

*John's Mother's Reward.*

THE

FAITHFUL MOTHER'S REWARD:

A NARRATIVE

OF THE

CONVERSION AND HAPPY DEATH

OF

J. B.

WHO DIED IN THE TENTH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION

BY THE

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following Narrative was prepared by the mother of its subject, many years ago, for the gratification of a near relative, without any intention of its ever being submitted to the public. All those more immediately concerned have been for some time in the grave. Few, indeed, personally conversant with the facts, now survive. The manuscript having fallen into the hands of a near Christian friend, it was thought that a more general circulation might subserve the cause of religion, illustrating as it does the faithfulness of God's covenant promise to parents, the power of divine grace in early life, and the value of our excellent Catechism in developing intelligent Christian piety.

The narrative may be relied upon with entire confidence. It was written but seven weeks after the death of the subject, before the mind

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of the writer had recovered that composure which would have been required, if the narrative had been designed for publication. This is evident from the frequent departures from a strict chronological arrangement of the circumstances of the narrative. Although it may seem to display the partiality of a mother's love, yet there are those still alive who can vouch for the strict truthfulness of the account.

It ought to be mentioned, that at the time of the birth of the subject of the memoir, his mother was suffering under a severe domestic affliction, which excluded her from general society for several years. Her little boy became thus her constant and almost sole companion; and his association with an unusually refined, intelligent, and stricken parent, may account, under God, for much that is peculiar in the development of his uncommon character.

SEPTEMBER, 1853.

## INTRODUCTION.

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**THERE** is much to commend the following narrative to Christians generally, and especially to Christian parents. It exhibits a peculiarly lovely natural character, developed under the influence of the truth and Spirit of God. It traces with remarkable distinctness the progress of spiritual life in the mind of a child. It presents a striking illustration of the adaptation of scriptural truth in its doctrinal form, as exhibited in the Westminster Catechism, to the work of conviction, conversion and sanctification. It adds another to the thousands of witnesses to the fidelity of God to his promise to give his Spirit to the children of his people. It furnishes much at once to encourage and to guide pious parents in the religious nurture of their children. Above all, it presents such a clear and lovely reflection of the Redeemer's image, as to serve greatly to strengthen faith and to enkindle love. When the sun shines on a drop of water he reveals his being and his glory; and so when the image of the Saviour is reflected even from an infant soul, it is the Saviour himself and his beauty we behold and love. This is the reason why the exhibition of genuine Christian experience, carries with it a convincing power so much higher than that which belongs to external testimony or logical argument.

It is not to attract notice to this interesting volume

that these few pages of Introduction are written, but rather to take advantage of this new instance of God's fidelity to his covenant, to urge on Christian parents the duty of relying on his promise, and of regarding their children as the children of God, to be trained up for his service and kingdom.

It can hardly be doubted that many Christian parents look upon their children as born out of the pale of the church, and as having no more interest in the promises of the covenant than the children of the heathen. They expect them as a general thing to grow up alienated from God, to be converted, if at all, after arriving at "the years of discretion." The consequence is, that such parents have no faith to animate their prayers, or to give vigour to their efforts. They expect nothing, and they receive nothing. Not regarding their children as belonging to God, they do not give them to him, nor do they act towards them as heirs of the grace of life. This is the view of the relation of children of believers to the covenant, which a rationalistic and worldly spirit has widely diffused through the church. There is another extreme not less unscriptural and injurious. It supposes the church to be an external society; that all born within the pale of that society are entitled to its promises; and that the benefits which those promises secure, viz. the merits of Christ's death, spiritual regeneration and adoption into the family of God, are all conferred by external baptism. This was the great error of Judaism, against which Christ and his apostles so often warned their disciples. It was not being born a Jew that made a man a child of God. It was not the circumcision which was outward in the flesh, which secured salvation. It would avail a man nothing that he had Abraham as his father, that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, or that he was circumcised on the eighth day. The baptism which saves the soul is not the



washing away the filth of the flesh, but the turning of the heart to God. The doctrine that the promises which are made to true believers belong to the external church; that the covenant of grace is made with a visible society, and its benefits secured and conveyed by external rites to the members of that society, has rested like a blight on the church for ages. Its whole tendency is to change religion into formality; to substitute external observances for inward piety, and carnal ordinances for the work of the Spirit.

The truth lies between these extremes. On the one hand, it is not true that the children of believers are in the condition of the heathen, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise. Neither, on the other hand, is it true that all are Israel who are of Israel; that the children of the flesh, are the children of God; that all born within the visible church are inwardly regenerated and made the children of God by baptism. But it is true, that the promise is not only to believers but to their children; that the covenant of grace which promises pardon, sanctification and eternal life, includes the offspring of believers, so that they are holy, belonging unto God, standing to him in an entirely different relation from that sustained by the children of unbelievers. This is true as the apostle teaches, even when only one of the parents is a Christian; for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 1 Cor. vii. 14.

That children are included with their parents in the covenant of grace, and have a special interest in its promises, is evident from the following passages of Scripture. The covenant which God made with Abraham included the covenant of grace. Its great promise, as Paul teaches in Gal. iii. 10-20, was

Christ, yet it is said, Gen. xvii. 7, 10, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee and thy seed after thee." When this covenant came to be re-enacted through Moses, the same promise is repeated in the most explicit terms and on various occasions. Thus in Deut. xxxix. 6, it is said, "the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that thou mayest live." God holds himself up in his word as a covenant-keeping God, as the special object of faith, and his fidelity is presented as the ground of encouragement and warning. Thus in Deut. vii. 9: "Know, therefore, that Jehovah thy God, he is God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments *to a thousand generations.*" So also in the second commandment he describes himself as "showing mercy unto thousands (of generations) of them that love me, and keep my commandments." The Psalmist says, Ps. ciii. 17, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." In Isa. lix. 21, God says, "As for me this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth for ever." In the very opening of the new dispensation, the same great principle is recognized. In Acts ii. 39, the apostle Peter said to the penitent believer, "The promise is to thee and to thy seed after thee." And the apostle Paul, Rom. xi. 28, says, "The children are beloved for the fathers' sakes." From these and many similar decla-

rations of the word of God, it is obvious that children are included with their parents in the covenant of grace; and that the promise of that covenant is that God will give grace and salvation to them on the ground of the faith of the parent. If this were not so, why should the seal of the covenant, circumcision under the old dispensation, and baptism under the new, be attached to the children of believers?

To understand the doctrine of the Scriptures on this subject, however, it is to be remarked, first, that many of the promises of God are not addressed to individuals, but are general declarations of the divine purposes, and are not intended to indicate the issue of any particular case. Thus the promise made to Noah, that summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, should follow each other without fail to the end of time, is no security that any particular harvest shall be productive, but it is an abundant security that as a general rule the husbandman shall reap the reward of his labour. In like manner the declaration, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," does not mean that every diligent man shall become rich, but simply that in the dispensations of providence diligence secures wealth. Thus too, the promise, "Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," does not preclude the possibility of any well educated child going astray, though it teaches us the purpose of God to render religious training generally effective. It is to this class of promises the assurance that God will be the God of our children, undoubtedly, belongs. It does not secure the salvation of all the children of every believer, but it reveals the purpose of God to make his mercy flow in the channel of his church. If the assurance that seed-time and harvest shall not fail, gives confidence to the husbandman, notwithstanding the occasional failure of his hopes; and if the promise that the hand of the

diligent shall secure riches, animates all the children of labour, so the gracious promise that God will give his Spirit to the children of those who fear him, may well sustain their faith and encourage their hopes.

A second remark necessary to the correct apprehension of this subject is, that many of the promises of God are conditional. Sometimes these conditions are expressed, and sometimes implied. The great promise that God will be the God of our children, is suspended on the condition of parental fidelity. His mercy is unto the children's children of such as keep his covenant and remember his commandments to do them. He has not promised to make no distinction between faithful and unfaithful parents. He has never said he would interfere by miracle to prevent all the ill effects of parental neglect; that he would as certainly bless the sons of Eli as the child of Hannah. Parents, therefore, must perform their part of the covenant, or they have no right to plead its promise. They must carefully and devoutly train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and then they may as confidently expect their salvation, as the husbandman the harvest.

In other parts of Scripture we find the promise in question suspended on the conduct of the children themselves. His mercy is everlasting to such as keep his covenant. The children must keep the covenant in order to be entitled to its blessings. No matter how faithful a parent may be, if his children reject his counsel and cast off all restraint, the piety and fidelity of the parent will only avail to their greater condemnation. The covenant, therefore, which God formed with Abraham, and through him with all his people, promising to be a God to him and to his seed after him, was never intended to secure the salvation of the children of believers, irrespective of the fidelity of the parent or the conduct of the child.

If this is so, it may be said, the value of the promise is lost. If it is only general, and if suspended on conditions, it can give no assurance in any particular case; and no man can plead it with confidence in behalf of his own children. It was thus the Jews reasoned. When Paul told them their circumcision would profit them only if they kept the law, they asked, What then is the advantage of circumcision? Paul answered, Much every way. It was a great thing to belong even externally to the people to whom pertained the promises, the adoption and the glory. Whatever there was of true religion in the world was to be found among them. In like manner, it is a great thing to be the children of believers, to be born within the pale of the church. There is the Spirit, there is the word of God, and the promises, and the means of grace, and the prayers of the faithful. The great majority of the saved come from those thus highly favoured; and those who fail of eternal life come short of salvation, through unfaithfulness to the covenant, and not through the failure of God's promise.

The Bible then teaches that the covenant of grace includes the children of believers. God says to his people: I will be a God to you and to your seed after you. My Spirit, which is upon you, shall be upon them; and I will circumcise their hearts to love the Lord with all their soul. The same ordinary connection which exists between seed-time and harvest, diligence and riches, education and knowledge, exists, by a divine constitution, between faithful parental training and the salvation of the young. That this is not more clearly seen, is doubtless to be referred, in great measure, to the lack of fidelity on the part of parents. When we look over the Christian world generally, and see how small is the proportion of parents who either purpose or desire to bring up their children for God; when we see

that the great majority evidently, and even avowedly, make the attainment of some worldly object the great end of education; when we consider how all the influences brought to bear on the young tend to make them worldly, we need not wonder that the promise seems to be of no effect. The conditions on which that promise was made utterly fail. And if we withdraw our eyes from the wide survey, and direct them to the narrower field of professors of religion in our churches, still we find comparatively few who so live and so labour for the salvation of their children, as to give them any pretext to throw the responsibility of their failure upon God. Want of fidelity, on his part, to the covenant, is the very last ground on which we dare cast this fearful responsibility. Besides this want of careful religious training, much of the evil is to be attributed to the want of faith. We have forgotten the covenant. We are unmindful of the promise of God to be the God of our children, and to give them his Spirit. A great and lamentable change has come over the church in this respect. We have ceased to regard our children as the children of God, and, in a covenant sense, holy; and, therefore, we do not expect God to claim them as his own. We have lost reliance on the covenant, in early, faithful and religious training, and either leave our children to take their chance, or trust to other means than those which God has specially appointed for their salvation, and which he has specially promised to bless. The covenant relation of the children of believers to God, and the divinely constituted connection between the faith and faithful training on the part of parents, and the salvation of their children, is a truth to which the attention of the church needs to be directed in this age, in which an opposite spirit so generally prevails. Christian parents especially should be called upon to lay this matter to heart.

To them the souls of their children are committed to bring up for God. If they do their part, God has promised to do his. We should, from the beginning, regard our children, not as profane, but holy; as belonging to God. It should be our settled purpose to bring them up for him, and not for the world. We should endeavour, by our habitual spirit, by our example, prayers and instructions, to lead them cordially to consent to the covenant within which they are by birth included. We should awaken in them the consciousness of their peculiar relation to God. We should remind them that God has made promises to them which he has made to no others; and that both their privileges and responsibilities are peculiarly great.

Children, too, as well as parents, have much to do in securing the blessings of the covenant. Let them feel the right to claim God as their God. Let them remember that this right is not founded on their freedom from sin and condemnation, but solely on the promise of God in the covenant of grace. Let them remember that faith on their part, in this promise, is one of the conditions on which it is suspended. They are bound to believe that God is reconciled; that they are beloved for their parents' sake; that God is their God. If they do not believe this; if they do not consent to be the children of God according to the terms of the covenant into which their parents entered, in their behalf and in their name, in baptism, then are they covenant-breakers; they forfeit its privileges and refuse its blessings. Let baptized children, the children of the covenant, look up to God as their Father, to the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, to the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier—claim, regard and submit to them as such, and they will never disclaim the relation.

“I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord. My

Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put into thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth, for ever."



# THE FAITHFUL MOTHER'S REWARD.

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## LETTER I.

MY DEAR COUSIN—The narrative to which you refer in your late letters, is a very long one, and yet you so earnestly entreat for a still more circumstantial account of my beloved child, and in a manner so soothing to my maternal feelings, and so well calculated to arouse me to the exertion, as a matter of duty, that I will no longer defer redeeming the promise those entreaties drew from me. As well as my feeble pen can, I will describe my departed darling, not merely that you may learn to love *him*, but that from the contemplation of his character you may imbibe new lessons of faith—may learn to love

more ardently and confidently that God, who alone made this babe to differ from others. To him alone belongs all the glory—all the praise. I desire to magnify his holy name for his wondrous work, and therefore it is that I am willing to obey your injunction, and tell you of that sweet lamb he so tenderly constrained to love and obey him, and suffer all his will.

But where shall I begin? My mind reverts with melancholy fondness to the whole course of his short life. Every step was marked by something on which memory loves to linger—something indicative of natural amiability, or of gracious feeling—something that endeared him inexpressibly to my heart.

You say that “he was early taught of the Spirit.” Truly he was! Only lessons from above could sink so deep, in the mind of a thoughtless playful child—could instruct so fully in duty—could impart such tenderness of conscience, and such love of holiness—could produce such fruits of righteousness—could teach to welcome affliction—to be thankful in tribulation—to endure to the

end, confiding the more firmly in the goodness, love, and mercy of God, the more heavily his chastening rod was applied. Only lessons from above could do all this—and all this, and more than all this, was wrought in the renewed heart of my child. So his life evidenced—so his perfect peace in the prospect of death proclaimed.

But you knew him not, and I cannot hope to give you an adequate idea of him. Much in which he differed from other children was to be seen and felt, rather than described. He was by no means a child calculated to attract the attention of strangers, for his diffidence and excessive sensibility often increased his natural modesty to a painful degree of bashfulness; but he was a child no one ever knew intimately without approving and loving. Relatives, companions, domestics, the poor of the neighbourhood, all loved him—and he loved all—delighted to oblige all, and was truly and touchingly grateful for the smallest act of kindness, or even civility, received from any. The servants particularly doated upon him, as their unwearied and affectionate

attentions during his long illness sufficiently proved. They must indeed have been devoid of natural feeling, not to have loved such a child; his reluctance to give them trouble was ever so marked—so eager the delight with which he rendered them any little service in his power—so great the interest he felt in their pleasures or grievances.

But these are general assertions. You wish to trace the goodness of God, and read my little lamb's character more fully in such additional incidents of his life as I can find time to relate. You shall be obeyed. My only fear is, that I shall be too minute. Where every recollection is prized, it is more difficult to select than to indulge in unlimited detail; at least, when I speak of my beloved boy, I find it so.

To begin with the first display of divine mercy in his behalf, I must go back to the very hour of his birth. Dreadfully debilitated as I was in body, and from anguish of mind, under the awful trial which had nearly overwhelmed me, incapable of taking a proper portion of nourishment—almost without sleep,

and in continual agitation during the three months which preceded his birth—though my eyes were upon the Lord, and my continual supplications unto him, yet hardly did I dare encourage a hope that either my infant or myself would survive. But the Lord designed mercy and preserved strength. To the astonishment of all, a son was given me, an unusually large and vigorous boy. The hand of God, of that God who “tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” the answerer of prayer, was most manifest. Deeply sensible of this, my first agitated exclamation was, “God’s child! God’s own child!”—my first impassioned supplication, that the Lord would never leave nor forsake him, but, having so unexpectedly permitted his entrance into life, would early grant him grace to walk safely through its perils, and would finally receive him to himself—my first act of faith, that of consigning my new-born babe to the arms of his Saviour, in confident belief that the banner of love would be extended over a child of so many prayers—a child so almost miraculously preserved.

As he grew in stature, he grew in favour both with God and man. Gracious inclinations were imparted, and his progress in the spiritual life was most rapid and evident. None could know him intimately without acknowledging his excellency; none mark the peculiar features of that excellence without perceiving that the promise-keeping God was with the fatherless child so often cast upon him. And he was with him, even unto the end, and the same exclamation—"God's child! God's own child!"—with which I hailed his entrance into life, did my bursting but thoughtful heart reiterate again and again, as I watched in unutterable emotion the slow and painful ebbings of that precious life. He had long been adopted into the family of the sons of God, and a sweet assurance that he was now about to learn in the bosom of the Saviour he had so loved—the Saviour to whom he had so closely clung—what was the amount of their glorious privileges, was shed abroad in my soul; and this assurance it was which enabled me so entirely to resign him into the divine hands; so fully to feel that

though the Lord was slaying me, yet could I trust in him.

You will wonder perhaps at these expressions, for you think that I have yielded myself a willing slave to grief; that I have rebelled and murmured and refused to be comforted under my bereavement; that having often pointed out the sources of consolation to others, I have neglected to draw near to the same fountain, and drink myself of the healing cup when affliction pressed sorely on me. You are in error, my dear cousin. So far as my infirmity, the shattered state of my nerves, allowed, I did approach—I did stretch forth my hand, and the cup of thanksgiving was imparted to me. And this spirit of thanksgiving, the gift of my God for his own unspeakable mercies, has sustained me, in a manner to surprise my friends, under a trial, whose magnitude cannot be justly appreciated by any; since none can perfectly know the peculiarities of my situation since the birth of my blessed child, or what that child was to me, under all those peculiarities.

He was my constant companion; the train-

ing of his mind and heart my daily employ; the witnessing his evident progress in all that was desirable, my continual solacè. My occupation is gone; no other seems capable of supplying its place. The little endearments that passed between us shall be repeated no more. How cold appears all else! I look around me, some tender recollection is associated with every spot. To banish these, I turn to my Bible, but there are the chapters, there the verses, the promises, he has so often read to me; so often, so feelingly called my attention to. If I take up the Hymn book, it is full of turned-down leaves, his own marks for favourite hymns. Every thing is full of him, for young as he was, he was my confidential companion. His docility, tenderness, and piety, together with his uncommon devotedness to me, rendered him such a consolation, that until six weeks before his illness, when he was nine years of age, I could never force myself to send him to school. Rather than do so, having carried him well forward in geography and arithmetic, I studied and taught him the Latin Grammar, and the early



Latin reading books used in the academies. Judge then, how I must miss one who was so incessant an object of my attention, and who repaid all my cares with the most profound love and gratitude. How I must miss him! No, you cannot judge. I have written much, but were I to write quires, I could not tell you what this child, with all his fascinations, was to me, in my trying, monotonous life; how my employments about him shortened my tedious days, and his tender, caressing manners sweetened my many bitter moments. But it is neither my occupation, nor his endearments, that I most miss. No! my loss is of a deeper nature. I have had more religious enjoyment, more spiritual edification, more impressive lessons in humility, from my conversations with my sainted child, than I ever derived from any other source. His love to his Redeemer was of so tender, so devoted a cast; his desire to obey and please God so active a principle; his looking unto his heavenly Father in all cases, so constant, that it was impossible to be in his confidence and not feel that he was taught of the Lord,

and therefore, though but a babe, an able instructor. Most sensibly did I feel this, for to me alone could the little creature unveil his whole heart; to me alone reveal his contrition, his doubts and fears, his hopes, his gratitude, and love to God; and never can I forget the emotions which his artless expressions often excited in my bosom. They had a warming, quickening influence, beyond all other means of grace. But these lessons in piety are over, and it is the chilling loss I have hence sustained that I most deplore. My child might indeed emphatically be called a blessing to his mother. Not one chord of feeling could be touched in my bosom which would not find a responsive vibration in his. Whilst he leaned on me for direction and encouragement, to him I could confide my own exercises; to him mourn over the hardness of my heart, or speak of its comforts. None of these things were "foolishness" in his eyes—all were intelligible to him—all excited his sympathy, for he had felt the evil of his own heart; felt the joys of communion with God. Destined early to reach the goal, he was

ripened and matured in grace, with a rapidity beyond any conception of what was possible at so tender an age.

I will tell you an expression of one of his physicians, a very pious man, who, I am told, was so impressed by the deportment of the sweet sufferer during his long, and most distressing illness, as to declare to a friend, that he furnished one of the most distinguished evidences of the power of the Holy Spirit that he had ever seen. The expression to which I allude was this:—Speaking to me one day, of my child's advance in the Christian life, he said, "Be comforted, madam, whenever your son goes, he will die an hundred years old." And I am comforted—though my fast falling tears seem to belie my words—I am comforted—I do rejoice. Nothing have I ever asked of the Lord for my children, but that he would make them his own—make them heirs of glory, joint heirs with Christ—and he has already answered my prayer for three. Two he removed before they could choose between good and evil, and I know that they "sleep in Jesus," for "of such

is the kingdom of heaven." The third—oh! what great things did he do for the third! and who shall say what is the amount of glory to which he has made him heir! Blessed, ever blessed be his name, for he doeth all things well! My tears flow, but it is because busy memory is continually bringing in view so many by-gone scenes of peace and love—so many touching recollections—not because I would have *my* will.

On the first months of his life, of course you do not expect me to dwell. He was all that a mother could wish. Full of life and good humour, an uncommonly large, blooming boy, with dark blue eyes, light, curling hair, and as sweet and open a countenance as you ever beheld. But I will not enlarge on his appearance. I will merely state, in proof of his remarkable strength and activity, that he walked entirely alone from the day he was seven months old.

In his third year, an extreme sensibility which marked his character, began to manifest itself. Though a most noisy, wild boy, one of his chief delights was to fondle upon,

or render service to every living creature which came within his reach. Innumerable are the instances memory has treasured up of his tender care, even of very repulsive objects. His attentions were not lavished merely on pets, but on every thing which he conceived could be benefitted. Never did I know him voluntarily inflict pain on the most insignificant reptile; if he did so inadvertently, his heart seemed ready to burst, and it was often difficult to reconcile him to himself, or dry his tears. Indeed, the least appearance of suffering or sorrow would arrest his wildest movements, and excite the most touching sympathy in his little bosom. And these feelings were far from being momentary, or inoperative. I have known him, even at this thoughtless age, recur for days together, and often after long intervals, to the mention of something of this nature which had distressed him, and always with renewed emotion. Before he had quite completed his third year, his tender and persevering attentions to a sick member of the family, were truly surprising. They were childlike, to be sure, but

they spoke the feelings of the heart; they evidenced the capability to make sacrifices and exertions, as plainly as the most judicious cares could have done. He could not hear a beggar's tale, that he comprehended, without showing great interest, and offering his cents, fruit, cake, or whatever he had. If at any time he saw me look unusually dejected, all amusement was abandoned, and his arms thrown round my neck, with the the most anxious inquiries into the cause of my sorrow. If my tears flowed, he was exceedingly affected, and would wipe them away with his little handkerchief, in the most winning manner, beseeching me not to cry, whilst uncontrollable sobs nearly choked his voice. On such occasions, every means his feeling heart could devise to soothe and cheer me he would essay, and no one could draw him from me, or quiet his emotion, till he saw me smile, and heard my assurance that I would not be sorry any longer. Even after I had prevailed on him to resume his play, he could not forget me, but would return continually, to hover around and fondle on

me. In fact, from the time he was capable of any degree of reflection, one principal object of his life, and one which he seldom seemed to lose sight of for any length of time, was to render me happy. To tell him that he had done so, was to bestow on him the reward he most valued; to tell him that he had caused me unhappiness, the severest punishment I could inflict; one, indeed, which distressed him so much and so long, that I never resorted to it, but in the very early stage of his life, and then only when I wished to make a deep and lasting impression.

Even, however, at the tender age of which I am now speaking, he had often a higher motive for his actions than the desire of contributing to my comfort. I had early endeavoured to impress on his pliant mind the belief that a far more excellent Being than his mother gave him his comforts and his pleasures. Vague as must have been his conception of the Being, an intimation that the Father in heaven, who loved him so much, and was so good to him, would be pleased with a certain sort of deportment,

and an appeal to him, whether he would not like to please so kind a Being, instantly produced any effect that I desired. Actuated by this idea, he would desist from whatever I objected to, or perform whatever I desired, with the utmost alacrity and cheerfulness. And here let me observe, that dread of the anger of God had no operation in such cases, for as yet he had heard of the Almighty only as the Dispenser of blessings—never as the punisher of sin. I considered him too young to comprehend clearly the harmony and beauty of the joint attributes of Deity—too much under the influence of his feelings to contemplate divine justice with approbation, and therefore only presented to him such views as were calculated to fill his mind with pleasing images. The terrors of the Lord were passed over in silence, until, having learned them from his little books in his fifth year, he began himself to interrogate me on the subject. Grateful love was the source from which I ever wished to see his actions spring; and impetuous and heedless as he was during the first six years of his life, I do not



recollect one instance where I failed of accomplishing my object, if I had a moment's opportunity to awaken this feeling.

But you are not to suppose that I considered my dear John as having already become pious. I did not. Any child naturally so amiable, and possessed of an equal degree of sensibility, might, I believe, be influenced precisely in the same way. I allowed myself to build nothing on these appearances but a strong hope, that good seed, early sown in such a soil, would, by the blessing of God promised to the training up a child in the way he should go, be made to take deep root, and yield an abundant increase. For this blessing I prayed, as for the one thing needful for my child. The Lord withheld it not. Hope ripened into assurance. Let his holy name be praised!

I am tempted, however, to give you an example of the manner in which my beloved boy might be governed, which I have often thought evidenced an early dawning of faith in its active power.

It was my custom to have the candle re-

moved from his chamber as soon as he was put to bed. On this being done, one night about the close of his third year, he called loudly for me. I went, and found him much frightened, pale, trembling, and crying. He gave me an incoherent account of some tale he had heard, and intreated that a light might be left in his room. I had one brought, and told him that it should not be again removed if he still wished it to remain after we had had a little chat together, but I thought he would send it away. I then endeavoured to convince him of the folly of his fears, but finding that he could not shake them off, said, "How old are you, my dear John?" "Almost three years, you say, mother." "Have you always had a candle with you?" "Hardly ever, mother." "What then has taken care of you?" "God, mother—I know that God takes care of me all day and all night." "Yes, my child, you run thoughtlessly into a thousand dangers, but God always preserves you. When you fell from the tree you were climbing to-day, had you a candle to help God to save

your head from being broken on the large stone?" "No, indeed, mother." "Well, my child, you know that God sees as well in the dark as in the light. If he saved you then, without the help of a candle, don't you think he can do so, just as easily now, that you are lying quietly on your good bed?" "But George said something would catch me to-night." "Did God tell George so?" "No, mother." "Then George cannot know, for nothing can ever hurt you unless God permits it, and nobody but God can know or tell, when he intends to permit any one to be hurt." He was silent, but still clung to me. I bade him ask the maid of what candles were made. He repeated her reply, "Grease and cotton." I looked at him a moment with an expression of regret, then said, "And can it be, my beloved child, that you are more willing to trust in a little grease and cotton, than in that God who has preserved you through the dangers of so many days, and the darkness of so many nights?" He looked quite distressed, and I went on— "Nothing can enter this room without his

knowledge, for he is constantly watching over you. If he should allow any thing to come in, could the candle save you?" "Oh, no! mother, it could not move." "Could God?" "Yes, in a minute." "And yet, my darling, you feel less afraid when you look at the candle burning near you, than when you remember that God is watching over you. My dear John, think how sorry it must make your Heavenly Father to see this—think how it would please him to see you trying to drive away these silly fears, and showing him, that you would rather trust to his goodness, than to the brightest light. Do you not believe that God always keeps his promises?" "Yes, to be sure, mother." "And do you not recollect that I have often told you, he has promised in his big book that he will take care of all who put their trust in him?" He pressed me tightly round the neck an instant, and then said, "Yes, I remember, mother, and I will trust in him to night. But please to tell me what I must do, to keep from feeling so frightened." "Why, you know, my dear

child, how very good God has always been to you—suppose I make a little prayer to him for you now—you can repeat my words—God will hear you, and I dare say make you able to do right.” “Please to try, mother.” The struggle in his feelings was manifestly great, and the earnest tone in which he reiterated the simple petition I offered, very affecting—but he immediately embraced me tenderly, and said firmly—“Now good-night, mother—please to take away the light.” “I will, my love, and if you should feel a little afraid when it is gone, just think who is always near you, and say to him, Oh God take care of me! and I think you will not want me to bring it back again.” “Yes, mother, I will.” Thus ended this, to me, deeply interesting conversation. It is indelibly impressed on my memory, and I have given it to you pretty fully, because I conceive that such a detail is better calculated to make you acquainted with my dear boy, than any character I could draw of him. If it does not prove a dawning of faith in his infant mind, it proves at least his early

power of self-command, and his willingness to deny his own wishes, when he saw that they stood in opposition to a line of conduct which promised to be pleasing in the eyes of God. This power and this willingness remained with him through life. Never did I, on one single occasion, see him voluntarily indulge his own inclinations when once enabled to perceive that such indulgence was contrary to the will of God—and for involuntary errors, his compunction was always keen. But to return.—Much pains had been taken by a mischievous boy to frighten him, and owing to the liveliness of his imagination and extreme sensitiveness, it was some time before the disagreeable effects of this attempt could be obliterated. From the above period he was occasionally disposed to be timid at night, but it was only requisite to remind him, that the gracious Being who had hitherto guarded him so carefully, would be pleased to see him exerting himself to banish his alarms, and putting his trust entirely in him—and my point was carried. He dismissed me, and fell quietly asleep. As

he grew older, I advised him, whenever he felt himself becoming frightened, to call to mind some instances of God's goodness to him, and then pray that he would still protect him from real dangers, and would enable him to overcome his foolish fears, and confide in his care. This he many times told me he had done the preceding night, and that God had been so very kind as to make him much less afraid afterwards, and sometimes to take away his fears entirely, and then he felt so glad and happy, because there was no light in the room.

Now, my dear cousin, when you reflect how difficult such childish terrors are to surmount, or even to endure in solitude and darkness, and how peculiarly so they must have been to one so sensitive, I think you will agree with me that this dear child's conduct condemns our want of faith and love, on much less trying occasions. Often, often have I been humbled by the contrast which the teachableness of my sweet lamb offered, to the hardness and unbelief of my own heart. Whilst he has thought that I was instructing

him, I have felt as though I was sitting at his feet to wonder and to learn. You will the more readily believe this when I tell you that those very fears, which were combatted in so exemplary a manner, formed a subject of keen self-accusation to my child three years after, when a want of perfect confidence in God appeared to his tender conscience a sin of great magnitude, and was lamented over in the most touching manner. But I am digressing.

I have said that John was easily governed. He was, indeed. The methods generally adopted to subdue children were entirely unnecessary with him. His mind was so open to conviction; the motives I have mentioned had such unbounded influence over him; his reasoning faculties (allow me to employ the expression) were so good, and he was so totally free from any shade of obstinacy or self-will, that nothing was more easy than to turn him from the pursuit on which he was most bent, and to induce the conduct to which he was most averse, without resorting to reproof, threat, or promise of reward. "Stop a little,



my dear John, come and listen to mother," would bring him to my side in a moment. "I am afraid, my child, you are not thinking now what is right or wrong, but doing just what you want; and that you know is not the way good boys do." This was enough to arrest his attention, and as he always listened with a willing ear to my admonitions, and never seemed to conceive it possible that any thing could be proper of which I disapproved, a few words sufficed to convince him of his error, and effectually to change his purpose. So great was his reverence for my opinions, that submission to them scarcely ever seemed to cost him the slightest regret; on the contrary, he would often, when checked for a fault, instead of looking vexed, kiss me tenderly, and say in a soft endearing tone, "Thank you, my own darling, good mother, for making Johnny stop being naughty." Indeed, my attempts to fulfil this duty of a parent seemed to be what most excited his gratitude and affection. Distinctly do I recollect my emotions, when his uncle, seeing him one day hanging fondly about me, said:

“I believe, John, you love your mother better than any body in the world. What makes you love her so much?” “O, because she takes such a great trouble to make me good, uncle.” “But then she punishes you sometimes, and I never do.” “Ah, but that is because she loves me so much.” His uncle affected not to understand how that could be, but the dear child, entirely unaided, maintained the point, and in his own simple way fully proved that he appreciated my motives in every restraint I put on his inclinations, as well as in the little punishments I occasionally thought it right to inflict on him. Willing, however, to try him further, his uncle still pretended not to comprehend the matter. “Why, would you not be happier, John, if mother let you do everything you wanted, and never kept you from hugging and kissing her for a whole day, or punished you in any other way, to make you remember your faults?” “Ah, but then, uncle, I would never get good, and I want to get good.” “Why, what good would it do you to be good?” “O! it would make me so glad, be-

cause mother would be glad, and grandmother would be glad, and brother too—and God would be glad—and I need never be sorry then, because I wouldn't do any ugly things." "Then I suppose you would rather be made a better boy than to have some nice new toys?" "Oh! yes, uncle, a heap rather." Was it possible, for a mother not to think that such a child was already almost all that she could wish?

