

Family Circle.

ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

BY MR. G. P. DUNCALE.

"Train up a child in the way he should go" was one of the sayings of the wisest men; and he gives us a reason why he should do so, "when he is old, he will not depart from it." The great duty here enjoined we think more particularly devolves upon parents and instructors, in order that wisdom and knowledge may be increased, and the blessed truths of the Gospel may abound. We are to train them up not in the way they would go (mark the expression) but in the way they should go. The great apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesian church says, "And ye fathers provoke not your wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." If, then, the education of children could occupy the minds of such honored men as these, surely we ought to give some portion of our time to search out the best manner of training children in the fear of God. The parent, guardian, instructor, and minister, we think, are amongst those upon whom rests the greatest amount of responsibility. What parent can look upon a new-born babe without feelings of the deepest emotion—born to live for every, either in heaven or hell? We envy not the man who can look upon the babe without trembling at the thought as to where that little one shall spend its everlasting days.

First, then, parents should determine like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" this determination derives increased force from the person who made it. It was Joshua. But who was Joshua? The leader of the thousands of Israel, the principal man of the common wealth of Israel. This was a personal as well as a pious resolution, "As for me and my house." There is nothing like personal experience of religion, if we wish to exert its influence over others. A drunken father or mother is ill prepared to recommend so wisely to his children. A proud, passionate, obstinate parent is preacher of humility, peace, and forgiveness; an ungodly parent is a poor example of piety. The parent, therefore, should begin both to do as well as to teach.—We should be able to say to our children, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ."

Secondly. Next to personal piety and self-dedication, is family devotion. A family altar ought to be reared in every household family. How delightful the associations we form with such a word! How pleasing the images which crowd upon the mind, and how tender the emotion awakens in the heart! Who can wonder that domestic happiness should be a theme dear to poetry? The family, look at it! In that unbroken circle are father, mother, brother, and sister—listen to the sounds of the younger music; how melodious! The family are singing their evening hymn; and as the sound dies away the good man proceeds to read the Scriptures, the blessed truths of which are able to make the family wise unto salvation. Afterwards the fervent prayers of the family ascend to heaven in thanks and supplication for mercies received and blessings yet needed, and the God of families lends an attentive ear to their prayers. Can such devotions fall to the ground? We say, No; they are felt in after life, when the members of the family are scattered up and down in the world, and the ruthless hand of death has taken away the pious parents. The children of such a parent will often call to mind in their gayest moments the appeals made to heaven on their behalf at the family altar, as their now sainted parent appears to pass before their vision. We cannot say too much on the importance of family worship. The excuses made for neglecting it are many. "I have no time," says one. We would ask that friend whose he is? and who gives him his precious time, and what for? "I have no ability," says another. Are you not dependent upon God for all your blessings, and how does the beggar proceed? Does he wait till he can ask eloquently? How you can talk about your worldly affairs! My dear friend, can you say, "God be merciful" to me and my family? If so, open your Bible, bend your knee. "I am ashamed," says a third. Ashamed of God? You are not ashamed of the devil. Read Mark viii. 38.—All have not the same abilities. Where you can only pray, do so; if you can read and pray it is better; to sing, read, and pray we think best.

Thirdly. Next to family devotion is private devotion; the taking your children alone at seasonable opportunities, praying and talking with them about their souls' eternal interests and their moral character. Here the mother may do much. Who can forget the prayers of a parent at such seasons as these? How often will they arrest a child when grown up to manhood! One perhaps has been leading a dissipated life; may have enlisted as a soldier, or be transported far from home for his crimes, but when alone in the solitary chamber, how the voice that he used to hear in prayer will seem to sound in his ears, and bring him to repentance before God. A young man, in relating his Christian experience, said, "Among my first recollections is the image of my sainted mother. My father was a missionary; we lived in a log house, and had but one large room; of course she had no closet there. But there was a beautiful grove a little behind the

