

WIDENER



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HARVARD COLLEGE

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Morals -  
Letters -



The Gift of  
 Jared Sparks, L.L.D.  
 McLean Professor  
 in

Harvard University  
 March 2  
 1846



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LETTERS

ON

**PRACTICAL SUBJECTS,**

FROM A

**CLERGYMAN OF NEW-ENGLAND,**

TO HIS

**DAUGHTER.**

*By*  
*William Ball Cheague.*

HARTFORD,  
HUNTINGTON & HOPKINS.

.....  
1822.

Phil 8893.20

**DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT, SS.**

**E. S.** **BE IT REMEMBERED**, That on the eleventh day of January, in the forty-sixth year of the independence of the United States of America, Huntington & Hopkins of the said District, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit: "Letters on Practical Subjects, from a Clergyman of New-England, to his Daughter."—In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned."

**CHAS. A. INGERSOLL,**

Clerk of the District of Connecticut.

A true copy of record examined and sealed by me,

**CHAS. A. INGERSOLL,**

Clerk of the District of Connecticut.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

**THE** following letters were originally designed to be preserved in manuscript, as a legacy to a motherless child. The circumstances which have resulted in their being given to the world, it is not necessary to state. The author has only to add his earnest prayer, that they may be read, with some degree of advantage, by young females into whose hands they may happen to fall, and especially by those, whom the righteous Providence of God has deprived of the advantages of maternal care and instruction.

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## LETTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

*My dear Child,*

By a mysterious dispensation of Providence, you were deprived of your mother, at an age when you were incapable of estimating the value of maternal attentions, or the loss which you sustained in her premature death. It was my lot to sit by her dying bed, while the unconscious smile was playing upon your countenance ; and it was nearly with the same breath that she commended her infant child to the gracious protection of Heaven, and her own departing spirit into the arms of her Redeemer. As you have advanced in years, you have often been interested in the story of her life and death, while, in your turn, you have lamented the dispensation, which has deprived you of her fostering and affectionate attentions. My determination to address to

you the following letters, has been induced altogether, by a regard to your circumstances, as a motherless child. I shall call your attention to several subjects intimately connected with your present and future happiness: but all that I can say, will be but a partial substitute for maternal counsels and instructions.

I am aware that much has been written on the same subjects upon which I am now to address you, and with a degree of ability to which I can make no claim. My design is, not to aim at any thing new or striking, but to give you plain parental advice, on topics, which do not lose their importance with their novelty. And it is a thought upon which I dwell with some interest, that though you might read the writings of a stranger with indifference, you will peruse these letters with attention, and, perhaps, advantage, when the heart that dictates them shall have ceased to beat, and the hand by which they are penned shall have mouldered into dust.

I need hardly tell you that my first and most fervent prayer on your behalf is, that

you may *remember your Creator in the days of your youth*. Unless you are practically religious, and embrace the gospel as a redeeming and purifying system, it will profit you nothing in the end, that you have every other accomplishment, which can adorn your character, or recommend you to the world. In the progress of these letters, I shall dwell upon the subject of practical religion, with some degree of particularity; and I wish you distinctly to remember, while I am directing your attention to other subjects, that they are all subordinate to this. To see you walking in the truth, and keeping the commandments of God, is the most earnest wish of

*Your affectionate Father.*

## LETTER II.

## EARLY FRIENDSHIPS.

*My dear Child,*

THERE is scarcely any thing which will go so far towards giving a complexion to your future character, as the friendships which you form in early life. The reason of this is to be sought in the constitution of the human mind. The impressions which we receive in childhood and youth, are those which we carry with us into the world ; and unless they are counteracted by some foreign influence, they grow strong by habit, and ultimately are matured into those fixed principles, which control the life, and decide the character.

If I am right in attributing so much to the influence of early friendships, you will perceive that it is a subject upon which it becomes you to act with the most cautious deliberation. The first rule which I would prescribe for the regulation of your conduct,

in this respect, is, *that your particular friends should not be numerous.* I say *particular friends*; because a few close and intimate friendships are perfectly consistent with a general esteem for your whole acquaintance. My reasons for wishing the number of your intimate friends to be limited, are two: First, that you will receive all the advantage from a small number, that you could from a larger: and second, that in proportion as the circle is extended beyond a moderate limit, you will be liable to find your confidence abused, and the value of your own friendship will be diminished.

The next article of advice which I have to give you on this subject, relates to *the character of your particular friends.* Never receive any one to your bosom, or do any thing to solicit an interchange of confidence, till you have had time thoroughly to examine and test the character. A friendship rashly formed, may bring after it a train of evils, which may follow you as long as you live. In ordinary cases, you will find that person the most valuable friend, whose attachment

is not gained in a moment, but is the result of considerable acquaintance ; and on the other hand, you may usually look with suspicion upon very warm professions, which are made without much knowledge of your character. As it is the tendency of an intimate friendship to assimilate its subjects, inquire, when you are about to select a friend, whether 't be a person, whose qualities you would wish to imitate ;—whether, amidst a cluster of excellencies, there be not some prominent foible, which clouds their splendour, and may expose you to inconvenience or reproach. You cannot indeed expect friends, in this world, who shall be free from imperfection and sin ; but let it be your endeavour to select those whose example may be recommended with the fewest exceptions.

I have a word to say with respect to *the manner, in which you should regulate your intercourse with your friends* after they are selected. If they are worthy of your friendship, they are worthy of your confidence ; and it is right that you should treat them, in general, without reserve. But while all your inter-

course is marked by a generous frankness, think not that you are bound to communicate to them every thing which you know, without discrimination. There may be many subjects, upon which it is best for you and for them, that you should remain silent. If you discover faults in their characters, be not backward to administer a gentle admonition ; but never wound them unnecessarily, by pouring into their ears the unmeaning speeches of fools and busy-bodies. I know this is sometimes considered an act of friendship ; but you may rely upon it, it is an act which true friendship peremptorily forbids. Always be faithful to your friends, and remember that a false friend is the worst kind of traitor.

*Your affectionate Father.*



## LETTER III.

EDUCATION. Solid branches.

*My Dear Child,*

IN this and some following letters, I design to give you my views of Education, and the comparative importance of its different branches.

