

## Selected for the Colonial Churchman.

## AN ADDRESS TO MOTHERS.\*

Humboldt, in his celebrated travels, tells us, that after he had left the abodes of civilization far behind, in the wilds of South America, he found, near the confluence of the Atabapo and the Bis Terni rivers, a high rock—called the "mother's rock."—The circumstances which gave this remarkable name to the rock were these:—

In 1799, a Roman Catholic missionary led his half-civilized Indians out on one of those hostile excursions, which they often made, to kidnap slaves to the Christians. They found a Guahiba woman in a solitary hut, with three children—two of whom were infants. The father, with the older children had gone out to fish, and the mother in vain tried to fly with her babes. She was seized by these man-hunters, hurried into a boat, and carried away to a missionary station at San Fernando. She was now far from her home; but she had left children there, who had gone with their father. She repeatedly took her three babes and tried to escape, but was as often seized, brought back, and most unmercifully beaten with whips. At length the missionary determined to separate this mother from her three children, and for this purpose, sent her in a boat up the Atabapo river, to the missions of the Rio Negro, at a station called Javita. Seated in the bow of the boat the mother knew not where she was going or what fate awaited her, she was bound, solitary and alone, in the bow of the long boat; but she judged from the direction of the sun that she was going away from her children. By a sudden effort, she broke her bonds, plunged into the river, swam to the left bank of the Atabapo; and landed upon a rock.—She was pursued, and at evening retaken, and brought back to the rock where she was scourged till her blood reddened the rock,—calling for her children! and the rock has ever since been called "the mother's rock." Her hands were then tied upon her back, still bleeding from the lashes of the manatee thongs of leather. She was then dragged to the mission at Javita, and thrown into a kind of stable. The night was profoundly dark, and it was in the midst of the rainy season. She was now full seventy-five miles from her three children in a straight line. Between her and her children lay forests never penetrated by human footsteps; swamps and morasses, and rivers, never crossed by man. But her children are at San Fernando;—and what can quench a mother's love! Though her arms were wounded, she succeeded in biting her bonds with her teeth, and in the morning she was not to be found! At the fourth rising sun—she had passed through the forests swam the rivers, and all bleeding and worn out was seen hovering round the little cottage in which her babes were sleeping!

She was seized once more;—and before her wounds were healed, she was again torn from her children, and sent away to the mission on the upper Oronoko River—where she drooped, and shortly after died, refusing all kinds of nourishment—died of a broken heart at being torn from her children!—Such is the history of "the mother's rock." Perhaps I might make use of this touching story to lead you to contemplate the curse of slavery; or show you how far cruelty may fill the hearts of those who profess to bear the image of Jesus Christ; but I have a different object in view, and I mention it solely to illustrate one single point, viz:—the strength of a mother's love for her children;—a feeling as universal as man, and a stream so deep, that nothing but the eye of the omniscient one can see its bottom!—For, wherever you find woman, whether exalted to her place by the Gospel, reduced to a mere animal by Mahomet, or sunk still lower by heathenism, you find the same unquenchable love for her children.—She will cheerfully wear herself out, and go down to the grave, to alleviate the sufferings of a single child. I have now in my mind a poor widow, who told me at the funeral of a son, whose intellect and reason had been destroyed by fits, that for thirty and eight years she had never passed a single night in which she did not rise once or more, and go and minister to the wants of that child! She was literally worn out, and in a few weeks followed her son to the grave.

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The heart of the mother can never grow cold.—Her offspring may go out one by one, and be scattered to the four quarters of the globe; but the rivers that run, and the mountains that rear their heads, and the long deserts that lie between them, neither lessen her love, nor loosen the bonds which hold them to her heart. Time and distance do nothing towards extinguishing those eternal fires which burn in her heart. From the moment that she first gazes on the face of her babe, to that which she closes her eyes in the slumbers of death, she never remits her care, her anxieties, or her love for him. But you will ask is this so without exception?

Have we not read of Jewish mothers who would go out to the fires of Moloch, and with their own hands, take their babes, and dash them upon the iron spikes in the midst of the flames, and there stand and see them writhing in death, while the drums are beating all around them to drown their cries? Yes, you have read of this, and probably thousands of Jewish mothers have done it. And have we not read in the letters of Ward, (now we trust residing in heaven) of the mothers in India at the present day, who take their first-born, when the child is two or three years old, to the river's side and encourage it to enter the stream till the current carries it out, and there stand and see it struggle as it screams and stretches its hands to her and perishes? And have we not read of mothers of Sanger Islands, who have been seen casting their babes out among the alligators, and watching these monsters as they quarrelled for their prey, and watching too the writhing infant in the jaws of the successful animal—standing motionless while they break the bones and suck the blood of these innocents. You have read all this.