About the close of his third year, his aunts took his brother and him to pass some weeks in the country. At the first proposal of this jaunt he was quite delighted, but soon the idea, how much I should miss him, chased away his smiles. "No, I cannot go—mother would have nobody to make her happy," was his answer, and much persuasion was necessary, and repeated assurances on my part that his going would afford me pleasure, before his assent could be obtained. A letter written by his aunt after their arrival at the farm, details some of his innocent prattle by the way. I will transcribe a passage, to show you the disinterested nature of his at-

tachment to me. "Poor mother! I wonder what she is doing now! Oh, aunt, I hope my poor darling mother is not all alone. She said she would not be sorry when we were gone, but I'm afraid she will. Nobody will bring her flowers from the garden now. Don't you think, though, grandma and uncle will keep her company? She said, aunt, she would write brother a word how she was; if she writes a word that she is lonesome, won't you take me home quick? I don't want to play in the pretty country, if mother is lonesome; I would rather go to her." Thus his little tongue ran on continually, and though for important reasons he was kept away three months, his solicitude about me remained undiminished. During the whole of his absence it was never found necessary to chide or punish him. "John, do you think your mother would like you to do so?" was an inquiry, which never failed to bring him, in his most giddy moments, to reflection and propriety of conduct.

Although he was at this time an exceedingly manly, independent, hardy little fellow,

ranging about without nurse or attendant, and able to take his own part with spirit, yet was he the most gentle, caressing creature you perhaps ever saw. To give you an idea how much love seemed to constitute a part of his very being, I will tell you an answer he made to his aunt, on her one day saying laughingly to him, "Why, what a fondling little rogue you are, John! what would you do if you had nobody to kiss and love?" "I'll tell you, aunt, if nobody would let me sit on their laps, and love them, I would just run right up a tree and hug it in my arms." The merry child was not aware how completely this unexpected reply, with the energetic action which accompanied it, portrayed his character. He must love. If all around had repulsed him, I do believe his affections would have fastened on some inanimate object—they could not have lain dormant.

## LETTER II.

HE had now completed his third year. Nothing marked occurred during his fourth. He continued to display the same amiable feelings—to progress rapidly in the attainment of correct ideas, and to show a growing desire, to perform, what he used to delight in hearing me call, “his little duties.” At the commencement of the year he was taught to read, and learned with uncommon facility, owing chiefly, perhaps, to a desire to perform his duty, which secured his prompt obedience, and usually his diligent attention, when called to a lesson. Before, however, he could read, I recited to him a number of hymns written for children. These he soon committed to memory, and used to repeat to me very sweetly, and with much enjoyment. His first favourite was that one of Watts which commences, “When’er I take my walks abroad, how many poor I see.” The comparisons made in this hymn, drew from him many interrogatories, and elicited much

tender feeling. The question, "What shall I render to my God, for all his gifts to me?" seemed to impress him greatly, and to excite in his bosom a similar inquiry. "Mother," he observed, after repeating it one day, "it makes me sorry to say that verse, for I don't render any thing to God, for all his gifts to me, and I ought to render something to him, for what a many gifts he does give me! I wonder, mother, how I could do, to render something to him! will you please to tell me, for you know every thing about being good." "Yes, my love, I will, but first do you tell me, why you think that I know every thing about being good." "O! because you have read the big book all through, that God gave people to teach them all about him, and what he likes them to do. When I can read that, if you will only tell me the meaning of the hard words, I can know too what I ought to do, for I can read a heap every day—but I can't know well now, because you only read me little bits out of it sometimes." "Then John, you will read in it every day when you

are able?" "Yes, mother, because I guess I'll forget some of it, if I don't."

I do not know how these expressions may strike you, but falling from the guileless lips of a child about three years and six months old, they made a deep impression on me; they seemed indeed almost like inspiration. What aged Christian could have referred more promptly to the fountain-head of revealed knowledge? What words could have pointed out more clearly two of the great objects of Scripture, or the advantages derivable from a perusal of the word of God, and the necessity for such perusal being full and constant? I knew that I had *told* him somewhat of the value of the holy book, but now a hope that the Lord was already beginning to make him *feel* it, sprung up in my heart, and never was that hope crushed.

Lest, however, you should suppose that I mean more than I really do, let me here observe, that as yet he had no other conception of the Bible than as containing God's rules for our conduct, in obeying which, we should be so good, that we should secure his favour.



It was not until he was six years old, that he prized it as teaching sinners how they might obtain pardon and salvation. Nevertheless, from the period when these remarks were made, whenever I could recollect a passage of Scripture that bore upon any point on which I was endeavouring to instruct him, if it was such an one as I considered him capable of comprehending, I used to ask him if I should tell him what God said in his book. He always desired to know, and the meek, reverential manner in which he listened to my quotations and explanations, was exceedingly encouraging. Could any task be more easy than that of guiding the mind of such a child? His grateful desire to know what he could render to the Lord, prepared the way for every instruction I deemed him old or intelligent enough to receive.

Aware that a little creature endowed with so much sensibility must be peculiarly open to impressions through the medium of his imagination, I early adopted the plan of imparting many of my lessons in the guise of simple tales or stories. To these he would listen with

the most wrapt attention, and as I always contrived them to illustrate some important truth, or inculcate some correct principle or feeling, their influence on his mind and heart was great. That this agreeable mode of instruction might be rendered as profitable as possible, I one day said to him, "You sometimes tell me, John, that it is very kind in me to take so much trouble to amuse you; but you know, my love, all our good thoughts come from God; now don't you think it very likely that God, who is always finding out ways to make us better, may have put it into my head to tell you these stories, not merely that you may be amused, but that you may, in this pleasant way, learn what is right and what is wrong, and how wise a thing it is to be good, and so may become a sensible amiable boy, and get his love, and the love of all good people?" "I dare say he did, mother, and I love him for putting such a nice thought into your head." "Would you like to show him that you love him for it?" "Oh! yes, mother, if I knew how." "Then I will tell you what to do. Try always to behave,

as the good children I describe to you behaved, and be very careful not to act like the naughty ones; this will show God that you let the stories make you better, which will be the very best way of thanking him."

"Please then, mother, to put me in mind when I forget, for I want to thank God for this nice kind of teaching the way he likes best." I did remind him whenever it seemed advisable, and never in vain. Indeed, the manner in which he was wont to sit in judgment on himself after hearing a story, was extremely touching. "What a good little boy that was, mother. I wish I was like him, but I don't think I ever will be. How much more pleasure he must give his mother, than I give you! How God must love him! I wonder God keeps being good to me, when I am so naughty, for all you take such pains with me. I ought to be better than all the boys, I have got such a good mother, and yet I am not half so good." A thousand expressions of this kind were continually falling from him, not unfrequently accompanied by ingenuous references to some parts of his own

conduct which occurred to his mind as being very different from that of the amiable children I described to him, and very blamable in comparison. Oh! how often, as I held him fondly in my arms, listening to his innocent prattle, have I felt his praises a reproach—felt, that in the lowly, applying, candid spirit which should mark the Christian, he was his mother's teacher. These thoughts were, nevertheless, confined to my own bosom. Never did I disclaim the praises he delighted in believing my due, or bestow any on him which might tend to pollute so pure and humble a mind, with one feeling of self-complacency. Considering it far better that he should overrate my merits than his own, in noticing such remarks, I simply sought to direct his gratitude to his Heavenly Father, as the first cause of whatever care I bestowed on him, and to impress upon him the conviction, that however deficient he might be, every inducement to aim at amendment was offered him in God's promise to help all who try to improve. Young as he was, the mention of this promise always seemed to afford

him satisfaction, and generally called forth a declaration that "he would try then as much as he could," with an artless request that I "would tell him when he was bad, because somehow he forgot about trying to be good, when he was not talking to me about it." This, in his humility, he believed to be the case, yet his almost daily progress in thoughtfulness and self-command, clearly proved the contrary. When my story was of a naughty boy, he evidently was much pained, and would lament over the erring child in the most tender manner—hope that bye and bye he would grow better—that God would put it into some good person's heart to teach him—but beg me with tears in his eyes, not to tell him any more about him, unless I found out he got good. "Why not, John?" I once asked him. "Oh! because, mother, it makes me so sorry to hear about any body being naughty." Is it with this temper we always hear of the follies or transgressions of our fellow beings? Do we so pity them? so desire their reformation? Does a tale of scandal thus grieve us? or are we thus averse to

hear it? No, blessed child! here too wast thou thy mother's teacher.

In framing these stories, I was obliged carefully to avoid making them very pathetic, as the effect produced when I was not thus guarded, was too violent to be salutary. In fact, so easily was the dear little fellow affected, that I ever felt solicitous rather to check than to encourage the sensibility of his nature, which, captivating as it rendered his childhood, gave rise to many painful anxieties for the future. It was too keen, too much alive to the interests and sorrows of others, to authorize a hope that he might pass calmly or comfortably through the changing scenes of life.

Yet, do not so misconceive the character of my beloved John, as to suppose that this extreme sensibility indicated weakness or imbecility. On the contrary, the efforts he sometimes made to suppress and conceal this very sensibility, which he thought unmanly, proved his powers of exertion. Few children, I imagine, have been found possessed of more natural strength of mind, or capable

of higher degrees of self-denial, disinterestedness, and magnanimity. The troubles or anxieties of others he could not view unmoved, but greater fortitude under personal pain or disappointment, no one could exhibit. Neither must you suppose that his sensibility was of that morbid cast, which renders its possessors useless, by rendering them incapable of viewing disgusting objects, or of supporting distressing scenes. Quite the reverse. His persevering efforts to accomplish a kind object, whatever disagreeable circumstances stood in the way, were remarkable. He would weep on my bosom as he described sufferings he had witnessed, yet return continually to the sufferer, to try by all the little means in his power, to alleviate their pains, or cheer their spirits.

You must not either imagine, that a being so easily melted, was necessarily of languid, unenterprising habits. Far otherwise. Ardent and energetic in every feeling, whatever he heard of other boys performing, not wrong in itself, he was all eagerness to attempt, and anxiety to achieve, regardless of

weather, fatigue, or trouble, and forgetting that he was much younger than his brother's companions. It was a common remark in the family, "Whatever John does, he does with all his heart and soul." Perhaps you have conjectured that he was of a sedate, quiet turn, indisposed to mirth or romping. Not so, neither. Never, perhaps, was there a more light-hearted creature, or one who engaged more rapturously in childish sports, or pursued them more indefatigably. Were boys collected to play, he was the wildest and most joyous among the throng; was an excursion proposed, he was the most eager to promote it, the last to grow weary. Witness his walking upwards of twenty miles, before he was eight years old, on a botanizing expedition, and returning home unwearied, and full of glee as he had set out, whilst most of the lads in company, all several years older, were completely tired and spiritless. Such excursions were his delight. He was also, though a very large, heavy boy, an active climber, a good runner, skated and swam well for his age and opportunities for practice, and en-



joyed all these exercises, and all other boyish pastimes, enthusiastically.

I have wandered somewhat from the account I was giving of my child in his fourth year, but you entreated me to omit nothing, and I have ever thought that his animation of character, and insatiable thirst for play, rendered his tenderness, his docility, his attention to his lessons, his undeviating conformity to my wishes, the more striking, the more demonstrative of the strength and influence of the sense of duty in his infant mind.

You will allow that the exertion of considerable self-command must have been necessary to enable so merry and social a little creature to observe injunctions not to associate with children in the streets; yet never, except once, did he pass the boundary of the lawn with this intent, and then only for a moment of forgetfulness, although he was generally obliged to play without a companion, and was often seen anxiously watching the sports of the idle boys in the neighbourhood, who spared no enticements to draw him amongst

them. This single transgression of orders was witnessed by his brother, as he returned from school, who, drawing him aside, whispered to him, "John, you are disobeying mother; how sorry she will be." He was instantly filled with contrition, and hurrying into the yard, sought for me, to confess his fault, and beg me to "not to be very sorry, for he had not staid out long enough to learn any bad words, and indeed he did not think he would ever forget again;" adding sweetly, "but, mother, was it not good in brother to put me in mind? Oh! what a good brother he is! I would be a great deal naughtier often, if it was not for brother telling me what is right." Are we thus grateful for friendly interference, or advice, which opposes our enjoyments?

His brother's absence at school left John much alone; he could however be happy alone, for as there was nothing listless or apathetic about him, he was always engaged in some active play, or interesting employment. Almost from his infancy, his uncle laughingly called him the young botanist,

so fond was he of examining plants, flowers, &c. He took equal pleasure in remarking the forms, and watching the habits of birds and insects, so that being very observant, the indulgence of these tastes furnished him with much innocent and profitable amusement, and many subjects of inquiry, from the time he was two years old, and was perhaps instrumental in filling his mind with an early admiration of the goodness and wisdom of God. He had, besides, many resources growing out of his own amiable disposition, which children differently constituted dream not of. The monotony of solitary play was relieved by the exercise of benevolent feelings. Little acts of kindness, such as I have never seen another child devise, he was continually contriving. Something was always to be amused, or taught to love him; to be fed, to be protected from danger, or nursed. Often when I went to seek him in the yard, have I found him busily occupied surrounding ant-hills with bricks, that they might not be destroyed; putting the eggs which he had discovered deposited on shrubs, in what he

considered a suitable exposure, that the sun might warm them into life; arranging near caterpillars the leaves they loved best, or conveying them, when in their chrysalis state, into a box, where they might wait in security their change of form; placing some wounded insect he had found in a place of safety; if an animal was sick, or had met with an accident, lavishing the most tender caresses upon it; feeding something that he conceived was hungry; collecting apples for young petitioners, who, knowing his good nature, assembled at the gate to assail him with entreaties whenever he appeared in view; or plucking grass, and stretching his little arms through the fence, to feed from his own hand a cow that had halted in passing the enclosure, to look wistfully in, as the dear boy thought, at the green lawn.\*

But to all he was obliging. Nothing gratified him more than to be furnished with an employment, which he could imagine rendered him serviceable to any body. When

\* You know, I believe, that we live in the suburbs of the city.

thus busied, he would say, with the sweetest animation of countenance, "Now I am being of some use, am I not, mother?" Not unfrequently he would add, "I wish, mother, you would let me do more useful things. I don't want to be of no use in the world. I love to be useful; I want to do all the things boys can do." You must observe, however, that this willingness to exert his little powers did not proceed alone from his strong disposition to oblige. I very early endeavoured to convince him of the sin of indolence, and the duty of diligence, according to our situations and ages; to show him, that by the wise arrangements of Providence, all the inhabitants of the world, except mere infants, might find useful occupations, and to impress on him the truth that God does not approve of idleness or laziness. Hence, in a great measure, his remarks, and the request so often reiterated, that I would find something useful for him to do.

But you will think that I have forgotten that I am describing my child when only four years old, and, of course, too young to

feel the force of such reasonings. I have not. Though an exceedingly wild, sprightly boy, he very early evinced a capability of embracing just ideas on matters apparently far above his age, and was never happier than when sitting on my lap, asking questions and receiving instruction, on even very serious subjects. A child who delights in the society of his parent, and who is taught to exercise his reason, from the very first dawning of that power, can accomplish more in this way than you perhaps imagine. Mine dearly loved fun and frolic, but he also loved to converse and reflect, and I encouraged him to do so, satisfied that, all important as was the obedience I required, yet an enlightened and willing, was far preferable to a blind, reluctant submission, and that teaching him how to think correctly in general, and in what light to regard parental restrictions, was the best method of preserving him from disobedience or discontent.

With this view, I early directed his attention to subjects which would not certainly have presented themselves to so young a

mind, but which, nevertheless, he was capable of comprehending, and drawing useful inferences from, when clearly stated. One of these was his own sinful nature, and propensity to evil. You may possibly think that I was premature in giving him this information. I do not. I have always thought that his belief of this truth so young, was one great cause of the teachableness of disposition, and the fear of doing wrong, he ever after evinced. I will leave you to judge for yourself. When I had proved the fact to his satisfaction, I explained the necessity of counteracting this propensity, lest habits of doing evil should become established; described the facility with which such are formed, the difficulty of overcoming them when formed, and therefore the propriety of my watching over his conduct carefully, and of his attending diligently to my instructions. The sweet sensible child listened with the closest attention, and would often say, "Oh! how glad I am, mother, you tell me all these things, for I could never find them out myself; but when you tell them to me, in your

easy way, I know they are true, and I like to know what is true, because it helps me to get good, when I don't forget." I remember distinctly a little speech he made one day, when we were chatting in this way, while he was quite young. "I know, mother, bad habits are hard to cure, for uncle had to slap me before he could break me of running across the strawberry bed, I had such a trick of it. I couldn't remember about stopping myself, although every time he told me not to, I thought I never would do it again. So you see, mother, you say true, that I must take care not to do a wrong thing twice, for fear I should begin to get a fashion of it; it is so easy to get fashions, and so hard to cure them. I suppose, mother, that's because of the bad nature we have got. Oh! I must take a heap of care, or it will make me very bad, I'm sure." Was it in vain, my dear cousin, to talk to such a boy?

Another conversation we held about the same time, and of which I find an account in an old letter to his brother, I will here mention, as his own observations best illustrate his



character. He was doing something I disapproved of, and on being stopped, said very gravely, "Mother, I can't help wishing it was right for me to do everything I want, for you would never stop me then, and so I would be always happy." "No, my dear John, you would not be so happy as you are at present." "O! now, mother, you are funning." "I am not, my love. If it were even right for you to do every thing you wished, it would not be always possible, and whenever it was not, you would feel much greater regret at being obliged to give up a wish which you knew it would not be wrong to gratify, than you can feel now, that you may always be sure when you are forbidden anything, it is because there is some reason or other why it would not be right that you should be indulged; some reason why it would do you harm, either at the time, or at some future day." "O! I understand, mother, just like it was about that mug yesterday. I kept trying and trying to get it, because I wanted to drink, and at last got angry because I couldn't reach it; but when they told me

what was in it would make me sick, I wasn't half so sorry that I couldn't reach it, for all I wanted to see in it." This illustration was not perfect, but it nevertheless surprised me. He however went on to say, that "may be he would not want many things that he could not get, and so he would be happier for all." I explained to him how naturally our wants increased by indulgence. This, too, he soon comprehended, as was evident from his reminding me of a story I had sometimes told him, of a spoiled child, who insisted on being taken out of bed at midnight; this being done, he would be carried down stairs; when below, he would not be satisfied without being taken into the garden, and this wish gratified, he cried for the moon. I told him that just as this child's whims multiplied, and made him miserable, so would his, if too constantly indulged, until they ended in wishes as impossible to satisfy as the child's demand for the moon. Our conversation here closed, by his saying sweetly, "Well, mother, I see it is just as you always say, "God's will is the best."

Some time after, when talking on a nearly similar subject, I asked him, how he thought he would be able to bear the troubles which everybody must meet with in this world, if he were gratified in all his desires whilst young. "I am afraid, my love, you would be so used to having your own way, that you would be very apt to think you never ought to be disappointed or afflicted, and that it was very hard in God to let you suffer. You might even be angry with him, and fret against him, as naughty children do against their mammas, and that would be dreadful." The dear, susceptible child was affected at the idea, and said with much feeling, "Oh! it would be the dreadfulest thing in the world! Mother, I hope I will never fret against so good a God." "I hope not, John, and I hope your heavenly Father will enable me to bring you up in the manner most likely to make you a good man, if it should be a little troublesome to you, whilst you are so young, and have not much sense or patience." What think you, cousin, was my boy's sweet answer?

“Mother, please to pray that prayer every day, for I don’t want to be a wicked man at all. I would rather be hindered from doing ever so many pleasant things now, than make you and God sorry bye and bye.” What could a parent desire more than such an answer? Nothing, for the time. Yet, well aware of the evanescent nature of our best impressions and anxious to keep alive his conviction of the advantages of occasional restraint, I frequently related to him anecdotes showing the difference of conduct under distressing dispensations between persons who in their childhood had been taught to control their inclinations, and conform to the will of their friends, and that of others who had been suffered to grow up with habits of self-indulgence, self-will, and self-conceit. Memory does not retain so exactly, so as to justify an attempt at repeating them, the thousand affecting and judicious comments he made on such occasions. The general impression, however, of comfort and encouragement they imparted, remains vivid—too vivid the remembrance of the tender caresses he

bestowed on me at such times—the affectionate tone in which he would call me his “own dear, good mother,” and with tears of sensibility glistening in his eyes, thank me for taking so much pains to keep him from becoming spoiled.

But the infant mind emphatically requires precept upon precept. Knowing this, and having seen children rendered unhappy by an idea that their companions, who happened to have more indulgent, had of course kinder and more affectionate parents, than they themselves had, I often, to guard him from the error, spoke of the different manner in which different persons manifested their attachment to their offspring. Some, by weakly gratifying their every wish, others, by steadily restraining their inclinations on all points where indulgence might prove injurious—and I appealed to his own judgment, as to which exhibited the best kind of love. He had no hesitation in deciding correctly, and sometimes affected me inexpressibly by artless avowals of pleasure, that I was not, as he expressed it, “one of those foolish,

petting mammas," and his hope that I would never become like them.

The good sense and good feeling of my beloved John, early opened the way for an explanation of the nature of my duties as a mother, and the impossibility of neglecting them with impunity. As soon as he could understand, I entered upon it pretty fully, reading to him, from the word of God, the positive commands laid on parents to exercise authority over their children, not sparing reproof or punishment; the sad consequences which might be expected to their offspring, if they did not faithfully discharge their obligations, and the great sin they would themselves incur. He seemed clearly to comprehend my responsibility, and his strong sense of it, and the consequent desire that I should fulfil my duty, which his disinterested affection prompted, had doubtless much agency in reconciling him to any part of my management to which he naturally felt averse. That the dear little fellow never for a moment suspected me of unnecessary strictness, is most certain.

If at any time he urged me too importunately to consent to a measure I could not approve, nothing was more easy than to silence him by a simple question of this kind: "Do you know, my dear John, what you are begging mother to do? Do you know you are begging her to be very naughty? I hope, my love, you do not wish mother to disobey God, by allowing you to do what she is sure would be wrong?" "Oh no, mother, I did not think about that," was his instant answer to such queries, and I do not remember that he ever looked vexed at my refusing him any favour, how great soever his disappointment. On the contrary, he never appeared to doubt my regret being equal to his own.

I recollect once saying, that it gave me great pain to deny his requests, or to reprove him, but that God would be displeased with me if I did not, whenever it was proper. He pressed himself into my arms, and kissing me fondly, replied in the softest tone, "I know very well, mother, it makes you sorry to make me sorry, and I am very sorry for that; but please don't stop finding fault with

me when I am naughty, for all, for I would be a great deal *sorrier*, and it would be a greater pity still, if God was to get displeased with you. I could'nt bear God to be displeased with you, my dear, good mother."

I make no comment on these expressions. You may imagine how my heart must have become riveted to a child capable of so feeling, so speaking; and such expressions, flowing from such feelings, was the dear little creature daily whispering in my ear as he sat on my lap, listening to my instructions, and fondly caressing me. Sometimes he would say, "I know, mother, you love to let me do what I want, because whenever you tell me 'Yes,' you look so pleased; but when you have to tell me 'No,' then you don't have the same kind of happy look. I wish it didn't make you unhappy to refuse me." I need not tell you, my cousin, how I felt this simple remark. That it still lives in my memory is proof of the impression it made on my heart. Apathetic, indeed, must have been that heart, not to fix itself too fondly on a child so tender, so considerate, so devoid



of selfishness! But I wander—my feelings hurry me away from my narrative. The fact is, they rise continually against the manner in which I am conducting it. They would rather dispose me to tell you only what my son was, than to say any thing of the method adopted in his education; but your brother requested that I would be particular on this head, when I wrote to you, and I am anxious to obey him, as I think it not improbable he may wish to see my letter. If he should, you may put it into his hands. He will praise the Lord for what he has done, and surely I would be blamable in withholding from him a statement calculated to inspire one additional flow of gratitude to the Author of all good.

Anxious that my dear, intelligent boy should learn as soon as possible to regulate his own conduct, when he could not have my advice, according to correct principles, I usually made a point of informing him of the reasons that induced my commands, either at the time of giving them, or at some subsequent period, and invariably had the satis-

faction of seeing him admit their force, and cheerfully adopt them, as rules for his future guidance. Do not, however, suppose that to secure obedience it was necessary thus to persuade him into it. By no means. This acquiescence was equally unhesitating when left in profound ignorance of my motives for an order, as when made fully acquainted with them, for his confidence in my judgment and affection was unbounded. So, too, his sense of duty and honour. You may smile at my imagining that ideas of duty and honour could have any weight with so young a child. It is, however, a fact, that a promise given he would not break, and that nothing wounded him more keenly than to be suspected of doing so—of committing any mean act—of disobeying me, when out of sight. Not that I would say that he never went contrary to my instructions, or acted in a manner I could not approve; this, while quite young, he often did inadvertently, owing to his extreme playfulness and giddiness; but I *do* say, that he *never* did so silyly or wilfully, and that whenever a thing

of the kind occurred, the moment he became sensible of it, he would voluntarily come to tell me himself the very worst, and to submit, with every mark of contrition, to any punishment I might think proper to impose. And, will you believe me, when I assure you, that many times, on consulting with him, as I frequently did, whether it would be better to punish him, or whether he thought he would be able to remember in future without, he has candidly answered, "Mother, punishment seems somehow to make me remember better than only talking, and so, may be, as I am so bad about forgetting, you had better punish me a little in some way that you think will be the best." A boy thus willing to adopt means of improvement, could not continue, even rarely and inadvertently, to transgress rules; accordingly, before he was five years old, obedience had become so habitual to him, that, notwithstanding the unusual wildness and heedlessness of his nature, I could trust him anywhere, or for any length of time, with the most perfect assurance that he would observe all my direc-

tions, and nothing delighted him so much as to be thus confided in, or, as he used to say, "treated like a boy of honour." There was, however, no temptation to treat him otherwise, for he had too much humility to set up his own judgment in opposition to mine—too much good sense not to perceive the propriety of my requisitions—and too much principle to allow himself forbidden indulgences. Sometimes his grandmother would say, "A., you trust that child too much; he is so wild that he will surely get into mischief." The little dear, with a look of surprise would tell her, that he had *promised* mother, to be good, and to mind every thing that brother said to him. This his conscience felt to be a sufficient reply, and so it was; his promise was sacred, and as his enthusiastic mind attributed every excellence to his brother, though little more than four years his senior, the respect he entertained for his opinions was only surpassed by what he felt for mine. I had, therefore, nothing to fear when they were together; his brother's advice was his law, his brother's approbation his delight.

John frequently visited a cousin, of whom he was very fond, but who was as wild as himself. When going, he would sometimes say to me, with the utmost simplicity, "Don't you think, mother, I had better ask aunt, when I first go to town, to please to stop me whenever she sees that I am doing anything wrong, for I am afraid I will forget myself when I get full of fun, like I always do when I'm playing?" He would ask her, and his obedience to her wishes was implicit; that he had been rather noisy, was the only fault with which he could be charged, and this his exuberant spirits, when exhilarated by the society of a lively boy, made it impossible for him to overcome. But even for this fault, trifling as it was, his gentle spirit felt regret. "Mother," he often said, "I wish you could find out some way to break me of being noisy; it seems the hardest of all my faults to cure, and it makes me so sorry afterwards to think that when I was being so happy myself, I was disturbing big people, and making their heads ache." Dear child! any inconvenience suffered by others always

pained him when he had a moment for thought.

Occasionally I declined giving him my motives for an injunction, telling him he was too young to comprehend them, but that I hoped he would be as obedient as if I did, since he knew that I always considered well what would be for his advantage, before I gave him any directions. Such an observation generally produced a feeling of disappointment—never one of vexation. “To be sure, mother,” he would say, “I’ll mind what you tell me, for I know you have always got a good reason, only I’m sorry I can’t hear it now, it is so pleasant to talk about your reasons.” One day he added, as he hung prattling about me, “I wish, mother, I could understand all your reasons now, like brother can. I could be so much better, if I always knew why I mustn’t do a thing. Don’t you think I could, mother?” Here was an opportunity to teach him that the merit of children did not consist in knowing *why* they should act in a certain way, but in implicit obedience to parental commands.

A little explanation made this point quite plain to him, but his active mind soon suggested another inquiry—"Mother, God likes children to be happy. I wonder then why he don't give them sense like big people—it is so nice to know why we mayn't do things." I endeavoured in a plain simple way, to make him comprehend, that the ignorance and helplessness of children was probably one of the very best regulations of almighty wisdom—since, in imposing upon them the necessity, and forming in them the habit, of giving up their own opinions and wishes in small matters, without knowing why they are desired to do so, it prepared them to submit with less reluctance than they must otherwise experience, to the many painful appointments of Providence, which they would be called to endure as they advanced in life, without being able to perceive any other reason for them than the sovereign will of God, or to feel any other support under them, than the consideration that their heavenly Father always meant kindly, and ordered wisely. You would have been

astonished to see how readily he embraced my views, and how sweetly he acquiesced in the conclusion, that God knew a great deal better than he did, how much sense it was best for him to have.

The mind, however, of a reflecting child, is not easily set at rest. In a subsequent conversation on the same subject, of which I have a private note, for many of these things I fondly treasured up as omens of good, he observed, "Mother, it is wrong to wish for more sense than God lets me have, but for all, it seems to me, if I always knew the *reasons* about every thing, I could remember better about doing right, till I got such a fashion of it, that I would never do any other way, and then you know, I should be very good." "It is your duty, my love, to commit as few errors as possible, but I rather suspect if you were so wise as to be able to comprehend all you wish, though you might not make those mistakes you now occasionally do, you would be in danger of becoming vain and obstinate, and you know pride and self-conceit are great faults."



“Oh! yes, mother, terrible faults—but I couldn't get vain. Smart boys might, may be—but I'm not smart at all—I'm not industrious, neither—nor manly—so how could I be vain?” I explained to the dear humble child how the evil might arise, notwithstanding his supposed deficiencies. “Well, mother, somehow you always make me see that God is right. I didn't know about getting proud, I only thought that I would be a wiser man by and by, if I was a wise boy now.” “And you were not wrong in that opinion, my dear, for if you are a really wise boy, you will be sensible that you know very little; will be willing to submit yourself to the guidance of those who know more; will try to add to your slender stock of knowledge; and will pray to God to make you good, and of course you will grow wiser daily. You were only mistaken in supposing, that to be a wise boy it was necessary that you should at present understand my reasons for every order.” “But wouldn't I have more sense, mother, when I grow big, if I had that much now?” “I think not,

John. I think it probable that you would not have so much, if proofs of your ignorance were not continually forced upon you while young, as you now may, since the belief that you already knew a great deal, which you would naturally entertain, would be very apt to render you remiss in your endeavours to improve. Consequently you would make little progress, and the degree of knowledge which might be wonderful in a child, would be very trifling indeed, in a grown person."

"Ah! but mother, when I got to be a man and found out that I did not know all that a man ought to know, I could learn then."

"By that time, you would have formed such lazy, self-indulgent habits, as you would find it almost impossible to overcome. Besides, remember, my love, you cannot afford to waste any part of your life, if you wish to become a sensible, useful man. It will require your whole time to form good habits, and gain the information it is desirable for you to have." "Yes, indeed, mother, it will so, if I am as industrious as ever I can be, because I learn so slow, and there is so

much to learn, and I was very foolish to want things fixed different from God's way, for I do wish very much to be a sensible, useful man. But don't you think yourself, mother, that although it wouldn't be good for me after a while, yet, at any rate, it would make me happy now, if I had sense enough to understand, without learning first, everything that boys can?" "I do not indeed, John, I think you enjoy a great deal of pleasure, every day, in acquiring new ideas by talking with me, and in learning things you never knew before, from the pretty books you read. Now most of this pleasure you would lose, if you understood everything so well as to make explanation and reading unnecessary." "And that would be a great loss indeed, mother, for all I learn so slow." "It would, my dear; besides you should remember that it is not what will make you happy while you are young only, but what will help to make you happy during your whole life, and after your death, that God thinks about." He rested his head thoughtfully against my shoulder, and after a moment's silence said,

with a solemnity that affected me very much —“How good God is! How I ought to love him! I forgot every time but now—he remembers the far off time, and makes you remember it. Oh! what a great thing it is for me that God is so wise, and don't alter his way for my foolish wishing!”

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### LETTER III.

HAVING, in compliance with your brother's request, given you, I think, a sufficient insight into the manner in which I endeavoured to guide the mind of my sweet child in the early period of his life, as also of the workings of that mind, we will pass on to his fifth year. He had now learned to read with facility, and began to find much delight in the perusal of his little books. Of course his mind opened more rapidly—but this was not all. He became even more affectionate, more tractable, more humble, and more anxious to “grow good,” as he used to say, though perhaps more wild and playful than

ever. Indeed, his passion for play rendered his quiet attention to my instructions, and the deep interest he took in conversing with me, on even grave subjects, very remarkable. "Mother," he would sometimes say, "have you time to talk to me now?" "Why, are you tired of playing, John?" "O! no, mother, I'm never tired of that; but I love play so much, and love to talk with you so much, that I don't know which I love best, so I want to have both; and may be presently you'll be too busy to have a long talk with me, and then, you see, I can run about; so let's have a pleasant conversation, as you call it, mother, now while we are all alone, so snug and quiet." My consent obtained, the little fellow would delightedly fix himself on my lap, or on his little chair beside me, and pleasant indeed would be our conversation; such innocent happiness or sensibility beaming in his eyes, so intelligent and guileless his remarks, so pure and delicate the feelings he displayed, so sweetly and artlessly expressed his gratitude and affection.