As the intellectual part of our nature is that which confers upon it its superior dignity, so it is the improvement of the mind, which is the foundation of some of the most important distinctions. It is true, indeed, that mere intellectual light is not to be put in competition with moral worth ; but it is also true that they exert a reciprocal influence to dignify and exalt each other. Virtue cannot but be the object of respect and homage, wherever she is seen ; but it cannot be denied that she appears to much greater advantage, when she is encircled with the additional glory of intellectual greatness.

You will perceive from these remarks, that

I consider the great end of education to be the improvement of the mind ; keeping in view the truth, that all intellectual acquirements, in order to be of any ultimate advantage to their possessor, must be sanctified by Divine grace. That system of education, therefore, is the best, which tends most directly to the accomplishment of this end. It is of less importance what particular course of study is adopted, than that it should be of a character to enlarge and invigorate the mind, and give it the easy command of its own faculties.

I have no hesitation in advising you to direct your attention principally to the *more solid branches of learning* ; or in giving it as my opinion that these constitute by far the most important part of female education. I know that a different doctrine from this has been quite popular ; and I also know, that many a female, of fine natural talents, has come forth to the world, and shewn as the fruit of a long and expensive education, in the marvellous dexterity which she has acquired in the use of her hands and feet. Not

that I intend to treat with disrespect the ornamental branches of education : in a subsequent letter, I shall shew you that I am not unfriendly to them, as a subordinate part of the system : but I insist that they should be kept in their proper place, and not be suffered to crowd out other studies of a more solid and important kind. For are not females gifted with the exalted attribute of Reason, as well as the other sex ; and where has Providence intimated that in one sex this gift is to be cultivated with the utmost care, and in the other, is to be left in all the wildness and barrenness of nature ? What if the sexes have not, in all respects, the same destination ? What if man is designed by Providence to stand forth in the bolder walks of society ; and what if woman has her station allotted her more exclusively, amidst the retired scenes of domestic life ? This may be a reason why their educations should, in some respects, be differently conducted ; but it can never be an argument for leaving the mind of the female to rust with ignorance, or moulding her into a pleasant, animated plaything.

If it be desirable that the mind of man should expand and strengthen by exercise, it must also be desirable that the female mind should share, in some degree, the same cultivation : otherwise, the dearest, tenderest connection of life, which ought to be but another name for the most absolute community of interest and feeling, will be converted into an unequal, unnatural league between knowledge and ignorance.

After you have gone through the elementary branches of your education, by which I mean, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar and Geography, my advice is, if your circumstances admit, that you should gain some knowledge of History, Rhetoric and Natural Philosophy. I do not object to your making farther progress in Mathematical Science, if your taste should incline you to such studies ; though I believe you will be less likely to reap the fruit of your labour in that department, in after life, than if it were devoted to some more popular and practical branch.

With respect to the dead languages, I

should be glad to see you a proficient in Latin, and able to read Greek. The study of language, in general, if properly conducted, is, in my opinion, well fitted to enlarge the mind ; and the Latin language, particularly, has strong claims upon your attention, for the distinguished figure which it once made as a living language, and for the immortal efforts of genius which it still preserves. A knowledge of the modern languages, as the French, Spanish and Italian, may be sufficiently valuable to compensate for the trouble of acquiring it, after you have learned the Latin. But I do not insist on your being a linguist ; and I mention the subject here, rather as a necessary part of a complete system of education, than to intimate a wish that you, in the circumstances in which you will probably be placed, should attempt to extend your labours over so wide a field.

I must add one word with respect to the modern sciences of Chemistry, Mineralogy, Botany, &c. It would be injustice to them to say that they are chiefly valuable as pleasant accomplishments ; for in some respects,

they are of great practical use. They are, moreover, particularly important, as they lead to a minute examination of the works of God, and are fitted to convey to the mind a sensible impression of his wisdom and goodness. If Providence should favour you with an opportunity to attend to these branches, I should, by no means, consider it an unprofitable use of your time.

*Your affectionate Father.*

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## LETTER IV.

EDUCATION. Ornamental branches.

*My dear Child,*

IN my last letter, I hinted at my reasons for wishing you to devote yourself chiefly to solid studies, rather than to those branches which are more strictly ornamental. While the former will lay a foundation for usefulness and respectability, and will open sources of enjoyment in your own mind, which you

may carry with you into the vale of adversity and of old age, the latter, if they exist alone, will serve only as a memorial of wasted time, and as a mirror to reflect the most inexcusable ignorance.

But while I am thus decided in my preference for the more substantial parts of education, I will now shew you that I do not entirely exclude those of a less practical nature.

Those branches of education, which are usually referred to under the name of *ornamental*, are Musick, Painting, Drawing, Embroidery, &c. There is no one of these, to which I would not readily consent that you should devote some attention; and if you should even be inclined to become partially acquainted with each of them, and your circumstances should appear to favour it, I cannot say that you would have to encounter the opposition of your father. Inspiration itself bids us regard 'whatsoever things are lovely;' and I know of nothing in religion to prohibit your attention to these subjects, provided it be confined within reasonable limits. That you may not carry your attachment to

them to excess, it will be well for you to observe the following marks. You have the best of reason to conclude that this is the case, when you find that your attention to these things makes you love parties of pleasure, more than the house of God ; when it gives you a distaste for prayer, or religious meditation, or any solid intellectual exercise ; when it renders serious company less pleasant to you, and makes you think less of persons of real worth, because they are destitute of these accomplishments. It would give me great pain to see you sacrifice the improvement of your mind, to what I am compelled to regard as comparative trifles ; but it would give me much more concern, were I to see you sacrificing in the same cause, the best interests of your immortal soul.

I shall resume the subject of education, in my next letter, and address you upon the importance of domestic economy.

*I am your devoted Father.*



## LETTER V.

EDUCATION. Domestic economy.

*My dear Child,*

HOWEVER much you may be distinguished for intellectual cultivation, or for proficiency in the more refined and ornamental branches, you can make no claim to a complete education, unless you are considerably acquainted with *domestic economy*. I am aware that this is a subject towards which many young females feel a great indifference, and even aversion; and there is reason to fear, that in too many instances, this aversion has been heightened, by receiving, in some degree, the parental sanction: but, you may rely upon it, there cannot be a greater mistake upon the subject of female education, than the idea that this branch may, with safety, be either partially or entirely neglected.

