be obeyed—not only because it is pleasant to obey them—but because it is right that they should be obeyed.

A judicious mother will exercise much discrimination, and adapt her treatment to the disposition of her children. There are as many varieties of temperament in some families as there are children. No two children are precisely alike in their minds and character—any more than in their bodies. One is forward and obtrusive, and should be checked and rebuked; another is timid and retiring, and needs to be encouraged and emboldened. One is more easily wrought upon by appeals to her hope; another by reasonings addressed to her fear. One is too shy and reserved, and needs to have frankness and communicativeness encouraged; another is too open and ingenuous, and should be taught caution and self-restraint. **Every child should be a separate study.** Quackery should be banished from the education of children—as well as from medicine. One treatment will no more suit all minds—than one medicine or kind of food all bodies. **A woman who does not know the peculiar dispositions of all her children, and does not adapt her treatment to them, is a very incompetent mother!**

The woman who would fulfill the duties of her parental relationship, must surrender herself to her mission, and be content to make some sacrifices, and endure some privations. Who can witness the patient submission of the mother-bird to her solitude and self-denial, during the term of incubation—without admiration at the quiet and willing surrender which instinct teaches her to make of her usual liberty and enjoyments? A woman must be willing, for the sake of her children, to do under the influence of reason and true religion, what the bird does from the unintelligent impulses of nature. Her children are a charge for which she must forego some of the enjoyments of social life, and even some of the social pleasures of religion.

She who would have a maternal power over her children, must give her company to them. It is not for her to be ever craving after parties—or to feel it a hardship that she is denied them. The secret of her beneficent influence lies in making the home her chief delight and focus. Hence the exhortation of the apostle in the text, to the matrons of his time, "Teach the young women to be . . . keepers at home." I would not have a mother incarcerated in her own house, so as never to go abroad or enter into company. She who is devoted to her family needs occasional relaxation amid the pleasures of society, and especially the exhilarating engagements of public worship.

There are some mothers who are such absolute slaves to their children that they scarcely ever stir from home—even to the house of God. This is an

error in one extreme, which might be avoided by method and dispatch. But those run into an opposite extreme who will not, even for the benefit of their children, give up a social party or a public meeting. The woman who is not prepared to make many sacrifices of this kind, for the sake of her children, and her home, and her husband—should never think of entering into wedded life!

Be ingenious, inventive, and studious—as to the best method of gaining the attention, and informing the minds of your children while young. There are too many who imagine that education, and especially religious education, consists in just hearing a chapter read, a catechism taught, or a hymn repeated—and that when this is done, all is done. The memory is the only faculty they cultivate—the intellect, affections, and conscience, are wholly neglected! A Christian mother should be ingenious to invent the best mode of gaining attention and keeping it. The illustrated works which in this fertile age are perpetually issuing from the press, afford advantages for conveying both secular and sacred knowledge, of which bygone times knew nothing.

Be personal in your religious instruction. The freedom of incidental spiritual conversation, rather than the formality of set and stated lessons; the introduction of religious topics in the mundane aspects of life—(rather than the grave and forbidding annunciation of a change from secular to sacred subjects)—and the habit of referring all things to God, and comparing the truths and maxims of the Bible with the events of every hour—(rather than the forcing all things out of their channel when the season of 'family devotions' returns)—these are the means of opening the avenues to the youthful heart, and rendering religion, with its great Author, the object—not of aversion or terror, nor only of cold and distant homage—but of mingled reverence and love. "These words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart—and you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up."

Mothers, invested as you are with such an **influence**, often dwell upon your **responsibility**. With such a power conferred upon you by God, you are responsible to your CHILDREN themselves. Every time their infant or adult voices repeat that word, "My mother"—so sweet, so musical to your heart—they urge their claims upon your best and most devoted attention. As it sounds in your ears it should awaken the deepest emotions of your soul and the most faithful admonitions of your conscience.

You are responsible to your HUSBANDS. They entrust the education of their children to you. They seem to say, "We will work for their support, and leave the early education of their minds to you. We will hereafter share all the

obligations of instruction and the care of their minds and characters with you, but at present, while they are so young, we confide this duty upon you."