house, and there, as early as I can remember, she took me by the hand, and caused me to kneel by her side, while she prayed aloud for my absent father and for me. At first I hardly understood it, but soon learned that God who dwells far above those high trees could hear her prayer, and was hearkening to her sweet voice. She used steadily to lead me there, and always laid her right hand on my head while she prayed, and feelings of deep awe came over me. She never omitted this practice whilst she lived, and I there had distinct and correct impressions made as to my character, of God.—She died when I was nine years old, and was buried near by. During the most giddy and wicked period of my life I could never forget these impressions. The grove is cut down now, but the spot seems a hallowed spot.—Even since the grove has been gone, and since my mother's grave has become level with the surrounding ground, I have stood on the spot, and her meek image seemed to be before me, and her voice tremulous with feeling seemed to come again to my ears, and I have paused there in tears, chained by the remembrance of her faithfulness and her love. Many years after my mother's death, I was in the hey day of my youth, and in a course of sin truly dreadful. My father was too far off to reach me otherwise than by his prayers. One night at a ball, my conscience was suddenly startled. I was introduced to a young lady for my partner. After the dance I entered into conversation with her, and among other things she mentioned the late sickness of her father, and many kindnesses and attentions of a Mr. Barr, a missionary.—She did not know my name. I replied, "That Mr. Barr, the missionary, is my father." "Your father, he your father! what would he say if he knew you were here?" Had a dagger been thrust into me, I could not have felt the wound more deeply. It spoiled the evening for me. It planted a thorn into my conscience, which was not taken out till I had bowed to God with a broken heart. After being under deep and pungent convictions for sin for more than three weeks, I could not pray, I could not feel sorry for sin, nor hate it. There seemed to be no mercy for me. The heavens were brass, the earth was iron, and I was fast preparing to look up and curse God. At length, after struggling with my terrified conscience and the stirrings of the spirit of God, I determined to take away my own life. It was not the result of a paroxysm of despair, but the cool, deliberate determination of one who dares throw himself upon the thick bosom of the Almighty's buckler. After coming to this determination, I selected my time and place. Not far from me was a considerable waterfall. Thither I went one beautiful morning, fully resolved to return no more.—The waters dark and deep gathered themselves together in a narrow channel, and after whirling themselves round several times, as if recoiling from the plunge, they rushed headlong over a time-worn rock and fell forty feet or more into a large basin beneath. On that rock I placed myself, prepared to do the deed. I looked down in the great basin forty feet below me, and there the falling waters were boiling and foaming up as if indignant at being thus cast down. Fit emblem, I thought, of the helpless raging of the wicked in the world of despair.—But I will know the worst which God can inflict upon me. I will plunge in, and in five minutes I shall know what hell is, and what is to be my situation in eternity. I drew myself to take the plunge; there was no faltering, no shaking of a single muscle, no sensation of fear. But just as I was in the act of leaping the hand of Omnipotence seemed to be laid suddenly upon me. Every nerve seemed paralyzed, and every bodily function to fail. A cold shivering overcame me, and I had not the strength of a child. I turned my face away: the beautiful sun was shining, and for the first time a voice like that of my departed mother's seemed to say, "Perhaps there may yet be mercy for you." Yes, I replied, I will seek it till God takes away my life; and there on the very spot where I was about to consign soul and body over to endless misery, the mercy of God found me." This young man afterwards became a devoted minister. This is only one instance out of many that might be produced, to show how the prayers of parents have followed their children through life.

Fourthly. Attendance on public worship. Moses was commanded by God, not only to gather the men and women together for public worship, but the children also. What sight is so delightful as to see parents and children wending their way to the sanctuary, to listen to the truth of the Gospel as expounded by the man of God! The habit of a regular attendance on the sanctuary is formed, and in after years they cannot forget the assembling of themselves together with the excellent of the earth; thus brought under the word, by the blessing of heaven that word may reach their stubborn hearts, bringing them to the foot-stool of mercy, and making them meet and ready to join the congregation that never breaks up.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Many people drop a tear at the sight of distress who would do better to drop a sixpence.

Type setting is said to be beneficial to a nervous man because he can compass himself.

Geographic and Historic.

ALEXANDER SELKIRK.