Early in this year, a clergyman, much in-

terested in the missionary cause, visited the family frequently, and I was surprised at the profound attention with which John listened to his observations on the situation of the heathen, and the duty of exertion in their behalf. To enable him to comprehend the subject the better, I added to my explanations the present of a book containing engravings of the idols of India and Africa, and statements of the mode in which they are worshipped by the deluded natives of those countries.

As I expected, he was much shocked; but as I certainly did not expect, he was not so much affected by the appearance of these horrid figures, as by the idea, which immediately seized his mind with painful force, that such objects obtained from their worshippers the honour due to God alone. "Mother," as he sometimes said, whilst turning over the pages of his book, "what a very sorrowful thought it is, that so many people, when God is so good to send them any blessing, only thank sticks and stones, and never thank him. Indeed, mother, it seems

almost too dreadful to think about. What a pity it is that there a'nt missionaries enough to teach them all, who gives them their blessings; if there was, God might soon have the pleasure to see them thanking him." Sometimes he would say, "For all I know, mother, that nothing can make God unhappy, yet somehow it makes me feel very sorry for him, to think that when he looks down from his glorious heaven, he sees so many people not caring anything about him, and paying such a great honour to things that can't have any sense of goodness in them." The idea that the heathen prayed in vain was very distressing to him, and he would observe, "What a dreadful sight it must be to God and the angels, to see people praying to idols that can't hear them if they are in ever such trouble, when it makes *me* so sorry only to *think* about it."

He appeared deeply to feel my remarks on the happiness of being born in a Christian land, and would say with swimming eyes, "Yes indeed, mother, it is a great happiness! I see plainer than ever, now, how

good God has been to me, and for all I am so sorry for the poor heathen, I am very glad that I have heard about them." "Why, John?" "Mother, I do not know what words to tell you well in, but somehow God seems greater to me, and I seem to love him more, every time I look at these ugly pictures, and remember how different he is." Occasionally, (for this soon became one of his favourite topics for conversation,) I described to him what would probably be the conduct of a pious Christian, and what that of a heathen, under similar circumstances. The contrast struck him forcibly, but the feeling expressed was always gratitude to God for "making him be born in a country where his good religion was taught," and commiseration for pagan ignorance and wretchedness—never contempt. "Poor people!" he would say, "I can hardly bear to hear about them. What a dreadful thing it must be to think that it is right to do wicked things! When they do the wickedest, cruellest things, they think they are pleasing their gods, and so how can they grow better, till



they hear about our God? I wish, mother, the time would come quick when you say they will all know about him. Oh! what a great sight it will be to God, when they throw away their idols, and kneel down to pray to him!" But to return to his fifth year.

Details of the customs and general manners of the pagans affected him very much. He could seldom speak of them without shedding tears, and continually expressing his wonder that "more good, religious people did'nt go and try to teach them about the true God, and how he would like them to do. It would make them," he said, "so glad to see how happy the heathen would be, if they could turn them from their cruel ways, and make them love our good God, and do his ways." I informed him of the necessity there was, that missionaries should have money to supply their wants, and that many pious persons were willing to go, but had not the means. "Then, why don't the preachers tell people so, and they would give

them money enough to help the good missionaries to go?" On being told that this was done, but that still the contributions were very small, he expressed the greatest surprise. "Why, mother, I see a great many people dressed very fine; they must have plenty of money. Why don't they give it?" Unwilling to encourage a disposition to judge or censure others, I endeavoured to make him comprehend the multiplicity of wants felt by persons in civilized society, and the heavy demands on their purses these wants occasioned. "I dare say, mother, but for all that, it seems to me, if they thought about the poor heathen, and wanted to make them love God, they would rather give them their money, than buy fine clothes and good things to eat, with it." I admitted, that if we thought and felt properly on the subject, we would all do a great deal more to promote Christ's cause on earth than we do, but added, "it is very easy, my dear John, to say this, but before we blame others, we should remember that it is not so

easy to deny ourselves indulgences to which we have been accustomed. Would you, for instance, like that I should give up having desserts for dinner, and that I should dress you in coarser clothes than other little boys wear?" "Yes, indeed, indeed, mother, I would; so please not to give me such dear clothes any more, and please to save all the money you can from our dinners. Oh! I should be so glad, if you could send a great deal of money to the good men that want to preach to the heathen."

Knowing how often our best wishes and intentions are merely momentary, and produce no effect on our lives, I many times after this, to try the dear child when he could least suspect my motive, proposed ordering something for dinner of which I knew he was particularly fond, and when I saw him delighted with the idea, I carelessly mentioned what I supposed the dish would cost. "Then, mother, please never mind having it," was always his prompt reply; "please to save that money for the heathen." To appreciate

his merit in these acts of self-denial, you must observe that this sweet child was even fonder than children usually are, of what they call "good things."

While speaking on this subject, I will mention another proof of the sincerity and continuance of his wishes for the conversion of the heathen. One day, about this time, he stopped suddenly in the midst of play, and running to me, asked "if I thought cents would be any help to the missionaries." "Certainly, John, every cent helps to make a dollar. But why do you ask the question?" "Because, mother, I was just going to buy a cake, and it came into my head that may be the cents I spend for cakes would do some good." "They would, John, but as you give almost all your money to poor people, I think there is nothing wrong or selfish in your sometimes buying a cake for yourself." "But, mother, I would rather do without cakes, and help the heathen, so I will save this cent for them, and all the money that any body gives me to buy cakes with, that I

don't give to poor beggars." I could not help kissing the dear boy, and telling him that he would find more satisfaction in doing so, than in eating the best cakes in the world. "Oh! I'm sure of that, mother; I know it by the happy way I feel now." As he said this, I gazed with delight on his sweet countenance, illumined by the pure pleasure of benevolence, and felt that indeed I was a happy mother. From this period I do not believe that he ever bought a cake, an orange; candy, or anything for his own eating, though he sometimes did to give away; yet he liked such things as well as any child possibly could. As he grew older, he occasionally purchased what he called useful playthings, as tops, balls, or marbles; but even these sparingly, and never any mere toys; yet he had always more money in his purse than children are ordinarily trusted with, and was never questioned as to its expenditure. He used it so judiciously that I thought it right to supply him freely, and leave him entirely master of what was

given him, only saying, that I hoped he would never give me cause to repent the confidence I placed in him. I could, however, have said nothing which would have had equal influence on a mind and heart like his. Indeed, he had no secrets from me, and the chief pleasure which money seemed to afford him; consisted in giving it away, either to the poor, for the heathen, or in purchasing little presents. The only admonition he needed as to its expenditure was, to exercise prudence in selecting proper objects of charity, and after three or four mistakes he used invariably to come and consult me before he ventured to yield to his feelings. Yet liberal as my beloved child was, his liberality was not more gratifying to me, or more marked than his disinterestedness and consideration. You know that a little money appears a great deal in the eyes of a little child. Often when I offered this dear little fellow a trifle, he declined taking it, saying that, "indeed he did not want it, he had enough—I gave him too much—he was

afraid I could not spare so much—I had so many things to buy.” “But, John, I do not give you more than I can afford.” “But may be you would, mother, if I let you, for you know sometimes I’m going to give all I’ve got to a poor beggar, and you tell me I had better keep some for the next one that comes. So I guess that’s the way with you too, it’s such a pleasure to you to give me money.” More than once, when he had injured or destroyed any article of his dress, as frequently happened, owing to his extreme wildness, he expressed great regret at costing me so much: “Why, my dear John, you ought certainly to be more careful—but you do not cost me much—nothing on purpose.” “No, mother, not on purpose, but when you have to take your money to buy me new things, you can’t have the pleasure of giving it to poor people, and I don’t like to keep you from having that pleasure.” Several times he begged me to let him pay for what was to be gotten, out of his own purse, and whenever I indulged him, he was

much gratified, not reflecting in his childish simplicity, that his purse was furnished from mine.

Suffer my fond heart to dwell a little longer on this part of my child's character. During his fifth year, the hardness of the times was a theme of general conversation; and John heard, of course, much on the subject. One day he returned from a visit to the city with a very thoughtful countenance, and coming to me immediately, said, "Mother, you must not give me any more money." "Why not, John?" "Because, mother, I heard big men, that know about things, say to-day, that everybody would soon be in great distress. They said, that ever so many people, that used to be rich, were in want of money now, and would be in great want after a while. And you see, mother, brother and I are so little, that it will be a great while before we can make any money for you, and may be, if you give us too much now, you'll spend all you've got, and then you'll get into distress too." Believing that a sense of the uncertainty of



worldly possessions might have a salutary influence on his young mind, I admitted the possibility of a reverse in our circumstances, mentioned the frequent occurrence of such things in mere improbable cases, observing, however, that in such an event, it would become my duty to exert myself to procure a support for my family. "Oh! but mother, I couldn't bear to see you taking in sewing, like they say some ladies have to do now—your eyes are so weak it would hurt them very badly. No, mother, you must save what you give to brother and me, and may be that will make you able to do till we get a little older; and find out some way of earning money for you. Do you think, mother, if I am industrious at my books, we can begin soon?" I encouraged the idea, that present diligence would qualify him early to do something for me, should the necessity arise, and for a few moments he looked perfectly happy, planning long lessons for the morrow, when suddenly a painful thought crossed his mind, and changed the expression of his face. "Mother," he said in a sorrowful tone,

“it’s a great pity times are so hard, for there’ll be a great many beggars, and I won’t have anything to give them or the heathen either.” At first, tenderness for me had excluded all other feelings, but now, the recollection of the wants of others, brought tears into his eyes. Seeing this, I thought it time to give him a more correct view of the subject, and therefore explained to him, that in seasons of general distress, economy in personal expenditures became matter of duty—but that, withholding our bounties from those in actual want, lest we might some day be in difficulty ourselves, was neither required nor praiseworthy. “Oh! mother, I didn’t think about *my* getting in want at all, I was only thinking about *you*.” “Thank you, my dear son, but you may continue to think about all you have been in the habit of thinking about. I have enough to satisfy my reasonable wants, and to supply your little purse too, as I have hitherto done.” “Then, mother, I’ll tell you what I had better do—I’ll go on giving the poor people and the heathen as much as I

do now, but I won't buy anything for myself; and then you see, you won't have to give me so much for all, and so you can save something for by and by, for yourself, to keep you from having to work, if the times get like people say they are going to." This arrangement seemed perfectly to satisfy him. That I was affected by the feeling and the reflection which induced it, you will not doubt. I was, however, silent, though inwardly resolved that if I should see him denying himself the purchase of any proper plaything, I would contrive that it should be given him, without any observation, as a present—and many, very many times afterwards was this the case. To the end of his life, though his fears that I should be involved in difficulties had entirely vanished, did he continually practice self-denial, that he might have the more, wherewith to aid others. He was indeed the brightest pattern of charity I have ever seen, and that not merely in its form of alms-giving, but in the most enlarged sense of the term. His views and feelings, with regard to every living

thing, were those of kindness and sympathy. Suspicion was a stranger to his breast—he hoped all things—he believed all things—envied not—vaunted not himself—sought not his own, but delighted in doing with the most complete disinterestedness, everything within the compass of his abilities and opportunities for all creatures—sorrowing for their sorrows—receiving pleasure from their pleasures—acknowledging his own faults with the most perfect candour, but apologizing for those of others with the utmost kindness—bearing personal disappointment with firmness and good humour, but moved to tears by those of others:

My beloved child, tender and tractable as he was, did not want for spirit. Too much of it was his only besetting weakness. Acute in all his feelings, though he was one of the most good humoured, obliging, and forgiving of playmates, never provoking a quarrel by any act of his own, yet his little spirit quickly rose against supposed ill-usage, or what appeared to him unjust or unkind teasing; and whilst quite young, and incapa-

ble of much self-command, petty trials of this kind sometimes hurried him into passionate expressions, and even acts. But his contrition on such occasions was so prompt, his sorrow so great, and his adoption of any means I might devise for his improvement, so eager and cheerful, that I never once found it advisable to punish him as children usually are punished. I endeavoured in the most affectionate, simple manner, to explain to him the nature of his fault—the danger of yielding to the impulses of temper—the beauty of a meek endurance of provocations—the example of our blessed Saviour—the delight it would afford me to see him acquire the mastery of his temper, and above all, the love God would feel for him if he tried to do so. Nothing more was necessary in his moments of greatest excitement, to produce an instant effect; for he had the most entire and grateful belief in my desire to promote his happiness; viewed his own faults in a stronger light than I did, and was willing not only to do anything which I thought might make him better, but also to contrive

little plans of his own to promote this end. One of the earliest of these I will mention. You will excuse its childishness. He was but three years old when he suddenly adopted it, without a suggestion from any one. He was one day displaying some impatience of feeling. I called to him, and said, "I am afraid, my dear John, you are not so good humoured as God loves to see you. Make haste, my darling child, and conquer yourself, or you will get quite angry." Immediately he struck his little head smartly, two or three times, exclaiming, "Naughty Johnny, naughty Johnny!" and every trace of temper vanishing from his face, he resumed his play, in the best humour imaginable. I could scarcely refrain from smiling, so unexpected and energetic was the action, but for more than twelve months after, whenever cautioned in the same way, he would resort to the same self-punishment. After that, although of course he dropped this childish action, he as instantly checked himself when warned of danger; and often proposed other modes of punishment, which he said "might perhaps

help to make him remember about curing himself."

I have his image distinctly before me now, as he came to me one afternoon, his face flushed and wet with tears—"Mother, I have been dreadfully naughty. R—— was plaguing me, and I know it was only for his fun, but I got angry, and struck him very hard." "Is it possible, John? Is it possible you have behaved so badly? I am very distressed indeed to hear it." "Mother, I am very sorry too, and what makes me feel sorrier still, R—— was so good that he did not strike me back, and I'm sure he never would have told you." "R—— is very kind, John; but that does not make your fault less." He sobbed aloud—"No, mother, it makes it a great deal greater, for all he loves to tease me, he never gets into a passion with me, as I do with him. Oh! mother, I'm afraid I never will get broke of getting angry so quick! but please to think of some punishment for me this afternoon, and try if it will do any good." After some further conversation, I proposed that he should remain

for two hours in the chamber with me, a window of which commanded a view of the yard and garden, where his brother and cousin were playing. The dear little creature artlessly observed, with an appearance of satisfaction visible through his tears, "Well, mother, I dare say that will be the best punishment, for it will be a *very great one*, to see them so happy, and not be able to go to them this holiday of brother's, when I thought I would have so much pleasure." He seated himself beside me—talked in the most touching, humble manner, of the fault he had committed—reverted to preceding instances of temper—followed me with much apparent earnestness and fervour in a prayer for forgiveness, for a proper sense of his failing, and for help to overcome it—listened with great attention to some verses of Scripture I read to him, and to my comments on them—repeatedly expressed admiration of his cousin's forbearance with him, and wonder that he should continue to love him, when he had been, as he said, cross to him so often; but appeared entirely to forget, in



the sense of his own error, the provocation he had received. Willing, nevertheless, to ascertain fully the state of his mind, I adverted to his cousin's fault, and gave an opportunity for blaming him, by observing: "Let what you suffer, John, be a warning to you never to indulge in the habit of teasing. It is a pity R—— does this sometimes." Far, however, from availing himself of this opening, my sweet boy replied: "Yes, indeed, mother, I am very sorry he does, for it plagues me dreadfully; but it is a great deal more bad in me to get angry with him for such a little thing, instead of bearing his teasing like a good-natured boy, and it was very naughty in me to strike him, for he never struck me in his life, for all he is so much older than I. Oh! he is a great deal better than I am, and I'm afraid he won't love me any more, nor brother neither, for how can they, when they are so good; and I'm so bad?" I gave the little creature the encouragement which seemed proper, and I was much affected when he threw his arms around my neck, and said, "Oh! how good God is to give me

such a kind mother! You always make me feel happy, when I am ever so much distressed." Several times he approached the window, and looking at the boys, said, "How nice they are playing! and I might be too, if it was not my own fault!" but never once alluded to what had caused his fault. Feeling for the privation he was undergoing, when the two hours had elapsed, I told him I thought he might venture to return to his companions, who had been entreating that he might be allowed to come to them. "No, mother," was his answer; "I think it will be better for me to stay away from them till tea-time. I want to be punished so much this afternoon, that I will never forget again about bearing patiently in my whole life." And he did this voluntarily deny himself in a point where indulgence would have been most delightful. Was not this perseverance in painful effort to obtain a good end, in a child not five years old, a lesson for his mother? Did I not truly say that he was my teacher? And could such a boy fail in acquiring the mastery of his temper? He did not. His at-

tainments in the power of self-command were rapid. I do not say that after his fifth year he never became irritated, for it was not in his nature to grow callous or indifferent, and the trials are pretty severe which boys sometimes experience from their companions. But I do say, that from that period he never suffered himself to be so seriously displeas'd with a playmate as to strike him, or even to utter strong expressions of anger. Whatever vexation he felt was momentary, was combated against, and was followed by a regret which showed itself, not merely in the circumstance being confessed to me with great self-condemnation; and palliations of the conduct of the other party, but in unusual endeavours to please and accommodate the person with whom he had disputed, that the boy might see, to use his own expression, that "he was friends with him and loved him as much as ever." After he entered on his seventh year, even transient excitements became rare, and in his eighth and ninth years, I do not recollect that he ever had what might be called

a dispute with any one. Sometimes he would say to me, "Mother, I was in great danger of getting angry to-day, but I tried to stop myself in time, and I didn't answer the boy cross; so we had no quarrel, and I am very glad of it—are not you, mother? I used to feel so sorry when I had quarreled with any body, and been in a passion." Then he would ask me, with the most confiding simplicity, "if I did not think his being able to bear things better than he used to do, looked as if God was helping him to get the command of his temper." And when I told him that I did indeed hope so, he would say, with glistening eyes, "Oh! I'm so glad you think so, mother; if *he* is helping me, I know that I will be able to get good, and that is what I want." But I am anticipating—I must return to his fifth year.

## LETTER IV.

ONE of the happiest periods of my blessed child's life, and one on which I love to look back, was the close of his fifth year. My health being delicate, it was considered proper for me to leave home. I went to W——, and in that sweet, retired spot, passed some weeks with my two boys. John had never been in the country before, except in his third year; of course all was new—all delightful to him—a happier being I never saw. He often through life reverted to this visit, once, I remember, using this strong expression: "Mother, I can hardly tell you how happy I was; it seemed almost as if I was in Paradise." He enjoyed all that other children enjoy in the country, and with as keen a zest—but here his enjoyments did not cease. Scarcely five years old, he yet delighted in the beauties of nature in an uncommon degree, and it was to the indulgence of this taste, to his joy in having his brother and me constant sharers in his pleasures,

and to the grateful emotions which the happiness he experienced excited in his little bosom, that his felicity is chiefly to be attributed. Much as he loved to roam through the woods with his brother—to ride the horses to water—to feed the poultry—all novel amusements to him—yet his moments of greatest enjoyment seemed to be those, when seated beside me on a rising ground, he was rapturously calling my attention to some view he admired, and telling me, “how good it was in God to let him have so much pleasure; how kind in his uncle and aunt to invite such a little boy to come and see them; and how good in me to bring him, and in his brother to let him be always with him, and to take so much pains to amuse him.”

With this beloved brother, the little creature ranged about incessantly without occasioning me a fear for his safety; for he was as obedient to his brother's directions, as to mine. In his rambles he always remarked the spots which commanded fine views, and on his return to the house, would describe them to me with eager delight, and entreat

me to accompany him to them. My consent obtained, he would hurry me along with joyful animation, and when he had placed me where he thought the prospect might be seen to most advantage, would hover fondly about me, pointing out its beauties, with a correctness of taste, and dwelling on them in a manner and with a degree of feeling, that astonished me. A grand sunset or sunrise he never wearied gazing on; and the moonlight nights so beautiful at W—— were an inexhaustible source of pleasure to him. Even when prepared for bed, he would beg me to let him go to the window once more, and take a last look at “the lovely sky, and the meadows, and woods, and fields, for they look so sweet, mother, that I can hardly bear to go to bed and leave them.” Often when he chanced to awake in the night did he rise to enjoy again the mild landscape that had so charmed him before he lay down. But it was not merely his eye that was gratified; his heart was also touched, and it was from an elevation of feeling, much beyond his years, that his pleasurable emotions chiefly

flowed. A fine night, a beautiful view, seemed to attune his little mind to serious reflection. He saw and loved the hand of God in the beautiful scene, listened with visible satisfaction to my references to the great Creator, as the author of all that delighted us, and often affected me exceedingly by the sweetest expressions of admiration and gratitude, uttered in his own simple, childlike manner, but evidently coming from a heart already prepared to render unto the Lord all glory and praise. Thus I then hoped, thus I have since felt assured. There was even from his cradle, a growing meetness for heaven, manifest in this tender, immortal plant. I watched its increase with pleasing anxiety, witnessed its maturity with profound thanksgiving, and now, I trust, rejoice in the early result of so rapid a growth. Often did I say, "John is not fit for this world." The Lord knew it, but he also knew that he was not destined long to remain in its ungenial soil. He was graciously fitting him for a brighter inheritance, "a city not made with hands," where all his gentle sensibilities,



all his ardent feelings, might have free indulgence, without bringing him one pang. Blessed be his name, for he hath done all things well! His precious loan he hath recalled, but Oh! my cousin, with what mercy did he accompany the demand! What healing balm did he pour into the bosom he was bereaving! Truly has he given "the oil of joy for mourning." I wished my child happy; he hath made him unspeakably so. What have I more to ask? Nothing, but a blessing on what he hath done! May he vouchsafe it.

Before I pass on to the sixth year of my sweet boy's existence, let me dwell a little longer on our visit to W——. It was as a gleam of sunshine across my dark path; and I have a melancholy pleasure in reviewing its attending circumstances. So eager was my dear enthusiastic child in pursuit of the pleasures the country afforded him, that day-break never found him in bed, but always dressed and seated on the window, to watch the first gray dawnings of morning, and to listen for the unlocking of the front door,

that he might sally forth and enjoy the opening day in the woods and fields. I usually accompanied my happy boys in an early walk, and when I had gone as far as my strength would permit, allowed them to take a wider range, watching with delighted eyes, as long as I could see him, my little cherry-checked darling, galloping forward on his wooden horse, the very picture of innocence, health, and hilarity. When they had rambled far enough, they returned to seek me, and having told their adventures, and been gratified by my interest in them, seated themselves beside me, to hear the portions of Scripture I had in their absence selected for the morning, and to join me in a short prayer. These seasons of reading, prayer, and serious conversation, in the secluded spots we chose for them, were, I think, greatly blessed to John. The happiness he was enjoying so disposed his feeling heart to love and gratitude, that every word which he could comprehend had its effect, and he repeatedly told me, that he thought he liked better to hear about

God early in the morning, in the woods, than he had ever done before. . "Somehow, mother, when I see the elegant country he has made—the sun shining so nicely in some places, and such a sweet dark shade in others—and have got you and brother all alone so snug with me, and feel so very, very joyful, 't seems as if I understand better how good he is, and as if I loved him more, and wanted more to try to please him." Feelings and desires like these are not the common effects of outward enjoyments, and often as I heard them described, and saw depicted on the speaking countenance of my little darling, expressions of the tenderest and purest emotion, did my bosom swell with a hope I dared not utter, that they were gracious indications. I say, "dared not utter," for I was too well aware of the frequent evil effects of inspiring a false confidence by premature demonstrations of delight, to endanger his simplicity and singleness of mind, by making his little observations subjects of remark. Much injury, I was persuaded, had often been done in this way—the work of God re-

tarded, or at least many tares thrown in amongst the good seed sown. I therefore watched these indications of dawning piety, with silent gratitude, waiting to see what the Lord would do, but neither intimating my hopes to the dear child, or to his friends, until the deep sense of sin, and fear of wrath, under which he was afterwards permitted to suffer, made it proper to advert to them, for his encouragement and their comfort.

Our visit to W—— concluded, we returned home, and as the little fellow was now five years old, and read and spelled well, I began to give him other lessons to learn. These he did not find so pleasant; they were dull, and his gaiety of heart and love of play disposed him to inattention. Appeals to his sense of duty, and desire to please me, would indeed always incite diligence for a time, but such appeals I did not like to resort to on every trifling occasion. Mere playfulness did not call for punishment at so tender an age, and to the common plan of paying children to be good, I always had an aversion, as having a tendency to render them selfish, and to in-

spire improper and degrading motives for exertion, and such as could only have a temporary good effect, whilst they might produce lasting evil. My dear boy's constant wish to aid the missionary cause furnished me with a better, and to such a mind, a far more effectual means of overcoming indolence. One day when he was expressing great sympathy for the heathen, I read him an account of a lad who had raised a bushel of potatoes in his little garden, and sent the money for which he sold them to the missionary society. "Oh, mother!" he exclaimed, "how happy that boy must have felt. I wish I was old enough to do so too, if I could do it without anybody but you knowing any thing about it. I'm so sorry I can't do any thing to earn money to send them. I save all I can, but that is so little, you know." I told him I had thought of a plan by which he might add to that little. "Oh! please to tell me what it is, mother." The way I mean, John, will be much more troublesome, and require a great deal more patience, than raising potatoes." "Never mind that, mother, if I

only can do it—but I'm so little, I don't know what I can do." "Why you can be industrious at your books, and I will make this bargain with you. Every day that you learn your lessons diligently and perfectly, I will give you a cent for your heathen purse, and at the close of every two weeks, in which you have not passed one idle day, I will add besides a silver eleven-pence to them, and when you have been diligent three whole months, a quarter of a dollar more." You cannot imagine the delight that sparkled in the eyes of the dear generous boy! He kissed me again and again,—thanked me for being so very kind as to think of this good way for him to earn something for the poor heathen—said he would try as hard as ever he could never to give up to laziness any more. He then eagerly busied himself in trying to find out how much he might make in a year, and how much good it might do. From this time I had no more trouble in exciting him to industry. When he was inattentive, I still occasionally reminded him of the pain it gave me to see him do so, or of the sorrow

his brother would feel, but generally simply said, "I'm afraid, John, the heathen will gain nothing to-day." Instantly he would rouse himself, and apply with the most persevering diligence to his lessons, and it was really surprising how very rarely he failed in adding to his little sum—how deeply he felt every failure that occurred, and how sacredly he preserved his earnings for the purpose for which they were designed. Nothing could tempt him to borrow from his heathen fund, not even the strongest desire to perform some other act of charity. His little mite for a beggar was always drawn from what he called his own purse; if that was exhausted, no matter how much his feelings were affected, he denied himself the pleasure of giving. If you have ever been engaged in instructing a wild, playful boy, of five years old, the effect of my arrangement on this sweet child, an effect unabated during more than two years that this arrangement continued to be observed, will convince you of the depth of his sympathy for the heathen, more than anything that I can say. It

must be a powerful motive that will incite a giddy, sprightly boy, to industry at that age; and industrious John certainly became, through pity for pagan wretchedness. How strong must have been the feeling! But possibly you may conjecture that the pleasure of acquiring money might have been in a degree the cause of his exertions. To do away such an idea, I will mention a remark he made to me at about the period of which we are speaking. He was slightly indisposed, and obliged to take medicine. A neighbour, who saw him receive the dose from my hand, and swallow it without hesitation, observed, that she could never get her son to take medicine without paying him. As soon as she left the room, I asked John how he would like me to pay him for taking his powders. "I wouldn't like it at all, mother; it would make me ashamed for you to pay me for doing what you want me to do, and I'm glad I don't know that boy, for he must be very mean to take medicine for money, when he won't do it to please his mother. I'm sure it's a happier thing to please people than to



get money." "And yet, my darling, you like very much to earn money." He looked perplexed a moment, and then said, "Ah! but mother, that is because I want it for the heathen. You let me have it for them, because I'm not naughty; that isn't like paying me for myself. I wouldn't like to be good, just on purpose to get money for myself." Such were the sentiments of my noble-minded child. He loved to obtain his reward, because by so doing, he had more to bestow on beings whose lot he commiserated, than he would otherwise have had. Nevertheless, lest the constant expectation of receiving money as the reward of industry, even for the laudable object he had in view, might eventually beget sordid views, when he was about seven years of age, and had acquired more steady habits, I discontinued my regular payments. The heathen, however, did not suffer loss. I increased my occasional presents, and the dear boy always voluntarily set aside a large portion of whatever I gave him for the cause he had so much at heart, and through life continued to derive undiminished satisfac-

tion from every addition he was enabled to make to his fund for this favourite purpose.

I will not say that nothing further of interest occurred in the sixth year of my boy, for to me every reminiscence is deeply so; but nothing, perhaps, which might not appear to you too trivial to dwell upon. It may, however, be proper to observe that the wish to please God in all his conduct, still retained its early influence over his mind. He still loved to talk of him, to hear me point to him as the bestower of his little comforts, as the author of all that is good or beautiful in this world; but especially he seemed to delight in hearing of the joys of heaven, often expressing hopes of going there when he died, for now he had learned what I have said I did not communicate to him in my first religious instructions, the awful future lot of impenitent sinners. This knowledge filled his gentle bosom with commiseration for the wicked; it did not yet, however, occasion him personal alarm, his simple idea seeming to be, that if he tried enough, God

would enable him to become good—his comfort, that he was determined to try; and as I did not consider it best to confuse his infant mind, and knew that if it were the Lord's will to open his eyes, he would presently see the need of a better righteousness than his own, I let the matter there rest for a time, only taking an opportunity when he was expressing a wish that he knew every way by which he could please God, to say, "Well, my dear John, I will tell you of one. God, you know, has given us a book to teach us what he requires of us, and how we may be saved. Now, if you would make a rule to begin every day by reading a little in this book, I think he would be pleased; may be so much pleased, that after a time, he would make you understand it so well, that you would always know how to please him in every other way, or how to seek forgiveness when you do not; and may be, too, my love, if he saw you endeavouring to learn his will out of his book, he would soon help you so much that you would be able to find out and conquer your faults, and to become what he

wishes you to become. Would you like to try this way, John?" The dear, teachable child immediately replied, "Yes, indeed, mother, I would. I think it is a very nice thought of yours, for God must want us to read his book, or else he wouldn't have given it to us, and I will begin to read it regular to-morrow morning, and if I forget any day, please, mother, to put me in mind." From this time, he regularly, and without prompting, brought his Bible to me every morning, before he would indulge himself in play, and frequently read chapter after chapter, with great attention and interest. More than once, I recollect his saying to me, even at this period of his life, "Mother, I feel so happy when I'm reading the Bible, and think that God is looking at me, and is pleased! Oh! it's a great deal happier thing to do what God likes, than to forget about him, and to be naughty, as I am sometimes. And besides, mother, I feel so bad after I've been naughty, but when I've been reading a pretty chapter, and talking to you about God and Jesus Christ, I feel such a good kind of

pleasure." Then would the dear lamb sweetly kiss and thank me, and can you wonder at my almost feeling that his conduct rendered my Bible more precious to me, or at my continually growing desire that he should be spiritually instructed from it, or at my faith that in due season he would be? Was it possible to see such a child thus meekly and voluntarily seeking to be taught from those Scriptures that testify of Jesus, without feeling this persuasion? How soon it was to be realized, I nevertheless little imagined. True, I saw "the fear of God, the beginning of wisdom," in my child. I saw too, gratitude and love; but I supposed years must pass before he could feel his need of a Saviour—before he could even conceive of saving faith in his Redeemer. The Lord's thoughts, however, were not as my thoughts. To him, to whom a thousand years are as one day, one day is also as a thousand years, and out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he perfecteth praise. As he respecteth not persons, so neither respecteth he ages; but "whosoever cometh unto him, he in no wise casts out."

His still, small voice, reached the heart of my gentle boy; the Spirit, which he did not resist, instructed him in all truth; he was led, for a time, through deep waters, and dark paths; but the Shepherd's arm sustained him, and drew him onward, when so early called to pass through "the valley of the shadow of death." Thus supported, he feared no evil, and now, translated into the "fold," what eye hath seen the glories revealed to him? What imagination can conceive the sweetness of the notes he mingles in the song of the redeemed? Oh! he was a blessed child, and I a blessed mother, to see my child thus early prepared for glory, and taken from the evil to come. Be thankful, O my soul! But I must not forget my narrative. This precious child, now not only read his Bible carefully, continually asking explanations of what he could not understand, but offered up his simple prayers with an increasing appearance of humility and earnestness, that indicated a sense of the divine presence. He loved, too, to commit the "Hymns for Children" to memory,

often, in his own artless manner, expressing admiration of the sentiments they breathed; never seemed more pleased than when I gave him a little book of a religious tendency to read, or when I described to him some act of piety, or afforded him an opportunity of performing an act of kindness to somebody or something. He was strict in the observance of truth, and upright in all his conduct, and so fearful of breaking the Sabbath, that he always put away his story books and playthings on Saturday night, lest he might, in a moment of forgetfulness, amuse himself with them on Sunday. Not that he was less cheerful on this day than on others, but he believed it ought to be kept holy, and therefore would not indulge himself in his usual recreations. "No, I must not. Don't you know it is Sunday?" I have frequently heard him say, when asked to bring out some of his playthings by a little servant boy, whom he would not have refused on any other day. Although he endeavoured to be thus particular, a doubt of the propriety of what he was doing would sometimes strike him;

but whenever this was the case, instead of dismissing the troublesome thought, he would immediately come to me, to tell me how he had been engaged, and ask if I thought it wrong.