You are responsible to the CHURCH of God—for family education is, or ought to be, in the families of the godly, the chief means of conversion. It is a fatal error for Christian parents to look to the ministers of religion for the conversion of their children. And, alas! it is the error of the day. The pulpit is looked to, for those benefits which should flow from the parents' chair. Our churches have weighty and righteous claims upon parents, and especially upon mothers.

Nor does your responsibility stop here, for SOCIETY at large looks to you for that beneficial influence which you are capable of exerting. I repeat here the well-known anecdote, which I have given, I believe, in another work. Napoleon once asked Madame Campan what the French nation most needed, in order that her youth might be properly educated. Her reply was compressed in one word, "Mothers!" And it was a wise reply. Not the French nation only—the world needs them—Christian, intelligent, well-trained, devoted women, to whom the destinies of the rising generation may be safely entrusted. The woman at whose domestic hearth, and by whose judicious maternal love, a family of industrious and godly sons—or of modest, kind-hearted, prudent, and pious daughters—is trained for future life, is an ornament of her country—a benefactress to her species—and a blessing to posterity. I again and emphatically say, Mothers, understand, feel, and remember your responsibility!

But hitherto, it may be said, the chapter does not answer to its title as intended for, and addressed to, **young** mothers. I will therefore now give it a special bearing upon their case. It has been my object, first of all, to set forth the subject of maternal duty and responsibility in its general aspect—apart from its relation to those to whom it is new—that they may see it in its widest and most comprehensive bearing—before they are reminded of its special bearing on their case. This, I am aware, will give the appearance of a repetition in the second part of this chapter, of some things that were advanced in the first. But such repetitions are sometimes beneficial. In addition, therefore, to what has been said on maternal duties in general, I shall now submit some other matters for your special consideration.

Too many, it is to be feared, enter upon this momentous business without consideration, and, as might be expected, equally without preparation or qualification. It is indeed a pitiable sight to look into the state of some families, and behold the hapless condition of the poorly trained children who have the misfortune to be in the hands of a weak, foolish, and incompetent

mother. Perhaps the cause may be traced one step further back, and it may be found that they are incompetent, because their mothers were so before them. Thus the mischief perpetuates itself from generation to generation.

In all things it is of importance to begin well. The beginning usually determines the progress and the close. Errors, both in theory and practice, however long and pertinaciously persisted in—may by intelligence, determination, and the blessing of God—be corrected. Reformation would otherwise be hopeless. But how much better and easier is it to **avoid** faults than to **amend** them! Many mothers have seen their mistakes when it was too late to correct them. Their children had grown up under the influence of a bad system of domestic government and maternal guidance, and had acquired a fixedness of bad habit which no subsequent wisdom, firmness, severity, or affection, could correct; and the parents had to pour out bitter but unavailing regrets that they had not begun life with those views of their duties with which they were closing it.

If a mother begins well—she is likely to continue well. And the same is true, that if she begins badly—she is likely to continue badly. Her conduct towards her first child is likely, of course, to determine her conduct with respect to all the following ones. How momentous is it then, at this stage of her domestic history, to weigh well, and solemnly, and prayerfully, her responsible situation! Indeed it is quite clear that this subject ought not to be put off by any wife until she becomes a mother. The very prospect ought to lead to a due preparation for the expected new duties; for these commence with the earliest anticipations of sustaining the maternal character. It behooves us to prepare ourselves for any situation into which we have a confident expectation of soon entering. Forethought is given to mankind for the purpose of meeting with propriety the situation and duties to which we are expecting. The woman who never studies maternal responsibilities and duties until she is called actually to sustain them, is not very likely to do well in that very important relationship.

Instinct will teach a parent bird, animal, fish, or insect, all that is necessary for the well being of its young. But it is not so with human parents—study, reflection, forethought, and determination are indispensable for them. Unhappily a young wife, in prospect of giving birth to a child, is in some cases so bowed down with an unnecessary solicitude about her own safety. Others are so absorbed with the preparations which are made for the physical well-being and the elegant furnishings of her promised baby, as to forget to prepare herself for those more important duties which devolve upon her in relation to the mind, and heart, and conscience, of the child. A mother who wishes to fulfill her duties to her children should take especial pains to educate herself for these momentous functions. She should read, to

store her mind with knowledge; she should reflect, observe, and gain useful information from every quarter. Her principles should be fixed, her plans laid, her purposes formed.