This extraordinary man, whose solitary residence in the island of Juan Fernandez suggested the matchless fiction of Robinson Crusoe, was a native of Largo, a village on the north shore of the Firth of Forth, in Scotland. He was the son of a thriving country shoemaker, named, John Selkirk or Selcraig, was born in the year 1676. Tho' he displayed some aptitude at school, especially in learning navigation, he was a restless and troublesome youth, of a quarrelsome temper, and almost always engaged in mischief. His father was one of those stern disciplinarians who formerly abounded in Scotland, and whose severity in dictating repulsive exercises and restraining from innocent indulgence, was so frequently rewarded, in the case of children of lively temperaments, with effects so different from what were expected. The mother, on the other hand, was so soft and pliant, made the subject of our memoir a favorite, on account of his being a seventh son, born without the intervention of a daughter, which, in her opinion, marked him out for a lucky destiny. The boy's own wish was to go to sea; that of his father, to keep him at home as an assistant in his own trade: and it appears that the mother advocated the views of her son, as most likely to lead to the realization of her superstitious hopes. It must be allowed that these circumstances, operating in a humble walk of life, at the time and place alluded to, were not calculated to sooth an irritable, control a reckless, or even to preserve the original features of an amiable character.

After working till about his twentieth year at his father's trade, Alexander Selkirk left his native village, in order to avoid ecclesiastical censure for domestic quarreling, and was at sea for four years. On his return in 1701, he once more excited public scandal: by his conduct in the family circle; and being again cited by the Kirk-session, along with his father, mother, and other relations, he on this occasion gave satisfaction by submitting to a rebuke in church, and promising amendment. Having spent the winter at home, he returned in Spring to England, in search of employment as a mariner.—The war of the Spanish succession was now breaking out, and among the means adopted by Britain for distressing the enemy, was the employment of those daring half-practical commodities, who used to scour the South Seas at all seasons in search of Spanish merchantmen and bullock-ships, allowing no regular principle of warfare, except that there was peace beyond the Line. The celebrated Captain Dampier had projected an enterprise with two well-armed vessels, under the commission of the admiralty; designing to sail up the river La Plata, and seize a few of the rich galleons which usually sailed once a year from that port to the mother country. His vessels were respectively entitled the St. George and the Cinque Ports of twenty-six and sixteen guns: and Selkirk, who was probably recommended by experience in the same kind of employment, was appointed sailing-master of the smaller ship. The terms on which both officers and men entered this expedition were very simple; they were to have no wages beyond a share of their prizes. Such however had been the success of many previous expeditions of the same kind, that no doubt was entertained by any other on board, than that they would each return with an immense load of Spanish gold. The two vessels sailed September, 1703, but were too late for the galleons, all of which had got into port before they reached Madeira. Dampier then relinquished his design upon the river La Plata, and resolved to attack some rich town on the Spanish main.—But before they left this rich range of isles, dissensions began to break out, and, by orders of Dampier, the first lieutenant of the St. George with whom he quarrelled, was left with his servant upon St. Jago. They soon after reached the coast of Brazil, where they had the misfortune to lose Captain Pickering of the Cinque Ports, who was admitted to be the most sensible man on board, and the main stay of the enterprise. This vessel was now very leaky and falling under the command of a man of brutal character named Strandling, it was no longer a place of comfort for Selkirk, who about this time had a dream, which he esteemed as a forewarning of the expedition and the loss of the Cinque Ports, and formed the resolution to withdraw at the first opportunity. The situation of the men may be guessed from the fact that nine of the crew of St. George went ashore upon the island of La Granda, preferring the hazard of perpetual slavery among the Spaniards to continuing any longer with their countrymen. The two vessels now doubled Cape Horn, and sailed for the island of Juan Fernandez, where they were refitted. Here, however, a violent quarrel broke out between Strandling and his crew, forty-two of whom (probably including Selkirk) went ashore, vowing, that they would not return to the vessel, in which there were not so many as twenty men left.

It was not without great difficulty, nor till they had become somewhat tired of the island, that they could be prevailed upon to change their resolution. For some months after this revolt, the two vessels cruised along the coast of Chili, capturing a few worthless merchant vessels, which supplied them with fresh stores, although failing in the principle object of their

expedition. At length Dampier and Strandling parted company, and the Cinque Ports returned to Juan Fernandez to refit.