I had early told him that it was proper for all who were able, to devote part of the Sabbath to religious reading. This duty he cheerfully performed, not only when reminded by me, but often of his own accord, brought what he called his Sunday books, saying, "Now, mother, I think it is time to read some, will you hear me?" His affectionate and grateful regards for the domestics of the family, made him, to use his own words, "want very much that they should know all about God and religion," and this anxiety led him to read much to them. On Sabbath nights he especially delighted in going into the kitchen for this purpose; and on his return he many times expressed himself in a manner which proved that he had experienced a sweet satisfaction in the performance of the duty.

I had always told him the dangerous ten-



dency of bad examples; he now began himself to feel a dread of them, and such a dislike to hearing improper language, that he would not remain near the palings when the boys of the neighbourhood, who were generally bad children, were playing on the street. His heart seemed to become even more tender and sympathizing, his regret for his little failings more poignant, his affection for me more ardent, and his desire to fulfil all my wishes so strong, that he would scarcely indulge himself in the most trifling action about which he had not heard my sentiments—had not consulted me. So particular was he on this point, that having discovered that sometimes, when my thoughts were much engaged, I unconsciously answered “yes,” without attending to the nature of his request, he learned to study my countenance, and whenever he suspected me of absence of mind, instead of availing himself of the permission he had obtained; would ask, “Mother, do you know what you are saying?” and wait to be fully assured, before he would indulge his wishes. More than once,

when I knew that his heart was set on the gratification for which he had petitioned, I was so struck by his strictness of principles, that I could not help telling him he was a dear, good boy, for waiting to be certain that I understood him. But to such remarks he always replied, "Oh! no, mother, there was no goodness at all in that, for you see, it doesn't give me any pleasure to do a thing I'm not quite sure you think right; and now that I know you sometimes say 'yes' without thinking, because you've got a habit of saying so to me, I like to ask you twice, so as to be *quite* sure." Then away the little fellow would bound, perfectly unconscious of having given me any cause for admiration.

Such was my child in his sixth year, and I have been thus particular with regard to this period, because I conceive that a knowledge of his then views and conduct, makes his deep distress of mind, a few months later, the more remarkable.

When he was just five years and ten months old, the ill health of his brother, and my own debility, rendered a visit to Cape

May proper. Most reluctantly I accompanied my two boys thither, though I little suspected the succession of trials which awaited me there, but which I will not attempt to enumerate, as I only wish to speak of John. This enthusiastic little creature was almost wild with delight, and unbounded in his anticipations of pleasure. He enjoyed the steamboat passage even more than I expected, and the two first days at the Cape he almost lived on the shore, as happy as any being could be. On the third day, he had left me only a few minutes, when his screams drew me to him. Whilst at play, a bench had fallen from a considerable height, and striking his leg, had broken a small bone, and injured the muscles considerably. From this last cause the pain was excessive, and his distressing cries uninterrupted for some moments; but so soon as he had somewhat recovered from the first shock, and could listen to me, he dried his tears, and struggled to suppress every exclamation of anguish. A physician set the bone and bandaged the leg; but his suffering continued

for many days so great, that the smallest movement produced excruciating pain. Fever was induced, and for nearly three weeks he was confined to bed, and for several more could not walk without crutches. Thus was he deprived of the pleasures he saw his companions enjoying, and in which he had so eagerly participated. You may judge how severe a trial this disappointment of all his sanguine expectations must have been, but you cannot easily imagine the uncomplaining patience, and even cheerfulness, with which he endured it. I seized the first opportunity we had of being alone together, to explain tenderly to him his duty, and the causes we had for thankfulness, and to entreat him to show his gratitude to God for the mercies shown him, by a patient endurance of whatever he might now have to bear. He immediately entered into my views, expatiated, in his childish manner, upon how much worse he might have been, if God had not let brother call him in time for him to jump a little one side before the bench came down; what a great thing it was there was such a

good, kind doctor there, and that he had me to nurse him and keep him company, when so many poor boys had no mother to nurse and take care of them, and no good bed to lie on, adding many other things of this kind and assuring me that he would not fret, and would try all he could to keep from wishing to get well before God chose to let him.

These words, you may believe, sounded very pleasantly in a mother's ears, but it was still more gratifying to observe that, throughout his trial, with all its privations, his whole deportment was in conformity with them. Indeed, so remarkable was his gentleness and patience, so uniformly sweet the expression of his countenance, as to excite the admiration of the ladies who visited me in his chamber. Many of them exerted themselves to amuse him, and though his extreme diffidence often rendered their attentions distressing to him, he nevertheless felt exceedingly grateful to them all.

The sudden death of my aunt at the Cape, took place whilst my dear child was confined to his bed, and I afterwards had reason to

think, made a deep impression on his mind, although at the time I observed nothing more than the emotion natural on such an occasion, except an earnestness of inquiry as to my hopes in regard to her state, and an anxious desire, that I could not have expected at his age, to learn every little particular that indicated her mind to have been in a pious frame when her awful summons came.

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#### LETTER V.

I HAVE now, my dear cousin, nearly brought this tedious narrative to a period of my child's brief existence more deeply interesting to me than any other, except the last five months. But before entering upon it, I will just observe, that from the time we had again quietly settled at home, I remarked an increased desire, without any apparent cause, for religious instruction, and listened with surprise to his frequent allusions to the sudden removal of his aunt, and still more frequent expressions of anxiety to be so good

that he need not be afraid to die, whenever God should choose, and entreaties that I would "please to take more pains than ever to break him of his faults." Sometimes he would say, "I think, mother, aunt G——'s dying so suddenly, ought to make us think more about our dying, and I want to think more about it; but somehow I'm so wild and so fond of play, that I can't think half as much as I want to do." I observed, too, that when engaged in prayer, he invariably besought that he might be made fit to die, and that God would make everybody religious, that nobody need be afraid of death. It was also evident that reflection was excited by subjects which never before engaged his attention, and at which I was surprised; as the very retired manner in which we lived seemed calculated almost to exclude from his mind the knowledge that such things were. I mean gay dress, costly furniture, large parties, &c., to all of which he expressed disapprobation, saying, "What a pity it is, mother, that there are so many gay, fashionable people! If I get to be ever so rich

when I am big, I hope I will never forget about God, and be a great company-man." Whenever he happened to hear of a party in agitation, he would look quite grieved, and as soon as he was alone with me, would say, "How sorry it makes me feel to think there's going to be another ball; so many people will go to it, and may be some that have never been to any yet, will go, and so begin to get a habit of liking company." As these remarks were frequent, and I besides perceived that he judged of the piety of individuals by their appearance, and the degree in which they mingled in worldly amusements, I became fearful lest he should acquire an illiberal, contracted way of thinking, and endeavoured to make him comprehend the danger of attaching too much importance to things of minor consequence, the variety of sentiment entertained on these and many other points, by sincere Christians, who made the Bible their law, and therefore the impossibility of estimating the religion of others correctly by our own views. As he had not learned to look beyond the letter of



the law, my remarks filled him with wonder, and with a promptitude which astonished me, he referred to some passages he had read in Scripture, which appeared to him to condemn the vanities of life. Much conversation and explanation ensued before he could properly embrace the subject, but when he did, he seemed greatly delighted at being relieved from a belief, which he said, "had made him very sorrowful," that those persons whose actions were not in unison with what appeared to him the meaning of Scripture, must of course be regardless of its injunctions. "I thought, mother, that everybody understood the whole Bible the same way, and so I thought that none of the people that didn't do as I understood it to mean, cared about pleasing God; but I am very glad you've made me see that isn't true, because now I won't feel so sorrowful as I did last Sunday, when I saw so many fine dressed ladies. But for all, mother, as I can't help thinking that the Bible means that God doesn't want people to care about being grand and fashionable, I hope I never

will." Nor did he, though from this time he showed no disposition to judge others by their exterior.

But with all his growing attention to serious subjects, he did not yet appear to have any idea of faith in the Redeemer, nor a wish to attain it. His views seemed quite simple—that God had created him, and therefore he ought to obey him—that God had given him the Bible, and therefore he ought to read it, to learn his will—that God had bestowed on him so many blessings, that it would be very ungrateful in him ever to displease him—that God required him to become quite good, or he would not receive him to heaven at his death, and that this required goodness was to be attained by efforts on his part, which he would be helped to make if he tried enough himself. This was the sum of his faith as an active principle, and limited as it was, seemed much for such a child; but his heavenly Father, who was gradually drawing him onward, did not design that he should long rest here. He now partially leaned on a power superior to

his own. He was soon to learn that there was no other dependence; he was to be led through difficulties and sorrows to that Redeemer, in whom, though he now believed that he died for sinners, and thought that he loved him for it, he yet felt no solicitude to obtain a personal interest.

But to proceed. When this dear boy was within two weeks of six years old, the health of my eldest child again required that he should make a journey from home. As was always the case on such occasions, John sought to supply the loss of his society by clinging more closely to me. During the first two days he could scarcely think or speak of anything except his brother—how good he was, how he missed him, but how he hoped that he would have such pleasure on the mountains, that it would never come into his head how lonesome we were at home—his determination to find out all the fun he could for me to put in my letters, so as to make him think we were very happy, to keep him from being sorrowful about us, &c.

On the third day, having become more

accustomed to his brother's absence, but not more disposed to leave my side, he said, "Now, mother, that we are so much alone, I want you to tell me all I don't know about religion." I took the opportunity to say; "The Catechism of our Church would teach you a good deal about it, John, would you not like to learn it?—for I always endeavoured to make the adoption of any means to obtain religious instruction a voluntary act on his part. "Why, yes, mother, may be I would, because then I could say it so nice with brother, and he would like that, I know. But what is the Catechism, mother? and what did people make it for?" I explained to him its nature, the object of its framers, and the benefits that might be derived from studying it properly. "Then, mother, to be sure I will try to learn it, and I hope I will get some good from it, but you must please to tell me the meaning of all the hard words, for I hardly understand the least bit of it when I hear brother saying it to you." I promised, and he commenced his labours.

Hitherto, although I had had abundant rea-

son to entertain the most sanguine hopes in regard to this interesting child, I had not ventured to flatter myself that he was yet other than any child of equal sensibility and docility, carefully instructed by a fond parent, might have been, but from this day it was evident that the Holy Spirit, not his mother, was his teacher. I had always regarded our Catechism as an admirable and useful compendium, and therefore desired that he should commit it to memory, but little did I imagine that it would be employed as the means of spiritually enlightening his mind—of convincing him of sin—of making him feel the necessity of an atonement for it—of revealing to him how all-sufficient an atonement had been made, and of exciting him to seek with his whole heart and soul that faith in a crucified Redeemer, by which alone he could be saved. Yet these, through divine teaching, were the blessed fruits of his study of this little work.

The very first sentence, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever," seemed to be carried home to his heart.

Many were his questions upon it, particularly as to what was meant by glorifying God. I answered him as simply and fully as I could. He listened with an air of intense interest, then looked very serious, and presently, resting his head upon my shoulder, said in a melancholy tone, "What a naughty boy I am, mother! I've never done anything at all to glorify God. I never even wanted to glorify him." The little creature appeared so distressed, that I replied almost unconsciously—"No doubt, my love, you have not sought to glorify God as it is our duty to do, but you have often tried to please him." "Yes, mother, I have tried sometimes to be good, but then it was only because I knew it was bad to be naughty; it wasn't because I wanted to do like the Catechism says, to glorify God." I was exceedingly surprised, more by the solemnity and dejection of his manner, than by his words, and when I reflected how very young he was, and how easily his feelings were affected, scarcely knew what to think, or how to reply.

But I will not attempt to repeat our conversation. I have said enough perhaps to convince you, who are acquainted with the closing scenes of his life, that the enlightening work of the Spirit had now commenced in the heart of this almost babe, and as it would be impossible to detail all the evidences of its progressive operations, I must confine myself to general statements.

The second answer in the Catechism, "The word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him," though perfectly understood, was not passed over more carelessly than the first had been. One of his remarks upon it, I remember, was, "That answer shows me, mother, that I ought to read the Bible a great deal, so as to learn how I can glorify God—I can never learn, if I don't read 'the only rule,' till I know it so well, that I won't be always forgetting, like I am now."

After some talk with me upon the third answer, "The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and

what duty God requires of man," the dear boy was silent for some moments, and then observed with an earnestness which quite affected me—"What a great book the Bible is, mother! Other books only amuse us, or tell us about common things that won't do us any good when we die, but the Bible tells us about the two greatest things of all. It is worth more than all the other books in the world." The fourth answer describing the nature of the Deity closed this day's lesson, and never shall I forget the eagerness with which he listened to my explanations of the terms used to express the divine attributes, or the ease with which he embraced their meaning. It was not, you may suppose, the first time these attributes had been mentioned to him, but although the definitions in the Catechism were more concise, and apparently less intelligible to a child than those I had given him on former occasions, yet it certainly was the first time that he had evinced such a capability of comprehending and appreciating them. His whole heart and mind seemed engaged, and though



his questions and remarks were uttered with his usual infantine simplicity, they yet betrayed a surprising clearness of conception; and as light gradually broke in upon him, his speaking countenance assumed an expression of awe and admiration not easily described.

The book was now laid aside, but not with it the feelings nor the disposition to enquiry it had excited, as was manifest from the tenor of his conversation throughout the day, and from his prayer at night, that, "God would give him sense to understand the Scriptures, so that he might learn how to glorify him always."

On bringing his Bible to me the next morning, he observed that he "did not know what was the reason, but somehow he felt a great deal gladder to-day that he could read God's book, than he used to do." As he read, it was very perceptible that not only his desire for information, but also the disposition to apply what he read, had increased. His questions followed each other so fast, and were of such a nature, that it

was almost as impossible to answer them, as to hear, without emotion, the self-condemning inferences he drew from different passages of the holy volume.

When the Catechism was again produced, the doctrine of the Trinity, which, of course, I could not explain clearly, and which, nevertheless he was unwilling to pass over without comprehending, puzzled him a good while. Seeing this, and that he was inclined to reason too much on its probability, I reminded him, that man, compared with God, had not so much sense as he had, compared with me; and that, as he ought not to expect to understand everything that I could, so neither ought grown persons, no matter how sensible and learned they were, to expect to understand all about so wonderful a being as God, who was so much greater than themselves, and who must be so different from anything they had sense enough to imagine. The dear child's reply struck me forcibly—  
“Then, mother, my not understanding about God, is only a sign how much grander he is than I am.” “It is, John, just as your not

being able always to understand things that seem very plain to me, proves that your mind is not yet so strong as mine, but never should make you doubt my word." "Yes, I see, mother, and so my not understanding how God can be like he is, only ought to make me think a great deal more of his greatness, and believe the better about my foolishness. It is my being so different from him, that keeps me from knowing about him. Isn't that the way of it, mother?" "It is, my love, and whenever you think about the Godhead, try to remember, that as you cannot comprehend how your soul and body are united to make one boy, you should not expect to comprehend the nature of the Almighty." The little dear caught at the idea. "O! mother, I'm glad you put me in mind of that, for now I think about my being two things, it don't seem half so hard to think that God is three, when he is so much grander than I am."

The exposition of the decrees of God, which followed next in the Catechism, that they "are his eternal purpose, according to

the counsel of his will, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass," shocked and alarmed him greatly. Never shall I forget the distressed tone in which he exclaimed, the moment he understood the meaning of the words, "May be then, mother, it is fixed now, that I am never to go to God, and can't do anything to help it, if I try ever so hard. Oh! mother, what a dreadful thing that is! What shall I do?" I endeavoured to persuade him that he took a wrong view of the subject—that he had no ground to form such a conclusion—that this was one of the doctrines of religion which were far too deep for his comprehension, and that, therefore he must wait till he had a more general knowledge of the Scriptures, before he attempted to think much about it. But he had now experienced the first pang of real alarm, and it was not so easily to pass away. He insisted, "But, mother, for all I'm too young to understand all about it, it must be true if it is taken out of the Bible." I admitted that it was drawn from the Bible, but tried to explain it, in a

degree, by God's foreknowledge of what the conduct of each of his creatures would be. "Well then, mother, may be my being so often naughty, and my never thinking the least bit about glorifying God, is a sign that I'm not good enough to go to heaven." "If you are as bad as you say you are, my darling child, it is nevertheless only a sign that you are not now fit for heaven—but God may, and I trust will, put so much of his Holy Spirit into your heart, that from this time you may seek to glorify him—and Jesus may procure forgiveness for all your past and future sins." He had not yet, however, any conception of an appropriating faith in the Redeemer, and could not be comforted. His answer was, "But may be he don't mean to, mother, and that is such a dreadful thought, that I can hardly bear it." The little fellow was moved to tears, and it was long before I could divert his mind sufficiently from the painful ideas to induce him to proceed.

The two succeeding articles being less doctrinal, we got through them without dif-

ficulty, and I proposed putting the book away, but he had become so anxious, that he begged to be allowed to learn one more answer. This described man as God had created him, "after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." John had certainly heard this description before, but the train of thought now awakened made the most simple and familiar truths appear new to him. He talked a great deal of the joys of paradise, and more than once observed, "What a great happiness that must have been of Adam's and Eve's!—I don't mean about the pretty garden, mother, but about knowing that God loved them, and about having nothing but good thoughts in their heads." What seemed however to impress him most, was the declaration that our first parents had been created "in righteousness and holiness." "That shows, mother," he said, "that God wanted them to be so, or else he wouldn't have made them so—and I'm not in that way at all, and that shows I'm not in the way God wants me to be." "Well, my love, if you have already been,

made sensible of this, I hope you will also soon be enabled to improve." "Oh! but mother, 'knowledge and righteousness and holiness,' are such great things! How will I ever be able to get them?" After indulging him for some time in conversation of this kind, I proposed his going to play, but he objected, saying he would rather talk with me. I told him I thought we had had talk enough, that a little play would be good for him. "Oh! no, mother, not half so good as talking with you. The Catechism makes me feel so sorrowful, that it takes away all my wanting to play. Please to let me stay here." Not well knowing what to think, I said, that perhaps, as the Catechism made him so dull, he would like to stop learning it, but he eagerly interrupted me—"No, indeed, mother, I wouldn't, for somehow, the sorrier it makes me, the more I want to learn it—it don't make me feel the same kind of dull that other hard lessons do, it only makes me sorrowful about my badness, and I want to be sorrowful about that, for God hates it." He remained with me during the rest

of the morning. After dinner I sent him to play, but in about an hour he returned to me. The gravity of his countenance, so unlike the cheerful, animated expression it usually wore, struck me so forcibly, that I hastily inquired if any thing was the matter. He answered that he did not know what was the reason, but such sorrowful thoughts kept coming into his head, that he had no pleasure playing, so he was come to talk more with me about God. I was surprised and affected, but feeling it my duty to meet his inclination, took him on my lap. Our conversation was long and interesting—his questions very remarkable in such a child—the feelings he betrayed, still more so. At night I observed, too, an alteration in the tones of his voice in prayer; it was that of the most earnest entreaty, and at times he seemed on the point of bursting into tears. He talked again, and still on the same subject, until he fell asleep, when I remained for some time gazing on him, and wondering what all this could mean, yet still fearful of indulging a hope that it was other than temporary excite-



ment, from natural causes. You may wonder at my difficulty of belief, but you know the result, which was then hidden from me, and my child was so mere an infant, and could so imperfectly express the state of his mind, that I dared not presume to believe what I so ardently desired. In the morning I awoke before him, and as I lay reflecting on the probability of the impressions of the preceding day having entirely passed away during the night, he opened his sweet eyes, and after embracing me in his usual endearing manner, immediately said, "Now, mother, please to talk religion a little before we get up, it is such a nice, quiet time." You may imagine how grateful the sound of these words must have been to my ears, and with what heartfelt satisfaction I met his wishes. I will not however attempt to relate our conversation, though I well remember that it was of a nature to increase my hopes. Many of his questions and remarks were such as it appeared impossible could have been suggested to him, but by the Holy Spirit. His anxiety of mind seemed rather to have increased

than diminished, and my own became great, to know how I ought to address him; my heart prompting me to soothe his alarms, while the dread of doing so prematurely, as often withheld me from yielding fully to its dictates. Sometimes I felt almost persuaded that the Father of spirits had vouchsafed to touch the heart of my little darling, and again I doubted, for we are prone, my dear cousin, to set times for the Lord, and this was years in anticipation of the period when I had hoped he might graciously manifest himself to this sweet lamb. My joy was therefore mixed with fear and trembling. I watched every look, and listened to every word, with a painfully eager solicitude, more easily conceived than described, but could not yet see my duty to be other than that of setting the mercies of God before him, avoiding every unnecessary excitement of fear, and availing myself of his desire for instruction, to impart to him all the knowledge on spiritual subjects which he was capable of embracing. My eyes were unto the Lord, my prayers before him, that I might be di-

rected in duty, and preserved at once from presumptuous expectations, and from a difficulty of belief dishonourable to him.

This day's lesson in the Catechism was not apparently calculated to produce so much keen feeling as the first two lessons, yet such was the tone of his mind, that it was not learned without many touching comments. One or two of these you may like to hear. After having repeated, "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions," the little fellow stood for some moments thoughtfully and silently looking through a window which commanded a view of a considerable portion of the city. Observing an expression of awe and elevation gradually diffuse itself over his face, I asked what he was thinking about. "Why, mother, I'm thinking of God's wonderfulness. What a heap of houses there are, and how many people must live in them, and for all there are so many, God knows what every one is thinking about and doing, and he makes just what he pleases happen to them all, without

any trouble." Again he was silent a moment, and then, as though oppressed by the magnitude of the thought, threw his arms around my neck, exclaiming, "O! mother, what a great being God is!" I pressed him to my bosom without reply, and presently he added, in a tone that went to my heart, "What a dreadful thing it is to be naughty, and make him angry!" "But you forget, John," I now said, "that God is not willing to continue angry with his creatures, but loves to pardon those who are truly sorry for their faults." "Yes, mother, I know that, but I am not sorry enough for my faults, or else I wouldn't keep on being naughty." Scarcely knowing how I ought to answer, and willing to fathom his thoughts, I asked, "Why, when were you naughty, John?" "Oh! mother, it seems to me, somehow now, as if I'd been naughty my whole life, so many bad things that I've done keep coming into my head; and besides, you know, mother, I've never been religious, and that is a great badness—it is the greatest of all." I expressed a hope that he would henceforth be enabled to be-

come religious, and induced him to proceed with his Catechism.

The next answer stated, that the condition of the first covenant into which God entered with man, was perfect obedience. This again startled him, for, as I have already said, things that he had long known, now seemed new discoveries to him, from the strong impression they were permitted to make on his awakened perceptions. "Perfect obedience!" he exclaimed, "Oh! I will never be able to do perfect obedience! Besides, I have broken that bargain already, and so, how will I ever go to heaven?" "My dear child, it is true, that if you depend on your own goodness for getting there, you will be disappointed. But you know God entered into a second engagement with man, in which he named a way by which those who had broken the first covenant, and had become the greatest sinners, might be saved, and by this way you assuredly may obtain admission into the heavenly kingdom." This way he however yet discerned too dimly to look towards it with encouragement. Still he dwelt on his

ignorance and his sins, and still he remained distressed, notwithstanding all I could say, and I said much, and in a more consolatory strain than I had hitherto ventured to adopt. At last the Catechism was resumed.

Having learned the next section, "Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God," he again became thoughtful, and after a little while said, "Mother, if Adam and Eve, who were born in 'righteousness and holiness,' did wrong, how can I ever be able to help doing bad things, when I've got such a bad nature?" Although the look which accompanied these words was one of great self-abasement, I yet felt alarmed, lest he might be drawing the conclusion that too much was expected from a creature constituted as he was; and to discover the extent of his idea, asked, "if he thought then, that God ought to have formed him differently, so that he might find it more easy to keep his laws?" He eagerly answered, "No, indeed, mother, I do not. I know very well that God has made me the only

right way for me to be, for he is too good to make any body any way that is not the best. It only makes me sorrowful to think how often I will do wrong things, when even Adam did what he was told not to do." I do not know how this reply may strike you—to me, it was cause of heartfelt gratitude, that even at this early stage of his spiritual progress, whilst he was suffering under a sense of his own utter incapacity to keep the law, and yet could not look beyond "perfect obediencē" for salvation, he was preserved from arraig-  
ing Providence, and enabled to extract from every new idea which broke into his mind deeper lessons in humility. I had dreaded his answer, but as I listened delightedly to it, could not suppress the mental ejaculation, "Surely this is of God! It savours not of human nature." I said not so, however; I only again endeavoured to lead his thoughts to the Redeemer. But the Lord's time had not yet come. His tender spirit was to be more broken, perhaps, that when the light should come to him, he might prize it the more highly.

Two other answers were learned; and the Catechism put away; but so greatly had its contents interested him, and so anxious had he become about his own state, that I found it difficult to persuade him to go and amuse himself. When he went, he soon returned to me, as on the previous day, and with the same declaration of finding it impossible to enjoy himself, and the same entreaty that I would talk religion with him. This was repeated whenever I prevailed on him to leave me, and when I indulged him in talking, his questions and remarks, as well as the very great degree of feeling he evinced, astonished me even more than on the preceding day—so much more acute were his reflections, so much more profound his emotions, than I had supposed possible at such an age, on such a subject. The most careless listener, who beheld his infantine countenance, and knew his almost spotless life, could not have heard him unmoved—how then could a mother?

The following day was passed in the same manner. Instead of running down to the



garden, as formerly, when he had read a chapter, he hung about me, reading now another chapter, now a hymn, asking explanations, making observations, and drawing inferences, which affected me beyond measure. Surely, I thought, as tears started to my eyes, this can be none other than the work of God! and it was none other, for it fell not through, as my unbelieving heart was too long prone to fear that it might.

The dear boy had now become exceedingly unhappy. God, to whom he had looked up, as to a tender friend, he now regarded with awe and dread, as an offended Judge. When I endeavoured to inspire him with more comfortable views, far from embracing my ideas with avidity, as he had been wont to do, he would answer in a melancholy tone, "Mother, I can't think about God, in that kind of happy way I used to do, since I've found out about his greatness and holiness; for I keep thinking about that, and then that makes me think about all my badness, and it is such a *great badness*, that I'm almost entirely sure he can't bear me for it,

and that's such a dreadful thought, that I don't know what to do." Continually was he dwelling on his little errors, reminding me of those I had forgotten, reproaching himself with them, and mourning over them, as though they had been sins of the blackest die, and such as it was scarcely possible could be pardoned. With me, such was the constant tenor of his conversation, and many were the tears he shed. When with the family, he indeed instinctively avoided all allusion to religious subjects, and tried to talk of common affairs; yet so altered was his manner from its usual and natural sprightliness, as to be remarked by all, though the change was attributed to the loss of his brother's society; for I had not yet communicated to any one except my mother, the state of his mind, deterred partly by my uncertainty as to the real cause and probable result of those exercises I was watching with such intense anxiety, partly by consideration for his feelings, and partly by the repugnance which I have always felt to the common practice of divulging the confidential

communication of feelings, which an awakening sinner is so naturally disposed to pour into the bosom of a sympathizing friend. Such confidences, I have ever thought, should be regarded as sacred deposits, and I believe that the premature revealing of these is the frequent cause of much evil; the eyes of the world being thus drawn on young, trembling converts, whose feet are not yet established, and who are often, from this very cause, retarded in their progress, or whose possible fall, after fair promise, is thus made a stumbling block in the way of many, and the difficulty of recovery from it increased to themselves. It was not, therefore, until about ten days from the period of which I am now speaking, that the distress of this sweet child was known even to his nearest relatives; nor until it became so poignant as to affect his health so materially that it was considered proper to consult a physician; and never did I mention it until his last illness, to any except his relatives and two very dear friends, all of whom I required not to repeat my communications, as it was

my wish that the tree should be known only by its fruits in after years, and whilst yet a tender plant, should be preserved from the blighting influence of a too early notice.

But not to anticipate. The doctrine of the fall, as stated in the Catechism, he easily understood; but after repeating the words, "The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery," he paused a moment, and then observed, that "once, may be, he would not have known what that meant; but now that he had found out about his sins, and felt so very miserable, he knew that it was true without looking in the Bible." And here I should inform you, that whenever he met with anything in the Catechism which surprised him, he was in the habit of saying, "Please, mother, to show me the place in the Bible that the Catechism-makers got this from, so that I may be surer that it is true." This disposition to examine, you may be assured I did not discourage, and many were the hours I employed in aiding him to hunt out and comprehend the authorities, for it was a pursuit that never seemed to

weary him. So far from this being the case, it is a fact that the proposition to stop always came from me, and was heard with regret.

To return from this digression. The answer to the next question, "Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?" was exceedingly blessed to him, and his reasoning upon it truly surprising. Many of the terms employed, of course required explanation; but the instant they were comprehended, the sense of the whole was embraced, and an entire change in his views produced. He had long since been made acquainted with the fact of "the corruption of our whole nature;" it had, however, rested in his mind as mere head knowledge, producing no other impression than that he must take great care, or this bad nature would make him do very bad things, never prompting a wish beyond reformation in conduct: but now he was enabled to draw a conclusion, which I am persuaded the Spirit of God alone could have dictated to such a child. "Then, mother," he said, "since our actual transgressions, as the Catechism says, pro-

ceed from the corruption of our nature, I ought to pray to God to give me another kind of nature, instead of praying so much for him to keep me from forgetting about doing right; for you see, if I had another kind of nature, that didn't put wrong things in my head, I couldn't forget so, or want to do bad; could I, mother?" This favourable moment was not to be lost. I seized it, to explain to him more fully than I had ever before done, the change of heart of which he had now been made to feel the necessity, and which I assured him was promised to all who sincerely desired it. He listened in profound silence, and then, when I had done speaking, made a request that affected me exceedingly. He asked me to kneel down, and pray to God, in easy words that he could say too, to teach him the right way to seek for a new heart. I did so, and never shall I forget the fervent tone in which he repeated my petitions, or the tenderness with which he embraced and thanked me on rising from his knees, observing at the same time, "that was a sweet prayer, mother."

Afterwards he often begged me to unite with him in the same way, and rarely prayed himself, without entreating the Almighty to take away his bad heart, and give him a good one. But you are not to suppose, that his mind was relieved. Far from it. What he called his badness passed as continually in review before him, and distressed him as much as ever. He no longer, indeed, expected to become good whilst his heart remained, as he thought, unchanged; but then, the fear that it might never be changed harassed him perpetually, and was expressed in the most touching language.

But I must not forget the Catechism. The next section, which runs thus, "All mankind by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever"—cost him many tears and much distress. "Oh! mother," he would say, "what a dreadful thing it is to think that I'm in that kind of state! It isn't so bad to think about the miseries of this life, but then

about God's wrath and curse, and about the pains of hell for ever and ever, that's what's terrible!" You may suppose that I used every argument I could devise, to allay his terrors—but as I have already said, the Lord's time had not yet come.

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### LETTER VI.

THE effect produced by the next article in the Catechism, inspired me, however, with a strong hope that it was approaching. The inquisitive, intelligent child, could not pass over the doctrine of election, without extracting from it, notwithstanding all my caution, additional food for anxiety, but on the whole, this response was made eminently useful to to him. Already convinced of sin, and fearing judgment, the declaration, that God had "entered into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer," riveted his attention. All my attempts to withdraw his



thoughts from his own works, and fix them on the Alone mighty to save, had failed, but now, this object was in a measure accomplished. He seemed at once to perceive the way of salvation, though he still had much to suffer, before a single hope of its having been prepared for him was permitted to arise in his bosom. It was, however, an unspeakable relief to my heart, to find that from this moment, my beloved boy's enquiries and wishes were directed aright. Without this relief, I know not how I should have supported the sight of his deep distress, almost despair, during the two ensuing weeks. For, my dear cousin, although the way of salvation was no longer hidden from him, the inability he felt to enter upon it augmented the anguish of his feelings. It was in vain, that I endeavoured to persuade him, in language suited to his age, that he would presently be brought to Jesus, and besought him to wait patiently the Lord's own time. His apprehensions that it might never arrive, were not to be removed. They speedily became so great as to destroy his

interest in everything around him. He could not play—could not read the little story books he had been so fond of—could not bear to be a moment from my side—lost his appetite and colour—his brother's garden, which during former absences he had always tended with care and delight, was neglected—he scarcely ever even spoke of this beloved brother. The Bible, his little Hymns, and the Catechism, occupied him alternately, and every interval was spent in talking of their contents—lamenting his failings, which he was continually finding out, or imagining—reproaching himself for not being able to trust in Jesus—weeping in my arms, or entreating me to pray for him—and repeating my supplications in so imploring a tone, as often quite overcame me. After he had gone to bed at night, he would beg me to lie down beside him, and talk some more religion—his first waking request was the same. Wherever domestic affairs called me, he would follow, but instead of being interested or amused with what was going forward, as he had used to be, always appeared serious and

thoughtful, and anxious to get me back to my chamber, "Mother," he would sometimes say, "I feel as if I never wanted to go out of this room any more, or to leave you a single minute—you're all the comfort I've got"—and then his sweet eyes would fill with tears, and leaning his head on my bosom, he would add, "But if I could only trust in Jesus, I would have a greater comfort."