She must cultivate all the habits and dispositions which will fit her to teach and to govern. She must seek to acquire thoughtfulness, careful vigilance, quick observation, and discretion in various forms. Habits of activity, efficiency, order, and regularity—are indispensable for her; so is the exercise of all the good and benevolent feelings. She must unite gentleness with firmness; and attain patience and the entire command of her disposition. It is of immense importance also that she should have a correct knowledge of human nature, and the way of dealing with the human heart. And above all things, let her remember that **piety is the vivifying spirit of all excellence, and example the most powerful means to enforce it.** She should never let the recollection be absent from her mind—that children have both eyes and ears for attention to a mother's conduct. Not content with preparing herself for her important functions beforehand, she should carry on the education of herself simultaneously with that of her children. There are few situations which more imperatively require preparation, and yet few that receive less.

Again, we often see in a mother such a solicitude about the health and comfort of her babe; such an engrossing attention to all matters respecting its physical well-being, united with such an exuberant delight in the child, as a child; such a mother's joyousness in her babe—that her mind is diverted by these circumstances from all the serious thoughts and solemn reflections which ought to be awakened by the consideration that a rational, immortal, and sinful being is committed to her charge—to be trained for both worlds. Thus her attention is absorbed month after month, while all this while her infant's faculties are developing—its judgment, will, affections, and conscience—at least in their capabilities—are opening, but neglected—and **its natural bias to evil, grows unnoticed and unchecked!** The very time when judicious care over the formation of character could be most advantageously exerted is allowed to pass by unimproved; sinful attitudes are allowed to strengthen unrestrained; self-will is allowed to attain a resoluteness which stiffens into obstinacy; and the careless mother, who at some time or other intended to begin a system of moral training, (always saying there was time enough yet,) when she does commence—wonders that the subject of her discipline is so difficult to manage!

And then she finds that she has so neglected to prepare herself for her duties, that she doesn't know how to go about them, or what in fact she has to do! A badly trained child continues growing not only in stature and in strength—but in his wayward disposition and obstinate self-will; the poor

mother has no control; and as to the father, he is too much taken up with the cares of business to aid his faulty helpmate; and thus the scene is exhibited, described by Solomon—"To discipline and reprimand a child produces wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by **an undisciplined child!**" Proverbs 29:15

Child after child comes along—and are misgoverned, or not governed at all. And there are soon seen—in rude, disobedient, and ill-natured children—perhaps at length profligate sons, and vain silly daughters—the sad fruits of the lack of maternal wisdom! Young mothers, begin well. Manage that first child with biblical principles! Put forth all your skill, all your affection, all your diligence and devotedness—in training him! And, the habit thus acquired, all will be comparatively easy with the others that follow. It is the novelty of that first child, the new affections which it calls forth, and the new interest that it creates, that are likely to throw you off your guard without concern—and divert your attention from the great work of moral training. The first child makes the good—or unwise mother!

And as it is of immense consequence to begin your maternal excellence with the first child, so it is of equal importance to him, and to every one that is added, as I have already said, to begin early. "Education does not begin with the alphabet. It begins with a mother's look; with a father's nod of approbation or sign of reproof; with a sister's gentle pressure of the hand, or a brother's noble act of patience—with a handful of flowers in green dells, or on hills or in daisy meadows; with creeping ants, and almost imperceptible gnats; with humming bees, and glass bee-hives; with pleasant walks in shady lanes, and with thoughts directed in affectionate and kindly tones and words to nature, to beauty, to the practice of benevolence, and to the remembrance of Him, who is the fountain of all good."

Yes, and before all this can be done, before lessons of instruction can be taught the child from flowers, and insects, and birds—the moral training can commence—a mother's look, her nod of approbation, or sign of reproof.

One of the greatest mistakes into which mothers fall is that of supposing the first two or three years of a child's life unimportant as regards his training. The truth is, that in the formation of character, they are the most important of all. It has been truly said, that from the impressions made, the principles implanted, and the habits formed, during these years, the child's character for time and eternity may take its complexion. It is perfectly clear that before a child can speak, he is susceptible of moral training. The conscience, or moral sense, may, by a judicious woman, be developed well before the child has spent his first birthday. So early may he be made to distinguish

between what his mother considers right and wrong, between what will please and what will displease her.