With regard to the extent to which you should be informed on this subject, I would say, in general, that you ought to have so

much knowledge of it, as will enable you to regulate, with advantage, the concerns of a family. And this knowledge, in order to be of any real profit, must be *practical*: it can be attained, not by receiving lectures on domestic economy, nor even by observing the management of skilful superintendants, but only by actually mingling and participating in the cares and business of a family. There are, indeed, some of the domestic arts, which you can hardly be expected to acquire; and which, in the ordinary walks of domestic life, are not very important; but whatever relates to the immediate superintendance and management of household concerns; you cannot neglect, without exposing yourself to inconvenience, which no future exertions may be able completely to remedy.

It is important that you should cultivate a taste for domestic habits, as early as possible. As this is perhaps the most practical part of your education, you cannot safely neglect it for a long period; as the consequence of such neglect probably would be, that you would form other habits uncongenial with domestic

employments, and which perhaps might give you an aversion to them, which you would never overcome. Never consider it a hardship, therefore, to be placed in circumstances which favour your attention to this subject, and even demand your active exertions. Every item of this kind of knowledge which you gain, you will be able, hereafter, to turn to some practical account, which will compensate many-fold for the labour of attaining it.

It is not uncommon for young females, in the higher walks of life, to plead, as an apology for the neglect of this branch of education, the elevation and splendour of their external condition. If this excuse could ever be sustained, you have no right to expect that your worldly circumstances will be such, as to allow you to avail yourself of it : but the truth is, that it cannot be admitted in *any* case.— For what if Providence should actually place you in circumstances of wealth, and what the world calls, independence ! Would you not still be as really accountable to God for all your possessions, as though you had been dim-

ited to a moderate competence ? Nay, would not your responsibility be increased just in proportion to the abundance which had been bestowed upon you ? This, therefore, instead of being an argument for the neglect of the domestic part of your education, is a reason why you should attend to it with the greater care : for if many of the gifts of Providence are entrusted to your management, and you are responsible for the proper improvement of each of them, it is certainly desirable that you should not lack that knowledge, which will enable you to husband these bounties of Heaven in a proper manner.

But if you leave the idea of accountability entirely out of the question, there are still other reasons, of great weight, why this part of your education should not be neglected. Without a considerable knowledge of domestic economy, you can never be qualified to preside in the concerns of a family. Though you should be placed in a station which might command all the conveniences and assistance which opulence can furnish, you will never feel at home in your own house, if you have

not gained that practical knowledge, which shall enable you to keep your house in order. You cannot realize half the value of your domestic aid, unless you are capable of exercising a general superintendance, and giving occasional directions ; and without such ability, you will be liable to continual impositions from those, to whom you will be necessitated to confide interests, which ought to remain exclusively in your own hands. Many a large estate has been squandered, and many a family reduced to want, in consequence of a deficiency in this part of female education.

Let me add, if Providence should ever place you at the head of a family, and you are obliged from ignorance of domestic economy, to entrust its concerns to another, you cannot maintain the dignity which appropriately belongs to such a station. You will be subject to a thousand painful mortifications, from discovering that your concerns are improperly managed, and yet being unable to suggest the mode of correction ; and though you may try to flatter yourself, that your ignorance on

this subject, will be taken for the proof of a polite education, it is much more probable that the unsavoury food, which will sometimes chance to be placed before your guests, will lead them to regret, that you happened to possess so unfortunate an accomplishment.

What I have said hitherto on this subject, has principally been upon the supposition, that you are to be placed in circumstances of external ease and affluence. But I hardly need say, that this is, by no means certain. Even if your prospects, in this respect, should be fair, in the outset of domestic life, there are a thousand changes, which may await you, any one of which may cast around you the gloom and desolation of heart-breaking poverty. I could tell you of many, who have begun life, without a cloud being seen to settle upon their temporal prospects, and have closed it in all the degradation and wretchedness, which the most abject want could occasion. I would fondly indulge the hope, that Heaven may avert such a lot as this from my dear child ; but, as it is impossible to tell what scenes of adversity the

changes of life may bring along with them, it is unquestionably the part of wisdom, that you should be prepared, so far as possible, for any lot to which Providence may call you. What, then, if you should be destined, in a few years, to the obscure and humble walks of poverty? What if, from the comfortable competence which you now possess, you should sink to a condition, upon which you have, hitherto, been scarcely able to look, without feelings of compassion, and tears of sympathy? What if you should see around you a little defenceless family, and all the dreaded evils of poverty clustering upon them, in most melancholy profusion? And what, if, in the midst of all these circumstances of temporal depression, you should be found incapable of devising a plan, or lifting a hand for the relief or comfort of yourself and family? I have seen an elegant, accomplished female, in these very circumstances, which I have described: and who knows but that another such case may occur, and that it may not be the case of my beloved child? Sure I am that another argument cannot be

necessary, to impress you with the importance of the subject of this letter.

In connection with the subject of domestic economy, let me say one word on the importance of your avoiding all needless expence. Though it would mortify me exceedingly to discover in you any indications of an avaricious spirit, I wish you to let all your expences be regulated, not merely by a regard to your ability, but to your duty and accountability as a steward of God. Let your dress be always neat and decent, but avoid gaudy and superfluous ornament. It may make the vulgar and ignorant stare, but it will excite the contempt of the wise and discerning. Always be liberal and honourable in any dealings which you may have with the world, but remember that the ostentation of liberality is cautiously to be avoided.

*I am your affectionate Father.*



## LETTER VI.

## ●GENERAL READING.

*My dear Child,*

IN the course of your education, and after it is completed, you will occasionally find leisure to devote to miscellaneous reading. In the present letter, I shall give you some directions how to regulate this employment, that it may be at once the most pleasant and useful.

And the first thought which I would suggest to you on this subject is, that even *your general reading should, as far as possible, be systematic.* You will find great advantage in having the different departments of literature and science with which you are conversant, so far systematized in your mind, that you will be able to refer every book that you read to some one of them. In this way, your mind will become an intellectual store-house, accommodated to the reception of every kind of useful materials ; and its various apart-

ments arranged with so much skill and order, that you will never be at a loss where to deposit any new article of knowledge, or where to find any which you had previously deposited. On the other hand, if you read indiscriminately, and without any regard to system, the impressions, which are made upon your mind, will be vague and indistinct, and after a little while, the severest effort will be too feeble to recall them.