But I have wandered from the Catechism. It was not my intention, however, to make you accompany him regularly through it—nor indeed could I, if I would, since I have by no means so distinct a recollection of his observations on the middle and latter parts, as on the commencement. These being so totally unexpected, made a deep impression on my mind—but as he went on, having become more familiarized with his manner of commenting upon it, his exact expressions did not all fasten themselves so firmly on my memory. Their general purport will, it is true, never be obliterated from it; and in turning over the leaves of his Catechism, as I often do, many of them occur to

me word for word; yet, as my object in entering so much into detail, was merely to show you how this little book was employed in the hands of God to do his own work in the heart of my blessed child, and this object is I think accomplished, I will endeavour to be, if possible, less circumstantial. I say, if possible, for every recollection of this epoch in the life of my angel child is so inexpressibly interesting to me, that I fear I may again be tempted to a minuteness that must weary you.

The eight articles describing Christ in his person and offices, wherein consisted his humiliation, and wherein his exaltation, were next learned, and were evidently employed in perfecting the work of removing all dependence on self, and convincing him where alone it should be placed. But they conveyed no healing balm to the wounded spirit of my darling. As his conceptions of the Saviour became clearer, he found new cause of regret in the reflection which instantly occurred to him, though he knew not exactly how to express it, that he had dishonoured

him, by his anxiety to work out his own salvation. This idea seemed to take complete possession of his mind, and often he would say to me, in these or similar words: "Mother, it makes me sorrier than anything else, to think, that for all you kept putting me in mind about Jesus, and for all I remembered what the Bible says about his dying on the cross for sinners, I never thought about wanting him to save me, but kept on wanting to learn how to be good enough to get saved myself. Oh! mother, how wicked that was! and how sorry it must have made Jesus to see me so obstinate, and so forgetting of him. I can't help being afraid, for all I know how good he is, that he will never save me, after such a great wickedness of not caring about him, after he had been so very kind, and I knew about his kindness." You will believe, that I used every means to comfort him—but his grief was too sincere to be removed by the reasonings or consolations of his mother. God alone had power to speak peace to his agitated bosom, and in his wisdom, he saw fit, still to defer so doing.

My child had now completed his sixth year, and in the hope of cheering his spirits, which it pained me exceedingly to see so very much depressed, I proposed taking some notice of his birth-day, but he besought me not to do so. "Mother," he said, "please not to make any fuss about the day. I couldn't bear it, indeed I couldn't, for it only makes me feel worse than ever, to think that I'm six years old, and don't trust in Jesus yet, and havn't got any religion. It is such a sorrowful thought, that I can't bear to think about having any fun." Obligated to relinquish my design, it only remained for me to give as encouraging a turn as possible to our conversations. This I endeavoured to do, but his gloom still increased. Several times during the day, he alluded to the decease of a child younger than himself—talked of the necessity of being prepared for death, and more than once, bursting into tears, observed that it kept coming into his head that may be he would die before he got to trust in Jesus, and so he would never go to heaven. Nothing that I could say, had more

than a temporary effect in calming the perturbation of his mind. I found it more impossible than even on the few preceding days, to divert his thoughts from the melancholy channel in which they were constantly flowing. What could I think, when I remembered that my least word had once sufficed to soothe all his little troubles, but that the Lord had inflicted these wounds, and that he alone could heal them? Of this, I began now at times to be almost persuaded—then again doubts would arise—the child so young—the means so different from those I had supposed would be used with so tender a spirit—with a little creature whose deportment had been so uniformly amiable—who seemed so prepared to be drawn gently forward by the cords of love. But I'm again forgetting myself.

When he retired at night, he was disposed to talk a great deal. I indulged him for some time, and then returned to the family, my heart so full, that I could no longer resist my inclination to impart to my brother-in-law the situation of his little pet. But

imagine my feelings, when about fifteen minutes after I had left him, and when his uncle was listening in silent surprise to my communications, I heard him calling, "Mother! mother! mother!" in a voice of such piercing distress that to this moment I almost shudder when I recall it to mind. I ran up stairs, but never can I convey to you an idea of my sensations, when I saw the dear boy, raised on his knees in bed, his arms extended towards me—pale as a corpse—trembling violently, and with such an expression of horror on his countenance as I trust you may never behold. Greatly affected, I asked eagerly, what was the matter. He threw himself on my neck, but for some moments could not speak. At length a flood of tears relieved him, and raising his hands in the most impassioned manner, he exclaimed, "Pray for me, mother! Please to pray for me!" "I will, my dear John, I will—but you must compose yourself first. Why are you so agitated?" He looked wildly around the room, and then buried his face in my bosom. "What can be the matter, my dear-



est child? What has terrified you so?" I again demanded, now become exceedingly alarmed at his appearance and manner. "That dreadful hell, mother! I thought I was sinking into hell," he answered, shuddering and clinging to me as he spoke. "What hell, my darling? You have been dreaming, you must arouse yourself." "No! no! mother, I havn't been asleep—I was only lying still, thinking about my badness, and about the day of judgment, and about how angry God would look at me, if I didn't get a new heart, and didn't trust in Jesus, and I tried to trust in him, but I couldn't at all, and I kept on thinking this way, till it came into my head that may be I would die to-night, and then it seemed to me all at once, as if I could see hell, and as if I felt myself just sinking down into it." Again he shuddered, almost convulsively, and besought me to pray for him. But it was impossible, utterly impossible—I was too much overcome to support myself, or to articulate one word. The anguish of his looks, however, soon aroused me. I pressed him to my

heart, and tried every means to quiet his alarm, but it was long, very long before I succeeded in even a degree. The rapidity with which he found arguments against himself, was astonishing, as was also the fact, that mere babe as he was, nothing save the truth, scriptural truth, was permitted to have the least influence on his mind. In vain I began by attempting to soothe him with assurances that he was not so bad as he imagined. "Mother, don't say that," he repeatedly answered, "I know that I am worse than I think I am, for I have got too bad a nature to think all the things naughty that must seem bad to God, because of his holiness. I don't think that any but good religious people that have got to think a little like God thinks, can know about all badness."

In vain I talked of the compassion of God; he could not forget his truth and justice, and surprised me by the promptitude with which he adverted to the various passages in the Old Testament, which describe the awful judgments executed on the rebellious Israelites, adding, that he knew that "God had a

great deal of compassion, but for all that, he couldn't break his word, and forgive people that didn't obey him." In vain I dwelt on the atonement made for sin; he could not feel that he had any part in it. "But mother," was his constant answer, "I don't trust in Jesus, and he only promised to save them that trust in him."

During this conversation, of which nothing that I have said can give you even a faint idea, he wept almost without intermission. At length, perplexed and agitated excessively, I determined to talk to him no longer as a child, or as one of whom it could be doubted that the Lord was bringing him into the fold, in his own mysterious manner. I therefore assumed a ground which I had never yet taken with him. Having engaged his attention, and withdrawn his thoughts from self a little by a detail of the long process by which sinners are sometimes brought to Christ, and a statement of how frequently they were left in darkness, and constrained to endure terror and uncertainty for weeks, months, and even sometimes years, before

they were permitted to feel that they had a saving faith, I ventured to express a conviction that God was actually leading him by this way—spoke with animation of the joy this conviction afforded me—and with certainty of what the result of his present affliction must be. He shook his head and said, “Mother, you wish so, and that makes you think so.” I insisted that my belief had a much surer foundation—expatiated upon the state of his mind, his feelings and desires, and declared that such were never produced, except through divine influence. “Mother, I want to think you’re not mistaken, but I can’t,” was his mournful answer. “Can you believe the Bible, John?” “Yes, mother, because it’s what God says, and he can’t be mistaken, Oh! if the Bible only said that people that have such kind of feelings as I’ve got, were getting brought to Christ, I would be so glad! but I never saw it in the Bible.” “Because, John, when you read the passages where it is said, you did not feel as you do now, and therefore did not understand them.” This was said

faintly and without the least appearance of an expectation of comfort. I repeated various texts descriptive of the broken spirit and contrite heart, as the acceptable sacrifice to God, and many promises and encouragements to the penitent, but still his fears that he had not this broken spirit, and therefore could not claim the promises, prevailed. Seeing this, I asked—"Why, are you not sorry for your sins, John?" "Very, very sorry, mother." "More sorry than you ever were for anything?" "A great, great deal, mother—I never had such sorrow before, Oh! I feel so dreadful"—and again he wept violently. "Perhaps, my darling, you wish you had not these feelings, since they prevent your enjoying play as you used to do?" "No, indeed, mother, I don't—I don't care the least bit about that. All my sorrow is about being so bad, and because I never loved God right, and don't trust in Jesus now." I insisted that this kind of sorrow was none other than the "gift of God"—that it was the contrite heart, which he had promised "not to despise"—and in view of

which, Jesus had said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted"—and the Psalmist had declared, "That the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." He listened eagerly, and made me repeat these texts, but still expressed apprehension that he would never be able to trust in Jesus. I asked him, if besides being sorry for sin, he did not desire to become holy. "Indeed, indeed I do mother, Oh! so much!" "Then, my beloved child, instead of being alarmed, you have every reason to rejoice at the present state of your mind, for the Scriptures assure us that the natural heart loves sin, and is averse to everything holy. Now, God whose goodness alone it is, the Bible says, which leadeth us to repentance, has taken away from you these natural feelings, and has given you in their place, that sorrow for sin, and those desires after holiness, which you now experience. And why has he done this?" "To make me know how bad I am, mother, and what a great thing it is to be holy." "But why

has he given you this knowledge? not to make you miserable, for the same Bible tells us, that he delighteth not in the sufferings of his creatures, but in showing them compassion. He has done it, that he may draw you to Jesus, by making you feel your need of a Saviour; for my dear child, we never properly understand how necessary it is that we should have a Saviour, until we have learned that we are wretched, and helpless, and undone without one; and we can never love Christ truly until we feel, that if he had not borne the punishment of our sins, and if he did not continually intercede for us, we must be lost. This, God is now teaching you. Do not then be frightened, but try to wait patiently, till he enables you, as he surely will, to trust in that dear Son, whom he gave up to suffering and death, that sinners might be saved." "Oh! mother, if I could only think that Jesus would save me, I could wait patiently, but I'm so afraid that my badness will keep him from doing it." I insisted upon the unreasonableness of this fear, after the proof of his desire to save

those who would come unto him, which our blessed Redeemer had given us. "But, may be, mother, I'll never be able to come to him right." "You will, my love, for God himself will lead you. He has said, 'They that seek me early, shall find me'—and he has so loved you and pitied you, as to put it into your little heart to seek him very, very early—He will therefore keep his word—you shall find him." The dear little fellow seemed to catch at this promise, for he instantly pressed me more closely to his bosom, and after a short silence said, in a very touching manner, "that those were sweet words, that they seemed to give him more comfort than any thing yet." I exhorted him to bear them in mind, to rest upon them, and while he continued to seek the Lord, whenever he felt alarmed, to repeat them to himself, and banish all his fears, for what God had promised he would assuredly accomplish.

All this, and a great deal more that I said, took much time to express so simply, and clearly as his age required, but I had the happiness of seeing his countenance brighten as



I proceeded, and therefore added, "My beloved child, the goodness of the Lord has now led you to repentance, and he is only waiting the best time to be further gracious unto you, in the way he knows to be best for you. He has bruised and he will heal. He is drawing you to Christ—presently you will see him who is able to save the greatest sinner, and who will in no wise cast out any who come unto him. There are many sweet promises in the Bible for those in your state." "Please to tell them to me, mother," said the dear boy, "in the *very words* of the Bible—I like to hear the *very words* God says." Being much excited, I quoted scripture freely, and soon had the comfort of observing that the words of Holy Writ had greatly tranquilized his feelings. I mentioned this to him. "Oh! yes, mother," was his reply, "I feel more like hoping that God will make me trust in Jesus than I ever did before, for all I've been so frightened to-night." Then, as if fearful of deceiving himself, immediately asked, "But do you think, mother, that's because God is putting right thoughts into my

head, or only because you've been so good in staying so long to talk with me." Was not this a surprising question, in a child of six years old? I answered it with more confidence than I perhaps yet could feel, prayed with him, and then told him that as it was very late, he must now try to go to sleep. He threw his little arms round my neck, thanked me in the most affectionate manner for having talked so much to him, and then said, "Mother, when you go down stairs, I will say over these words to myself, 'they that seek me early *shall* find me,' for they seem to be such a great comfort to me, I want to keep remembering them." Thus I left him.

After relating this deeply affecting conversation to my mother and brother-in-law, I returned to the dear interesting child, and found him asleep, but his slumbers were disturbed and uneasy throughout the night, and the morning found his mind much in the same state it had been for some days; his anxiety excessive, and the hopes, with which he had fallen asleep, more faint, and more difficult to awaken. The day passed over very heavily; he

hung continually about me, conversing in the same strain, and without appearing to receive any comfort. He could not fix his thoughts on his ordinary lessons, but when allowed to take up his Catechism, became instantly deeply attentive. I was so much struck by one of his remarks on the response to the question, "What is effectual calling?" that I still distinctly remember it. The explanation, you know, is this: "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel." The meaning of some of these expressions he did not clearly comprehend, but as soon as I had made it plain to him, he said, "Mother, I thought that would be a hard question to learn, but I see it will be a very easy one, it goes on so regular telling how people get religious. I will only have to think about how that is, and I will remember it all directly." As I always loved to hear him explain his ideas, I asked him what he

meant. "Why, you see, mother, it begins with the very first thing, God's Spirit making people know about their sin and misery—then it goes on about his making them understand about Jesus, and then making them want to do right things instead of wrong ones, and then making them able to trust in Jesus, and then it says at the end 'freely offered,' to keep us from forgetting that he offered himself out of his own goodness, and not to pay people for their goodness." As the little creature thus traced the work of grace, I listened with an astonishment that I could scarcely hide, and felt my hope, that the Lord was indeed enlightening his infant mind, increased ten-fold; for, although I had undoubtedly instructed him on all those points at different times, yet the manner in which he brought together the truths he had learned, and the clear view he appeared to have of them, certainly indicated teaching from a higher source. Indeed, the quick apprehension he evinced when engaged in studying the Scriptures or Catechism, or when conversing on religious subjects, it was scarcely

possible to attribute to a rapid development of his mental powers, the more especially as in regard to other matters I could perceive no change of this kind. Ordinary lessons were as irksome to him as ever—the same effort was necessary to acquire them; still I knew not what to think. I listened and wondered, but scarcely dared believe what yet I hoped so anxiously.

As day after day continued to wear away in the same manner, my anxiety about his health became very great. It was evidently much affected by the exercises of his mind. He had become quite pale—his countenance had lost every trace of its original vivacity—he was often feverish, and too much disturbed in his sleep to derive from it the relief and refreshment he so much needed. Indeed his nights were so distressing that it became necessary to keep a light in his room and remain constantly with him, for sleep, far from affording repose to his mind, seemed only to yield him a prey to the workings of an over excited imagination. He would frequently start from his bed, awakened by some terrify-

ing dream, always on the one engrossing subject. On such occasions my distress was extreme, his manner was so wild and agitated, his incoherent expressions of grief and alarm, so inexpressibly painful, and it was so long before he could be completely aroused or brought to a sense of his situation and induced to return to bed. These dreams had presently such an effect upon his mind, that he dreaded not only going to sleep, but although he reproached himself bitterly for his weakness, shrunk from solitude and darkness, and even observed to me one day, on entering our chamber, that, "Somehow, the very sight of that room brought such dreadful thoughts into his head, that he could not help shivering all over, whenever he came into it."

You can scarcely conceive, my dear cousin, the uneasiness and perplexity of my mind at this period—fearful of interfering with the Lord's work, and yet apprehensive that my darling would sink into a nervous fever, if something were not done for his relief. Quite uncertain what course to take, I nevertheless suffered him to continue his attention

to the Scriptures and the Catechism, in a degree, and at times indulged him in conversation on religious topics, but at others exerted myself greatly, to draw off his thoughts from the channel in which they were disposed to flow perpetually. His cousin, whom he loved with the warmth of a brother, was in the country, so were his two other young companions. I, however, devoted myself almost entirely to him, and counterfeited a cheerfulness which I did not feel. I changed our chamber and usual place of sitting to one which could awaken no unpleasant associations. I walked a great deal out with him—talked as much as possible on indifferent subjects; tried to find active occupations for him; tried to interest him in his brother's garden; tried, in short, every way to win his attention to common matters; but all in vain. He did all that I desired, but every movement and observation betrayed the depressed state of his spirits. Sometimes when he heard the birds singing sweetly in the trees, he would bid me listen, and then say mournfully, "Don't they sing sweet, mother? It seems

to me as if they are praising God. Every thing praises God, but me." More than once, when I pointed out the beauty of some favourite flowers, he observed, "Mother, it don't make me feel happy to look at flowers now, like it used to do. When I see them look so elegant, it makes me think how good God is to make every thing so nice for people, and that makes me feel such a sorrow about my badness to him."

One day when we were walking in the garden, he stopped, and looking pensively at some shrubs which had grown rapidly, said, "Mother, how fast these little bushes do grow the way God wants them to grow; but *I* keep just the same, for all he has done such a great deal more to make me change than he does for them." I now often walked with him beyond our enclosure. On one occasion we passed a graveyard. He asked permission to clamber up on the gate and look in. After gazing at the graves for some time in silence, he turned towards me, and said in a tone of deep sadness, that even now seems to vibrate upon my ear, "Oh!



mother, what a dreadful thought it is, that may be a great many of the people that have got these grand tombstones over them, never loved God at all, and so, after all their grandness in this world, and their great burings, their poor souls are in misery for ever and ever." Thus almost every object he beheld, seemed to inspire melancholy reflections, unnatural to his age and lively disposition, and therefore exceedingly affecting. One or two more instances I will give you, as his own little remarks will best acquaint you with the state of his mind. During one of our walks, I called his attention to some beautiful white pigeons. He expressed admiration for a moment, and then added, "They look so innocent and happy, mother, they put me in mind of good, religious people, that Jesus Christ has taken away all sin from." Another day, after he had been reading some hymns, and talking about them for a while, I took him into the yard, and in order to change the current of his thoughts pointed to a beautiful view of the western sky. A shower had fallen in the early part

of the afternoon; it was now a sweet, still evening—the sun just sinking behind the trees—and all nature looked refreshed. He gazed in evident admiration at first, but soon a deep shade of melancholy crossed his face. “Is it not a charming evening, John?” I said. “Do not the mellow rays gleam beautifully across the green meadow?” “Yes, mother,” he replied in a languid, absent tone, and was again silent. “You do not appear, my darling, to enjoy this lovely prospect as you usually do.” “Why, mother, I did at first. It seemed to me as if God was telling me in his own sweet way, by this beautiful sunset, how very glorious and good he is, and I felt as if I loved him for it.” “And what makes you feel more sad now?” “Why, mother, I happened to see the sun shining so bright on the windows of those houses up the road, and it came into my head how many naughty, quarreling, swearing people live in them, that never think about God, for all his telling them so sweetly about himself, and that thought is so sorrowful, it takes away all my pleasure.” If I could

paint for you the touching expression of my beloved child's open, innocent countenance, as he thus endeavoured to explain feelings evidently more elevated than he had language to describe, you would not wonder that his words are imprinted on my memory, or that my eyes fill with tears as I recall the vivid record it retains of that evening scene. But I must not speak of myself.

Finding that all my efforts to amuse the dear child failed, and knowing his delight in charitable acts, I tried the effect of taking him to visit some sick poor in the neighbourhood, but soon perceived that such visits only served to feed his melancholy. If the individuals were in a happy frame of mind, and expressed pious submission and confidence, he wept as he listened to them, and when we were alone, contrasted himself with them, and lamented the difference with the keenest self-reproaches. If their state was different, his compassion and anxiety for them were so lively, and the idea of the dreadful doom which must await them should they remain unchanged, so afflicted his ten-

der heart, and so haunted his imagination, that I was compelled to refrain from carrying him into scenes productive of such excitement.

In this manner the ten days succeeding the dear little fellow's violent agitation on his birth-night passed. At times it was impossible to inspire him with hope. At other times, the promises on which I continually dwelt, were permitted to afford him some faint encouragement; his nights were always distressing, and he began to look quite ill. From this period there was, however, a perceptible change. He did not so continually wrest against himself the condemnatory passages of Scripture, and appeared much more sensible to its general consolatory tendency. When I urged the faithfulness of God, and repeated his assurance that those who sought him *early* should find him, he often seemed almost ready to repose on the precious promise with confidence. But still the glimmerings of light were quickly chased away by heavy clouds. His convictions of his own imperfections, and of having merited the dis-

pleasure of God, were too deep not to produce a terror of judgment, which could only be allayed by a clearer view of the Author and work of redemption than he had yet obtained. I was, nevertheless, even now somewhat encouraged, and a few days after filled with thanksgiving.

He was repeating to me all that he had learned of the Catechism. When he came to the definition of Justification, that it "is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone," he said, "Mother, I don't know how it is, you have explained that question so much to me, that I understand *every word* of it, and for all, I don't somehow seem to understand it. Please to talk to me more about it." I did so; and afterwards, as he repeated the answers to "What is adoption?" and "What is sanctification?" I explained them also. He came next to "The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification, are assu-

rance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace and perseverance therein to the end." After going through this article and talking it over a little, he paused a moment, and then, in a tone which bespoke at once the utmost humility and an unwonted degree of hope, observed, that if God ever pleased, as I said he would, to give him trust in Jesus, then he would have all these things—adding, in his sweet, energetic manner, "What great things they must be! Oh! mother, if I could only be sure of having them, what a pleasure I would feel!" I endeavoured to convince him, that the Lord would assuredly, in due time, give him all the graces necessary to his happiness in this world, and in the life to come, if he continued earnestly to seek them. He said a good deal in reply, the amount of which was, that if he could get to be certain of that, he would be very happy for all his badness, and that sometimes he did feel more like thinking that may be it would be so, than he used to do.

When he had finished reciting, I sent him into the yard. In about an hour he returned,

and placing some flowers in my bosom, told me, with one of his long banished smiles, that "now he could gather flowers for me again, he felt so good." Surprised at the renewal of this little attention and at his cheerful countenance, I enquired what made him feel so good. He answered, that he did not know, but somehow he had got to understand better about Jesus being able to save people, and about his wanting to save them, and so he did not feel frightened as he did before. Struck with this reply, I interrogated him closely, and found that on leaving me, he had gone into the summer-house, and, as he expressed himself, "got saying over what the Catechism says about Jesus, and thinking what great pain he had had for sinners, and that made him so sorry that he could not help crying a little, and then somehow he remembered about how glad it must make Jesus to see people trust in him after his dying for them, and presently he got saying over Effectual Calling, and when he came to where it says, 'God's Spirit doth persuade and enable us

to embrace Christ,' it came into his head to try to make a little kind of prayer to God, to enable him; and so he did, and when he prayed all that he could think how to say, it seemed to him as if God did mean to make him able, for he hardly felt afraid at all that He never would, and he almost seemed to understand how he would get justification, adoption, and sanctification if he trusted in Jesus, and he felt like trusting in him." What I have here thrown together, is the sum of his answers to my many anxious questions. It was impossible to obtain a clearer statement from such a child; yet even this, confirmed by his altered countenance and manner, afforded me unspeakable comfort. He added, that "he was going to come and tell me directly he felt good, because he thought I would be so glad, but he knew I wanted him to walk in the garden, so he went twice round all the walks, and the flowers made him so happy, just like they used to do, that he couldn't help bringing me a nice nosegay." Imagine my feelings, as I pressed to my heart,



my once more happy darling, and doubt not that I kneeled down with him to return thanks for present relief, and to supplicate for a further display of divine mercy.

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LETTER VII.

WHAT I have stated may perhaps lead you to suppose that my beloved child's trial was now at an end—that he had peace in believing. But not so. The view he had obtained of his Saviour was indeed sufficiently clear to dispel the deep gloom, sometimes nearly bordering on despair, which had of late involved his mind, and the first removal of this cloud afforded such relief to his feelings that for a season he appeared perfectly happy. But a day or two saw him again a prey to anxiety. True, the nature of his anxiety was much changed; it was by no means so intense, nor had it any longer a reference to his past life, to which he only reverted when expressing his gratitude to God, for “not letting him die

before he knew about trusting in Jesus to take away his sins." His grief arose entirely from his conviction of present ignorance and sin, and from the persuasion that he had not yet such "true trust," to use his own expression, as he ought to have. He looked unto Jesus with hope, but could not yet rest upon him. Although his every word betrayed reverence for, and gratitude to his heavenly Father, he was incessantly reproaching himself with want of faith, love, and knowledge, and with the errors and short comings which he rather imagined than discovered in his conduct and feelings; constantly expressing the most earnest desire that God would take away his bad heart and give him a good one; in short, though no longer agitated and distressed as he had been, yet always engrossed by the one subject, and generally much depressed. I now, however, began to attribute this morbid state of mind to physical causes, and concluded that his recent severe exercises having induced considerable derangement of the system, this indisposition was now reacting upon his spirits. As the little creature

continued feverish and harassed by terrifying dreams, I consulted a physician. He expressed much surprise when informed of some of the particulars I have given you in such detail, and seemed hardly to know what to think; but considering the child's situation a delicate one, and fearing, as I had done, a nervous fever, he desired me to take the Bible and Catechism from him for a time; to indulge him as little as possible in serious conversation, and to try the effect of company and change of scene, by taking him to town and spending a week or two with some friend who had a young family.

As the physician was a truly pious man, I could not hesitate to follow his advice, though perplexed with many unbelieving fears of the possible consequences of such a step. Aware, however, that if the work was of God, he would complete it, I candidly told my dear sensible boy what the doctor apprehended, and what he advised. At first the idea of suspending attention to religious subjects distressed him greatly, and he almost turned me from my purpose by begging me, with

tears in his eyes, "Please not to ask him to do such a sin, just as God was being so good, as to make him know about his badness, and trust a little in Jesus." I nevertheless persevered, and after representing the measure to him as a point of duty, under existing circumstances, and describing the spiritual benefit he might hope from a recovery of his health and relief from frightful dreams, and after assuring him that the Lord, who saw his unwillingness, so far from being displeased, would love him better for endeavouring to gratify his mother's wishes, he acquiesced with his usual docility.

Our first visit was to his aunt's; but this change of place produced little effect. There were no young people in the house, and although his affectionate nature was touched by the attentions of his aunt, and he tried to appear easy, and to avoid seeking to talk with me in private, yet he continued drooping and dejected. His thoughts were evidently engaged on the subject nearest his heart, and his nights were not better. I then carried him for eight or ten days to

the house of an old friend. She was herself very cheerful, and had a fine family of children, who, being informed that John's health was delicate, and that the doctor wished him amused, exerted themselves greatly to entertain him. This change had soon a most salutary influence, for his unwillingness to expose his feelings to any one except me, his gratitude for the uncommon kindness of his playmates, and consequent desire to gratify them by meeting their wishes, together with the novelty of the scene, and the gaiety of all around him, rendered it impossible for one of his constitutionally lively disposition, to indulge much in melancholy thought. As, however, he still watched for opportunities to renew with me our former conversations, my friend advised me to keep pretty much out of his sight, and to leave him to the children. I did so, and before a week had expired, was often gladdened by the sound of his sweet voice, raised in its natural tone of glee and animation. His mind not being intensely engaged during the day, the feverish symptoms disappeared, and his nights became

much more tranquil. He still frequently started from his bed, repeating incoherently something from the Scriptures or the Catechism, or calling out "Glorify God! Glorify God!" but these involuntary exclamations no longer betrayed the horror of divine wrath which had heretofore rendered them so shocking; and although he would still cling to me, and talk wildly and distressingly for some minutes before he could be completely aroused, yet even in this respect a perceptible and rapid improvement was discernible. His colour too began to return, and his strength and appetite to increase.

That my anxious heart rejoiced as I noticed all these changes you may suppose; but I had higher cause for thankfulness. My apprehensions lest the means used to restore health and vivacity should result in retarding the work of grace, or in quenching the Spirit, were removed. As the slow fever which had been hanging about him passed away, so did many of his unreasonable doubts and fears, but not his lowly, self-abasing views—not his growing faith and holy de-

sires. Quite the reverse. Whenever he found me alone for a moment, he would seize with avidity the opportunity to pour out his little heart to me, and I perceived with inexpressible joy that all was as I could wish:—the same deep humility, the same desire to make progress, but a more abiding hope. Again and again he thanked me in his own sweet, endearing manner, for bringing him to town, saying that he saw himself that I said true about its being his fever and frightful dreams, that kept such dreadful thoughts in his head, that he could not remember right about God's goodness, for now he was better, and didn't dream so about hell. God and Jesus Christ seemed so good, that he hardly felt at all afraid that they wouldn't take away his sins, and make him religious. He often enquired when I supposed he would be well enough to begin to learn about God, and about being good, begging me, whenever I thought he was, to take him home, for he wanted to go on learning. He told me that when he first tried to play with the children, he could hardly bear to do

it, he felt so sorrowful, but that now, for all he would a great deal rather talk to me about God, he liked to play very much when he couldn't be with me, for it seemed to him as if God wanted him to trust in Jesus and be happy, or he wouldn't have put it into the doctor's head to send him there. Sometimes he would say, "Mother, when I feel so much better, I think what happiness I have now, it makes me love God so! O! I must try harder than ever to be what he wants me to be!"

Not to be too prolix—after a lapse of ten or twelve days, I carried my precious child home quite an altered being. His cheeks had recovered much of their bloom, and his eyes of their sprightliness. He ran eagerly to visit his favourite spots, and to weed his brother's long neglected garden. All his old avocations again interested him; again he began to long for his dear brother's society, and to lay schemes of enjoyment with him. But what most gratified me was the air of pleasure with which he brought his Bible to me the morning after



our return, and begged me to sit down with him and have some nice reading in that good book he had not seen so long. He read, and talked of what he read, for some time, with feelings so different from those he had evinced before our little excursion, that I could scarcely conceal my delight. He resumed his Catechism, too, and studied it with all his former earnestness; but everything he now read or learned, seemed only, by increasing his knowledge, to strengthen his faith. He judged himself as severely as ever, but he had obtained a hope that the Lord would teach him and lead him onward, which never after deserted him, and which enabled him to look humbly to his Redeemer, when most cast down by a sense of sin. And, my dear cousin, he was often greatly cast down, for acute as was his sensibility on all subjects, it was peculiarly so with regard to his own faults, if faults his occasional inadvertencies and the temporary diminution of fervency in spirit to which all are liable, might be called. In general, however, his mind was serene and comfortable;

often full of gratitude and joy. He did not feel then, nor indeed did he ever, until his last illness, assured of having obtained pardon and acceptance in the Saviour; but he had faith in the promises, and while he looked upon himself as exceedingly sinful, looked also with strong hope to their being sometime fulfilled on his behalf, through the mercy of God. He felt that he hungered and thirsted for righteousness, and hoped therefore to be one day filled, though his deep humility placed that day at a great distance; and he only ventured to anticipate it, because God had promised to open to those who knocked, to be found of those who sought him. You are not to suppose that he ever stated these things as I have done—that was not to be expected—but in his own artless manner he stated them much more sweetly and satisfactorily. Oh! could you have seen his bright countenance as he sometimes called my attention to one of the promises, and heard the tone in which he said, “Mother, what a great promise that is! how happy it does make me to read God’s promises, now

that he has made me want to try to get religious! Oh! what a goodness in him to make me want to try, and then to promise to help me for wanting." His expressions were always thus infantine in style, for he knew nothing of the technicalities of religion, if I may so speak, as I had constantly avoided using them in conversing with him, but they were on that very account the more touching. Had I not already trespassed too far on your patience, I would endeavour to describe his manner of commenting on what he read, and of drawing lessons of humility and encouragement even from portions of Scripture least calculated to strike the attention of a child. But I must not indulge myself. Allow me just to say what I confidently believe, he was spiritually enlightened, and, therefore, thought not as a child, felt not as a child, though he spoke as one.

Never saw I human being peruse the Scriptures with more deep interest, or a more single eye to discovering the will of God to the end that he might obey it. Of course there were many portions of the holy volume

which I did not deem it advisable that he should yet study, but all that I permitted him to read was greatly blessed to him. He became daily more clear in his ideas of the depravity of human nature—more sensible of the necessity of an atonement—and more convinced of the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer. His admiration and love of God too, became daily more ardent. He recognized his hand in all his works; even the most trivial blessing or comfort he enjoyed, he referred to his kindness, and often covered me with confusion by his innocent expressions of gratitude to his heavenly Father, for circumstances which had excited no pious emotion in my colder bosom. To praise the Lord seemed indeed one of his chief pleasures. He never wearied of saying, "How good God is! How I ought to love him!" Prayer was also his delight. When we had been reading or talking seriously for some time, he would often ask me to kneel down and make a little prayer that he could understand. On such occasions he would fervently repeat my words, and when

we arose, not unfrequently embrace me tenderly, saying, "that was a sweet prayer, mother. It made me feel as if I was speaking to God—quite close to him. Oh! I feel so good! Thank you, dear mother."

And here let me remark that he was very sensible that his heart was not always equally engaged in acts of devotion, though he knew not how to express this knowledge in the usual terms. When he had enjoyed communion with the Father of spirits, he would say, "Mother, I feel so good, I've had such a good prayer." When he had not experienced such enlargement, his language was, "Mother, I feel so sorrowful, I've had such a bad prayer." And these seasons of languor in devotion always affected his spirits, and were regarded by his tender conscience as sin. "If I loved God right," he would say, "I would always be thinking about him, and be happy when I'm praying; for I'm always happy and thinking about you, when I'm telling you about things, and thanking you for your goodness to me."