Why, the brute creatures will do this—and if they can be trained thus—may not very young children? It is admitted that there is more of reason in many brutes than in very young children. Still even very young animals may be trained to know what they may and what they may not do—and so may very young children! We often hear mothers say, their children are too young to be taught obedience. The mother who acts upon the maxim that "children may have their own way for a certain number of months", will find to her cost that that lesson will not speedily be forgotten! Moral training may and should precede that which is intellectual. The cultivation of the affections and conscience should be the commencement and foundation of education, and will facilitate every succeeding effort—whether of the child—or of those who train or teach him.

There is in some women a timidity and a distrust of their own capacity, which paralyze or prevent the endeavors which they could make if they would only believe in their own power. Every woman of good plain understanding, can do more than she imagines for the formation of her children's character. What she is deficient in, let her supply by reading; and no mother, however qualified, should neglect this. Every one may learn something from others. Fearful, timid, and anxious mothers, be not afraid! Prayer will bring God's help and God's blessing.

Injudicious indulgence is the most common, as it is the most injurious, danger into which a young mother can fall! Be kind—you ought to be. An unloving, hardhearted mother is a double libel upon her gender and her motherhood. Love is her power, her instrument, her magical charm. She can do nothing, worse than nothing, without it. But then her love must be like that of the Divine Parent, who said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Can you say, "No!" to a child, when with winning smiles, or beseeching voice, or weeping eyes—he asks for something which is not good for him? Can you take from him that which is likely to be injurious to him, but which it will give him pain to surrender? Can you correct him for his faults when your heart rises up in opposition to your judgment? Can you put him down from your arms, at a proper season for so doing, when he clings to your neck and cries to remain. Can you exact obedience in, to him a difficult, but to you, a necessary command? Can you, (first conquering your own heart) stand out against his tears, resolute in purpose, unyielding in demand, so stoutly resisting you, in order to conquer his heart? Or do you allow yourself to be subdued—to put an end to the contest—and by soothing his tears foster the disposition which ought to be eradicated at any pains and

any cost? She who cannot answer all this in the affirmative is not fit to be a mother!

There must be discipline in a family! A parent must be obeyed. Give up this, and you train your children for evil and not for good. Here again I say, begin early. Put on the soft and easy yoke early. The horse is broken in while a colt. Wild beasts are tamed while yet they are young. Both the human species and animals—soon grow beyond the power of discipline!

A young mother is apt to entrust too much of the care and early training of her children upon servants. Much of what may be called the drudgery of managing children, must of necessity be committed to them; but a wise woman will have her children with her as much as possible. Next to mothers, nurse-maids are the most influential class of the community, as regards young children. They and nursery-governesses are to a great extent the educators of the community. They, when carrying the children in their arms, or leading them out for air and exercise, or attending upon them in the nursery, or dressing or undressing them, or however they may be employed for them—are forming them to good or evil habits. If multitudes are spoiled by mothers, multitudes more are spoiled by servants; and some of the latter have undone all the good the former have done. Of what importance is it then that you should be careful as to the people you admit to your families in this capacity, to whom to entrust your children's minds, and hearts, and consciences—for depend upon it, they have the care of their minds and hearts—as well as of their bodies!

All you do in training up your children in the way they should go—should bear directly or indirectly on their eternal welfare! If I seem to advert to this subject with a frequency that looks redundant—let its tremendous importance—and its too frequent and too great neglect by parents—be my apology. You will not overlook, as I have already remarked, the intellectual training of your children's minds—but I hope their moral and religious education will be the chief object of solicitude to you. Viewing your children as immortal beings destined to eternity, and capable of the enjoyments of heaven—you will labor even from infancy to imbue their minds with spiritual truths. It is the eternal welfare of her children, which rescues from littleness and insignificance all that it appertains to, and hence arises in no inconsiderable degree the exalted honor of a mother.