It is important, moreover, that you should form a habit of *selecting and treasuring up those parts of a book which are most important*. In order for this, accustom yourself to review your author before you lay him aside, and form an analysis, at least in your own mind, of all that you have been reading. It will be well too, if you commit to paper a general outline of every important book that you read; or at least, that you make references on a blank ~~paper~~, to those parts to which you may afterwards wish to recur. Some such expedient as this will be of great use in assisting your recollection; and will help you to retain stores of knowledge, which

would otherwise be lost from your memory. But, in order to regulate this employment with advantage, you must not only have some regard to the *manner* of your reading, but you must also *be particular in the selection of books*. A bad book, like a bad friend, may exert a corrupting influence, which an established habit of virtue will scarcely be able to resist. Never allow yourself, therefore, to read books of an immoral tendency, whatever attractions they may possess from a refined and fascinating style. These literary embellishments can no more disarm false principles of their fatal tendency, than poison can lose its virulence by being mingled with honey. Nay, these very attractions give to bad books much of their dangerous influence ; for while they recommend them to the attention of the incautious and inexperienced, they too often serve as a channel through which the most deadly impressions are conveyed to the mind. And if the reading of such books were the only way in which you could gain the refinement of literature, then, I would say, better remain in ignorance forever, than hazard the

wreck of your moral principles, and admit into your heart the elements of destruction.

The general direction which I would give you, in regard to the selection of books, is, that *while you carefully avoid all works of immoral tendency, you choose those, which, on the whole, are best adapted to increase your stock of useful knowledge, and practical wisdom.* In the wide range of elegant literature, there is a great variety of authors, the reading of which will at once enlighten your understanding, improve your taste, and exert an influence upon your heart, favourable to virtue and piety. The excellent works of Mrs. More, the pride and glory of your sex, you cannot read too often, or too attentively. They contain a system of moral instruction, particularly adapted to young females, which has, perhaps, never had a parallel in any age or country.

In your reading, it is important that you should have considerable regard to *the cultivation of your taste.* With reference to this, endeavour to be conversant with those authors, who have been most conspicuous in

the field of literature. Do not, however, confine your reading to any particular class, but select those who have been employed with the most success, in the various kinds of writing. Such a course will be most likely to give you a correct and dignified taste, at the same time that it will impart a general consistency and vigour to your intellectual character.

Though I have no wish that you should be an enthusiast with regard to *poetry*, I would still have you, in some degree, familiar with the best poets of ancient and modern date. The immortal works of Milton and Young, Cowper and Thomson, may be read with great advantage to the heart, as well as to the understanding. But there are others, usually associated in the same cluster of poetical genius, who, however inimitable their poetry, cannot be safely recommended as guides to youthful virtue. Much of the modern poetry, I am sorry to say, is chargeable with the same immoral tendency. Even the enchanting strains of Scott and Byron, too often seem designed to shed a deceitful glare

over the objects of life, or to plant the seeds of infidelity and death, in the unsuspecting breast of youthful inexperience.

With respect to *dramatic writers*, there are few which I can recommend to you, without much reserve and qualification. The plays of Shakespeare, though incomparably the finest specimen of dramatic genius, which the English language preserves, have so much in them to tarnish the purity of the mind, that I wish you never to read them, unless it be under the direction of some friend, who will point to you the parts which are most unexceptionable. The plays of Addison, of Young, of Rowe, and perhaps a few others, may be read with safety and advantage.

But there is no kind of reading to which young females are usually more inclined, than *fictitious history* or *novels*. There are a few works of this kind, which are written with an unusual elevation of moral feeling, and which may be read with no small intellectual and moral advantage. Those, which, perhaps, are distinguished, in this respect, above all others, are the novels of Richardson.

The modern novels, which are attributed to Walter Scott, are, for the most part, of unexceptionable moral tendency, and abound in critical views of human nature. But while I give my testimony in favour of a few of these productions, I have no hesitation to pronounce the great mass of them, as of dangerous tendency, and wholly unworthy the attention of a female. A character formed by the reading of such trash, will combine all the elements of insipidity, corruption and moral death. Many a young female has been obliged to trace to this cause the destruction of her principles, her character, and ultimately, her life : and if she have escaped these greater evils, she is still unfitted for solid intellectual enjoyment, and for a life of active usefulness.

I will only detain you, for the present, with a few words on the reading of *sermons*. Your first object in reading books of this kind, should be the improvement of your heart : you ought, therefore, with reference to this, to select those which are most serious and practical. But it is perfectly consis-

tent that you should combine with the culture of your affections, the improvement of your mind : and for this purpose, you should choose those which are composed with the best taste, and with the greatest degree of intellectual vigour. The sermons of Barrow and Jeremy Taylor, though they partake much of the spirit of the age in which they were written, are specimens of a vigorous and powerful eloquence, to which modern times have hardly furnished a parallel. The sermons of Archbishop Tillotson, are fertile in weighty and impressive sentiment, and on subjects connected with natural religion, are exceeded by few in the language. Bishop Sherlock's sermons, though not in all respects accordant with my own views of religious truth, are certainly a monument of an elegant and active mind, which posterity can never cease to admire. The sermons of Robert Walker, a modern Scotch divine, are fine specimens of an evangelical spirit, and admirably adapted to promote the influence of practical religion. But the sermons which I can, on the whole, recommend with as much confidence



as any other, are those of our own countryman, the late Doctor Lathrop of West-Springfield. While they are written with excellent taste, they discover a fertility of invention, a grasp of intellect, an enlightened view of scripture doctrine, and an elevation of pious feeling, which, to say the least, are not often found in combination.

I have been thus particular on the subject of your general reading, from a conviction that it is one, which is intimately connected both with your intellectual and moral improvement. If I have been more particular than is necessary, it is an error which has resulted from the fond and anxious regard of

*Your affectionate Father.*

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## LETTER VII.

### INDEPENDENCE OF MIND.

*My dear child,*

**THERE** is, perhaps, no single quality more

necessary to the constitution of a character, which will ensure the highest degree of respectability, and the largest amount of usefulness, than a good degree of *independence of mind*. Without this, the brightest cluster of amiable qualities, will be associated with a kind of imbecility, which is incompatible with true dignity of character, and which will prevent its possessor from receiving that homage, which independent virtue never fails to command.

But, what I would recommend to you under the name of independence of mind, is something very remote from another quality, which has sometimes assumed the dignity of this appellation. There is a pride of opinion, which consists in an excessive confidence in our own judgment, and a disregard or contempt of the opinions of others. This characteristic, instead of indicating a mind of superior mould, is rather an evidence of a contracted understanding. The person, who possesses a fair and well proportioned mind, will be ready to receive light that may emanate from the mind of another ; and will not

be the more disposed to cherish an error, because his own brain may have been instrumental in giving it existence. Never think, for a moment, therefore, that you forfeit your independence, by renouncing an erroneous opinion, ever so publicly, though it should imply an acknowledgement, not only of your fallibility, but of an unhappy failure in discernment. To persist in an error against the force of conviction, is something worse than obstinacy. To confess an error, as soon as you discover it, is the best atonement which you can make for having ever indulged it.