The manner in which he heard a sermon

was also matter of self-examination with this dear boy, and he would often reproach himself greatly for not having enjoyed a discourse, when I could perceive no other reason for it than that the subject was too difficult for him. He was certainly always attentive and anxious to be instructed, and frequently exceedingly affected.

I believe I have not told you of the comfort I derived from the impression made on him in church, the Sabbath immediately succeeding the day on which he had those exercises in the summer-house, which I have mentioned. The account is here a little out of place, but you will excuse my inserting it.

We had been detained from the sanctuary two Sabbaths. He expressed a great desire to go on this morning, and repeatedly said as we walked thither, that he hoped God would let Mr. N—— say something that would help to make him trust more. Happily the sermon was a very plain and encouraging one—much of it addressed to such as were inclined to seek the Lord, but were oppressed with doubts and fears, and part of

it directed expressly to the young. John's attention was riveted. He scarcely withdrew his eyes a moment from the minister, never except when he sought to hide the tears with which they were suffused. After some time Mr. N—— quoted very emphatically the text to which the dear boy had first clung, "They that seek me early shall find me." It seemed to penetrate his heart. He started involuntarily, and turning suddenly round, gave me a look so full of delight and hope as quite overcame me. During our whole long walk home, he appeared blind to every object around him, so completely was he engrossed by what he had heard. He talked incessantly of the "good sermon," and more than once exclaimed, "Mother, I can't help thinking about that text. It was a great comfort to me when you said it over that dreadful night, but when I heard Mr. N—— say it so sweet and strong in God's own church, it seemed surer than ever, and made me so glad that I could hardly keep from telling you. It almost seemed as if God was

saying it to me himself." Imagine my feelings—but you cannot, unless you could also imagine the speaking, innocent, dove-like countenance of my child, which is ever before me, as I repeat his artless little speeches. To return from this digression.

My dear John had recovered his wonted zeal for play, but it was so tempered by desire to grow in spiritual knowledge, and by delight in serious conversation with me, that I found it necessary rather to devise amusement for him, than to encourage his anxiety for religious instruction, as I still dreaded the effect of his overstraining his tender mind. No traces of his late nervous derangement were, however, discoverable, except a repugnance to being in the dark, and a frequent recurrence of disturbed nights. I was well aware that the removal of these evils must be the work of time; but the sweet child, who of course could form but a faint conception of the operation of physical causes upon the mind, blamed himself exceedingly for the gloomy ideas and irresistible sensations of terror which for a long time agitated



him, whenever he found himself alone at night. He often wept over this infirmity, and throwing his arms around my neck, in an agony of grief, would say, "Oh! mother, what a poor trust in God mine must be, when it can't make me happy in the dark! What shall I do to get a better kind of trust?" In his approaches to the throne of grace, he seldom omitted entreating that he might be made able not to be afraid at night. He was also willing to make such efforts as he had found successful at the period of his childish fears, to habituate himself to being alone, and without a light. But this I would not permit, knowing the cause of his present feelings, and therefore being desirous to preserve him from any excitement calculated to affect his nerves. I simply advised him to wait patiently, assuring him that all these uncomfortable sensations were easily accounted for, and would presently pass away. He could never, however, look on them, as otherwise than sinful, and rejoiced beyond measure, when at length they gradually vanished. "Oh! how good it does make me

feel, mother," he would say, "to be able to lie and think about religion after the candle is put out, and feel just as happy and hoping as I do in the day-time. What a great goodness it was in God, to take away my naughty fears."

As I have described at length the blessed epoch in my sainted child's life, we will now pass on more rapidly. Weeks rolled along—October came, and my beloved brother was called from a life of trial, to one of everlasting glory. I will not speak of my feelings on the occasion. John's were beyond anything you perhaps ever witnessed in a child of six years old. He was sent for two weeks to stay with his aunt, who cannot, even now, speak of the sensibility he evinced without emotion. It was not displayed as is common at his age, in a transient burst of sorrow, although his aunt was quite alarmed at the excess of his agitation for hours after she had informed him of his uncle's removal. His grief was so profound, that she found it impossible, during the whole of his stay with her, to divert his thoughts a moment from it.

In obedience to her wishes, he would go into her garden and try to be amused, but would presently burst into tears and declare that, "he kept thinking so about uncle John, that he had no pleasure in anything."

As soon as I had somewhat recovered from the violence of the shock caused by the death of my brother, John was allowed to come home, and never can I forget his unremitting attentions, and the consolation which his sympathy and pity afforded me. I was still confined to bed—the sweet lamb would sit beside me for hours, sometimes reading aloud what he called "good parts of the Bible"—sometimes telling me how religious his uncle was, and whilst he wept himself, begging me not to be sorry about God's taking him away, because he only did it to make him so very happy. More than once he remarked that God had made uncle's sorrow do him a great deal of good, in turning him from the world to religion, adding, "May be, mother, God means to make our sorrow do us good too, in making us love

him more, and then what a great thing it will be!"

The first day that I was able to sit up and converse without inconvenience, the dear boy looked delighted, and as soon as we were alone, said, "Now, mother, won't you please to talk to me about God and Jesus Christ? It is so long since I've had any good talk; for all I kept wishing and wishing that aunt would talk about religion, I was ashamed to ask her." The fact was, his aunt had purposely avoided the subject, from a persuasion that he dwelt too much on serious thoughts. Truly thankful that his two weeks' absence from me had not effaced his pious inclinations, I indulged him in a long conversation, and found that although he considered himself to have lost a great deal of time, he had advanced, rather than retrograded. His knowledge of his uncle's dying confidence in the Redeemer, whilst it had deepened his humility, had also manifestly increased his ardent longings after a faith that should take away all fear, and confirmed his desire to press forward.

I have said that my child possessed an instinctive refinement of feeling. I will give you an instance of this which affected me very much. Soon after I became able again to move through the house, I one day, on passing a room, in which I had appropriated a closet to his use, heard him sobbing, and going in, found him weeping over a number of articles that his uncle had given him at different times. He told me as his sobs would permit him to speak, that he "was collecting them to put by—that he never meant to play with them again—he wanted to keep them, just as they were, for uncle's sake"—and then bursting into a fresh flood of tears, said, "Mother, I hope the mice won't eat this kite, for this and the bow and arrow seem dearer to me than all the rest, because he made them for me with his own hands." He put them all away, and on no occasion used even the knife, though an article he was often without, and of which boys feel the want very much. I reminded him of it after the lapse of eighteen months, when he was one day regretting the loss of another, but

he shook his head mournfully, and replied, that "he could not use that knife—he loved to keep it to look at sometimes, and remember about uncle's kindness." Dear child! he needed no mementos to preserve in his grateful bosom the remembrance of kindnesses. During the three remaining years of his life, the recollection of this dear uncle, and of his many attentions to him, remained nearly as vivid as in the first months after his removal, and often as he spoke of him, he rarely did so without being much moved. Even on his death bed when he was one day talking with me on the joys of heaven, and I observed that there was also another pleasure which he would perhaps be permitted to enjoy, that of meeting his dear uncle, he was quite overcome with the idea, the tears sprung into his eyes, and he could not speak for some minutes.

But it was by his attentions to my brother's feelings during the season of deep affliction for the loss of his wife, that his delicacy of character, as well as the disinterested nature of his affection, was most strongly marked.

He was then only five years old, yet seemed to know almost instinctively the state of his uncle's feelings, and to hold them sacred. With me, he talked a great deal about "poor uncle," and wept for him—but in his presence was silent, and only betrayed his sympathy by anxious looks and abstaining from play. Often when he went into the garden to race about, and found his uncle there, he would return to me, saying, "he expected uncle would rather be alone." If he came bounding into the parlour, full of life and fun, the sight of my brother there instantly banished his mirth. "I guess, mother," he would sometimes say, "it must make poor uncle feel worse to see people laughing when he is so sorrowful, so I wish I could never forget about his sorrow, and then I would never laugh till he gets happy again."

When my brother gradually became more reconciled to his severe bereavement, John rejoiced greatly, and busied himself in a thousand little schemes to attract his attention to what his innocent heart thought would amuse him; but he observed every

change of countenance, and when he imagined his uncle was unusually depressed, silently relinquished his efforts, telling me that "Poor uncle couldn't take notice of things to-day, so he wouldn't trouble him." After a time, my dear brother's natural disposition to promote the happiness of others, induced him to make exertions to amuse the children. Every exertion was noticed by John, and reported to me, with the most grateful comments on his kindness. One evening he exhibited some philosophical experiments of an amusing nature. John was highly entertained at first, but remarking that his uncle's countenance became presently deeply overcast with melancholy, the little darling whispered to me an entreaty that I would "tell him to stop now, for I see he can hardly bear to go on—only he is so good, he doesn't like to stop, because he is giving us so much pleasure." But how far have I gone back in my narrative! You must bear with me. I find it impossible to observe system—every circumstance that I relate, recalls so many others of a different date. I



intend, however, to say little more of my child's seventh year.

You know how ill I was the winter after my brother's decease. This illness confined me for seven weeks at the house of my sister-in-law—my almost more than sister. My children were separated from me during this period, and I had many fears lest on my recovery I should find John grown lukewarm in his religious feelings. But not so. I had scarcely reached home when I was gladdened by his expressions of delight that our conversations and his instructions would now be renewed, and his declaration that he had often wanted to talk about God so much that he didn't know what to do, and he was glad I had got well enough to let him, it was so sweet to talk about Jesus, and hear me make easy prayers. I found him as lowly in spirit, but less harassed by doubts; as eager to read the Bible with me; as much disposed to discover the glory of God in everything, and, if possible, more fond of my society. He retained his love of private conversations on religious topics—his quickness in detect-

ing his trifling errors—his candour in confessing them—his unfeigned and poignant contrition for them. And here let me observe, that the faults with which he bitterly reproached himself, were chiefly such as only a child spiritually enlightened, and anxious to grow in conformity to the divine will, would have deemed faults. From the common failings of childhood, I can truly say, he was exempt. His whole deportment evinced an integrity and purity of mind, and a correctness and amiability of feeling, you have probably never seen equalled at so tender an age.

He was again the ruddy picture of health, and when playing with his brother, his cousin, or other children, the same energetic, joyous creature he had once been, and generally leaned with an increased confidence on the merits of Christ and the mercy of God, which made our private hours delightful. He had, nevertheless, his seasons of deep humiliation, when all the encouragement I could offer was necessary to sustain his hopes, so strong was his sense of unworthiness. The Bible being his only rule of

faith and conduct, by its requisitions he examined himself in his own simple way, and every short-coming was cause of grief, and not seldom of alarm. Indulgent and charitable for the failings of others, he had no toleration for the smallest error or omission of duty in himself. His supreme desire was to please God; and the standard which the Spirit and the gospel had erected in his mind, was so high, that the conviction how far he fell below it, had a constant tendency to oppress him with fears lest at length the Lord should be provoked to cease from waiting to be gracious unto him. Often when unbosoming his little heart to me, he has exclaimed, "Oh! mother, what a great badness mine must be! How dreadful it must look to God, after my having so much teaching, and after all his goodness in making me know about the wickedness of sin, and about his hating it so. I'm afraid he will give up helping me to be good at last, and then what will I do?" At such times I found the endeavour to fix his eyes on the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,"

the only efficient means of stilling the tumult in his mind; but he often said in reply, "Yes, mother, I know all that is true, and I know that Jesus wants to save me, but that only makes me think it the more wrong to keep on being naughty." At other times he would say, "But I'm afraid, mother, I havn't got the least bit of the right kind of trust in Jesus, or I would never have these sorrowful feelings." Thus varied was his experience. Ordinarily he rejoiced in an humble hope, but sometimes the weakness of his faith opened the door to distress and apprehension. He never, however, abated his efforts to advance, and he did advance most rapidly.

I have said that he was the most easily guided of children. I will give you another proof. He considered religion as so all-important that he was continually enquiring anxiously of me, whether I thought such a one, or such a one of our acquaintance, religious. He never heard of a marriage or death that he was not eager to know whether the individuals were pious, or of the conduct of persons on any occasion, without seeking to

ascertain if it were right or not. True, all this was done in the best and most Christian spirit. It rejoiced his little heart to obtain a favourable answer to his queries, and grieved him to receive one of a contrary character. But I was fearful lest this habit might ultimately create an unamiable propensity, and therefore explained to him the difficulty of any, except God, knowing the heart of man; told him the danger I apprehended to himself from an indulgence in such unprofitable inquiries; reminded him of the injunction to judge not, that we be not judged; and the declaration, that the measure we mete unto others, shall be meted unto us; assured him that it was infinitely more pleasing to the Almighty to see his creatures examining themselves, and trying to amend their own hearts and lives, than indulging curiosity with regard to others; and in confirmation of this, showed him our Saviour's reply to Peter's question concerning the fate of John—"What is that to thee? follow thou me." He was instantly convinced—promised to try to break himself of

asking about people, and begged me to put him in mind when he forgot, "because he was so forgetting that he was afraid he wouldn't always remember." I consented, and when ever, after this, he was too inquisitive, held up my finger, and repeated emphatically, "What is that to thee? Follow *thou* me." The little dear would instantly blush, but with a sweet smile say, "Thank you, mother," and desist from further enquiry. In a short time the habit was completely eradicated. Such were the only admonitions he ever required after his sixth year, and for such he was touchingly grateful. Often he would lay his little head on my bosom, and say, with unaffected emotion, "What would I do without you, mother? You are so good to me! You are always finding out my faults, and helping me to cure them. If it wasn't for you, I'd have a great many more bad ways, I'm sure." Can you wonder that my heart clung to this child?

But we will go forward some months. He still, at times, started from his sleep, but the dreams which occasioned this, were not of

the terrifying description they had been, and solitude and darkness no longer produced gloom. The little fellow attributed this to an increase of trust, his common term for faith, and was exceedingly grateful for it. Observing him slip silently up stairs one night, without a candle, I followed in about half an hour, and found him lying awake. He raised his head and demanded eagerly, if I was not very glad that God had taken away all his fears, adding, that "he was thinking all that day, that he would show God his trust, so he came to bed in the dark, and he wasn't afraid at all, and had no bad thoughts, and he was so glad I had come up, that he could tell me, and make me happy too."

Willing to encourage these feelings, on his asking permission the following afternoon to visit his cousin, I replied, "Oh! yes, you may go, and stay till nine o'clock if you choose—you know you are not afraid in the dark now." I had, nevertheless, no idea the child would do so, and when he did not return before night, I supposed that his

cousin, who was older, was coming with him. But he really walked alone, at the hour I mentioned, at least a mile, half of which lay beyond the city. You have no idea of the delight which this little achievement afforded him, if *little* it may be called, for a child not yet seven years old, and to whom night had recently been accompanied with such terrors. His joy arose not from vanity in what he had performed, but from heartfelt gratitude at having been enabled to accomplish it without a sensation of timidity. His brother being absent, John went frequently to visit his cousin, and from this time purposely returned after dark, and always with renewed satisfaction. "Mother," he sometimes said, "it seems to me as if the thought about God's goodness in taking away those dreadful fears, made it give me such a pleasure to walk at night, that I love to do it dearly."

About this time a friend presented him with a collection of simple hymns, designed for social worship in families or prayer-meetings. You can scarcely imagine the delight this book afforded him, or the unsatiated



avidity with which he read it over and over. Never had the most interesting story-book such attractions for him. For some weeks, whenever he was not engaged at his lessons, or in some active amusement, it was almost continually in his hand, and through life was a treasure to which he loved frequently to resort. It now beguiled his attention from play, and on his death-bed from his sufferings. For a long time after he received it, he would follow me from room to room, begging me just please to listen, first to one, and then to another hymn which he considered particularly sweet. I have found him standing on the staircase, riveted there by something which had caught his eye in this beloved book. Before breakfast I have looked from my window and seen him sitting under a tree, reading it. Just as he was going to bed, he has begged me to let him stop and read me a *beautiful* hymn he had put a mark in to show me. When sent to play in the garden, this book was his companion, and I have often found him unconsciously reading aloud, in a tone of the deep-

est feeling, and seen his tears falling on the page, when he was not aware that any one was near him. Were not these genuine emotions? and must not the aspirations of praise have been in unison with his own feelings, to have been so enjoyed?

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LETTER VIII.

HIS seventh birthday arrived. He was in fine spirits, and spent it in wild merriment with some young companions; but all the joyous excitement of the day did not prevent his contrasting it with the last sad anniversary. Several times, when I went out to see how he was amusing himself, he drew me aside to whisper how very good it was in God to let him have such a different day from last year, and to say that his great kindness in that kept coming into his head, and making him feel such a happiness, that he could hardly keep from coming in to talk to me, only the boys wouldn't like it. When alone with me at night, he resumed the sub-

ject. His heart seemed overflowing with love and gratitude. Among many other things, he observed that last birthday had been a dreadful one, but that now he was glad that God had given him such great sorrow then, for it had made him want to turn to Jesus, which may be he would never have wanted to do without, and that would have been the dreadfulest thing in the world. He then commented sweetly on the goodness of the Lord in having relieved his distress, and enabled him to trust a *little*, and to feel so happy in hoping that he would help him to get religious, and to have true trust, before he let him die. As he was kneeling down to prayer he said, "Somehow, mother, when I think about last birthday and this, I seem to want to thank God, better than I know how; please to tell me good words to thank him in."

If this conclusion to a day of unusual gaiety affects you, in the slightest degree, as it did me, you will not wonder that I added a note of it to the many I occasionally made of his sweet expressions, not from apprehen-

sion that I should lose my lovely child, but because I felt they had an humbling and quickening influence upon me, and dreaded lest time should obliterate them from my mind.

Nothing that will perhaps particularly interest you occurred this year. He was again full of fun and play, and yet grew continually in grace. Before the Saviour had revealed himself unto him, his sufferings were acute; but now he was happier than he had been in his thoughtless days of infancy. Gratitude to the Father of mercies seemed to enhance every ordinary gratification, and the interest which he felt in religion to afford him an inexhaustible source of pleasure. "How good it was in God, mother," he would sometimes say, "to make me want to get religious! It keeps me from ever feeling tired now, as I used to do sometimes, because, you see, when I've had play enough, I can always come and talk to you about it, and then I'm so happy." At times, when his eye fell upon the Bible, he would say, "That sweet book, mother! It makes me

feel good just to look at it!" Rainy days were no longer a grievance to him; he often declared them to be his happiest, because he had so much good talk with me. Every beautiful view of nature, every comfort he enjoyed, brought to his feeling heart the recollection of the Dispenser of blessings, and attuned it to praise. Even little accidents or disappointments were, after the first moments, subjects of thankfulness. He knew, he would say, that God let them happen, because he knew they were good for him. I have told you of his early wish, that it were right for him to do everything he wished. Now, on the contrary, he never wished to do anything, the propriety of which was even doubtful. His whole desire appeared to be, to ascertain what it would be best for him to do on all such occasions. So strong was this desire, and so great his distrust of his own judgment, that he was continually running to me for advice; sometimes on such trivial points that I could scarcely refrain from smiling. He would enter into no unaccustomed game or amuse-

ment proposed by his playmates, without first coming to me for counsel. One day, when I laughed at his scruples where they appeared totally unnecessary, he silenced me by saying, "Why, mother, you've made me see so often that things that I thought no harm, were not right to do, because they would give me bad fashions, that I don't like to do anything till I ask you first; you've got so much sense about getting habits." His playful disposition still occasionally inclined him to be idle or inattentive during lesson hours. Whenever this had been the case, he was grieved, as having been very naughty; for observe, this conscientious child considered attention to his studies as duty to God, who, he said, must want him to learn, or he wouldn't put it into my head to teach him.

About this time he perceived himself the truth of what I had frequently told him, that an unusual degree of recreation had the effect of increasing his giddiness and disrelish for lessons. This he lamented with many self-reproaches, but was not satisfied with lament-

ing. Often when his brother and cousin had a holiday, and were playing merrily in the yard with him, he has come to me and asked, if I did not think he had better get some of his lessons, for fear playing all day would make him lazy to-morrow. Sometimes when I observed, "Why, brother won't study to-day," he answered with a look of deep humility, "Yes, but mother, brother isn't bad like me; he never gets lazy." At other times, when I approved of a little work, he would get his book cheerfully, only saying, "When *you* think it won't do me any harm to stop, mother, please to tell me."

The attention it was now proper that he should give to writing, geography, arithmetic, and grammar, necessarily prevented his devoting so much time to the Scriptures as he had done during the preceding twelve months. He was, however, even more fond of his Bible as he understood it better, and whenever he could, would read chapter after chapter with unwearied interest, comparing passages and making remarks which often surprised me, accustomed as I was to his manner of think-

ing, and which could only be accounted for in one way, that he was "taught of God." And this he surely was. The light he possessed on religious subjects could not possibly be attributed merely to the exercise of a good understanding, nor the convictions of his own sinfulness to the workings of natural sensibility. Dear little creature! whilst all around him thought him the most pure minded and lovely child they had ever seen, he esteemed himself as exceedingly unworthy, and would frequently, when conversing confidentially with me, ask, if I still thought he would yet become a good boy; adding in his simple way, but with overflowing eyes, "Sometimes, mother, I feel sure that God will make me all that he wishes me to be—but at other times I think I change so little, that may be at last he will get tired of helping me."

Often when he read or heard of an act of uncommon piety, or an instance of uncommon faith, he would look wistfully in my face, and if we were alone, say, "Mother, if my heart was changed, I could feel and do like that person did; but, indeed, I'm afraid I



couldn't now;" and then he would express such earnest desires to become such a child as God might delight in, that I could not repress my tears. Yes! often, often has the Lord beheld us weeping together, but from widely different causes. The dear child wept for his short-comings, whilst I wept from excess of thankfulness that the Lord had already so evidently made him a monument of grace. I may, indeed, say evidently, for his looks and conduct revealed the fact to all who knew him intimately. Every member of the family felt that it must be so, though to no human being, except his mother, did the little creature ever divulge his religious exercises. He listened eagerly whenever serious subjects were discussed, asked questions to obtain instruction, but suppressed his own views and emotions till he could be alone with me. Into no other bosom than mine, could he pour out his religious feelings. Often did he draw me aside, even from his brother, from whom he had no secret on any other subject, to whisper some pious thought which had arisen in his mind—often beckon

me from the family, to entreat that I would "walk with him in the garden, and talk about Jesus, it was so sweet to walk all alone with me in that sweet place, talking about him." If I consented, he would throw one of his little arms about me, and draw me to the back of the garden, saying, "that there nobody could hear us, and we could talk as much as we pleased." My tears almost blind me, when I think of these conversations—when I recall the solemn, yet delighted countenance of my dear child—remember how often, on a still, pleasant evening, he has bid me "stop and look around, and not speak a word"—and then, after pausing for a few moments, has raised his speaking eyes to mine, and said with the utmost sensibility, "How lovely it is, mother! How every thing seems to be praising God!"

You may imagine how dear to my heart; and how profitable to me, these seasons of retirement and refreshing communion with such a child must have been; yet the little creature always thanked me for them, as if the affording them were an act of self-denial

on my part. "How very good you are, mother," he would say, "to stay so long with me, when you might be with grandmother, and all of them in the parlour. O! you are the best mother in the world!"

You will judge that my darling was now in a most happy frame of mind. He was so in general, and often had seasons of high enjoyment. When he was about seven years and five months old, his grandmother was afflicted with a painful disease in her eyes which prevented her reading. One Sunday afternoon that she had insisted on my going to church, John, with his accustomed kindness offered to remain at home, "to keep her company." He did so, and she still loves to think of that afternoon. On my return home, he flew to meet me, his countenance so bright with peace and joy, that I instantly said, "You look as if you had been a very good boy, John." "I don't know about good, mother, but grandmother says I've been a good nurse; and I'm sure I've been very happy," was his smiling answer. Seeing that he seemed anxious to detain me, I halted to gather a

flower, and his brother passed on. The instant he found himself alone with me, he broke out into expressions of delight, at the happy afternoon he had had; saying, if he could only tell me how happy he had been, I would be so glad! I enquired particulars. He said, that "when I left him, he thought it would be a comfort to poor grandmother to hear the Bible, so he got it, and felt very glad to think he could do something to amuse her; that he read five or six chapters, and she was so good, she kept stopping him and explaining things to him, and afterwards talked a great while about religion in such a nice way as gave him a great deal of pleasure, and made him want to keep on, only he was ashamed to tell her so. Then she sent him to play, but he felt so happy that he didn't want to play; so he went into the quiet parlour and read another chapter, and then he read one of the good praising hymns, and afterward some of the other kind, and it seemed to him almost as if he had prayed all the verses and said all the thanks himself, and then he thought he would try to make a

prayer out of his own head, and somehow he had more words than he ever had before, and felt so very good on his knees." Quite affected, I pressed him to my heart, and returned thanks for the comfort vouchsafed him. He listened with emotion, and exclaimed when I had ceased, "How sweet it sounds, mother, to hear you thanking God! O! I have had the happiest afternoon I ever had in my whole life, and feel so good now I have got you to tell about it. Don't you think, mother, that God is giving me the right kind of thoughts about him at last?" Surely it was impossible to think otherwise.

He still, however, frequently reproached himself as wanting faith. He had been struck by the declaration, "Perfect love casteth out fear." To attain this standard was his aim. Everything short of it appeared to him unworthy the name of faith. "Mother," he once said to me, "I think to myself sometimes, suppose God was to let me die to-day, and I always feel sure that I would be afraid to die. What a very little trust mine must be!" Still his confidence that the Lord

would perfect his work was nevertheless stronger and more abiding than he was aware of. His extreme humility, though it prevented his actually appropriating the promises to himself, could not prevent his loving and deriving hope from them. This was visible whenever he read the Bible. He was continually stopping to say, "Mother, what a sweet verse this is! Isn't that a great promise, mother?" and not unfrequently observed that, "he loved to read God's promises better than any thing, they made him feel so happy."

Constantly, as you may suppose, watching for evidences of regeneration in my child, I was forcibly struck by his altered feelings towards transgressors. He had early testified an abhorrence of sin, but this abhorrence was sometimes associated with a degree of displeasure towards those whom he knew to indulge in it, if they had had opportunities for instruction. Now, whilst he even more strongly loathed vice, he looked with the tenderest compassion on sinners, for the idea that they were incurring the displeasure of

God, never seemed absent from his mind. To tell him that an individual had committed a crime, was immediately to fill his little bosom with sorrow, and awaken the warmest interest in behalf of the sinner. No word of censure ever passed his lips, and nothing gratified him more than to discover some palliating circumstance which might countenance the hope, that "they had not quite given up to wickedness," as his expression was. He would talk of them for days, and always in the language of pity, and with repeated wishes that some good person would try to make them think about their badness, and turn to God. If, in our walks, he observed either children or grown persons behaving improperly, he was exceedingly pained; and on several occasions told me, that he was so sorry for them, that he could not help making a little prayer to God, as he walked along, "to please to forgive them, and change their hearts."

When a young companion, whom he loved, had been detected in a falsehood, or a friend had fallen under temptation, his grief was

excessive, indeed; so much so, as quite to distress me. At such times, I found the best method to restore his composure was to pray with him for the individuals; and often have I wished they could hear the fervent tone in which the innocent suppliant repeated after me, or the sobs which broke from his full heart, or could have known how eagerly he afterwards watched for symptoms of their amendment, and how fondly, when he thought he had discovered such, he cherished the hope that "God had been so good as to make them understand about sin, and was helping them to conquer their faults."

Another evidence of regeneration—love to the saints—my child possessed in an eminent degree. His whole heart seemed to warm towards those whom he believed children of God. They were truly the honourable of the earth in his estimation. His lively imagination invested them with a kind of sanctity, which gave them a powerful hold on his affections. Proofs of the enthusiasm kindled in his pure bosom frequently occurred, which might have provoked a smile



in any one, except a doating parent. Diffident and averse to the notice of strangers, as he constitutionally was, I have known him come into the parlour when I have had pious visitors, merely to enjoy the pleasure of looking at them. "It made me feel so good, mother," he would afterwards say, "to think they loved Jesus!" On his return from town, he has more than once told me, with a smile of satisfaction, that he had walked a great way close behind a certain lady, and when I have asked him why he did so, replied, "Because she is so religious, mother; I love so to be near religious people!" The poorest and most ignorant persons became objects of almost veneration the moment he imagined they were piously inclined. Indeed, the least semblance of piety won his heart; for he was too guileless, and too ignorant of the world, to suspect hypocrisy. I have often been both affected and amused by his humble, reverential deportment to a worthless beggar, who had artfully dropped a few religious sentiments. Dear, heavenly-minded lamb! A stranger to pride, those whom he

imagined most conformed to the divine will, were those whom he thought most worthy of respect, and whom, in reality, he most respected. Allow me to give you an instance of this, and I will quit the subject. When he was about retiring to bed one night, the sound of many voices singing a hymn in a neighbouring dwelling attracted him to the window. After the hymn was concluded, he observed to me, that a great many ladies and gentlemen went to that house every Tuesday evening. Knowing that the prayer-meeting was conducted by coloured persons, I exclaimed in a tone of surprise, "Ladies and gentlemen, John?" "Yes, mother," he replied, with the utmost simplicity. "Ladies and gentlemen, dear?" I again repeated. He now, in his turn, looked at me with surprise, mingled with concern, and asked, "Why, mother, don't you think that good, religious coloured people deserve to be called ladies and gentlemen more than white people that don't care about God?" I felt for a moment at a loss for an answer, and he went on, "I'm sure, mother, they are a great deal

better, and must seem greater to God, and they seem a great deal greater to me too, because I know Jesus Christ loves them."

But I am dwelling longer on the state of my child's religious feelings this year, than I intended.

His progress in the usual branches of education was equal to my wishes. With the most common capacity, and his was certainly a most excellent one, it could not have been otherwise, so much did he make it matter of conscience to learn faithfully whatever I attempted to teach him. Often, when I was satisfied with the manner in which he had said a lesson, he has observed, that "he thought he had better learn it a little more, because he saw that he did not know it quite *pat* yet, and he didn't want to give up, till he could say it glibly." He was never content with having learned the mere words of a lesson, but always desirous of having its obscurities explained; "for you know mother," he would say, "if I don't understand it well, I will forget it directly." If, at any time, his eye happened to rest on the page I was hear-

ing him recite, he would tell me that he had seen some of the words, and request me to hold the book differently, and let him begin again. A friend who was present one day when a circumstance of this kind occurred, injudiciously praised him for his candour. John coloured, and observed, that "he did not think there was any great goodness in not liking to cheat; besides, what good would cheating do? It would not make him know his lesson." If, at any time, I was obliged to leave him to himself, instead of seizing the opportunity to idle, he only seemed to double his diligence, that, as he said, I might have the pleasure of finding, when I came back, that he had not been lazy;" and a happier looking creature than my smile and kiss of approbation rendered him, you can scarcely imagine. The dear boy's exertions to progress were the more praiseworthy, inasmuch as ambition to excel others had no agency in producing them. This he was too seriously humble ever to conceive possible, and too devoid of selfishness to wish. The desire for praise had as

little influence; for, except from his dearest friends, it had no charms for him; from them he prized it as an evidence of their love; but his lowly opinion of himself prevented his ever feeling that he was entitled to commendation, and of course rendered it painful to him from strangers. It is to principle that we must refer his diligence. I had early taught him that the measure of understanding which he possessed, and the opportunities for instruction which he enjoyed, were talents placed in his hands by the Creator, not to be buried, but to be improved to the utmost extent to which he was capable. The belief of this truth it was, which excited him to exertion; for he was not naturally industrious, was uncommonly wild and playful, and too much under the dominion of feeling and imagination to relish dry studies. Reading, however, he dearly loved; and now that story books and poetry were banished from the school-room, it was amusing to see the eagerness with which he resorted to them in his leisure hours. Several times, to indulge his anxiety to finish a

borrowed book, I permitted him to bring it to the dinner-table, when, after hastily eating a little, he became so engrossed as not to perceive that the dessert had been placed, until the family had finished their repast, and were moving from the table, and even then to decline taking time to eat what, under other circumstances, he would have missed with regret.

The latter part of this year he read with me Robertson's History of America in four volumes. This work deeply interested him; but I was sometimes tempted to regret having put it into his hands, so powerfully was he affected by his sympathy for the poor Indians, and horror at the duplicity and cruelty of the Spaniards. I was, however, much gratified with the intelligence and discriminating judgment he discovered, by the correctness of his sentiments, and by his quick perception, and warm admiration of everything really great and heroic. Columbus was his favourite hero. He followed him with intense interest through all the vicissitudes of life—seemed to realize the full

amount of the difficulties he had to contend with—to enter into the elevation of character he displayed, and what most surprised me, to appreciate fully the magnanimity of his conduct under adverse circumstances. The answer of this great man to the captain of the vessel in which he was conveyed in irons to Spain, when he offered to remove his fetters, delighted him beyond measure. He read it again and again with enthusiasm, appealing to me, whether “it was not noble!”—carried the book to show it to his grandmother—talked of it for days, and even marked the page that he might find it again.

The enterprise, valour, and patient endurance of suffering and privation, so remarkable in many of the followers of Columbus in the discovery and conquest of the New World, called forth momentary admiration; but it was instantly checked by the strong detestation which their sordid motives and selfish, unfeeling policy excited in his generous bosom. “Mother,” he one day said, “what great men they would have been, if they had ‘fought

and bled in freedom's cause,' like Hail Columbia says the 'heroes' that got our independence did; but they only wanted to get rich and grand, and their wickedness and hard-heartedness takes away all their glory."