"She has given birth, by the sovereign ordination of Almighty God, not to a being of a mere momentary existence, whose life will perish like that of the beast of the field—but to an immortal being! Her nursing infant, feeble and helpless as it may appear, possesses within its bosom a rational soul, an intellectual power, a spirit which 'all-devouring time' cannot destroy, which

can never die, but which will outlive the splendors of the glorious sun, and the burning brilliancy of all the stars. Throughout the infinite ages of eternity, when all these shall have served their purpose and answered the beneficent end of their creation, and shall have been blotted out from their position in the immense regions of space—the soul of each Christian will shine and improve before the eternal throne, being filled with holy delight and divine love, and ever active in the praises of its blessed Creator."

Mothers, such is your dignity, such your exalted honor. Feel and value your rich distinction in being called to educate the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, and to prepare the holy family who are to dwell in those many mansions of his Father's house which the Lord Jesus has gone to prepare. Give yourselves up to this glorious work. But be judicious in all you do, lest you produce prejudice against true religion, instead of partiality in its favor. Let your warmest affection, your greatest cheerfulness, your most engaging smiles, be put on when you teach Scriptural truths to your children. Approach as nearly as possible to a seraph form. Be a true Christian—in all its beauty, loveliness, sanctity, and ineffable sweetness. Let them see it in your character as well as hear it from your lips.

And especially be careful not to enforce as a 'task', what should be proposed as an object of hope, and a source of delight. Let them see in you, that piety, if in one respect it is a strait and narrow path, is in another, a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. Do not inflict upon them as a 'punishment' for offences, learning Scripture or hymns; and thus convert religion, which is the foretaste of heaven, into a penance which shall be to them like being tormented before their time.

And can it be necessary, after what I have said in a former part of this chapter, to admonish you again to pray for and with your children? How have a mother's prayers been blessed to her children! John Randolph, a distinguished American statesman, who had been much exposed to the seductions of infidelity in the society into which he had been thrown by his position, thus accounted to a gentleman with whom he was conversing, "I believe I would have been swept away by the flood of French infidelity, if it had not been for one thing—the remembrance of the time, when my godly mother used to make me kneel by her side, taking my little hands folded in hers, and caused me to repeat the Lord's Prayer."

"On the east of Long Island, in one of the most secluded spots in America, more than thirty years ago, a mother, whose rare intellectual and moral endowments were known to but few, made this simple record—'This morning I rose very early to pray for my children; and especially that my sons may be ministers and missionaries of Jesus Christ.' A number of years after, a

friend who was present, thus describes that mother's dying hour—'Owing to extreme weakness, her mind wandered, and her conversation was broken; but as she entered the valley of the shadow of death, her soul lighted up and gilded its darkness. She made a touching and most appropriate prayer, and told her husband that her views and anticipations had been such, that she could scarcely sustain them; and that if they had been increased, she would have been overwhelmed; that her Savior had blessed her with constant peace, and that through all her sickness, she had never prayed to live longer. She dedicated her five sons to God as ministers and missionaries of Jesus Christ, and said that her greatest desire was that her children might be trained up for God. 'She spoke with joy of the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and of the glorious day now ushering in. She attempted to speak to her children, but was so exhausted, and their cries and sobs were such, that she could say but little. Her husband then made a prayer, in which he gave her back to God, and dedicated all they held in common, to him. She then fell into a sweet sleep, from which she awoke in heaven.'

"The prayers of this mother have been answered. All her eight children have been trained up for God. Her five sons are all ministers and missionaries of Jesus Christ—and the late Rev. George Beecher is the first of her offspring whom she has welcomed to heaven." And one of her daughters is the lady already alluded to in this discourse, who has obtained a world-wide fame by her touching story against slavery. In that lady and her work, as well as in her able and learned brothers, we see the fruit of a mother's prayers.

Take with you the following **MAXIMS**, as summing up all that has been said.

1. Though a child's **character** is not entirely created by the circumstances in which he is placed, especially as regards his mother—it is powerfully influenced by them.
2. **Education** is designed to form character, and not merely to communicate instruction. A king of Sparta, when asked what it was in which youth ought principally to be instructed, replied, "In that which they have most need to practice when men."
3. **Obedience** is the first thing a mother has to teach; first both in order and time—and the foundation of all the rest. Obedience must first be taught as a habit, and soon after inculcated as a duty.
4. A mother should assiduously cultivate the spirit of **curiosity** in a child. Instead of always calling him to learn—should prompt his desires to learn.

5. Young children must be sometimes **denied** their wishes, but never merely for the purpose of teaching them submission by taking from them something they are pleased with.