The independence which I would here advise you to cultivate, is that quality of mind which leads us to form all our opinions deliberately, and from the best light which we can gain, and then to adhere to them with firmness, until there shall be sufficient evidence to reverse our convictions. It is opposed to inconsiderate and hasty judgments. It supposes the mind, before adopting an opinion, to weigh the opposite kinds of evidence, and to form a rational estimate of their compara-

tive force. It is also perfectly consistent with an indulgent spirit towards those who differ from us in opinion. Instead of discovering itself in excessive self-confidence, in a conviction of our own infallibility, and in an arrogant refusal to listen to reasons and arguments, it never fails to associate fairness with firmness, and a distrust of human infirmity with a proper regard for our deliberate convictions.

The quality which I have here been recommending, you will perceive is but another name for *decision of character*. It is important, not only as it influences your opinions, but because, through them, it will exert a powerful influence on your conduct. It will secure you, more than any thing else, except a principle of Christian holiness, against false opinions and corrupt practice ; it will be a shield which will protect you from the impositions of the world, and in a great measure also, from its scandal and reproach : for it confers a majesty upon the character, which the world cannot but respect, and with which it will not often venture to trifle. But while

you aim at this exalted trait, let me caution you again to beware that your independence does not degenerate into obstinacy. The least appearance of this is so inconsistent with the amiable and benignant spirit, so essential to female loveliness, that you cannot guard against it with too much caution. Obstinacy in a *man* deserves to be treated with exemplary reprobation ; but in a *female*, it cannot be chastised with too great severity. Far better that you should be weak than obstinate : the former would only excite pity ; the latter, disgust and contempt.

*Believe me, your devoted Parent.*

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## LETTER. VIII.

### FORMATION OF MANNERS.

*My dear Child,*

IT is of great importance to your success in life, that you should pay considerable attention to your *manners*. These are usually

considered a fair index of the mind : it is from them that we receive, for the most part, our first impressions of the character ; and in many cases, where the acquaintance is transient, we have no other criterion by which our opinion can be regulated. It is an old and just adage that ‘ a man is known by his manners.’

As the manners are professedly the expression of the feelings, the living image of the heart, you will at once perceive, that their character will be closely connected with *the complexion of your natural dispositions and moral qualities*. It is easy to see that ill-natured and haughty feelings will be embodied in an overbearing and forbidding manner ; and on the other hand, that an amiable and affectionate disposition will discover itself in a gentle and winning deportment. The grand requisite for possessing good manners, therefore, is to possess good feelings. If you cultivate an amiable temper, it will require but little additional attention to render your manners agreeable and engaging.

Next to the cultivation of benevolent feel-

ings, it is important that *you should have so much self-command, that you can act out your feelings without embarrassment.* With a view to this, endeavour to form a proper estimate of your character and condition in life, and of the deference due to those with whom you associate. This will be likely to save you from the two extremes of undue forwardness, and awkward diffidence ; and to render your manners the simple, natural expression of the feelings of your heart.

There is nothing more disgusting than *affectation* ; because it is an attempt to be something which we really are not. The common sense of the world condemns it ; and it often happens, that there are none more forward to decry it, than those who are the most unhappy specimens of it themselves. On this subject, particularly, be always ready to receive a friendly hint or admonition. There may be much in your manners, which will appear to others to be affectation, when you are not at all aware of it yourself. Be thankful for any such suggestion, and avail yourself of it instantly.

Be careful also, that your manners are free from *ostentation*. This is always odious, as it discovers a bad trait of character. It excites the disgust of the wise and judicious, who are in the higher walks of life, and provokes the envy or contempt of those, towards whom it is designed as an expression of superiority.

If you will not subject yourself to the imputation of a weak mind, avoid every appearance of *levity*. It is inconsistent with that dignity and stability of character, which contribute more than any thing else to female influence. Never indulge in loud and indecent laughter : it is almost uniformly taken for the mark of a vulgar and untutored mind. Be cheerful and affable, but avoid every approach to carelessness and trifling.

The only remaining thought, which I shall suggest to you on this subject, is, that you should avoid *close imitation*. I do not mean by this, that you are not to observe the manners of others, with a view to improve your own ; but only that you are not to aim at an exact conformity to any particular model.



If you attempt to make your manners, in every respect, like those of any other person, you will almost certainly do it, at the expense of becoming stiff and affected. An intercourse with enlightened society, with the observance of the rules which I have already laid down, is all that is necessary to form and perfect your manners. After all, your own good sense must be your guide on this subject; and without that, every advantage which you could enjoy, might leave you scarcely advanced beyond the first stage of improvement.

*Your affectionate Father.*



## LETTER IX.

### CONVERSATION.

*My dear Child,*

THE subject of *Conversation*, upon which I am now going to address you, may seem to be partly involved in the subject of my last letter; but it is so important that I am unwill-

ling to pass it over, without giving it a more distinct consideration. Providence has no doubt made an original difference, with respect to different persons, in dispensing this gift; and yet it must be apparent to every one, that in this respect, as in most others, the character is formed, in a great degree, by the influence of education.

It is obvious, at first view, that no person can converse well, who has not the materials for conversation, in *a well stored and cultivated mind*. A person of sound mind and good sense, may make it apparent, by a casual remark, on the most unimportant subject; whereas a person of an opposite character, cannot open his mouth, without betraying the secret that he is a fool. If you wish, therefore, to cultivate the gift of Conversation, you must not think to substitute any thing for a cultivated intellect. You may have the credit of possessing every amiable virtue, and may be admired as a pattern of moral excellence, but you cannot neglect your mind, and yet possess, in any superior degree, the gift of Conversation. I have known some young

females endeavour to conceal their ignorance of a subject, not by decently waving it, or by remaining silent, but by venturing some bold and rash opinion. But this is an experiment, which can never succeed among enlightened people, and which is almost sure to result in painful mortification. Ignorance on subjects upon which you have not had the means of information, is always excusable ; but an affected knowledge of things of which you are really ignorant, can never fail to excite contempt.

