

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH CHILDREN SHOULD BE TAUGHT.

The instruction of children should be begun in very early age.

Very young children are capable of learning many things of incalculable importance to themselves. All parents appear to me to labour under serious mistakes with regard to the subject; and begin to teach their children many things, at least at a later period than that in which they would advantageously begin to receive them. The infant mind opens faster than we are apt to be aware. This is the true reason why very young children are almost always thought peculiarly bright and promising. We customarily attribute this opinion to parental fondness; in some degree, perhaps, justly; but it arises extensively from the fact, that the intellect of little children outruns in its progress our utmost expectations: the goodness of God intending, I suppose, to provide by this constitution the means of receiving the instruction so indispensable to children at that period. Of this advantage every parent should carefully avail himself. At the same time he should remember that this is the season for making lasting impressions.—The infant mind lays strong hold of every thing which it is taught. Both its understanding and affections are then unoccupied. The affections are then, also, remarkably susceptible, tender, and vigorous.—Every person knows the peculiarly impressive power of novelty. On the infant mind every thing is powerfully impressed, because every thing is new. From these causes is derived that remarkable fact, so commonly observed, that early impressions influence the character and the life beyond all others; and remain strong and vivid after most of those are worn away.

From these remarks must be seen, with irresistible evidence, the immense importance of seizing this happy period to make religious impressions on the minds of our offspring. He who loses this season, is a husbandman who wastes the spring in idleness, and sows in midsummer. How can such a man rationally expect a crop. To the efforts of the parent, at this period, the professed instructor is bound to add his own. The instructor who in a school, a college, or a university, does not employ the opportunities which he enjoys, of making religious impressions on the minds of his pupils, neglects a prime part of his duty; and so far wraps his talent in a napkin, and buries it in the earth.

2. Children should be gradually instructed,

Knowledge plainly should be communicated in that progressive course, in which the mind is most capable of receiving it. The first thing which children attain are words, and facts. To these succeed, after no great interval, plain doctrines and precepts. As they advance in years and understanding, they gradually comprehend, and therefore relish, doctrines of a more complicated and difficult nature. This order of things, being inwrought in the constitution of the human mind, should be exactly followed. When it is counteracted, or forgotten, the task of instruction will ever be difficult; and the progress of the pupil slow and discouraging. A loose and general attention to this great rule of instruction seems to have prevailed in most enlightened countries, but a far less accurate one than its importance deserves.

Among the facts and doctrines suited to the early mind, none are imbibed with more readiness, or fastened upon with more strength, than the existence, presence, perfections, and providence, of God; the creation of all things by his power; its own accountability to him; and the immense importance of his favour, and, therefore, of acting in such a manner as to obtain his approbation. These things, then, together with such as are inseparably connected with them, should, without fail, be always taught at the dawn of the understanding.

FEARFUL REBUKE.

The following affecting event is recorded by one who has been called to resign his ministry, and to enter upon his everlasting rest in the morning of life. The truth of it is attested by such evidence as to leave no room for doubt. It is another awful reproof to those parents who deprive their children of the means of grace, and who endeavour to banish from them every serious feeling. That last sentence which the dying youth began to utter as her spirit

was leaving the body, must have been in the ears of her father a dismal foreboding sound.

"I was present," said a worthy minister of the gospel, on an occasion which introduced this subject. "I was present where an instance of this kind made a painful and indelible impression on my memory. An accomplished and amiable young woman, in the town of —, had been deeply affected by a rease of her spiritual danger. She was the only child of a fond and affectionate parent. The deep impression which accompanied her discovery of guilt and depravity, awakened all the jealousies of the father. He dreaded the loss of that sprightliness and vivacity which constituted the life of his domestic circle. He was startled by the answers his questions elicited; while he foresaw an encroachment on the lucid unbroken tranquility of a deceived heart. Efforts were made to remove the cause of disquietude: but they were such efforts as un sanctified wisdom directed. The Bible, at last—O, how little may a parent know the far reaching of the deed, when he snatches the word of life from the hand of a child!—the Bible, and other books of religion, were snatched from her possession, and their place was supplied by works of fiction. An excursion of pleasure was proposed, and declined. An offer of gayer amusement shared the same fate. Promises, remonstrances, and threatenings, followed. But the father's infatuated perseverance at last brought compliance. Alas, how little may a parent be aware that he is decking his offspring with the fillets of death, and leading to the sacrifice like a follower of Moloch! The end was accomplished. All thoughts of piety, and all concern for the immortal future, vanished together. But O, how, in less than a year, was the gaudy deception exploded! The fascinating and gay L.—M.— was prostrated by a fever that bade defiance to medical skill. The approach of death was unequivocal; and the countenance of every attendant fell, as if they had heard the flight of his arrow, I see, even now, that look directed to the father, by the dying martyr of folly. The lazing eye was dim in hopelessness; and yet there seemed a something in its expiring rays that told reproof, and tenderness, and terror in the same glance. And that voice—its tone was decided, but sepulchral still.—My father! last year I would have sought the Redeemer.—Father—your child is'—Eternity heard the remainder of the sentence; for it was not uttered in time. The wretched survivor now saw before him the fruit of a disorder, whose seeds had been sown when his delighted look followed the steps of his idol in the maze of a dance. O, how often, when I have witnessed the earthly wisdom of a parent banishing the thoughts of eternity, have I dwelt on that expression, which seemed the last reflection from a season of departed hope, 'Last year I would have sought the Redeemer!'"