His grandmother had given him a copy of the once favourite song, "Hail Columbia," with which he was so much pleased that he soon committed it to memory. This song drew from the inquisitive boy, an hundred questions relative to his native country; my answers increased his desire for information. Accordingly when he had finished Robertson, I selected a School History of the United States for his reading with me, and you would find it difficult to conceive of the enthusiasm with which he contemplated the motives and actions of the Pilgrims—the revolutionary patriots, and "our glorious Washington," as he energetically termed him. He was continually contrasting them with the Spanish adventurers, and exulting in their superiority. When I smiled at his ardour, and asked if he did not think he was a little unjust to the brave,



enterprising Spaniards, he would vindicate his opinion with animation, insisting, in his childlike manner, that "they did all their great things, just to get riches and get admired by people, so all their fighting, and bearing suffering, and being deceitful and cruel, only showed how greedy and vain they were; but that the men he loved had such grand reasons for their trying and bearing, and bearing patiently, and fighting with such courage, that it made everything they did seem grander."

Remarks and emotions like these, in a child between seven and eight years of age, are not very common, and indicate more discrimination of mind, and a higher tone of feeling, than I think can be attributed to mere natural abilities. Accustomed, if I may so speak, to the contemplation of Deity, to the study of the holy volume, and the examination of his own heart, he had acquired an expansion of thought, a correctness of judgment and refinement of taste, beyond his years. There was, indeed, something in his comments on whatever he read,

and whatever fell under his observation, that betrayed the exalting influence of early gracious impressions. He had a standard by which to measure everything that preserved him from error and deception, and enabled him to perceive what was lovely. Never have I seen a little creature so alive to the beauty of noble sentiments or actions. He required no prompting to discover such, and dwelt on them with delight. Neither have I ever seen one so quick in discerning, or so much pained by what was ignoble or unamiable. He loved to reflect and converse on subjects, which, to the generality of children, would have been wearisome. The instructive reflections frequently interspersed in books for children, but so commonly passed over unread, as dry, were to him exceedingly interesting; so much so, that he always seemed most to prize the book in which they most abounded, provided the language was not above his comprehension. In fine, he early showed a perception of, and delight in all that was beautiful in nature, or excellent in conduct or sentiment; and dearly as he loved

play, seemed to enjoy a still higher pleasure in having his attention called to such things, and being permitted to indulge, alone with me, the feelings they inspired. I say, alone with me, for the fact is, this little diffident creature shrunk with instinctive delicacy from revealing his feelings, or expressing thoughts which he felt to be different from those of other children, to any one, except his beloved mother. And now, my dear cousin, will you not agree with me, that much which appeared like superior intelligence in my precious child, is referable to the elevating influence of early religious impressions, and a gradual growth in grace? But perhaps you will think that parental fondness has led me into exaggeration. You would not think so, if you had ever marked his countenance and listened to his touching remarks, as he gazed with me on a sweet moonlight view; you could not, if you had ever seen the sensibility he evinced when he either read or heard of an instance of virtuous conduct, of piety, generosity, or magnanimity; you would not, if you had ever

seen him reading, and observed the emotion which a fine thought excited, heard him sometimes exclaim, with a glow of pleasure, "How beautiful that is, mother!"—seen the tears, at other times, start into his eyes, as he asked me in a tremulous tone, "Is not that *sublime*, mother?" For this word, although he could not have defined it, he early adopted as expressing something which he felt, and which he could not otherwise so well express.

Near the close of the year, the faith of the dear boy was exposed to a severe trial, in which, blessed be God, it came off victorious. In his very infancy, before he had a conception of religion, he looked upon the Bible with reverence, as the book which told about the good Being who had made everything. As he grew older, this reverence was increased by the knowledge that it was the word of God revealing his will to man; and for the last two years, by the conviction that it pointed out the only way of salvation. But now, doubts of its authenticity were darted into his mind. For many days he was harassed by

them in a manner that surprised me beyond measure. During lesson hours, in play time, whilst engaged in reading the Scriptures, even whilst at prayer and in his dreams, they were obtruded upon him. He was exceedingly distressed, but never overcome by this temptation; continually asking me what could be the reason of his having such wicked thoughts, when he hated them so much and wanted so bad not to have them, but never willing for one moment to cherish them. "Indeed, mother," he would say, "I'm *quite certain* the Bible is true, and when it comes into my head that may be after all it isn't, and that may be men made it, I feel so sorry and have such a shivering all over me at such dreadful thoughts, that I can hardly bear them. Sometimes I say a little prayer to God to please to take them away, and sometimes I try to get thinking about something else, to try to put them out of my head, but they will keep coming back, and I don't know how to drive them away." After being annoyed in this way for some days, the dear little fellow asked me "if I did not think

the more any body read the Bible, the more they would see that it must be true." I told him that I assuredly did. "Then, mother, I'll tell you what I think I had better do—I had better not read any other books to you now, but give all the time you can hear me to reading the Bible." He did so, and listened with delight to the proofs of inspiration which I occasionally pointed out. Enabled thus to mourn and resist unhallowed thoughts, he was also enabled to triumph over them. In a short time, I heard no more on the subject, and have reason to believe that his confidence in the word of truth was never again attacked.



### LETTER IX.

I will now carry you on to the next year of my child's life. But what shall I tell you concerning it? I can only desire you to recollect all that I have already said of his endearing and estimable qualities, and tell you he was everything my fond heart could wish ;

that whilst he was my pride, my comfort, and often my instructor, whilst his attainments were more rapid, and his conduct blameless, he was even more lowly in spirit, and more anxious to improve; that whilst he was full of activity, life, and spirits, entering with more than the usual ardour of childhood into every innocent pleasure, he was yet ready cheerfully to renounce any amusement at the call of duty or feeling; that whilst his leisure for religious reading and conversation had diminished, his delight in both seemed to have increased; and that as he became older and more able to judge for himself, he only became more devoted to me, and more eager to discover and conform to my least wish.

But you will, perhaps, think that I speak too strongly. I do not. Indeed, I do not. Could you appeal to the friends who knew him intimately, you would find that I do not—you would find they all esteemed him a very uncommon child. And why was he so? Because the Lord had poured out his purifying Spirit

upon him—had made him willing in the day of his power—because he kept him from falling, taught and led him gently forward—because the love of Christ constrained him.

How could he have been other than the best of children? It was his constant desire to act in the manner most pleasing to God—to learn what was right, that he might do it. He had been enabled to take the Bible as a light to his feet, and a lamp to his path, and by its precepts he sought to walk; but the extent and beauty which he daily perceived more plainly in them, rendered him daily more sensible to his own deficiencies, and more earnest in his endeavours to amend. He was continually entreating me to tell him all his faults, and the best means of conquering them. I can truly say, that during the last eighteen months of his life, I never once had occasion to admonish him of error. My office was entirely that of comforter; for the omission or careless performance of duty, or the slightest inadvertency of conduct so instantly struck him, and



produced so much pain, that it was necessary rather to point out palliating circumstances and offer encouragement, than to express disapprobation. Every the slightest deviation appeared sin to his tender conscience. Indeed, so severe a judge was he of his own heart and conduct, and so abundant and holy were the fruits he expected to spring from faith and love, that it was often difficult to persuade him I was not saying, "Peace, peace," when there should be no peace. Often has he said, "Mother, you do not do it on purpose, I know; but you love me so much, and are so sorry to see me feel bad, that I think sometimes you try to make me think less of my faults than I ought to do! I wish you would help me to see the very worst of myself, for I know that I don't think sin half so naughty as God does. If I hated it enough, I would not commit it so often." I would reply, that I did not wish to lessen his abhorrence of sin, I only wished to increase his confidence in the love and tender mercy of God, who knows our infirmities

and pities us, as a father pitieth his children. "Yes, mother, that is what you want, I know; but then I oughtn't to forget how God must hate sin, when he was obliged to let Jesus die for us, before he could pardon us." "True, my child; but neither must you forget how great his love for sinners must be, when he was willing to give his Son up to such sufferings as he endured, that we might be saved." "I don't forget, mother; I can't forget that. Oh! mother, what strong love it must be! I could never give you to die, even for brother; and God must love Jesus better than I love you, for he does every thing better; but that's the very reason that makes me think it so bad, not to be always what he wants me to be. The more I remember about his goodness and forgiveness, the sorrier I feel for my faults, and the more I want you to help me to find them out, and tell me ways of curing them."

Dear child! he little thought how loudly his holy, humble spirit reprov'd his mother, and that whilst he called on her for instruc-

tion, she felt that she should be learning of him.

Never shall I forget the impression his conduct one Sabbath, early in this year, made on me. I had experienced much distraction of mind during the morning service at church, and perhaps with little compunction. In the afternoon, Mr. N—— catechized the children of the congregation, and I remained at home. Whilst he was addressing some serious remarks to them, a sudden and most singular and ludicrous action of an old lady present, so surprised John, that he was thrown off his guard, and smiled. In a moment, however, he was filled with remorse for what appeared to his tender conscience a serious offence, and as soon as Mr. N—— had dismissed the class, hurried home to pour his troubles into my bosom. “Oh! mother, I’ve been a very, very naughty boy!” were his first words, “and this day, too, when I went to the session-room, hoping so much that God would make Mr. N—— say something that would do me good! Oh! mother, I’m so sorry! I didn’t think I would

have been so bad!" He then gave me the particulars, weeping as he spoke, and blaming himself so severely that I thought it proper to say, that although it certainly was his duty to attend seriously to pious instructions, yet as his fault had not been wilful, and as he had immediately checked himself, I was sure God would not be displeased with him; that a much older and grown person would probably have been betrayed into the same impropriety by the same circumstance. "No, no, mother, not a religious person," was the dear boy's answer. "A religious person would feel too solemn when Mr. N—— was speaking about Jesus, to laugh at any thing. How could I be so naughty, mother? Oh! I'm afraid I've got no true religious feelings at all." This idea seemed so dreadful to him, that I said everything I could think of to place the matter in a different light, but it was long before I could soothe his mind. For days afterwards, he reverted to the subject in a manner that proved how deeply he mourned the indignity which he conceived himself to have offered to the Saviour, and

that it was a sense of his own unworthiness, not fear of the displeasure of God, that distressed him. Was it possible to see such evidences of godly sorrow, and not feel self-condemned?

You must not, however, suppose that he often thus suffered. He did not. He was ordinarily in a sweet, serene frame, full of gratitude for the holy desires which he felt, and indulging an humble, but peace-giving hope, that the Lord was indeed working in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Sometimes when I expressed the satisfaction it afforded me to observe his attention to religion, and his constant endeavours to act correctly, he would say, "But do you think, mother, that my being so very sorry about doing wrong, and wanting so much to get good and religious, and my being able to trust a little in Jesus, is a sign that God is beginning to change my heart?" When I assured him that I did, his sweet countenance brightened with such an expression of holy delight as I have never seen in any other. "O! mother," he would exclaim, "how glad

it makes me feel to hear you say that! It is such a great thought to think that may be God is helping me to love him, and grow like he wants me to be, that when it comes into my head, I hardly know what to do, I am so happy: and when you say it, it seems so much surer, that it makes me happier than any thing in the world."

Thus you see my child's high ideas of holiness, and heartfelt persuasion that he fell short in everything, did not prevent his tasting of joys which only the children of God can know. The very conviction that he could do nothing of himself, that every good thought must come from above, disposed him to lean on an arm mightier than his own—and who ever leaned on that arm, and did not find support and consolation?

My dear John had now settled down into what is perhaps the safest state of mind. He did not feel what is called assurance, what *he* called true trust, but he felt so strong a hope, and such a measure of faith, as preserved him from apprehension, without lulling him into carelessness. He by no

means thought that he "had attained;" indeed, even on his death-bed, although in the enjoyment of the most perfect peace in believing, he still prayed earnestly for that thorough change of heart which it had long been evident to all but himself, that he had experienced. But he felt that the Lord had done great things for him, and believed in his willingness to do still greater. This belief rendered him truly happy, and was his refuge in all times of trouble. Often has he said to me, when lamenting some trifling neglect or error, "What would I do, mother, if it wasn't for knowing about Jesus, and for hoping that God would help me to become good?" For although he was fully convinced that the merits and intercession of Christ alone could procure forgiveness of sin, and looked to them only for pardon, he did not forget that "without holiness no man shall see God," and that he was required to show his faith by his works. The fear of God had given place to love—but this love only increased his anxiety to conform to the divine will, and made every failure in obedience or

holiness, more quickly perceived, and more keenly regretted. He did not yet think that he could meet death without alarm, but he no longer felt the dread that he should perhaps be summoned before his faith was perfected, which he once had. Whilst he considered himself as utterly unmeet for the kingdom of heaven, he rested in hope that God would not leave nor forsake him.

Such was the state of his mind, as my thorough acquaintance with his every feeling enabled me to read it, but not as his humility would have permitted him to describe it. Many who imagine religion too gloomy a subject for the contemplation of childhood, might suppose that such a state of mind must prove inimical to the gaiety of spirits natural to his age, but there could be no greater mistake. Never was there a child fonder of play—never one, in the merriest group, more animated and cheerful—never one whose countenance was more constantly illumined by the sunshine of content and happiness. “Do come to the window and look at John,” his aunt has often said; “did



you ever see a little creature so happy? He really seems to enjoy play more than the wildest of the boys." And this, I believe, was the fact. The peace which was shed abroad in his mind, and the frequent employment of his thoughts on serious subjects, seemed to increase his zest for innocent diversions. Indeed, his religious feelings, far from impairing, contributed to his happiness in various ways. Believing that God ordered everything, and confiding in his wisdom and love, he was preserved from the discontent and vexation so common in children when their inclinations or schemes are thwarted. If it rained on a day of proposed pleasure—if he was prevented from enjoying an anticipated amusement, instead of repining or fretting, he only said, "Well, may be, mother, God knows some good reason why it wouldn't be good for me to have the fun I expected to-day." Or, "may be God has let me be disappointed to teach me patience, and to bear disappointments; so, mother, it is good in him, and best for me, after all." With such an antidote against discontent in

his bosom, it was impossible he should ever be peevish or dissatisfied. On the other hand, believing that every good thing came from God, all his pleasures were doubly enjoyed. "Mother," he would say, "how sweet it makes me feel, when I have had such a pleasant day, to think of God's goodness in letting me have it." Constantly desirous of ascertaining and doing what was deemed best for him, obedience never cost him even a momentary struggle with himself, and the sound of reproof never reached his ears. Once irritable, he had now so completely mastered his temper, and had imbibed so much of the spirit of the Saviour, that the occasional improprieties and offensive acts of his companions produced sorrow rather than anger, and were never mentioned but with expressions of pity. Delighting in the word and ordinances of God, in the exercise of prayer and praise, he found pleasure in duties which to most children are wearisome. Thus did religion enhance and multiply all his joys, and preserve him from many inquietudes. Can it then be justly esteemed

too gloomy a pursuit for childhood? No, no—the pursuit never interfered with my darling's enjoyment of the usual pleasures of his age, except for a short interval at the close of his sixth and the commencement of his seventh year, and then, "though weeping endured for a night, joy came in the morning." From that time her ways were ways of pleasantness—her paths peace. He had his seasons of deep humiliation, it is true, but he had also pleasures which the world could neither give nor take away—pleasures he found far sweeter than even his much loved hours of play. His very seasons of mourning ultimately afforded comfort too, as affording evidence that the Lord was still striving with him. I remember his once telling me that he never had felt glad about being sorry till he began to want to be religious, but that now, when he had been very sorry, it always seemed to make him happier afterwards, because it seemed to him as if God must be trying to make him good, or he wouldn't make him so sorrowful for not being better, and that thought was such a

comfort to him, that it always made him glad that he had been sorry.

Thus, while religion made duty pleasant, and preserved him from many of the uncomfortable feelings and agitating passions of childhood, while it so purified his heart and life, as to exempt him from rebuke, and render him an object of love and admiration to all, did it also make even the painful moments it sometimes occasioned productive of happiness. Was it not then a blessing to him, even in a temporal point of view? It was. It rendered him the happiest of children. But Oh! this were little. It conducted him to joys at the right hand of God. It cost him some tears for sin, but it gave him a hope which hath not been made ashamed. It transported him into the bosom of the Redeemer he loved, who hath wiped away all tears from his eyes, and placed on his head an everlasting crown of glory, who hath opened to him the gates of bliss, and will no more suffer sorrow to come near him! Be thankful, O my soul!

Early in this year a coloured boy who had

been waiter in the family died. His illness was tedious, and had my dear child been his own brother and many years older, he could not have been more persevering and tender in his attentions. Poor Lewis, as he called him, never seemed absent from his mind. The moment he was ready to leave my chamber in the morning, he hastened to that of Lewis. If sought for, when his lessons were over, he was found there. Before retiring at night he always passed some time with the sick boy. He chatted with him, read to him, told him stories, spread his play-things on the bed to amuse him, sought out the prettiest flowers in the garden for him, carried him all the little family news he could collect, set apart a portion of everything good that was given him, to take at the first leisure moment to "poor Lewis," bought cakes and fruit for him, in short, thought of him continually, and devoted most of his spare time to him. Sometimes I thought he confined himself too much, but when I said so, he would answer that "poor Lewis liked to have him, and you know, mother, he has so much suffering and

so little pleasure now, that I ought to give him all the comfort I can. He always looks glad when I go to see him, and I like better to amuse him than' to play." He expressed great solicitude about the state of the poor boy's soul, and was exceedingly gratified when he found that a clergyman who visited him several times was satisfied with it. "I think myself, mother," he observed, with his eyes full of tears, "that God must be making Lewis's sickness do him good, for he seems to have quite a different temper from what he used to have, and he is so patient, and likes so much to hear me read the Bible and hymn book to him. At first he only wanted me to read story books, but now, when I ask him what I shall read, he always says the Bible or the hymns. Oh! I hope, mother, God is changing his heart and preparing him to die, for he talked to me yesterday a great deal about Jesus, and I think he talked as if he was very sorry for his sins, and had no trust but in him." Sometimes he would say, "mother, for all I'm so sorry for poor Lewis, I'm glad God has given him this sickness,

for may be if he had not had it, he would never have thought about his sins, and never have turned to Jesus; and you know it is better for him to be sick and do that, than to be well and not care about him." Long as the boy was ill John never abated his attentions. You may conceive my feelings when I have gone unexpectedly into the room and found the lovely child seated where I had perhaps left him an hour before, on Lewis's bedside, tenderly holding his hand, and in a low tone reading to him his own favourite hymns.

The evening previous to the boy's death, he appeared unusually strong and cheerful, and when John had taken leave of him at night, and left the room, called out, "Good-bye, John." The child repeated his good-bye, and went to bed. When he heard in the morning that an unexpected change had taken place, and that all was over, he was exceedingly shocked, but became composed on my assuring him that Lewis's dismissal had been an easy one; that his grandmother and I had been with him, and that we hoped

he was now, not only relieved from his long suffering, but happy with his Saviour. The last words, "Good-bye, John," of the poor boy, then occurred to him. "Oh! mother," he exclaimed, bursting into tears, "I'm afraid he didn't hear me answer him! I would give anything in the world if I had only gone back into his room, and let him see me once more, and shake hands with me again, it would have pleased him so much, I know. If he didn't hear me, how hard it must have seemed to him to think that I took no notice, when he called out so affectionately after me, with all the strength he had. Oh! if I was only sure he heard me, what a comfort it would be!" I told him he had the best ground for comfort in the recollection of his uniform kindness to the boy. "Yes, mother, it is a great comfort to think that he liked so much to have me with him, and that I gave him some pleasure, but for all, I can't help wishing I was sure I had not made him feel sorry that last night."

I have mentioned this little incident merely to show you the delicate refinement of



feeling which characterized my blessed child, and which, indeed, was evident in his every word and action. Allow me to give you another instance. The latter part of this year his brother went to Saratoga, leaving a favourite dog to his care. The dog became sick, and never shall I forget the tenderness with which John nursed him. His little heart seemed almost ready to break, as he witnessed the agonies Gellert endured, and yet he scarcely ever left him. The dog appeared sensible of his kindness, and as long as he could give any sign of recognition, testified pleasure at his approach. At length, however, he sank into a stupor, and could take no further notice. I then told John that he could do nothing more for the poor animal, and had better leave him. "Oh! no, mother, not yet, for may be, for all he seems quite insensible, he can hear a little, and if I speak to him, and he knows my voice, it will be a comfort to him I'm sure." As I could not deny the possibility of this surmise, the tender-hearted child continued for hours to hover over his poor Gellert, addressing him

every few minutes in the most endearing manner. Was there not something of delicate feeling in this, beyond his years?

But it was not merely in attentions to the dog his feelings were displayed. Dearly as he loved Gellert, the anxiety to save him was more on his brother's account than his own. The idea of the loss he would himself sustain in the death of his little playful companion, seemed completely swallowed up in the consideration of what he supposed would be his brother's distress. "Oh! if brother could only see how grateful and affectionate he is! If he only could help to nurse him, and see the last of him," he would say, "he wouldn't be so very sorry; but what will he do, mother, when he comes home and expects Gellert to run to meet him, and no Gellert comes, and he hears all at once, that he is dead?"

Thus were the sweet child's anxieties divided between his brother and the suffering animal, while self was scarcely thought of. I have dwelt much longer on this incident than I intended, but cannot forbear mention-

ing a little circumstance connected with it, which affected me exceedingly at the time, and will give you some idea of the child's tenderness of conscience and habitual looking unto God. Two days before his favourite expired, he came to me, and with a countenance expressive of most anxious concern, said, that he was afraid he had been doing wrong—told me that he had been praying for poor Gellert, and asked if I thought it was wrong to pray for a dog. The question was so unexpected, that I scarcely knew what to say. I told him, however, to remove his uneasiness—that I did not know that it was—that he had always been grateful to God for allowing him the pleasure which the dog afforded him, and that I did not conceive there could be any thing wrong in praying for a continuance of this pleasure; but that he ought to endeavour to be willing to give Gellert up, if God thought proper to deprive him of him. "I am willing, mother," he replied; "indeed, I am willing to give him up, if God pleases to take him away from me. It is seeing him suffer so—not being

unwilling to give him up—that makes me cry. I thought I would pray for him, because Jesus says that the sparrows are not forgotten before God, and that not one of them shall fall to the ground, unless he permits it; but I only prayed to him to lessen poor Gellert's sufferings, and let him get well again, if *he* did not think that it was better he should die. If he does, mother, I don't wish at all to keep him."—You must be aware, that before we have had more serious evils to endure, the loss of a faithful, affectionate favourite is more keenly felt, even by children of much less keen sensibilities than John possessed, and may, therefore, imagine how much the submissive spirit he evinced, must have gratified me.

At the time of the dog's death, John was in bed. When I told him that his pet was gone, well as I thought I knew him, his conduct astonished me. He struggled with his feelings for a few moments, and then looking calmly at me, said, "Well, mother, God thought it best for brother and me to lose him, and it must be best. I couldn't help

crying when I saw him in such pain; but I won't cry any more now." Presently, he enquired if he had died hard. "No, quite the contrary," I told him I had understood from the servants. The tears now flowed down his cheeks, but they were tears of gratitude. "Oh mother!" he said, "how good God is! I prayed to him last night—for I thought I would never see Gellert again—to let him have an easy death, and he has granted my prayer." I made some remark on the readiness of our heavenly Father, to grant all the proper wishes of his creatures. "I know that, mother," he replied; "I know that he does everything that is right to make people happy; and I know that he had some good reason for depriving brother and me of the pleasure Gellert gave us, or he would not have done it; and I thank him as much for taking him for our good, for all it makes me so sorry to think that I will never see his fond ways again, as for letting him die so easy at last." Now, when you recollect that this dear boy's trial, though not great in itself, was, all things

considered, perhaps as severe to him as real calamities to older and less susceptible persons, you will acknowledge that his resignation, his willingness to receive evil as well as good at the hands of God, and in all things to give thanks, might well serve as a lesson to aged Christians.



### LETTER X.

WHAT, however, most gratified me, was the enjoyment which, amidst all his childlike feelings and habits, religion afforded him. In reading the word, it was now more than ever evident, that he was spiritually enlightened. Often have his remarks on passages, of which I had supposed he would not discern the meaning, surprised and instructed me, and often have I caught myself mentally ejaculating, as I listened with delighted ear to his applications and inferences, "this babe teaches me how to read the Bible!" He was too truly humble, and had too exalted a conception of holiness, to look upon himself

as having become a child of God, but the strong hope he now entertained that he should yet be made such, enabled him to peruse the denunciations of wrath against the impenitent, without his former fear and trembling, and the spiritual light and comfort he had obtained was plainly indicated by the delight with which he dwelt on such portions of the holy word as promise rest and peace to the adopted of the Lord, and the just conception he evinced of the nature of those promised blessings. "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace," was a passage on which he frequently commented, and in a manner that proved his clear ideas of what the command embraced, and his feeling, that such an acquaintance as was intended, must necessarily produce "peace passing understanding." Had you heard this sweet lamb reading the word of God during the last eighteen months of his life, noted the Psalms which he marked as favourites, the passages in Job, Isaiah, and the epistles, which he particularly loved, observed the expression of his countenance and the

tone of his voice as he read, or stopped to make his little, touching remarks, you would have felt as I did, that the Bible was no longer "a sealed book" to him—that he had obtained a key to the "mystery of godliness." It was not merely the historical parts which interested him; these most children read with pleasure, but to him the whole word was precious. He longed and sought to understand it fully, and he had his reward. Light broke in upon him continually—light which shed peace abroad in his gentle bosom, made self-denial easy, and all the ways of religion ways of pleasantness. Far from finding the performance of known duties irksome, it was his delight to discover new means of growth in grace. Frequently, in his own artless manner, did he entreat me to point out such to him; and never did he fail to adopt my suggestions, or to thank me for them at the time, and still more warmly, when, on trial, he thought he derived benefit from them. He was also in the continual habit of practising various voluntary acts of self-denial, unknown to



all but me, from whom he concealed nothing. Do not, however, mistake his reason. It was not from any opinion of *merit* in such acts. No; he was as clear in his views on this subject as any human being. Christ crucified was his only hope. But I had, one day, in the course of a serious conversation, incidentally observed that he could yet form no idea of the variety and strength of the temptations to which he would be exposed as he advanced in years, and began to mingle with the world. On hearing this remark, he became thoughtful for a moment, and then asked, "Mother, don't you think that if I were to begin *now* to deny myself something I liked very often, it might make me better able to conquer myself, and resist temptation by and by?" When I replied, that if made with a proper dependence on God, and accompanied by prayer, such efforts on his part would most probably be blessed to him, he immediately adopted a resolution to refuse himself many things in the way of eating, &c., which resolution he kept, even until quite ill. For

instance, during three whole months he abstained from the use of butter; frequently refused dessert, cake, fruit, or something he was particularly fond of; several times denied himself an offered holiday, or a favourite amusement. Now, my dear cousin, did not these things demonstrate an uncommon earnestness to obtain the mastery over the flesh in such a child? Were they not loud calls on me to practise like diligence? Oh! how often have I felt his conduct a reproach on my supineness! How often acknowledged in his humiliating views of his own weakness, and earnest steadfastness in the use of every means of grace, an admonition to fresh diligence on my own part! How often blushed for myself, on observing the eagerness with which he sought instruction, and the diligence with which he availed himself of every hint which he hoped might aid him in the attainment or enjoyment of Christian privileges! To give you an example: I once told him, that pious persons found much comfort and advantage from mingling prayer and thanksgiving with the perusal of

Scripture, and, by reading a chapter to him, and pausing occasionally to express the desires or feelings excited by different verses, explained to him what I meant. He immediately adopted the plan in his private readings, and frequently after thanked me for "putting it into his head," as he expressed himself, saying, "that he thought that way of reading did him a great deal of good, and made the Bible a great deal greater comfort to him." Very often, when reading to me, he would stop and observe, "Mother, what a sweet verse that is! I wish I could remember it to put it into my prayers; it says what I would like to say, so much better than I know how to say it, and I like so to pray in the very words of the Bible!"

I early informed him of the duty of praying on a Sabbath morning for God's blessing on the instructions we might receive, and on our endeavours to worship him; and from this time he often came to me before church hours, when he knew I was alone, and asked me to pray with him to this effect, saying that he had been trying to do so by himself, but that I

could pray so much better than he could, that he wanted me to help him. Dear lamb! No petition of mine was so likely to reach the throne of grace as the aspirations of his own far more humble and pure heart! But I must not indulge in comment.

You have seen many children go reluctantly to church, merely in obedience to parental authority—you have seen their listless inattention whilst there—deriving neither profit nor pleasure from their attendance. To my blessed child, the Sabbath was a delight. When preparing for church, he almost invariably expressed satisfaction at the prospect of hearing something that might, as he said, do him good, or make him feel happy. Whilst in the sanctuary, he generally sat with his little hand on my lap, his eyes fixed on the minister, and when any observation particularly struck him, would gently press my hand, to make me participate in his feelings. Often, often, have I seen his tears flowing, when the love of Jesus has been expatiated on; his face lighted up with an expression of delight when the glory of

God was the theme, or his colour fade and his agitation become evident, when sinners were admonished to flee from the wrath to come. Often have I seen him bury his face in his arms, rested on the pew before him, to hide his emotion, during prayer. When the services were over, if they had answered his hopes, so eager was he to tell me, that he would instantly stretch up his little face under my bonnet, to whisper, "what a good sermon!" or "what a sweet sermon that was, mother!" and as we walked home, would talk of what had been said, mention what had pleased or affected him most, and what he must try not to forget, and frequently ask explanations of remarks which he had not understood. Such was my child's deportment in the house of God. Judge with what delight I must have marked his fixed attention, must have beheld the variations in his speaking countenance, his tears of penitence and gratitude; with what pleasure I must have communed with him on a Sabbath evening; but oh! think not to conceive how I must now miss him in the sanctuary he so

loved! how I must feel the want of the lessons in holiness, he was so continually, yet so unconsciously, imparting! You cannot, unless you have known and loved such a child, as I knew and loved my blessed boy; unless you have been as fondly and confidently looked to, as I was by him; nor even then, unless you have been as often forced to contrast yourself with him, with the same deep sense of inferiority on all points where excellence is most truly lovely.

I have said that the lessons my child gave me, were unconsciously imparted. They were indeed. They were to be read only in his conduct, and in the confidential exposure of his own thoughts and feelings. He was far too humble to think himself qualified for, or to assume the office of admonisher to any one, and least of all to his mother. I have heard of children who, having received some serious impressions, immediately began to exhort and instruct those around them. This was not the case with John. He secretly mourned for the transgressions which fell within his notice; he prayed for the trans-

gressors; he was continually expressing hopes to me, that God would enable them to see their faults, and would help to overcome them. He besought me to talk to them, or to try to get some "good religious person" to do so, but he never dreamed of arrogating to himself the task of teacher; for while he saw their failings with pain, and longed that they should become changed, he yet believed himself on the whole, far more deficient. When in fact he had learned much, he thought that he had yet everything to learn, and never attempted to impart religious instruction, otherwise than by continuing the custom he had early been taught of reading the Scriptures, tracts, and hymns, to the servants on Sabbath evenings. He often, it is true, told me "that if God was so good as to let him grow up a religious man, he thought it would make him happier than anything else, to try to make other people love Jesus Christ too;" but at this time his desire to render spiritual service to others, was manifested only in the anxiety which he showed that I should select such

things for him to read, as I thought likely to have a good effect on the domestics; in the earnest, feeling manner in which he read them, and in the delight with which he added his little contribution to the collections made for religious societies. On one, and only one occasion, with which I am acquainted, did he venture to go further, and this, from delicacy to the boy whom he had reproved and counselled, and from an habitual aversion to telling the faults of others, he never mentioned to me, until a few weeks previous to his death, although it had occurred more than seventeen months before, when he was about eight years old. The boy, a coloured lad of fourteen, who had been for some months dismissed from the family, hearing that John was very ill, called to see him. The child being told of the visit, and being at the time comparatively easy, requested that the boy might be permitted to come into his chamber. He seemed much pleased to see him, but I remarked that when bidding him farewell, he said in a low voice, but with a peculiar em-



phasis, "I hope, Jesse, you are a good boy, now;" and that he gave him a sweet smile when he received an answer in the affirmative. Observing that he continued to look very happy after the boy left the room, I said, "You seem to have pleasant thoughts, my darling." He raised his sweet eyes to mine, and with an expression of the most heartfelt satisfaction, replied, "I do feel very happy, mother. I have the pleasure to think, and it is a great pleasure to me now, that I tried to do poor Jesse some good when I was able, and I *hope* I *did* him good." On my enquiring what he meant, he hesitated a little, and then answered, "that he never had intended to tell me about it, and would rather not tell me now, what Jesse's fault had been, but that one day he had done a very bad thing indeed, and that he (John) was so distressed about it, that he could not help calling Jesse into the summer-house, and telling him how wicked it was, and that he talked a great deal to him, and tried to make him understand as well as he could, how very wicked a sin it was, and how it would displease

God if he ever committed it again, and that at last Jesse seemed to understand, and to be very sorry, and promised that he never would do so again. And I don't think, mother," added the sweet confiding lamb, "that he ever did, so I have the happiness of thinking that, may be, God's letting me talk so to him, kept him from getting a habit of that wickedness, and it is a very great pleasure to me now, a very great pleasure indeed, mother." If you could but conceive the modest, diffident tone, in which the little sufferer spoke; could but picture to yourself the humble, holy joy, which lighted up his poor, wasted features, and beamed in his soft eyes, you would not wonder that I was affected beyond measure. He lay silent a few minutes, and then looking at me, said, "Mother, don't you think people ought to be very thankful to God for allowing them to do good sometimes to one another, when he could do all the good himself? It makes them so happy at the time, and so happy when they think of it afterwards. I am sure, mother, if people would try oftener to be useful, they

would have a great deal more pleasure, and I think they ought, if it was only to show their gratitude to God, for blessing what they do say sometimes." The little creature had now exhausted his strength, but even after he ceased speaking, the same sweet expression of satisfaction was visible on his pale countenance. Do not, however, suppose, that his satisfaction arose in any degree from self-complacency, or from an idea of merit in what he had done for Jesse. It evidently proceeded from the purest and most single and holy feelings.