6. **Habits of employment** and a love of useful employment, should be taught to children. They are not so mischievous for the mere love of mischief, as it is supposed. If they destroy articles, it is sometimes for the purpose of investigation, and oftener still for lack of proper employment, which ought to be furnished to them. In very early childhood a 'love of industry' and 'honest independence' may be instilled into a child, by teaching him that it is honorable to be usefully employed. One little child may feel the pleasure and practice the duty of benevolence, by doing something for the comfort of a tender babe still more helpless than itself.

7. It is of the first importance for a mother to establish in the mind of her child an **entire confidence in herself**—in her wisdom, kindness, and truth—as well as a sense of her irresistible authority.

8. Truth, sincerity, honesty, and simplicity are basic virtues in children. Simplicity is the beauty of a child's character; and he should be taught from the beginning to **act upon principle**, and not for the sake of being well thought of or rewarded.

9. **Domestic affections** should be most assiduously cultivated. When the second baby is born, the first child should, if old enough to understand the matter, be taught to regard it as an acquisition by which his happiness is to be increased, and in which he is to take an interest in conjunction with his parents. **The child who is taught affectionate obedience to his parents; and justice and kindness towards his little equals round the domestic hearth—is being trained to fill with propriety the stations and relations of future life.**

11. The **babe** grows into the child; the **child** into the youth; the **youth** into the man; and the **man** into the immortal; and that **immortal** will be an heir of glory—or a child of perdition. Let this be remembered from the beginning and always acted upon.

12. **Discipline** in a family is what the public administration of justice is to a state; where it is lacking, there may be very good laws, but they will remain a dead letter—and the reign of crime and confusion be the certain consequence.

13. Christianity should not be regarded as one science among many, the inculcation of which is a part of good education. But it must be the vital

principle diffusing itself through all instruction, all rules, all authority, all discipline, and all example. At what age is it proper, it may be asked, to begin teaching children religion? Their father and mother are, if true and consistent believers, "Christianity embodied"—and as soon as they begin to know their parents they begin to know something about true religion. A very young child is quite aware that his parents speak to One whom they do not see, and inquiring thoughts are awakened in his mind, before he can express them in words.*

*Some of these maxims are taken from "The Young Mother, or Affectionate Advice to an Unmarried Daughter," by Mrs Copley. Published by the Tract Society.

And now, to sum up all, consider—

A mother's **charge**—an immortal creature.

A mother's **duty**—to train him up for God, heaven and eternity.

A mother's **dignity**—to educate the family of the Almighty Creator of the universe.

A mother's **difficulty**—to raise a fallen sinful creature to holiness and virtue.

A mother's **encouragement**—the promise of Divine grace to assist her in her momentous duties.

A mother's **relief**—to bear the burden of her cares to God in prayer.

A mother's **hope**—to meet her child in glory everlasting, and spend eternal ages of delight with him before the throne of God and the Lamb.

But are mothers only to engage in this work of educating their children for God? No! **Fathers**, I speak to you, for the Bible speaks to you—"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." I have addressed this chapter to your wives, because on them first devolves the duty of training the infant mind, and preparing the children for your hands. Not that they will ever, or should ever, give up their diligence or withdraw their influence. A mother's power is perhaps as great when judiciously exerted over the adult—as over the infant child. But you, when the children are growing up, must join your solicitude and labors with hers. They are your children as well as hers. God will require their souls at your hands as well as hers. Are you exercising your **authority**,

giving your **instructions**, pouring out your **prayers**, affording your **example**—for the salvation of your children? Is it your wish, your ambition, your endeavor, your supplication, that they may be Christian men—or only rich ones? Are you pouring your influence into the same channel as your holy wife? Are you helping or hindering her in her pious solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of your joint offspring?

Happy, happy couple, where there is sympathy of feeling and similarity of sentiment in the most momentous concern that can engage the attention of man, of angels, or of God—true Christianity. Where the husband and the wife are of one mind and one heart, not only in reference to themselves, but in regard also to their children, and both are engaged in training them up for everlasting glory! I can liken such a couple, in their benevolent efforts for their children's welfare, only to the two angels who were sent down from heaven to the rescue of Lot, and who with holy and benevolent violence took him by the hand to pluck him from the burning city, and conducted him to the place of safety prepared by the mercy of Almighty God.

