



HEARTS RESOLVED AND HANDS PREPARED, THE BLESSINGS THEY ENJOY TO GUARD.—SMOLLET.

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### THE MOTHERS OF OUR LATE ENGLISH POETS.

From the Obligations of Literature to the Mothers of England.

BY MRS. HALSTED.

English Literature produced few more striking instances of great talent, united to the most inflexible virtue, than that of *Dr. Johnson*. The genius, indeed, which excited such admiration must be considered innate, for it was independent of ordinary instruction; but the rectitude and probity for which he was fully as eminent, was the result of his mother's religious precepts, and the effect of her moral influence over him. His father's eccentricities are well known, and equally so the poverty that clouded *Johnson's* prospects at his decease. There is something singularly touching, after reaping his eulogium on his mother, and the simple account he gives of the vivid impression made on his infant imagination by her precepts, to find him, too, when the mother had departed, writing "*Rasselas*" to pay the expense of her funeral,—that beautiful work, expressive of things temporal, and directing the hopes of man to things eternal. His reverential love for her never abated,—and deeply was he affected at her loss. *Edmund Burke*, as a political philosopher, a scholar, a writer, and an orator, has never been surpassed; yet his fame had its basis in a mother's tender care. Fragile and sickly in childhood, he received the rudiments of education at home; his mental and bodily strength progressed under the watchfulness of maternal anxiety. His mother, from his nurse became his instructress,—books soon constituted his greatest enjoyment, by her he was taught to read them, and in her he was encouraged in that devotion to study, which displayed itself in childish years, and which influenced so materially his brilliant career. The beautiful effusions of *Cowper*, and his exquisite poem at the sight of his mother's picture, above forty years after her death, are well known; and it cannot be necessary to point out the effects of her paternal instruction, when that loved mother's decease, at the early age of six years, contributed to tinge with sadness his after career, and left so indelible an impression as never to have been wholly eradicated—

"The record fair  
That memory keeps of all thy kindness there,  
Still outlives many a storm that has effaced  
A thousand other themes less deeply traced."

It may not, however, be so generally known, that the poet *Gray*, whose touching strains are engraved on the memory both of youth and age, was more than commonly indebted to maternal affection. By the promptitude and resolution of his mother, under circumstances of sudden and dangerous illness, his life was saved in

childhood; by earnest and stimulating encouragement she developed to him his talents in boyhood, and by personal self-denial afterwards afforded him, from her own private resources, those advantages at Eton, which procured for him the character, at a very brilliant period of literature, of "the most learned man in Europe." His gratitude to his devoted parent is forcibly and beautifully expressed in his published letters. He never mentioned her but with a sigh; and like *Sir Francis Bacon*, his last request was to be buried by her side in that churchyard, which his elegy has ever hallowed by his associations. *Pope* in his Universal Prayer, seems to express the nature of those unfading impressions made in early childhood; and he was himself a striking instance of the enduring effect of maternal influence. From his birth, of a constitution feeble and delicate, his sense of his obligation to his mother, and his gentle obedience and deference to her as such, shone in bright relief through the irritability that shaded his peculiarly sensitive career; and his overwhelming grief at her death, though at the great age of 93, fully justifies that beautiful apostrophe of *Dr. Johnson* to him, that "Life has among its soothing and quiet comforts few things better to give than such a son." *Thomson*, whose "Seasons" occur intuitively to every reflecting mind, in spring and autumn rambles, was left by his father, at an early age, the eldest of 9 children, to the "sole care of his mother." *Shenstone's* precocious fondness for reading was so great, that to supply his craving for a fresh supply of books, his mother often wrapped up a piece of wood in the shape of a book, and put it under his pillow to induce sleep for the night, and gain time to supply the little student's demands for the morrow. What love but a mother's would have sought in such an expedient the repose due to over wrought mental powers? The influence which the mother of *Robert Burns* early acquired and always maintained over her son, is well known. His poetic genius was first called into exercise by the ballads and songs she sung with peculiar pathos and feeling, and to his further progress, his mother was still his instructress. To the purity of her religious exhortations, and the strict fulfilment of her social duties, may be traced the most touching of these effusions which shed such lustre on the name of the author of the "Cotter's Saturday night." *Sir William Jones*, the great oriental scholar, owed to his widowed mother, that careful education which laid the foundation of his undying fame. Her vigorous understanding had pre-eminently qualified her for the task, and induced her, insensibly, from the first dawn of infant intelligence, to direct the mind of her child to habits of reflection. She early addressed herself to his understanding, and