Strandling and Selkirk had for some time been on such terms, that the latter was now determined to remain upon the island, the capability of which to support him was proved by two men, who had lived upon it since the vessels were there in spring. Accordingly when the vessel was about to weigh, he went into a boat with all his effects, and was rowed ashore under the direction of the captain, (October, 1704.) His first sensation on landing was one of joy, arising from the novelty of an exemption from the annoyances which had been oppressing him for such a length of time; but he no sooner heard the strokes of the receding oars than the sense of solitude and helplessness fell upon his mind, and made him rush into the water to entreat his companions to take him once more on board. The brutal commander only made this change of resolution a subject of mockery, and told him that it would be best for the remainder of the crew that so troublesome a fellow should remain where he was.

Here, then, was a single human being left to provide for his own subsistence upon an uninhabited and uncultivated isle, far from all the haunts of his kind, and with but the slender hopes of ever again mingling with his fellow-creatures. Vigorous as the mind of Selkirk appears to have been, it sank for some days under the horrors of his situation, and he could do nothing but sit upon his chest, and gaze in the direction the ship had vanished, vainly hoping for its return. On partly recovering his equanimity, he found it necessary to consider the means for continuing existence. The stores which he had brought ashore consisted, besides his clothing and bedding, of a firelock, a pound of gunpowder, a quantity of bullets, a flint and steel, a few pounds of tobacco, a hatchet, a knife, a kettle, a flip-can, a bible, some books of devotion, and one or two concerning navigation, and his mathematical instruments. The island he knew to contain wild goats; but being unwilling to lose the chance of observing a passing sail, he preferred for a long time feeding upon shellfish and seals, which he found upon the shore. The island, which is rugged and picturesque but covered by luxuriant vegetation, and clothed to the tops of the hills with woods was now in all the bloom and freshness of spring; but upon the dejected solitary, its charms were spent in vain. He could only wander along the beach, pining for the approach of some friendly vessel, which might restore him under however unpleasant circumstances, to the converse of his fellow-creatures.

At length the necessity of preparing a shelter from the weather supplied him with an occupation that served in some measure, to divert his thoughts. He built himself two huts with the wood of the pimento tree, thatching them with the long grass which grows upon the island. One was to serve him as a kitchen, the other as a bed room. But yet, every day for the first eighteen months, he spent more or less time on the beach, watching for the appearance of a sail upon the horizon. At the end of that time, partly through habit, partly through the influence of religion, which here awakened in full force upon his mind, he became reconciled to his situation. Every morning after rising, he read a portion of the Scripture sang, a psalm and prayed, speaking aloud in order to preserve the use of his voice: he afterwards remarked, that during his residence on the island, he was a better Christian than he ever was before, or would probably ever be again. He at first lived much upon turtles, which abounded upon the shore; but afterwards found himself able to run down goats, whose flesh he either roasted or stewed, and of which he kept a small stock tamed around his dwelling, to be used in the event of his being disabled by sickness. One of the greatest inconveniences which afflicted him for the first few months was the want of salt; but he gradually became accustomed to his privation, and at last found so much relish in unsalted food, that, after being restored to society, it was with equal difficulty that he reconciled himself to take it on any consideration. As a substitute for bread, he had turnips, parsnips, and the cabbage palm, all of excellent quality, and also radishes and water-cresses.—When his clothes were worn out, he supplied their place with goat-skins, which gave him an appearance much more uncouth than any wild animal. He had a piece of linen, from which he made new shirts by means of a nail and the thread of his stockings; and he never wanted this comfortable piece of attire during the whole period on the island. Every physical want being thus gratified, and his mind soothed by devotional feeling, he at length began to positively enjoy his existence, often lying for whole days in the delicious bowers which he had formed for himself, abandoned to the most pleasant sensations.

DANGER IN TRIFLES.

By the want of one nail, the iron shoe is lost, and the shoe being lost the horse falls, and the horse falling, the rider perishes. Such are the dangers that he incur, that neglecteth small things. The neglect of the lesser maketh way for the greater evil, and he that setteth light by small things, falleth by little and little.