The next hint, which I wish to give you on this subject is, that you should *avoid talking too much*. Though your conversation discover ever so much sprightliness, or ever so much intelligence, it will cease to be interesting, if it is not conducted with proper deference to those around you. If you have good sense, you will not be under the necessity of talking a great deal, to make it manifest : if you have not good sense, the less you say, the better. Never allow yourself to 'monopolise the conversation, because you may be among those who look up to you as their superior. If you

do this, the weakest of them will be wise enough to charge you with vanity or ostentation ; whereas, if you encourage them to bear part in the conversation, they will respect you for your condescension and courtesy, and will consider it a privilege to enjoy your company.

Cautiously avoid *egotism*. It always disgusts people of sense, and detracts greatly from the good qualities with which it may be associated. Endeavour to keep yourself as far out of view in your conversation as possible ; and when you are obliged to speak of any thing which has a bearing upon your own character, let your modest and unassuming manner protect you from the charge of vanity.

Another kindred fault against which you should guard is *pedantry*. I will not say that this is one of the peculiar infirmities of your sex ; but wherever it appears, it creates such a contrast to the retiring loveliness natural to the female character, that it never fails to excite disgust. Of the two evils, I must acknowledge, for myself, that I prefer a very considerable share of ignorance, to pedantry.

It costs me a less effort to accommodate my conversation to a person of the most rude and uncultivated mind, than it does to accommodate my feeling to one, who, without any compassion for me, is constantly pouring into my ears a string of scientific discoveries, and classical allusions. Make it a rule never to use an expression which will be unintelligible to the persons with whom you converse ; and never to step out of your way, for the sake of making a remark, which shall discover your learning. The least effort of this kind, is always discovered ; and the loss to your character, in point of discretion, will be greater than the gain, with respect to intelligence. One great secret in avoiding the imputation of pedantry, lies in the manner. A remark made with an easy and careless air, might leave no unfavourable impression ; while the same observation, repeated with a look of self-complacence and self-confidence, might procure for you the reputation of an accomplished pedant.

But the evil, against which you ought, perhaps, to be more vigilant than any other,

which relates to your conversation, is a disposition to *sarcasm and satire*. This is the more serious, because its consequences are not confined to yourself; and by the same act, you may injure your own reputation, and wound the sensibility or character of another. There is, perhaps, no talent, which is more liable to abuse than this: it creates a strong temptation to appear witty and brilliant, and sometimes even at the expense of friends. But, you may rely upon it, that the indulgence of this propensity, while it involves the grossest injustice to the person who is the object of your sarcasm, will always be regarded by others as indicating an unhappy flaw in your character. The very persons who seem to applaud your wit, by laughing at it, will express their disapprobation to others, and will have the less confidence in your friendship: for it will be no unreasonable conclusion, that the same sportive artillery, which they see employed with so much effect upon the characters of others, may, in different circumstances, be levelled against their own. I advise you, therefore,

if you find you have a talent for sarcasm, to keep it under the most active restraint. The reputation which you will gain, by frequently exhibiting it, will come at a dearer price than you can afford to pay. It will be no less expense than an abatement of the esteem of your friends, a dread of being in your company, and a needless multiplication of enemies.

You cannot be too cautious how you treat characters, especially when you are thrown into the company of strangers. Many persons have subjected themselves to severe mortification, by an improper freedom of this kind, and have discovered, when it was too late to correct their error, that those who were the subjects of their remarks, were listening to them. Never express an unfavourable opinion of any individual, unless you have good evidence that the opinion is well founded, and that no improper use can be made of it. By a single indiscreet remark, you may do an injury to a character, which it will never be in your power to retrieve. As you value your own reputation, therefore, treat with lenity the characters of others.

I have now pointed out some of the most prominent faults in Conversation, and have hinted at the opposite excellences. I can only add my sincere wish that you may profit by the remarks which I have made, and thus gratify

*Your affectionate Father.*



## LETTER X.

### AMUSEMENTS.

*My dear Child,*

THERE are, perhaps, few greater sources of danger to young females, than an excessive love of *amusement*. It shall be the object of this letter, therefore, to suggest a few hints, by the observance of which, you may secure the end which amusements are designed to answer, and avoid the evils with which the abuse of them is connected.

In the first place, you are always to bear in mind that *you cannot be justified in engaging*



*in any amusement, merely for its own sake.* I know, indeed, if we were to judge from the conduct of many of our fellow creatures, we might suppose that amusement was the ultimate end of our existence ; but the real fact is so different, that no amusement can be innocently indulged, which has not some reference to our preparation for more important concerns. The constitution of the human mind is such, that it will not bear to be continually bent upon a single object ; and the consequence of incessant exertion in any one field of intellectual or moral labour, must be unfavourable, as well to bodily health, as to mental energy. It becomes necessary, therefore, in order to accomplish the greatest amount of good in any department of action, that the mind should occasionally unbend from a posture of severe effort. The only legitimate end of amusements, is to restore the mind to its native elasticity, and thus prepare it for prosecuting its useful pursuits with more vigour.

If you will keep this observation in view, you will perceive that the application of it

must strike off a large number from the list of fashionable amusements. All those which are fitted to inflame the passions, to lessen the sensibility of conscience, to invest worldly pleasure with new attractions, or merely to kill time, must of course, be condemned, not only as useless, but positively sinful. Those also, which are innocent in themselves, if engaged in for their own sake, and without any reference to a more important object, deserve to be reprobated. In order, therefore, to decide whether it be lawful to engage in any particular amusement, inquire, first, whether it be innocent in itself; and secondly, whether it will be likely to prepare you for the more successful prosecution of the great business of life. If you can conscientiously answer both these questions in the affirmative, you need not fear to proceed.

From what has now been said of the design of amusements, you will perceive that their whole end may be answered, in perfect consistency with a profitable improvement of *all* your time. If the grand object is to relieve the mind from the tedium occasioned by a

uniformity of effort, all that is necessary to produce the desired effect, is a change of employment ; and this may as well be a change from one useful employment to another, as from one that is useful to one of an opposite character. The only precaution which it is needful to observe, is, that the employment which is resorted to as a relaxation, should be of a kind, not to require severe effort of the same general character with that which is incident to your stated occupation. I cannot but think that this is one of the greatest secrets of redeeming time. If you will be governed by these hints, instead of having occasion to lament that many of your hours have gone to waste, your life will be a constant scene of systematized action ; and each of the departments of useful labour in which you are employed, will, in a most happy manner, be made subservient to every other.

