

*Selected for the Colonial Churchman.*

THE FAMILY CHANGED ;

OR,

*A Story for All.*

I was very young when I left the parental roof, and was separated from my mother. My father lived in one of the finest regions in France, and passed all the year upon his estates, which obliged him, for the sake of my education, to separate me from him, when I had attained my ninth year, and to place me in a college at Paris. Until this age, my mother had the sole care of my education. Each day she devoted several hours to giving me lessons, and often made me read, after her, portions of the holy scriptures, which she afterwards explained to me in a persuasive and touching manner. This exercise, and the prayers I had been accustomed to repeat morning and evening, together with the sermons which I heard on Sundays, were the only means of improvement which I enjoyed. I had been three years in college, when my father requested one of his friends to bring me to Languedoc, a province in France, to pass the time of my vacation there. The health of my mother was so much impaired, that the physicians felt the greatest anxiety on her account. She was so changed that I hardly recognised her. Although very young I felt the deepest sorrow, and could not bear to fix my eyes upon those pale and faded features that I had formerly seen animated with such an expression of happiness.

One day my mother sent for me earlier than usual, about six o'clock in the morning I found her sitting in bed, and leaning upon the pillows. She held the Bible open before her, and an expression of peace and hope shone in her pale countenance. The window was open, receiving the perfume of flowers, and the song of a thousand birds celebrated the infinite greatness and goodness of God, the Creator of the universe.

My feelings were strongly excited, I hardly dared to approach the bed of my mother: she stretched forth her hands, clasped me affectionately to her bosom, and when I knelt beside her, she raised her eyes toward heaven and prayed fervently. "My dear child," said she to me, with a calm and firm voice, "I wished to see you early this morning, because there remains but a few moments for me to live. Do not let this trouble you, even the longest life is short, compared with eternity! We shall soon be reunited for ever my son! God will not forsake you, but you must consecrate yourself to him to serve him."

My mother's voice ceased for a moment, a tear dropped from her eye, when she added, with a trembling voice, "you must serve him better than I have done." I looked surprised—"Yes, my son," replied my mother, "and at this moment, when the world is receding from me, when I am going to render an account to God of my works, I can say, that the Lord allows me to go in peace; that I commit my soul into his hands, with a firm assurance of having part in his mercy; for the blood of my Saviour has atoned for my offences, and it is only by him that I am justified. Still I regret one thing, which I hope to repair by the promise I wish to obtain from you—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

"See what I ought to have done," continued she, "and what I have not done. I have served God in my heart, but have never established his worship in my family. Oh! what a blessing this sacred duty would have conferred upon me, and upon us all! I thought I loved God, but forgot to serve him! My son, perhaps you will one day become the father of a family, promise me that you will call to mind the last words of your mother, and that then you will honour the Lord by daily family worship." Bathing my mother's hands with tears, I promised to comply with all her wishes. She seemed satisfied, and enjoined on me not to forget my promise. I will not retrace the afflictive scenes which followed this interview: my mother slept in Jesus. A few weeks after, I again left my father's roof: it was the abode of sorrow, but had become dearer than ever to me. I had a sister, three years younger than myself, and two brothers of an intermediate age: they understood not the loss they had sustained; alas! I knew it not myself.

I resumed my studies, and several years glided a-

way before I returned to Languedoc my father came to Paris yearly to visit me. These journeys served to divert him from the grief which time had not diminished.

When I was eighteen years of age, I left college, and returned home. I had not seen my brothers and sisters since the moment of our sad separation, and I found them so much grown, that I had, as it were, a new acquaintance to make; but a tender affection soon united us perfectly.

My sister bore a striking resemblance to my mother. The faculties of her mind were early developed; she sought, as far as was in her power, to fill the station, and discharge the duties of a mother. But all her efforts were insufficient, and I was deeply grieved to observe the absence of that order, peace, and harmony, which once prevailed. A melancholy sorrow settled down upon my father's heart, which indisposed him for domestic duties, he, however, devoted most of his time to the superintendance of his children's education, but this was chiefly confined to their intellectual instruction.

During the hours of study, he exacted an indefatigable application; at other hours, he imposed no restraint, but left them to grow up without any care, except for their protection.

He left his domestics still more to themselves; and they abused his confidence, quarrelled with one another, and set a bad example to the inhabitants of the village. One evening, feeling dejected on account of some unhappy scenes which I had witnessed, I desired to visit my mother's room: it was generally locked, and I entered it with an emotion of awe. Every thing remained as it was: my heart beat with violence, as I took a view of the objects around me: I fell upon my knees near the bed, and wept freely; the last words of my mother rung in my ears; I heard her trembling voice saying, "my son you must consecrate yourself to God; you must serve him."

"Yes, Lord," I cried, "I make this sacred engagement; but how many difficulties surround me! How shall I fulfill the wishes of my dying mother! Assist me, O God; sustain my weakness."

