

away the mind too often from its steady pursuit of any subject which we contemplate; and thereby the soul gets a habit of silly curiosity and impertinence, of trifling and wandering. Vagarlo thought himself furnished with the best closet for his studies among the beauties, gaieties, and diversions of Kensington or Hampton Court; but after seven years professing to pursue learning he was a mere novice still.

V. Be not in too much haste to come to the determination of a difficult or important point. Think it worth your waiting to find out truth. Do not give your assent up to either side of a question too soon, merely on this account, that the study of it is long and difficult. Rather be contented with ignorance for a season, and continue in suspense till your attention, and meditation, and due labour, have found out sufficient evidence on one side. Some are so fond to know a great deal at once, and love to talk of things with freedom and boldness before they fully understand them, that they scarcely ever allow themselves attention enough to search the matter through and through.

VI. Have a care of indulging the more sensual passions and appetites of animal nature; they are great enemies to attention. Let not the mind of a student be under the influence of any warm affection to things of sense, when he comes to engage in the search of truth, or the improvement of his understanding. A person under the power of love, or fear, or anger, great pain, or deep sorrow, hath so little government of his soul, that he cannot keep it attentive to the proper subject of his meditation. The passions call away the thoughts with incessant importunity towards the object that excited them; and if we indulge the frequent rise and roving of passions, we shall thereby procure an unsteady and inattentive habit of mind.

Yet this one exception must be admitted, viz. If we can be so happy as to engage any passion of the soul on the side of the particular study which we are pursuing, it may have great influence to fix the attention more strongly to it.

VII. It is, therefore, very useful to fix and engage the mind in the pursuit of any study by a consideration of the divine pleasures of truth and knowledge—by a sense of our duty to God—by a delight in the exercise of our intellectual faculties—by the hope of future service to our fellow creatures, and glorious advantage to ourselves both in this world and that which is to come. These thoughts, though they may move our affections, yet they do it with a proper influence: these will rather assist and promote our attention, than disturb or divert it from the subject of our present and proper meditations.

A soul inspired with the fondest love of truth, and the warmest aspirations after sincere felicity and celestial beatitude, will keep all its powers attentive to the incessant pursuit of them: passion is then refined and consecrated to its divinest purposes.—*Watts.*

## MOTHER'S DEPARTMENT.

### Maternal Authority.

BY THE REV J. S. C. ABBOTT.

Obedience is absolutely essential to proper family government. Without this, all other efforts will be in vain. You may pray with, and for your children; you may strive to instruct them in religious truth; you may be unwearied in your efforts to make them happy, and to gain their affection. But if they are in habits of disobedience, your instructions will be lost, and your toil in vain. And by obedience, I do not mean languid and dilatory yielding to repeated threats, but prompt and cheerful acquiescence in parental commands. Neither is it enough that a child should yield to your arguments and persuasions. It is essential that he should submit to your authority.

I will suppose a case in illustration of this last remark. Your little daughter is sick; you go to her with the medicine which has been prescribed for her, and the following dialogue ensues.

"Here my daughter, is some medicine for you."

"I don't want to take it, mama."

"Yes, my dear do take it, for it will make you feel better."

"No it won't mother; I don't want it."

"Yes it will, my child; the doctor says it will."

"Well, it don't taste good and I don't want it."

The mother continues her persuasions, and the child persists in its refusal. After a long and wearisome conflict, the mother is compelled either to throw the medicine away, or to resort to compulsion, and force down the unpalatable drug. Thus, instead

of appealing to her own supreme authority, she is appealing to the reason of the child, and, under these circumstances, the child of course refuses to submit.

A mother, not long since, under similar circumstances, not able to persuade her child to take the medicine, and not having sufficient resolution to compel it, threw the medicine away. When the physician next called she was ashamed to acknowledge her want of government, and therefore did not tell him that the medicine had not been given. The physician finding the child worse, left another prescription, supposing the previous one had been properly administered. But the child had no idea of being convinced of the propriety of taking the nauseous dose, and the renewed efforts of the mother were unavailing. Again the fond and foolish, but cruel parent, threw the medicine away, and the fever was left to rage unchecked in its veins. Again the physician called, and was surprised to find the inefficacy of his prescriptions, and that the poor little sufferer was at the verge of death. The mother, when informed that her child must die, was in an agony, and confessed what she had done. But it was too late. The child died. And think you that mother gazed upon its pale corpse with any common emotions of anguish? Think you the idea never entered her mind that she was the destroyer of her child? Physicians will tell you that many children have been thus lost. Unaccustomed to obedience when well, they were still more averse to it when sick. The efforts which are made to induce a stubborn child to take medicine, often produce such an excitement as entirely to counteract the effect of the prescription; and thus is a mother often called to weep over the grave of her child simply because she has not taught that child to obey.

It is certainly the duty of parents to convince their children of the reasonableness and propriety of their requirements. This should be done to instruct them, and to make them acquainted with moral obligation. But there should always be authority sufficient to enforce prompt obedience, whether the child can see the reason of the requirement or not. Indeed, it is impossible to govern a child by mere argument. Many cases must occur, in which it will be incapable of seeing the reasonableness of the command and often its wishes will be so strongly opposed to duty, that all the efforts to convince will be in vain. The first thing therefore to be aimed at, is to bring your child under perfect subjection. Teach him that he must obey you. Sometimes give him your reasons; again withhold them. But let him perfectly understand that he is to do as he is bid. Accustom him to immediate and cheerful acquiescence in your will. This is obedience. And this is absolutely essential to good family government. Without this your family will present one continued scene of noise and confusion; the toil of rearing up your children will be almost insupportable, and in all probability, your heart will be broken by their future licentiousness or ingratitude.

We come now to the inquiry, *how is this habit of obedience to be established?* This is not so difficult a matter as many imagine. It does not require profound learning, or a mysterious skill, which pertains but to the few. Where do you find the best regulated families? Are they in the houses of the rich? Do the children of our most eminent men furnish the best patterns for imitation? Obviously not. In some of the most humble dwellings we find the beautiful spectacle of an orderly and well regulated family. On the other hand, in the mansions of the wealthiest or most eminent men of our country, we may often find a family of rude girls and ungovernable boys,—a picture of wild misrule. It is not greatness of talent, or profound learning, which is requisite to teach a child obedience. The principles by which we are to be guided are very simple and very plain.

*Never give a command which you do not intend shall be obeyed.*

There is no more effectual way of teaching a child disobedience than by giving commands which you have no intention of enforcing. A child is thus habituated to disregard its mother; and in a short time the habit becomes so strong, and the child's contempt for the mother so confirmed, that entreaties and threats are alike unheeded.

"Mary, let that book alone," says a mother to her little daughter who is trying to pull the Bible from the table.

Mary stops for a moment, and then takes hold of the book again.

Pretty soon the mother looks up and sees that Mary is still playing with the Bible. "Did you not hear me tell you to let that book alone?" she exclaims: "Why don't you obey?"

Mary takes away her hand for a moment, but is soon again at her forbidden amusement. By and by, down comes the Bible