How then, say you, can I reconcile all this cruelty with what I have been saying of a mother's love? I reply, I said that a mother's love was strong and deep. I did not say it is the deepest thing known on earth. No! there is one thing deeper! It is that unutterable sense of guilt and ill desert which can overcome even a mother's love, and turn her into a tiger. These awful cases only prove what I have been saying, for when the wounded conscience, knowing of no Redeemer from sin, would try to purchase her salvation, she offers the highest price of which she can conceive—the life of her own child! Oh! if we need no atonement by the blood of the Lamb, how is it that the soul, so torn that its very holiest and deepest affections are tortured away and destroyed, is ever to find peace, and confidence, and joy? What, but a Saviour's blood, can pacify a conscience which will make a mother a monster in her hopes of finding relief from its awful lashings!

The love which the father, the brother, or the sister bears seems to be secondary, and the result of habit and association. But that which glows early and late, that which never tires or decays in the bosom of the mother seems innate—a part of her very being. In such cases as that presented by Solomon, it speaks out in Nature's own voice.

Now, why has God planted this deep, this unquenchable, irrepensible love for her offspring, in the mother's heart? Does he do any thing in vain? Did he ever rear a mountain, or hollow out the basin for the great waters, or even leave the impression of his hand anywhere in nature—much more on the human heart—unless that hand was guided by infinite wisdom? No—he had a design in all this, and a design worthy of himself. All do not see it,—all do not feel it. The Indian mother who hangs her infant to the bough of the tree, and sings her wood-song while the winds rock it,—thinks no further than to rear up her child to be a warrior or a hunter: the African mother who carries her infant on her back to her daily toil, may think no further than that he may be a slave under a kind master; and many a mother claiming high intelligence and refinement, thinks no further than to rear up her child to share and enjoy wealth, pleasures, notice and distinctions. With what pride does she gaze upon her little daughter, hoping she shall yet see her excite the admiration of the bright circle!—How will her heart doat when that infant boy shall stand the first in the university, the first in his profession and among the first in the nation! As such mothers bend over their children in all the tenderness of maternal love and solicitude, they have no conception of the design of

God in creating that feeling which looks down into the future, and lives in posterity: May we not fear there are too many who profess to be Christians, who day by day go no further in their views than merely to train up their children for earth? I do hope there are none of this description who will read these pages; but if there are not, my readers will be very few or very uncommon indeed.

What are correct views on this subject? Why is a love so deep planted in the bosom of the mother, that no language can describe it? You have seen the child die, and heard the lamentations of the father, the wailings of David over his son, still ring in our ears, but the sorrows of the bereaved mother are too deep for wailing. You never hear her voice on such an occasion. Nature has given her no means by which to convey the agony of her sorrows! Why has God created this love in her heart.

I will try to tell you. It is because he commits to her first, constant and immediate keeping, a treasure too important to be entrusted to a love that can be measured! When he gives to the mother a child, what does he do. He has made a new creation; he has created a mind which is to think and feel, to live, grow and expand for ever!—a mind which is to act on other minds, and influence their destiny for eternity,—a mind which is to be a vessel into which blessings or woes are to be poured and from which blessings or woes are to flow upon other minds for ever! A new spirit is placed under the care of the mother, which is surely to track its way in the eternal world, and in its train carry joy or misery—not for a day, or an age, or while a world lasts, but while ten thousand worlds fall away into nothing, and then it is only in the dawn of its being. Who would think it a small charge, were a young son committed to her charge, which would shine as our sun does, and give light, and warmth, and heat, and uncounted blessings, if properly reared; but which, if not properly reared, would be a curse for ever to hang up in the heavens, pouring woe and death upon the generations of the earth! But know ye, that yonder infant in the cradle is a spirit which will live, when that sun has done shining, and will be felt in the universe ages after his light is extinguished.—will be a greater blessing than the brightest sun that ever shone, or a heavier curse than the sun would be, if every ray of his light were a poisoned arrow.

This is the reason why so deep a love is centred in the bosom of her to whom this immortal spirit is first committed. It would not do to trust it to the cool calculations of one who could stop to measure her affection;—no!—such a spirit must first be placed in the hands of one whose love is too deep for measurement.

Here, then, I take my stand; and here I feel the real dignity of the mother to begin—for God had committed to her hands the keeping and the moulding of a spirit which may for ever rise up in glory and in light. Never, this side eternity, will the influence of the mother of Moses be known, who trained up a child and so implanted religious impressions upon his soul, that a kingdom and a crown could not tempt him from the service of God—his great end for which he was created! You say the you cannot expect your child to become a Moses—True—nor did she expect this. But when you see a little boy walking the street, who dare say that he may not become a man, and become a blessing to his day and generation? Recollect that our very existence on earth is but a childhood; the making of the soul is in the next world, where the spirit that child, redeemed and glorified, shall shine as the sun in the firmament, for ever and ever, and scatter blessings as widely. Oh! if my child do all that he ever does for his God, in this life, or nothing; but when I recollect that heaven is his home,—infinite the space in which he may move, and everlasting ages the period in which he may act, with a nature unwearied day or night, can tell the greatness of the destiny of such a spirit, or the work of rearing it for God! Blessed be His name, he hath created in the mother's bosom a love that can receive such a charge, and looking for assistance, can train up that child and then patience and tears and prayers, will at last see him up and become "a star of day."—To be continued.