You will naturally expect me to give you my opinion of some of the more fashionable amusements of the present day.

With respect to *Dancing*, there seems to be a change in publick opinion gradually tak-

ing place, which will probably result before many years, in its exclusion from the list of genteel amusements. I am happy to observe this, as I am fully of the opinion that it augurs well to the cause of morality and virtue. In expressing this opinion, I scarcely need say that I look at the amusement *as it actually exists*; and I can hardly imagine that any person of a serious mind, can soberly compute the waste of time, the extravagant expense, and the numerous temptations connected with it, without a conviction, that it is on the whole detrimental to the interests of society, and unfriendly to the influence of virtue. At the same time, I am perfectly aware that some excellent people have a different opinion on this subject; but I have never been able to conceive that it could be formed under an intelligent and impartial view of their Christian obligations.

*Parties of pleasure* constitute another source of amusement, which is, perhaps, resorted to not less than any other. When I express an unfavourable opinion with respect to these, you will not understand me as reprobating, in

the least degree, the occasional meetings of friends for social intercourse, for the interchange of kind affections, and for animated and pleasant conversation on topics of common interest. The meetings to which I refer, under the name of *parties of pleasure*, are those large collections in the fashionable world, whose only object is to witness a display of pomp and extravagance, and to fritter away time in foolish sports, or insipid and trifling conversation. On such occasions, there is nothing to improve the mind; nothing to awaken the finer feelings of the heart; nothing to furnish materials for useful reflection; nothing, in short, but what is fitted to arm an enlightened conscience with terroure, and leave a sting behind.

In regard to the *theatre*, an amusement which is exclusively confined to large cities, I must also be allowed to express my conviction of its deeply injurious tendency. Without attempting to consider the arguments, which are usually urged in its favour, or many of those on which I rest my conviction of its baneful influence, I will only say that you

cannot frequent theatrical exhibitions, without great danger of a corruption of your principles, and of being ingulfed in the vortex of worldly pleasure. After all which the advocates of the stage can say, it remains a melancholy truth, that the evident tendency of a large number of the plays which are exhibited, is to weaken the power of virtue, and to array the most vicious qualities and habits in such fascinating disguise, that their poison is concealed until it is felt rankling in the heart. It is a mystery which I have never yet heard explained, that ladies professing the utmost delicacy of feeling, can deliberately go into a scene of amusement, where they must expect, of course, to listen to the most heaven-daring profaneness, and the coarsest vulgarity. Had I the painful assurance that Providence would ever place you in circumstances, which would admit of your frequenting the theatre, and that you would be disposed to avail yourself of them, I should begin, even now, to weep tears of bitterness over the anticipated fate of my ruined child.

As a substitute for these several amuse-

ments, I would suggest, that you should engage in cheerful conversation with some interesting friends ; or if this should be impracticable, that you should read some amusing and agreeable author. Either of these will involve none of the evils to which I have adverted ; and will answer the end of relaxation in a much higher degree, than those upon which I have been remarking.

In the full hope that you may always act under an impression of your accountability to God, for all your time and talents,

I remain, as ever,

*Your devoted Father.*



## LETTER XI.

### MARRIAGE.

*My dear Child,*

I shall devote this letter to a consideration of several points of conduct, which relate to the *matrimonial connection*. As this is the most important of all our temporal connec-

tions, inasmuch as it is identified, in a great measure, with all the enjoyments of life, so it is one, concerning which, there is the greatest danger of committing an irretrievable mistake. Perhaps the period of marriage may be considered the most important era of human life : it is that from which is dated, in most instances, a vast accession to human happiness, or an additional weight of vexation and sorrow.

The first idea which I would suggest on this subject is, that *you should not form this connection prematurely*. A girl of sixteen or seventeen years, of only a common degree of maturity, is not qualified to direct the concerns of a family. I would not advise you to refuse an eligible offer, even at so early a period as that which I have mentioned ; but if you accept it, let it be on the condition that the engagement do not go into effect, till you have reached a more advanced age. Such a suggestion could hardly fail to be appreciated by any gentleman with whom it might be desirable that you should form this connection ; and if he should refuse to listen to your rea-



sons, you would probably hazard little, by submitting to the consequences.

But the most important decision which you will have to make on this subject, respects *the character of the man*, with whom you are to be connected. Set it down as a principle, from which nothing shall divert you, that he be neither an immoral man, nor an infidel. If he be guilty of only one species of immorality, there is such an intimate connection in the family of vices, that you can have no security against his becoming an accomplished profligate. Make it an indispensable requisite also, that he possess, at least, an ordinarily good understanding; for nothing is more certain, as the immortal Washington once remarked, in a letter to a young female, than that ‘a woman of sense can never be happy with a fool.’ Such an unequal connection would not only deprive you of all that intellectual enjoyment, which might result from intercourse with a man of sense and improvement, but it would subject you to a thousand little mortifications, from the exhibitions which you would be

compelled to witness of his awkwardness or ignorance. Pay particular regard also, to the natural temper. There is no quality, perhaps more important to the happiness of domestic life than this ; for a jealous, discontented, or contentious disposition, with whatever other qualities it might be associated, could not fail to poison the best enjoyments of the family and the fireside. It is important also, that there should be something like an equality in your ages ; for it is not less a dictate of reason than experience, that there can be little congeniality of sentiment and feeling, between a man who has retired from the more active scenes of life, and is advancing into the vale of age, and a woman who has not yet reached the meridian of her day, and has a keen relish for the enjoyments appropriate to youth. It is desirable, moreover, that you should be introduced, by your matrimonial connection, into a circle of some respectability : and it is a circumstance which you will do well to remember, that the change, in this respect, is of more importance, as it respects the female than the

man ; for marriage elevates or depresses the wife to the same rank which is held by the husband. Above all, never marry any man merely with a view to become rich ; and indeed, never make property a consideration of much importance. A competence is certainly desirable ; but an enormous estate, while it would greatly heighten your responsibility, would add nothing to your real enjoyment, and would entail upon you an endless train of vexations. It rarely happens, that either man or woman marries from this motive, but the folly receives an exemplary punishment, in a life of uneasiness and discontent. On the whole, I would say, let your choice be regulated by a regard to the more substantial qualities, rather than to any superficial and dazzling traits of character.—The former are those upon which you must depend for domestic happiness : the latter may excite a momentary admiration, but like the blazing deceitful meteor, they will soon pass away, and only serve to render the darkness of human woe still more oppressive and appalling.