After this chapter was composed, I received the following letter—

"Dear Mr. James,
In your next Sermon to Young Women, will you kindly give some advice to common-place Mothers; who, not gifted with extraordinary affection, or extraordinary patience, are apt to be sadly worried with the incessant and varied claims of a large family; especially where a limited income imposes unremitting toil to arrange for ordinary domestic comfort; and the numerous inhabitants of a small house almost preclude the refreshment of solitary closet communion with that Heavenly Father who rewards openly. As a class, we would gladly be instructed how to avoid, or at least to surmount, the impatience and irritation so frequently engendered by the perplexities of the nursery and the school room; the hasty speech, the angry action, which must be not only a hindrance to maternal influence, but perhaps even a hindrance to the efficacy of a mother's prayers. Excuse the liberty I take in thus writing to you, and with many thanks for your past valuable hints,
Yours very respectfully,
A Common-place Mother."

This letter claims and awakens my tenderest sympathy for the class of mothers to whom it refers; I mean women without the advantages of wealth, the accommodations of a nursery, and the help of servants, to lighten the load of maternal cares, and to assist in the performance of maternal duties—women who must always be in the midst of the perpetually recurring trials of irritation, to which, in such circumstances, a numerous

family of young children exposes them; and who may imagine themselves, as to intellectual and other qualifications, only "Common-place Mothers." Let such women not despond as if they were but slenderly fitted for their duties.

The writer of this letter gives full evidence that she is not disqualified for a mother's functions, so far as mental ability is concerned—but perhaps she, and others in her situation, may have something yet to learn and acquire as to godly disposition and manner. It is evident she is in danger in these respects. The waywardness and sins of unamiable dispositions in her children, produce petulance and irritability, and lead perhaps too often on her part to sinful anger. A scold, slap, or shake—sometimes takes the place of mild but firm admonition, and calm correction. To her, and to all in her situation, I say, what you need, and what you must put forth all your constant and determined effort, and wrestling supplication with God, to obtain—is the complete subjugation of your temper. You must bring this under control. You must acquire forbearance, patience, and calm serenity. It will cost you much trouble and much prayer to attain it; but God's grace will be sufficient for you.

I do not, of course, counsel you to contract that spirit of apathetic, easy indifference which lets children take their own course, and for the sake of a little ease throws out the reins of discipline. Still a mother must often have eyes—and not see; ears—and not hear. A fussing, fidgety notice of every little thing that goes wrong in the disposition of all the children, will keep her in perpetual misery. To all then who are in the situation of "The Common-place Mother," I again and again, with all possible emphasis, say—subdue your irritability, and acquire a calm, patient, forbearing, loving, and serene mind. God will help you if you seek it. You must not think such a frame of mind unattainable, nor allow your provocations and temptations to be an apology for your little sallies of bad disposition.

The misfortune perhaps in the case of such mothers, is—that they did not begin well. The first child was not well managed. Bad habits crept on, and now, with the family increased, it is difficult to break them. I have known even large, very large families, where, though there were few domestic accommodations, by patience and kindness, mixed with firmness, on the part of the mother, aided by a wise, kind, firm father, the children were all well-managed, and the parents happy.

It would greatly comfort, help, and encourage such mothers, if they attended the meetings of Mothers' Societies, where such institutions are formed.

As regards what is said about the opportunity for **prayer**, I can hardly admit a crowded house to be an excuse for the neglect of this. Every mother has at her command her own chamber, to which, as to a little sanctuary, when the infant voices are hushed in sleep, she can repair and pour out her heart to God for her children, and perhaps breathe over some of them, slumbering on the bed at which she kneels, a mother's prayers. Besides, how much of prayer—spontaneous and silent—yet sincere, fervent, and believing—may be presented to God, without the formalities of devotion, or the retirement of the closet!

I again say, let no mother despair of herself because she does not possess high intellectual qualifications—the more of these she has of course the better, but **a disposition under control, a patient, loving, forbearing temperament, mild firmness, a gentle, but constant maintenance of parental authority, a judicious administration of rewards and correction, will enable any woman to fill her place with efficiency,** though she may think herself to be "A Common-place Mother."