I remained a long time, imploring the assistance of Him who is strength and power; by degrees, my feelings were calmed, and an inexpressible peace came over me, I arose full of confidence, and seeing the claims of duty, I went without hesitation to my father, who, at this hour, was always alone in his study. I was embarrassed and troubled as I approached him; but raising my heart to God, I felt strengthened. As I approached my father, he perceived my emotion: looking kindly upon me he inquired the cause of my agitation. "The fear of reawakening your grief has often hindered me from speaking of my mother; but now duty urges me to speak of her, and mention circumstances of which you have been ignorant." My father appeared desirous that I should proceed. I recounted to him all that had taken place without omitting a single word of my mother. I finished the recital with a calmness of manners, which proved to me that we never ought to doubt the assistance of God; he will grant it to all that need it.

My father could not immediately answer but soon replied. "My son, why have you communicated these painful particulars; do you depend on me to accomplish the last wishes of your mother?" I replied, "yes."

My father paused; he seemed to be lost in deep and troubled thoughts. To establish family worship, especially to take it upon himself, seemed impossible, though he expressed a wish that it might be done. "To-morrow, my son, I will give you a decisive answer, meanwhile, leave me to myself."

I left my father; but before retiring to my chamber, I went for my mother's Bible; which I found in her room, upon the same table where she always kept it: I took it with me, and employed the greatest part of the night in perusing the same passages which she had often explained to me; they were all marked and underlined with her own hand. While thus employed, I felt that we were not separated, but that my mind was united with the already happy and glorified spirit of my mother. The next day, I was very calm, and when I met my father, it was with the firm assurance that God would direct all things for our greatest good. My father led me into the garden, and spoke a few words, nearly in these terms: "I cannot, my son, comply with the desire that you expressed yesterday

I desire that my children should love religion and obey God; but I ought to guard against every thing that will give to their piety an appearance of pride and ostentation. All that God requires of us is, to serve him cheerfully, by conforming our hearts and lives to the precepts of the gospel. Any thing more than this, I think, tends only to exalt the heart with pride and self-sufficiency." I was very much grieved at this reply of my father's; but felt that I could not change his opinion or touch his heart. My only resource was prayer. My father perceived my sorrow, and, taking my hand, continued: "It is impossible for me, in the midst of my domestic duties, to attend to those of a pastor; this ought not to surprise you, my son: still, I do not object to your sister's attending to these things when you are away, and doing for your brothers all that your mother did for you; she may read the Bible with them; she may pray with them, if she desires it; all that I shall wish is, that it may be done without confusion, and with the greatest simplicity, and in a private manner."

My father left me as he said these words. I hastened to my sister, to whom I related all that had passed between us. She listened with interest and attention; and desired me to guide her, in a matter so solemn. It was from the holy scriptures that I endeavoured to make her understand the importance of the charge that was intrusted to her. The next day we met again in the chamber of my mother, and humbly prayed to God to accept our worship, and to teach us himself, by his Spirit, to serve him every day of our lives. I then read a chapter in the Bible, and closed by again calling upon the Lord. For some days I performed this duty with much pleasure; but it was soon necessary for me to quit my home, and again return to Paris, to attend to the study of the law. My sister promised to persevere in praying; and reading the word of God: as yet, however, our hearts were not affected by divine truth: we were actuated rather by a deep feeling of filial respect, than by a desire to please our heavenly Father.

On my return to Paris, I persevered in the plan of commencing each day by an hour of prayer and meditation. By degrees light shone into my heart; I felt my misery, my state of sin, and condemnation before God. I felt anguish of soul, at the thought of meeting my God in judgment; but soon I felt the joy of deliverance, and I received with eagerness, all the assurances of mercy which were presented in Jesus Christ. From this instant every thing was changed within me, an invisible power calmed my troubled passions, and diffused quietness, peace, and happiness through all my being. It was a new life to me, and I felt guided by the hand of God, though I had often cause for sighing over my ingratitude and spiritual want.

The following year I returned to Languedoc, and then I witnessed fresh manifestations of the Divine mercy. For some time past, the letters of my father and sister had led me to anticipate the joy which I was soon to experience; for they always closed with expressions of a serious and religious cast. From the moment of my arrival, I was struck with the change which a few months had made in our family. The mild and modest air of the domestics, their becoming and grave demeanour, the extreme neatness of their clothing, at once attracted my attention. My sisters and brothers received me with joy: inward happiness was exhibited in all their looks. My father received me with great tenderness; his eyes were filled with tears; but the sweetest smile animated his countenance, instead of that dark expression of sorrow, which had so long settled there. As soon as I was alone with my sister, I eagerly questioned her upon what had passed during my absence. "O my brother," said Henrietta to me, "how grateful you will be, when you know what the Lord hath done for us! How true are the words, 'continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.' Col. 4. 2. 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.' Matt. 7. 7. After you left us, I continued the performance of family worship; our brothers were every day more and more interested in my reading: they became more attentive, and sought to understand the meaning of the scriptures. Often during the day, they conversed together; and when a particular passage struck them, they repeated it to their nurse. She soon asked permission to be present at the exercise, and appeared to listen with attention. Soon after,