

INFANT TRAINING.

MY 15.

THAT the attainment of happiness in this life, and a reasonable hope of attaining it in the life to come, are the great objects of all reflecting men, there can be no doubt. How this happiness and this hope can be most surely attained, is best taught by the Holy Scriptures.

But the interpretations of many of the most learned commentators have led to so many diversities of opinion, and consequent diversities of practice, as to cause much unkindly controversy among Christians.

For more than fifty years have these controversies continually occupied my thoughts, and more than any other subject have they been considered by me;—and chiefly with the view, and in the hope, of finding some yet untried way, or means, whereby peace on earth and good will among men could be more generally realized than they ever yet have been.

In early life, very soon after twelve years of age, I had much to do in the management of infants, and of young children. At the age of seventeen, I became a teacher of a military company. For nineteen years after, without any intermission, I had the teaching of military men, from the most ignorant and awkward peasant to the educated scholar from Oxford or Cambridge. Subsequently, for more than thirty years, in civil life, have I continued so to exercise my mind. During the whole of this time, I studied the human mind in every point of view in which I could regard it; and above all as to the best means of forming it to habits of gentleness, love to parents, good will to one another; and this good will so strong as to give an eager desire to *do good to one another above all things*; and these dispositions to be founded on a deep and an affectionate sense of gratitude to God, our Heavenly Father.

I soon, however, became painfully impressed with the many evils I saw from day to day arising up before my view. I watched continually to discover the causes of those evils; and I desired above all things to discover the best means of preventing, or removing, or abating them. I exercised my mind incessantly, to discover if there were any one course of conduct, which, more than any other, would be acceptable to The Deity, that I might, as much as possible, adopt and pursue that course.

After many years of inquiry, search and reflection, I became convinced that *to do good to my neighbour*, *TO DO GOOD TO MY NEIGHBOUR*, was, as it were, the one thing needful in this life. For, if every man "*loved his neighbour as himself*," where would be the motive to impel any one to injure his neighbour? Would not all men meet one another with joy and gladness, because their happiness would consist in blessing one another?

How best to bring the human being to love his neighbour was the next greatest question with me. I early discovered that the older men became the more difficult was it to induce them to change or alter their habits of thinking or acting:—that in youth, and *above all in infancy*, was the mind most easily impressed or biassed by appropriate training. I saw that infant children were little attended to beyond the ordinary attention to feeding and clothing them; the mind being almost entirely left exposed to the effect of every casual or accidental impression made by surrounding circumstances. The anxious, or the angry expression of the parents', or the nurse's face, was not studiously kept from the observing eyes of the curious and watchful infant. The harsh and the startling tones of an angry voice were not carefully suppressed within its hearing. The utmost care and precaution were not taken to keep these and the like causes of disturbance, or of painful emotion, from all knowledge of the infant; while, on the other hand, as it advanced in observation and in physical power, it was led into evil habits by the erroneous teaching or treatment of the parent or the nurse: as for example, when the child began to walk, on its falling or tumbling against a table or a chair, forthwith it was shown how to be revenged, by beating the supposed offending object. Was not then the passion of anger roused into activity, and the first impulse given to it? and did not every succeeding repetition of angry excitement soon ripen this tone of the feeling of anger into a fixed, or at least into a strong, habit, such as should have been guarded against with the most diligent and constant care? Let every observer note how numerous and painful are the evils which, in after life, afflict the domestic and the social circles, and which are chiefly caused by the ungoverned, or ungovernable exercise, in in-