

ful, careful nurse of a helpless babe, and seem to live but for it, is, indeed, another of the deep mysteries of love. Willingly does she watch it by day in its cozy crib, and drink in purer, sweeter joy from her vigil, than ever she drank from any other source. Willingly does she prevent the night watches, that its rest may be sweet and undisturbed. Forgetful of herself, her sole care is centred on this little object, and she lives, and moves, and works, and watches, and wrestles for its good. Such a change,—so sudden,—of her whole habits, business, thought, did we not witness it every day, would appear a more wonderful metamorphosis than any that Ovid has described. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb.” Now, as committed to her care, the child is just what the mother makes it; or, at the very least, she stamps upon it the impress of her own character. It is not too bold a use of the figure to say that it is in her hands as clay in the hands of the potter, and she can mould it at will. The power she can exert for a considerable period is well nigh absolute, for during all this time it is passive in her hand—and even when the understanding opens, and the will begins to work, and the passions to play, such is her power that she, as none other, can furnish the understanding and bend the will, and direct and control and subdue the affections.

Her influence thus exerted in early life she exerts and retains so long as life lasts, and its effects are seen in the history of her family alike in their temporal and spiritual condition. A mother’s counsels, a mother’s prayers, a mother’s psalms, a mother’s reproofs, a mother’s commendations, the gentle firmness of her authority, and the warning attractions of her example, are immortal; they never die; they may for the time be forgotten, profligacy may bury them in the grave with all that was lovely and pure and ingenuous in youth; ingratitude may raze them from the table of the heart, and neglect may hide them so far in the treasures of the memory, that they may seem as if lost amid the rubbish which encumber it; but all will not do; and in an hour when he thinks not, his mother’s power will reclaim the prodigal, and restore the ingrate to her and to himself. So have I read of the shipwrecked sailor who in a foreign land sent for a minister to see him when about to die. He was a Scotchman, and the minister was a Scotchman