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### LETTER XI.

AT nine years of age, John entered school, and was put in the first geography class, and in Latin with boys several years his senior; he was far advanced and very ready in arithmetic, wrote a beautiful hand, read well, and when not overcome by diffidence, spoke better than any of the younger boys in school—in fact, there were but three who excelled him in speaking, and only one in

parsing—not one in propriety of deportment. His teacher, the Rev. Mr. R., told me he considered him the most truly conscientious child he had ever seen; and in proof of this, publicly paid him a compliment, which he had never paid any other pupil, only ten days after he entered school. When setting the others their night tasks, he observed, “I will not task John—I know that from a sense of duty, he will learn as much as I could wish, and while he continues to deserve my confidence as he has done, I shall never appoint a lesson for him.” Must not this have been precious to a mother’s heart? It was indeed; I was thankful—but it was a mingled emotion—it was polluted by pride and exultation. Not so with him. Humility was his most striking characteristic; he referred all his success to the blessing of God upon my instructions, which he thought must have been unusually excellent, and therefore only felt his duty and responsibility the greater; no past success ever emboldened him to hope for any in the future, but as God might continue

to bless his endeavours, and for this blessing most devoutly and faithfully did he pray. Timid and retiring, he thought his natural talents inferior to those of his companions, because he could make no exhibition of acquirements as they could, with a far more slender stock to draw upon. History he loved, and his remarks on its great characters evidenced a discrimination and judgment far beyond his years. Poetry, however, was his delight; here his warm imagination and great sensibility found congenial food—but in such reading I did not indulge him much.

Returning from school one day, he said, “Mother, what wicked boys I have seen to-day—they were cursing and swearing.” “I hope, my son, you did not stop and listen to them.” “No,” he answered, “I crossed over the street, and all the way to our gate I was praying for them.”

My dear John had been just six weeks at school when he was taken sick. His disease at first was not violent, and for some days, supposing he would soon be better, in every

little interval, he exerted himself to keep up part of his class lessons, but finding his head become too bad, he decided that his line of duty had changed, and desiring me to lock up his books, he said, "Mother, I was very anxious, till to-day, not to lose time by this sickness, but it seems as if God thought it was best that I should. I have had a great deal of good health, and may be it is better for me now to have some affliction. You know, mother, God could make sickness do me more good than all that I could learn at school." And most diligently did the dear little fellow set himself to learn under the rod, the lessons it is peculiarly designed to teach; and well did he learn them, and faithfully did he practise them, even to the end, through a course of sufferings such as you have probably never been called to see a child endure. Such unbroken patience never have I seen displayed; such gratitude to God, to physicians, to friends—such a total resignation of self-will, and such an unshaken confidence that every pang was inflicted by love and wisdom. Seeing me

look dejected one day, when the physicians expressed their surprise that some medicines had not produced the intended effect, he whispered to me, "You know, mother, if God had thought it best, he could have blessed my medicines long ago." He would sometimes say, "I did not improve my opportunities as I ought to have done when I was well, and I suppose that is the reason God is trying sickness. I hope, mother, he will bless this sickness to me. I pray to him to make me willing to bear whatever he thinks best, and I do feel very willing." Sometimes, when the doctors had left the room, after making a kind of apology for the quantity of medicine they ordered, he would look up so mildly and sweetly in my face, and say, "Why, mother, the doctors seem afraid I won't be pleased with them—they need not. I know they would not be permitted to order these things if God did not approve of it. I hope I am willing that he should do whatever is best for me." Having after a time become exceedingly nervous, when a fresh supply of some nauseous medi-

cine would be brought, his little cheeks would sometimes flush for an instant, and the tears spring to his eyes; but he would instantly lift up his little heart in silent prayer for a continuance of patient submission, and as instantly his usual serenity of countenance would return, and he would say, "Now, I am ready, mother." All this was in the early part of his illness. As it progressed, so was the Lord pleased to grant his earnest prayers, and I heard no more on the subject. Patience seemed indeed "to have her perfect work." The effort to maintain it was past—it became the abiding habit of his mind. If he was better he was thankful; if worse, and able to speak to me, which was not always the case, he would often say, "Mother, I am very sick, but then it is such a blessing that God makes me feel so certain that all is for my good." At other times, he would say, "God, who knows all things, must know that these sufferings are good for me, or he would not continue them, and I am sure I would not stop God from what he thinks good for



me if I could." He continually inquired what his physicians thought of his case, and I never concealed the truth from him. When I first communicated the opinion that his case was alarming, which was two weeks before Christmas, he was for a few moments considerably fluttered, but only for a few moments. He had previously, though a little anxious, still rather looked on his illness as designed for his amendment, with a view to longer life, than as intended to remove him from all he so dearly loved on earth. The thought, therefore, naturally startled him—but here, too, instant prayer was his resource—and the tumult was stilled. In less than five minutes he was able to fix his eyes calmly on my face, and say, "Mother, please to tell me, for my head is so confused I cannot remember the very words; but is it not said, they that seek Jesus shall find him?" I quoted the text which was floating in his mind. He then added, "And is it not said, that those who come unto Jesus he will in no wise cast out?" Again I quoted the text he wanted—and Oh! my

cousin, never shall I forget the look of calm faith which illumined his sweet countenance. From this time forward, although he did not despair of life, he looked on death as a probable result, and calmly he viewed the king of terrors. Yes! to my unutterable joy, he could speak of death with perfect composure, though he was pleased when any temporary alleviation of suffering seemed for a little to countenance hope. The reason why this composure so rejoiced my heart, was, because it was unexpected. Although evidently regenerated from the time he was six years old, yet so unaffected was his humility, and so high his ideas of what religion requires, and what a change of heart meant, that he never, until a few weeks before his illness, could feel easy in the contemplation of death. His exercises of mind, on account of what he termed his trust in Jesus, were often so great, particularly in his seventh year, as I believe I have already mentioned, as to injure his appetite and health, and he had continued at times much disposed to doubt and fear, until a short time before his

illness, when he said to me, one evening, "Mother, I do not feel so much afraid to die as I used to do." "Then I suppose, dear," I replied, willing to try him, "that you are a better boy than you used to be." "Oh! no, mother, I don't mean that, but I have been thinking to-day a great deal about death, and I feel as if I could trust in Jesus now a great deal more than I used to do. It is because I can trust in him, that I feel more prepared to die." For this, when I heard it, I was deeply thankful; but Oh! how much more so, when in the middle of December, a time when he was thought at the point of death, in answer to an interrogatory I put to him, how he had felt during the preceding night, when he had been too ill and low to speak, he replied after a moment's hesitation, as if almost afraid to utter the words, lest they might appear presumptuous, "Mother, I felt as if God would take me." My prayer was heard, my child had perfect peace in believing, and I was permitted to know it. What my heart then experienced, I never can tell you; but I

recollect silently ejaculating, "My God, what have I more to ask?"

But how long, how very long am I making this account! I feel that it affords me a melancholy pleasure to write about my darling, yet I had no idea how much I was writing. You, I know, will not be weary of reading—you will feel great interest in what I have narrated, however confused my manner; for is it not concerning the dear child of your friend?—above all, is it not concerning a highly favoured child of God? And may I not call that child highly favoured of God, who, under an almost unheard of accumulation of suffering, continued during five long months, was able to repress every impatient feeling—to be even thankful for suffering? If I could but paint his sweet acquiescent countenance to you—could but transcribe the hundredth part of the sweet things he uttered, and then could make you comprehend the suffering state he was in—you would indeed say, "True is the Lord!" According to a custom my darling had, when in health, of stopping when reading the

Bible, and calling my attention to any passage which particularly struck him, he frequently did so to a verse in Isaiah—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee; because he trusteth in thee." "Mother, is not that a sweet promise?" he was wont to say; and how often, during that winter, did I acknowledge its literal fulfilment in himself! Never did one shadow of doubt or fear seem to cross his mind. Love to God and man, and the most perfect reliance on the divine love, reigned in his heart, and diffused a heavenly expression over his countenance. Never, in health, had his face possessed half the beauty which this peace, which the world could neither give nor take away, imparted to it. An infidel could not have watched over him during that winter, without being convinced there was a power in religion beyond his dreams.

Think, my cousin, of a lively, playful boy, confined for five months to bed, with a fever which never intermitted for one moment, and was during the greater part of every four

and twenty hours, very high; think of this child being four months unable to turn himself, or, whatever his sufferings or burning heat, to change his position in the smallest degree; think of his being three months and a half immovably fixed on his back, enduring frequently excruciating pain, and always aching and sore, with generally a most distressing nausea, and great nervous derangement of the system. Such, and far worse than I can paint, was the situation of my child—suffering the greatest agonies when it was necessary to make any change about him; incapable himself of moving anything except his arms and neck; his poor shoulders and back inflamed from lying on them, and the bones literally through the skin in places; racked with cough; often nearly strangled with phlegm he was too weak to discharge; his liver, his lungs, and all the internal organs, as the doctors said, greatly diseased; having two severe chills every day, and a pulse at night rapid beyond a possibility of counting it. Such was the situation of my beloved boy, yet never did

one discontented look cross his serene countenance; never one impatient word escape his lips. Everything was asked for with a "please;" every little attention noticed with thanks. Often he would compare his situation with that of the sick poor, and with such deep commiseration for them, and gratitude for the comforts vouchsafed him, as seemed to hide from his view that he was called upon to endure anything, and yet what he endured you may imagine when I tell you, that in January the physicians said he could not survive such a fever one week longer. Yet the fever continued; other symptoms grew more distressing, and he suffered on till 21st of March. The doctors declared their astonishment continually, and remarked that they never had seen so iron a constitution—and iron, indeed, it seemed. Oh! if you had seen its resistance to the king of terrors, in the last awful stage of life. Oh! it was a scene that I never can depict. It was that scene which so subdued me. All through his illness, however, so evidently was the hand of the Lord with

him, that I was kept in so thankful a frame, I thought I should give him up without one struggle, for I then expected to see a creature so totally wasted, so low, pass away without a conflict. But oh! how different was my darling's exit! It was, if possible, the most wonderful part of the whole providence. Four days and nights did the last agonies continue—not even one drop of water swallowed in all that time—every convulsive breath heard in distant rooms—the whole countenance awfully changed. I felt as though I must lose my senses. Not a tear did I shed—night and day my eyes were fixed upon him, and I saw the very last breath drawn, but I wept not still. My mind, I am told, was quite wild for some time. I shed no tears for three days after; but blessed be God! even in my wildness I murmured not. It was the Lord's doing; my child had put a blank in his hand, and though my God had almost slain me, yet did I trust in him, and pour forth thanksgiving to him. The means He had chosen; the end was the fulfilment of my prayers—even salvation.



Too much overcome to write more, I laid down my pen. Again I resume it, and I would tell you more about my little lamb.

At the commencement of his illness, he delighted in hearing me read the Bible and his favourite hymns, but soon grew too ill, and one day said to me, with more appearance of regret than he ever exhibited for anything else, "Mother, the pleasure of listening to the Bible is over—I can't follow you at all now—my head is too weak!" From that time, for two months, he could bear no reading. After that period, though become much more ill, the Lord was mercifully pleased to enable him once more to hear his holy word read. And from this time, till within a few days of his dissolution, when it was possible for him to withdraw his mind from his sufferings, he would beg me to read to him; and many are the sweet little comments which my memory treasures up. He was exceedingly fond of listening to the "Pilgrim's Progress"—a book he loved in health, not for the story, but for its rich spiritual meaning, which he understood as

well as I did—perhaps much better. I will tell you one of his remarks. I was reading, one day, of a Mr. Fearing, who was continually disturbed and retarded in his progress by doubts and misgivings. Knowing my child's former experience to have been in this way, and fearing his making a comparison which might be painful, I looked at him, and observed, "This, however, my love, was better than presumption." He instantly replied, "Better than ignorant presumptuousness, mother; but not better than that true faith that makes people good and happy." Could you have replied better? Of this happy character had his own faith become. Never, in all his illness, did he express a wish to be better. Once, when, for a few days, his sufferings were considerably mitigated, and his pulse stronger, he said, "Perhaps, mother, at last God is going to bless my medicines; perhaps he has been afflicting me to punish my sins and do me good; and when he has punished me as much as he thinks necessary, and made my sufferings do me all the good he intends, he will then restore me."

Thus, waiting to see the Lord's will, in the sweetest frame you can imagine, a day or two more passed, when redoubled sufferings spoke a negative to the hope of life, but had no power to ruffle his brow, or to lessen his belief that all was done in love. Once or twice he said timidly to me, "God has been trying, mother, to do me good; and I feel that he has done me good by this sickness. I have a great deal more faith than I had, and in some other things I feel much happier too." A lingering unwillingness to give up his brother and me, appeared the last feeling which stood between him and perfect resignation to die, and his tender conscience was wounded by it. Once he asked me, "Mother, do you think God would be displeased with a dying person for wishing that he might sometimes see his friends on earth, to talk religion with them?" Blessed child! the recollection of his whole life talks religion loudly to me.

The gentlest of human beings, he was yet, where principle was concerned, one of the firmest. In the very early part of his sick-

ness, I talked to him one day of his marbles, to try to amuse him, and made some remark about his winning more, when he should recover. He looked surprised at me, and said eagerly, "Why, mother, you don't think I play in earnest, do you?"—I did not answer directly, but said, "Why, you do not think it worse than plugging tops, do you?"—"Mother! I never plug tops in earnest."—"Don't the school boys plague you to do so?"—"Oh! yes, they laugh at me, and make a great deal of fun of me, and some of them call me mean—but you know, mother, I must not let that make me do what is wrong." I had never hinted to him that I disapproved of playing marbles, &c. in the usual way—his decision against so doing, flowed entirely from his application of general principles. I enquired how long he had discontinued playing in earnest. "About a year and a half, mother"—that is from the time he was seven years and six months old—and I know from the habits of his most frequent playmates he must have resisted frequent temptations and much ridicule. One of his greatest appre-

hensions in going to school, was that he might become fond of the society of bad boys, and be led into improprieties of conduct; and in the most artless manner, he would pray God to teach him to choose his companions and to preserve him from temptation, or to enable him to resist it. With the utmost humility he would beg his brother to counsel him how to act, and never did he hesitate yielding to his advice.

But my dear little one has entered into his rest! And Oh! what a rest must his be, entered through so much tribulation—endured with such Christian fortitude—with such an unwavering belief, that his heavenly Father inflicted no pang upon him, but what he knew to be needful—with such constant thankfulness that God, who delighteth not in afflicting his creatures, did nevertheless persevere in laying on him what he thought best suited to promote his eternal interests! Sometimes, when I saw him suffering beyond my power of looking calmly upon, I have whispered to him, “My darling, I would suspend these sufferings, if I could; but God

is wiser and firmer than I am—his love looks to eternity!” “Oh! yes, mother,” he would softly answer, “I am certain of that—I know that if God *could* feel sorry, he would be sorry to deal with me in this way; but, mother, it is a great thing, that God always goes on doing what is for our good, if it is ever so trying to us.” At other times, he would say, “Mother, if I were not to try to let this sickness do me good, how ungratefully I should act, when God continues so long trying to do me good in a way that he does not love?” Once, when I thought it impossible he could longer tranquilly support what he was undergoing, I said, “My dearest son, I fear your patience will fail—look to Jesus for aid.” He fixed his sweet, mild, and now unnaturally bright blue eyes upon me, and with an expression of countenance I can never forget, said, “Oh! no, mother, I hope not; I do pray to Jesus, and I do not think he will forsake me. I have not at all the same fears now that I used to have when I was in health. I could hardly believe then that God could love such a one

as I am; now I do not seem to doubt it at all." Nor did he appear harassed by those apprehensions which he sometimes expressed when in health. Only twice, during all his illness, did he seem even anxious, and then only for a minute. Once was on reviving a little from a stupor in which he had been for hours—his head weak and confused, and I suppose his feelings somewhat deadened—he looked very anxiously and timidly at me, and then said, "Please, mother, to tell me why you are so sure that God has spoken to my heart, and that Jesus will make me his own." I went slowly and deliberately, but fully, over the grounds of my faith for him. He listened with an intentness of attention astonishing under the circumstances in which he lay; and as I spoke, the little transient cloud vanished, and the most satisfied expression diffused itself over his countenance. He was too feeble to speak; but he sweetly smiled on me, and held up his mouth to be kissed.

The other occasion was one day, when he was unusually easy, and his fever more

moderate than ordinary. He had lain silent for some hours, when he unexpectedly asked me to bring him Sherwood's Stories on the Catechism—a book he had read several times with great pleasure, when well. He requested me to find for him the part where the clergyman examines the children previously to distributing the Bibles. "Now, mother, please not to speak to me." I went to the fire, surprised, for it was two months since he had been able to read. I observed that he read a little, then closed his eyes—whether in prayer or meditation, I did not know—then read again, and again closed his eyes. This continued for some minutes, when, with a look of extreme dejection, he said, "Mother, take the book; I am not able to read more." I observed, "I fear, my dear, the effort has injured you." "No, mother; but"—and he gazed on me with such an expression of deep humility and distress, as pained me exceedingly; then, after a little while continued, "but, mother, I am so very ignorant; after all, I seem to know nothing. I could never answer such



questions as the clergyman puts to his scholars in anything like the manner they are represented to have done. Oh, mother, how different I am from what I ought to be!" I endeavoured to reassure him, saying, that he could, I was certain, answer similar questions as satisfactorily—that is, that he could give the *sense* of the Scriptures as promptly, though, from the weakness of his head, and from never having learned some of the passages quoted by heart, he could not give the very words of Scripture. He sighed and shook his head. "My dear child," said I, "God has not left you in the dark on any important doctrine; and you should be thankful for this, in place of suffering yourself to become depressed, because he has not favoured you with so retentive a memory as some others. Answer me now, my love, the questions I will put to you, and you will be satisfied I do not say 'peace,' to you, when there should be no peace." I then, as his strength would enable him to reply, put a number of interrogatories to him, with his replies to which, he could not himself help

being satisfied; and though he still appeared much humbled, his serenity of soul was restored; indeed, his love and gratitude to the Saviour, who he was permitted to hope, would make up for even such great deficiencies as his, were deepened by this little exercise.

One evening, when his agony was very great, yielding to weakness, I threw myself beside him on the bed, and burst into tears. "Mother, mother," said he, in a tone stronger than usual, "look at me." I did so; and he continued in an affectionate manner, "*How hard God tries to make you good!*" I could contain myself no longer, and was obliged to leave the room, till I could recover composure.

Will you indulge me in telling one other little trait indicative of the character of my dear John? At one period of his disease, something was hoped for from stimulants. I told him, the doctors desired me to give him gin-toddy. "No, no, mother; I cannot, indeed I cannot take gin." I was much surprised, for he had never objected to the

most nauseous medicines, or most painful or disagreeable remedies, considering it his duty to obey the physicians implicitly. I reminded him of this, and asked him why he was disposed to depart, in this instance, from his usual course of proceeding. He reminded me of a resolution, formed a year before, that he would never drink any spirituous liquors. I immediately recollected the circumstance. He had an utter horror of the sin of intemperance; and speaking to me once on the subject of so many persons falling into it, said, he supposed the love of drink came on by degrees, and as nobody could feel sure of being able to resist it, he thought it would be a good way to make a resolution never to taste strong drink. This he said he would do, and pray to God to enable him to keep all his life. From the time this resolution was formed, he never saw any one intoxicated, that he was not reminded to renew his prayer for perseverance and strength to keep his resolution; and this habit had so confirmed his abhorrence of the idea of ardent spirits, and

made him feel it so much a matter of duty to refuse them in any shape, that he shuddered at the order of the physicians. I endeavoured to combat his scruples, and make him view the subject in a proper light; but so tender was his conscience, that I found him pained, without changing his sentiments. On the next visit of the doctors, I appealed to them as religious men, for their opinions on the subject. They exaggerated their hopes from the adoption of the measure, and represented to him that acquiescence was his present duty. He listened in silence; but on their departure, besought me so pathetically not to urge the point further, that I desisted, seeing how exceedingly agitated he was becoming from the conflict he endured between his wish to conform to our judgment, and his dread of doing wrong. The next morning, when his fever had somewhat abated, his head become clearer, and nerves more firm, he saw the matter in a different light, and, calling me to him, seemed to make one great effort, which flushed his face, and said, "Mother, you are right; I

ought to use every means which God permits such good men as the doctors to prescribe. I am *determined* to do my duty to-day, Please to bring me the gin." The great effort it evidently cost my poor weak child to come to this determination, touched me exceedingly. He did, however, persevere in the use of this remedy, until the doctors were satisfied, though every drink he took cost him a great effort. One day, his aunt said to him, "Oh! you will soon become so fond of your toddy, John, you will want some pound-cake with it." The idea seemed most revolting to him, and in an earnest tone, he said, "I hope not; I would much rather take it disliking it as I do, than liking it." Shortly after, the doctors ordered porter. This he relished much, but presently found that it affected his head with an unusual sensation. He blamed himself greatly for having taken so much, and never after could be induced to take it otherwise than with the utmost caution, and in very small draughts, even when, sinking with debility, and parched with fever, it was the

greatest luxury that could be offered to him. So firm, where principle was concerned, was this dear boy!

Perhaps you will desire to know whether he ever wished to partake of the Lord's supper. He did. On the two last sacramental occasions before his illness, he expressed to me an earnest desire, but added, in his timid way, "How should I ever be able to answer Mr. N—— when he went to examine me, mother?" Having no wish that he should take a step of this kind prematurely, I replied, "Do not be solicitous on that head, dear; wait patiently. If your desire is of the Lord, he will impart to you resolution to go through all proper, preliminary measures." He was satisfied, and the subject dropped, but during the several last administrations of the sacrament, which he witnessed, he was greatly affected. And now he is with that Saviour he remembered with such emotion; now symbols and veils are removed, and he beholds face to face.

I believe I have not yet told you the nature of his disease. I cannot. His case

was entirely new, and completely baffled the skill of our best physicians. They could never ascertain its originating cause, or to what order of fevers to refer it, declaring at the close, that they were as completely in the dark as ever. You may form some idea of his fever, when I say, that in the morning, which was his best time, his pulse was generally 160—during the evening and night the pulsations could not be numbered—and yet his position could not be changed. All the relief that could be afforded was that of placing occasionally a fresh pillow under his poor, burning head. His fixed position was a most distressing aggravation of his sufferings, but never once did he complain of it. How has my heart bled, when lying silently beside him during his dreadful nights, I have seen him at intervals turn his face towards my pillow, the only movement he could make, and raise his meek, patient eyes to mine, to ascertain whether I slept, then again turn his poor head to its usual position, and without one word, groan, or sigh, suffer on.

When I began to teach my little darling

to write, which was at six years of age, I gave him a little desk with a lock and key for his own use. Sitting up with him one night, when he had been about two months ill, I opened this desk, to indulge myself in looking over the little memorials of his industry and improvement which it contained. Judge of my feelings when I opened the leaves of a book I had given him to draw in for his amusement, I found in it a number of little prayers, written at different periods from the time he was seven years and a few months old. I wept and rejoiced over them, you may believe, and with one exception, I have now nothing in my possession more precious. Never had I suggested to my child such a practice, and never knew when he penned these petitions; his having done so secretly, is a proof how much he delighted in religious exercises. I will transcribe some of them for you, without making the smallest alteration in them. They will interest you, although very different from the prayers I have often heard him utter when on his knees before God; but you know a child



writes so slowly, and the mechanical process requires so much of his attention, as necessarily to render any effort in this way brief, and also to impair considerably the spirit with which the thoughts might first have passed through his mind. One thing will perhaps strike you, as it has done me, that he does not pray merely to be enabled to *fulfil* duty, but to *delight* in so doing. This delight was what he ever aspired to, and whenever he found reading, prayer, or going to church, rather an effort of duty than a pleasing employ, he was greatly pained.

When he went to school, unlike most of the scholars, he was rejoiced to find that the preceptor opened the daily exercises with prayer, and such was his engaged and devout appearance during these prayers, as to excite attention. Often he would repeat to me parts of them, and ask me if I did not think it would be a great help to him to prevent his giving up to the temptations of school, to join in such good prayers every day. I give you his own unstudied expressions. I would neither add to, nor improve anything

I relate. Such was my boy, and in addition to all this, or rather as the chief cause of all this, God had sowed the good seed in his heart almost in his tenderest infancy—had blessed the watering it received, and gave an increase which demands my most fervent thanksgivings. And I do thank him—I do bless his holy name. My great fear is, that all the good which this trial was calculated to produce, has not been effected; indeed I am confident it has not; and yet, as our pastor remarked, there was everything accompanying it to render it eminently useful. God grant a blessing yet upon it! You will not accuse me of exaggeration in speaking of my beloved son, when I tell you that our pastor thought his character and experience, his conscientious deportment in health, and his patient submission in suffering, so remarkable, as to to render it proper to expatiate upon them, and endeavour to render them beneficial to many, by making them the subject of an evening address and exhortation in our session-room. A similar course was adopted by an Episcopal minister, intimate in

our family. What I have written now, I have written in the overflowings of a full heart, to a dear and sympathizing Christian friend, who will, I know, properly appreciate my motives in doing so. These are, gratitude to God; a wish to ensure your affectionate respect for the memory of one so precious to me, and a sense of relief to myself, in talking of the beloved child. To speak of him, is not to foster improper feelings, it is to dwell upon evidences of the truth, power, and love of our heavenly Father—such evidences as must warm and soften the hardest heart.

The prayers I will now transcribe, that is, some of them, and you will remember they were private exercises, never expected to meet any eye. The first was written when he was seven years and better than five months old, as I learn by the date.

“O! Lord, let me adore thee for ever more, and let me delight to do thy word, and let me triumph over my great enemy, and believe in Jesus and trust to him, and Oh! preserve my soul from hell, for his sake, Amen.”

This little prayer is dated at the time when his convictions and apprehensions were so distressing, that it was necessary to take him from home and change the scene. I will quote one other prayer written the same year, when he was seven years and seven months old. The slow and careful manner in which I had taught him to write, accounts for the brevity of these productions.

“Oh! Lord, enable me continually to adore thy holy and blessed name, and cause me to delight in going to hear thy sacred word preached. Oh! Lord, make me be born again, for I am a sinner, and I desire to become religious. Oh! enable me to do everything thou likest, and to be afraid of doing anything which thou dost not approve of, Amen.”

The next I shall transcribe is dated one year later.

“Lord God Almighty, Father of heaven and earth, I pray thee to turn me from all the wickedness of the world, and make me ever adore thee. I pray thee also to preserve me from the troubles of this earth, and

let my heart be full of gratitude to thee for all thy goodness to me. Oh! Lord, change my hard heart, from bad to good—enable me to obey thee in all things, and follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust in him, with all my heart, and love him with all my soul, Amen.”

The next few lines I shall copy, are dated in the same year. I only copy them, because written on a thanksgiving day, and therefore affording sweet evidence that such days were not suffered to pass unheeded by this dear babe in Christ. His favourite cousin and his brother having holiday on these occasions and being with him, a child so fond of play might be supposed to be then more than usually devoted to amusement and averse to serious thought.

“Oh! Lord, let this be to me also a day of thankfulness to thee for thy great mercies—let me never forget all thy goodness to me; and O Lord, help me from this time to conquer first my own wrong wishes and feelings, then the vices and temptations of the world, and lastly its allurements. So let me

grow in grace till I become one of thine own children. Do this, O God, for Jesus' sake. For ever and ever, Amen."

I will but transcribe one other—the last in the book, and to me inexpressibly affecting, from a recollection of the circumstances under which it was written. A few days elapsed after my darling was first seized before he became so ill, as to be constantly confined to bed. In this interval our communion occurred, and I felt it my duty, not considering him at all ill, to attend church. He was of course left alone for some time, as he requested me not to desire any one to sit in the room with him. When I asked him privately on my return, if he had enjoyed himself in my absence, "Oh! yes, mother, as much as I could, being so poorly." He then told me the chapters and hymns he had read—observed that he had been enabled to pray over many of the verses, and remarked, that he had "never in his life felt so much trust in Jesus, and so willing to die as he now did, or so full of hope that God would always watch over him

to do him good, and would never leave him to himself;" adding, "Oh! mother, how we ought to love God! How good<sup>d</sup> God is! Mother, please to let me lay my head on your lap, and then talk to me as you often do about Jesus. I think your talk would seem sweeter than common to-day." I indulged the dear lamb, and never, I think, shall I forget that conversation. It was during my morning's absence that the last prayer was made, though he never mentioned it to me. The tremulousness of his hand is evident from the writing—indeed he never after this Sabbath rose from his bed, so rapidly did his disease increase. His head was even then very weak.

"Oh! Lord, at the day of judgment, let me be placed among those whom thou wilt separate from those that love thee not—let me be found with them on thy right hand—let me be one of the flock that follow thee—let me be taken up to thy dwelling-place in heaven, for I am a little child, and thou hast promised that if little children seek thee early, they *shall* find thee, and I hope, O

Lord, that I have sought thee earnestly—but if not, enable me to do so yet, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.”

I know not what you will think of this prayer—to me it breathes a most sweet, Christian spirit. It claims the promise—(mark the emphasis under the word *shall*)—it expresses a soothing hope, yet an humble distrust of his own judgment, and continued wish for divine help, in the only way in which saving help is promised. Oh! my cousin, when I first saw this little effusion at midnight, alone with my suffering lamb, the quivering, uncertain strokes of his pen proclaiming how ill fitted for exertion he must have been, when still he found comfort in thus employing himself, it almost convulsed me with suppressed emotion; but when I read it, how did I bless the Lord for this precious treasure! I needed comfort, and this afforded it; and think you I have ever wished to bring back my darling from the enjoyment of those pleasures at the right hand of God, which he was so early enabled to seek and long for, with more eagerness and perseve-



rance than he ever sought for any childish amusement, or earthly good? No! no! I bless the Lord, for taking my child from all the evil to come, whilst yet he remained almost unspotted from the world.

I will tell you one other little circumstance to convince you what power he thought religion should have. A few weeks before his removal he requested his brother to take some of his jelly to a sick man in the neighbourhood. His brother returned, saying it went too late—Mr. W—— was dead. John looked at me with a most concerned countenance and ejaculated, “his poor wife! what trouble she must be in!”—“Oh! no,” said his brother, “she came to the door herself, and seemed quite at ease.” Instead of viewing her conduct as his brother’s tone implied that he did, as evidencing want of sensibility, my heavenly-minded lamb fixed a look full of benevolent gratification on me, and said, “how religious Mrs. W—— must be, mother, to be able to give her husband up so soon! Oh! what a great thing religion is!” I shrunk behind his curtain to conceal my emotion,

for I felt his words and look as a message from the Lord, to inform me what should be my deportment when soon I should be called on to give up one so precious.

As I have already made a book instead of a letter of this sketch of my child, I will yet add to this poor tribute to his worth and memory, a few lines sent me by my sister-in-law, after visiting his inanimate remains. So dreadfully emaciated and reduced was he, and so altered by his last lingering agonies, that when the flush and fullness of fever had passed from his face, and when his bright eyes were closed, nothing except the calm, open forehead, seemed to say who had once animated that clay. But I cannot dwell on this. M. B——, guessing how painful to me must be the change, sent me, a few days after, these lines, and I cannot tell you how soothing to my heart was the idea they suggested:

*“Here kept in perfect peace, our darling boy  
Now lives a cherub in the realms of joy;  
And though his spirit linger’d, loath to part  
From the waste form which held so pure a heart,*

And when 'twas wafted through the expanse of air  
 Took with it all that made that form so fair,  
 No mystery see we here, but now can trace  
 What was it, gave such sweetness to that face.  
 'Twas God's own Spirit that resided there,  
 The hallowed soul that made the child so fair.  
 That habitant is gone, and now we see,  
 Nothing, alas! but frail mortality:  
 The same loved form, but no expression given,  
 The patient spirit's flown away to heaven."

And now, my dear friend, I will try your patience and friendly sympathy no further. My fond heart longed to tell you something of the treasure I have lost, and I have indulged it. You will pardon my weakness; perhaps you will even find my tedious narrative useful. God grant it! Oh! my friend, we must live as this child did, if we would have our latter end like his. When we expect as much of religion as he did, we may perhaps make similar attainments, for the Lord's hand is not shortened.

Yours, &c.

P. S.—My child was just nine years and seven months old when he left us.

Guy Morville  
Apr 21.

I believe in the communion  
of Saints.

'Little things on little wings  
Bear little souls to Heaven'