always directed his enquiring spirit to useful objects. To the observation of his mother's axiom, "Read and you will know," *Sir William* always acknowledged himself indebted for his rare attainments; and rare indeed they were, for he was master of twenty-eight languages, an elegant poet, a distinguished naturalist, and an excellent mathematician; but his greatest praise lies in the direction of his talents, which were devoted to public utility, and wholly subservient to religion. The name of the benevolent *Wilberforce* is intimately connected with maternal care and solicitude, whether arising from his peculiar feeble frame in childhood, or the early age at which he was deprived of a father's protection. From his mother he inherited many rich endowments and to her firmness and decision in boyhood, his country owe his connection with politics, and that useful career in public life which has caused him to be numbered among her most eminent philanthropists. The essays of *Charles Lamb* abound in the most touching allusions to the sweets and blessings of home; while his letters attest, in beautiful language, the all powerful effect of a mother's love, portrayed in the gratitude which he expresses to the parent whom he so warmly and affectionately eulogised. Endless indeed are the incidents in which rare and singular talents have been developed and promoted by maternal love; innumerable the examples that might be adduced to prove in this particular point alone, how much the "Mothers of England" have done for their offspring, by the exercise of an influence the purest and strongest perhaps which binds the heart of man to earthly ties. How forcibly does *Sir Henry Wotton*, portray the solidity of that mother's well directed instruction, who undertook to be "tutress unto him during much of his childhood." How strikingly does the upright, exemplary, and devout bishop *Sandford*, illustrate through a blameless life, the effects of a widowed parent's confidence in her children's honor and truth even in childhood, and in very infancy! Who can pursue the "*Remains of Henry Kirke White*," the touching poet, the young humble christian ripe for eternity, without feeling his heart overflow with admiration at the self denial, the privation endured in secret by his mother, to aid the poet's "mounting spirit," to soothe her son's wretchedness at "hope deferred," and to prevent that genius, which was alike her pride and her joy, from being withered by servile occupations, and the misery of a hateful employment. But, as above stated, instances of a corresponding nature in mothers are endless, examples in their sons are innumerable. *Sir Walter Scott* is among the latest and most distinguished instances of the effect of female education; it was to his mother that this great man

owed his tuition, for though, as stated in his autobiography, he was indebted to his aunt for the rudiments of learning, and to his grandmother for that fund of legendary lore, which fixed irrevocably in his infant mind, clung to him like a charmed gift, even in his declining years, yet by his mother was he imbued with his youthful taste for imaginative composition, and stimulated to exercise his poetical ardour. Of delicate temperament and feeble constitution, he peculiarly needed the watchfulness of maternal tenderness in childhood; and to the judicious care of his excellent parent in more advanced years, and the benefit he derived from her highly cultivated mind and superior understanding his literary fame may be attributed.

### THE DUKE AND THE SENTRY.

One of the heaviest of the heavy German Soldiers had the duty of mounting guard at one of the Ducal hunting seats; and, not to perplex the poor fellow, one single notion, and no more, was rammed into his noddle—namely, that he must present arms to the Duke should his business pass that way. He was then left to his cogitations, which, we need hardly say, were of that class described by *Dibdin* in his song of "The Jolly young Waterman," who, we are told, was "thinking of nothing at all." Tired of this transcendental monotony, the man had recourse to the universal German solace—his sausages and his schnapps. The better to enjoy these he laid his firelock on the grass, and, lolling against a tree, discussed his creature comforts with due voracity. While thus engaged, he saw an unpretending person approach, dressed in the common German hunting dress, a sort of green smock-frock, leathers, and continuations. "Good appetite to you," said the new-comer; "what are you eating?" "Guess!" gruffly answered the peasant soldier. "Oh, perhaps *Rothwurst*?" said the Duke (for the sportsman was no less a personage) "No; something better than that!" "Probably *Leberwurst*?" "No; something better than that!" "Probably *Mettwurst*?" *Rothwurst*, *Leberwurst*, and *Mettwurst* may be called the positive comparative and superlative degrees of the German sausage. "Yes. And, now you know all about my sausage, pray who are you?" "Guess!" said the Duke. "Oh, perhaps you're one of the Duke's pages?" "No! something better than that." "Then you may be one of his aide-de-camps in disguise?" "No; something better than that." "Perhaps you're the Duke himself?" "Yes." "Then just hold my sausage a moment—for my orders are to present arms to you." The Duke always related this anecdote with infinite glee.

**Making Coffee.**—In making Coffee, much care is requisite to extract the whole strength and flavour of the berry; and, moreover, it is very erroneous and most expensive to sweeten with raw or moist sugar. Many persons imagine that the moist sugar tends more to sweeten; but if experience be made, it will be found that half the quantity in weight of refined sugar will add more sweetness, and the flavour of the coffee will be much more pure and delicate. In Holland, where coffee is the universal beverage of the lower orders, the sugar cannot be too refined, and the boatmen on the canals may be seen mixing the most beautiful white refined sugar with their coffee, while on such a custom and taste, they pride themselves highly. It requires little thought to conceive in this departure from our custom, and when economy is blended with refinement, it is only necessary to call the attention of those whose means naturally are scanty, to seek for facts combining what is best, and what is best.