

forbidden amusement. By and by down comes the bible upon the floor. Up jumps the mother hastily, giving the child a passionate blow, and exclaims, "There, then, obey me next time." The child screams, and the mother picks up the bible, saying, "I wonder why my children do not obey me better."

This is not a very interesting family scene, but every one of my readers will admit that it is not an uncommon one; and it is strange that a child thus managed should be disobedient? No. She is actually led on by her mother to insubordination; she is actually taught to pay no heed to her directions, even the improper punishment which sometimes follow transgression is not inflicted on account of her disobedience, but for the accidental consequences. In the case above described, had the bible not fallen, the disobedience of the child would have passed unpunished: let it be an immutable principle in family government that your word is law.

I was once, when riding in the country, overtaken by a shower, and compelled to seek shelter in a farm-house. Half a dozen rude and ungovernable boys were racing about the room, in such an uproar as to prevent the possibility of conversation with the father, who was sitting by the fire. As I, however, endeavoured to make some remark, the father shouted out, "Stop that noise, boys."

They paid no more heed to him than they did to the rain. Soon again, in an irritated voice, he exclaimed, "Boys, be still, or I will whip you—as sure as you are alive I will." But the boys, as though accustomed to such threats, screamed and quarrelled without intermission.

At last the father said to me, "I believe I have got the worst boys in the country, I never can make them mind me."

The fact was, these boys had the worst father. He was teaching them disobedience as directly and effectually as he could; he was giving commands which he had no intention of enforcing, and they knew it. This, to be sure, is an extreme case. But just so far as any mother allows her authority to be disregarded, so far does she expose herself to the contempt of her children, and actually teaches them lessons of disobedience.

And is there any difficulty in enforcing obedience to any definite command? Take the case of the child playing with the bible. A mild and judicious mother says distinctly and decidedly to her child, "My dear, that is the bible, and you must not play with it." The child hesitates for a moment, but yielding to the strong temptation, is soon playing with the forbidden book. The mother immediately rises, takes the child, and carries her into her chamber. She sits down, and says calmly, "Mary, I told you not to touch the bible, and you have disobeyed me. I am very sorry, for now I must punish you."

Mary begins to cry, and to promise not to do so again.

"But Mary," says the mother, "you have disobeyed me, and you must be punished."

Mary continues to cry, but the mother seriously and calmly punishes her. She inflicts real pain—pain that will be remembered.