EXERCISE.

Persons whose habits are sedentary, deceive themselves into a belief that mere physical exercise will preserve health; and accordingly take daily walks for that purpose, while the current of their thoughts remains unchanged. This we conceive to be a radical error. The only exercise that can produce a really beneficial result, is that which breaks up the train of ideas, and diverts them into new and various channels. An eminent writer has said, that it ought to be the endeavour of every man to derive his reflections from the objects about him; for it is to no purpose than he alters his position, if his attention continues fixed to the same point. This is no doubt true; and in order to the attainment of any advantage by exercise, especially walking, the mind should be kept open to the access of every new idea, and so far disengaged from the predominance of any particular thoughts as easily to accommodate itself to the entertainment which may be drawn from surrounding objects.

DRUNKENNESS.

Lord Chief Justice Hale, nearly two centuries ago, remarked—"The places of judication which I have long held in this kingdom, have given me an opportunity to observe the original cause of most of the enormities that have been committed for the space of nearly twenty years; and by a due observation I have found that if the murders and manslauhters, the burglaries and robberies, the riot and tumults, the

adulteries, fornications, rapes, and other great enormities that have happened in that time, were divided into five parts, 4 of them have been the issues & product of excessive drinking, or of tavern and ale-house meetings." Judge Rush, in a charge to a Pennsylvania Grand Jury, nearly echoes thus—"I declare, in this public manner, and with the most solemn regard to truth, that I do not recollect an instance, since my being concerned in the administration of justice, of a single person being put upon his trial for manslaughter, which did not originate in drunkenness; and but few instances of trials for murder, where the crime did not spring from the same unhappy cause."

ANECDOTE OF R. ROGERS.—This puritan divine was styled the Enoch of his day. Bishop Kennett said of him that England hardly ever brought forth a man who walked more closely with God. He was always remarkable for gravity and seriousness in company. Being once addressed by a gentleman of rank, "Mr. Rogers, I like you and your company well enough, but you are too precise." "O, sir," replied Mr. Rogers, "I serve a precise God!"

LONG LIFE.—In every case the characters stamped on human life are brevity and uncertainty. To live to purpose is to live long; and their motives are unerringly known who perish in the commencement of a career in which the melioration of human nature is the object.

Divine grace touches all the powers and movements of the soul. Love and hatred, hope and fear, desire and aversion, joy and grief, are the springs and wheels which it influences, rectifies, and governs.

One of the persecuted Reformers had these words for his motto, "A good conscience is a paradise.—He who has this paradise should highly value and diligently keep it. Sin once admitted and indulged, it will soon blast its bloom, fill it with brambles and thorns, and make it a howling wilderness.

He who circulates base coin, is as bad as the coinor; and he who retails slander, as two slanderer.

EXTRACTS

From the Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Boston Prison Discipline Society.

THE INDIRECT INFLUENCE OF THIS SOCIETY.

This Society may have an indirect influence in producing important changes in the criminal law.—It has been already seen that there is room for such changes; and if it has been made so apparent, that every mind may see it, will not this have a tendency to produce those changes which are obviously important?

This Society shows the connexion between architecture and morals.—If there are principles in architecture, by the observance of which great moral changes can be more easily produced among the most abandoned of our race, are not these principles, with certain modifications, applicable to those persons who are not yet lost to virtue, but prone to evil? If it is found most salutary, to place very vicious men alone, at night, and give them opportunities for thought, without interruption, is not the principle applicable to others subject to like passions? If the old offenders corrupt juvenile delinquents, in buildings so constructed as to make it necessary to lodge them in the same room, will not vicious youth of seventeen, in similar apartments, corrupt innocent boys of eight or nine. If a night room, in a prison containing ten or twenty convicts, presents to an invisible, spirit profaneness, obscenity, histories of past and designs for future mischief, and generally contagion in sin, what will be presented to the same spirit, in a night room, occupied by five or six unruly apprentices? If females, in prison, crowded together in a room at night, and left to themselves, dishonor their name, is there no tendency to a similar result among factory girls, lodged in the same manner? If in a house of refuge for juvenile delinquents great changes are produced, in a few months, for the better, in consequence of breaking up the evil association between vicious youth, and placing them alone, in solitude and silence, eight hours in twenty-four; is there no danger that youth of like passions, in similar numbers, for the same length of time, if placed several in a room, and left to themselves, will corrupt good manners by evil communications? If a youth of seventeen, while confined in a room with two and twenty