I have a few words to say in reference to *the conduct which you should pursue, preparatory to this connection.* Never be at any pains to invite professions of attachment ; for if you do not succeed, it will only expose you to contempt ; and if you do, it will detract, not a little, from the value of such professions, to be obliged to reflect that they were gained by unworthy means. If you discover evidences of attachment in a person, whose affection you cannot reciprocate, instead of seeking to gratify vanity, by encouraging him to ask for your hand, let your deportment towards him assume that reserved and dignified character, which will prevent him from a step that must result in mortification. A woman of amiable sensibility will never wish to be the object of an affection, which can find no counterpart in her own breast ; and much less will she employ the arts of coquetry, to lay the foundation for a triumph in another's disappointment. But if coquetry be one extreme, prudery is another ; and both are to be avoided with equal caution. If a gentleman of fair

character, and one whom you are willing to accept, addresses you, never trifle with his proposals, by professing a suspense which you do not feel. A man of spirit, who should discover such conduct, would testify his disapprobation of it, by declining any farther acquaintance. Let your mind be decided as early as convenient, and communicate to him the decision, with frankness and candour. If it be favourable to his wishes, he will esteem you the more highly for the discreet and amiable manner in which you have complied with them. From this time, treat him with unreserved candour and affection ; but never let your intercourse degenerate into an undignified familiarity.

I will close my remarks on this subject, by suggesting a caution, with respect to the estimate which you ought to form of *polite attentions*. There are some young females, who breathe only in the atmosphere of civility and admiration. But you may rest assured that it is no recommendation to any young lady, to be encircled with a host of admirers, and to have her heart and hand frequently solicited.

Beside the unfavourable influence, which it is fitted to exert upon her own feelings, it rarely fails to sink her in the estimation of the wise and discerning. In short there is hardly any thing, which I would not rather have you, than a *fashionable belle* ; and I would greatly prefer that you should have one suitable and advantageous offer of marriage at a proper time, than that you should engross the undivided gallantry of all your acquaintance.

That Providence may direct you with respect to every thing in which your happiness is involved, is the sincere and fervent prayer of

*Your devoted Father.*

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## LETTER XII.

### INTERCOURSE WITH THE WORLD.

*My dear Child,*

NOTWITHSTANDING much of what might naturally fall under the subject of your *inter-*

*course with the world*, has been anticipated in several of the preceding letters, there are still some things connected with it, which I deem too important to be passed over in silence. A few hints on this subject, will, therefore, claim your attention in the present letter.

With regard to *the degree of intercourse, which you are to have with the world*, you will need to guard against the two extremes ;— on the one hand, of neglecting your more retired and domestic duties, for the sake of mingling continually in society ; and on the other, of imbibing the habit of a recluse, in order to shut yourself out from the din and business of the world. A character formed exclusively in either of these ways, will lack some qualities which are important in practical life ; and it is only the proper combination of both, which will give to it a due proportion and consistency. It is necessary that you should be considerably in the world, that you may be practically acquainted with its ways, and study the science of human nature, with the greatest advantage : and it is

necessary that you should be conversant with retired life, that you may apply the knowledge which you gain, in the regulation of your character, and may discharge the duties which devolve upon every female in a domestic station. Though it is desirable that you should avoid both the extremes which I have mentioned, an error on the side of retirement, is, perhaps, safer than one on the side of excessive fondness for company. That female, who finds her only enjoyment amid the bustle of the world, and who prefers to mingle forever in the social circle, rather than in the still and exquisite scenes of the domestic fireside, is miserably qualified for any department of practical life ; and I may add, is a stranger to the sweetest enjoyment which Providence has allotted to mortals.

The next thing to be observed in regard to your intercourse with the world, is, that *you endeavour to make it as useful as you can, both to yourself and others.* It will be natural and proper, that the friends with whom you principally associate, should be selected from the same walks of life to which you are destined ;



but I trust it is not necessary to remind you that your intercourse is not to be circumscribed by these limits. The constitution of human society is such, that if you are elevated to a station ever so lofty, you must needs come in contact, at a thousand points, with those who are far below you ; and you cannot refuse every kind of intercourse with them, without standing convicted of an unnatural offence against humanity. On all occasions, which bring you into the company of those of more obscure condition, let your intercourse be tempered with great mildness and condescension. While it will secure to you the good-will and affection of those with whom you mingle, it will contribute to abate the jealousy with which the poor often regard the distinctions of life, and leave an impression favourable to contentment and virtue. I advise you often to visit the mansion of poverty and wretchedness. Go, not merely, to alleviate the distress of the suffering, and to soften the pillow of the dying, but to learn a lesson of gratitude for your own blessings, and of resignation, when you are visit-

ed with trials. Let it be your endeavour, on all these occasions, to regulate your intercourse in such a manner, that while you will leave a blessing behind you, you will also carry one away.

There is scarcely any thing more necessary to secure the esteem of your acquaintance, than *an attention to little things*. I have known persons of the sternest integrity, and the best intentions, so inattentive with respect to a thousand of the little nameless offices of life, that their real merit was greatly obscured. It is not by any single deed of uncommon celebrity, that you can expect to become the object of general esteem ; but it is by a constant succession of little acts of civility and kindness, which will cost you no trouble, when you have once formed the habit of attending to them. This, more than any thing else, is the secret of gaining and keeping the good will of our fellow creatures ; whereas, if this be neglected, there is nothing else, which can answer as a substitute.

I submit to you these directions, with respect to your intercourse with the world, in

the hope, that their favourable effect in the formation of your character, may give great satisfaction to

*Your affectionate Father.*

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### LETTER XIII.

#### FORMING RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS.

*My dear Child,*

I have now gone through with a consideration of a number of those topics, which I deem important to you in practical life. There is one subject, however, which concerns you more deeply than any to which your attention has hitherto been called, which remains to be considered. It is the subject of *Religion*. It is this, which is identified with all your interests, as an immortal creature. A deficiency in other respects, may, indeed, prevent your success in the world, and may occasion you much inconvenience on your passage through it : but a radical deficiency here, must extend its influ-

ence beyond the grave, and be felt in the unmitigated sorrows of eternity.

The first branch of this important subject, to which I shall call your attention, is *the formation of your religious sentiments*. It has been a doctrine unhappily popular, in modern times, that our religious characters do not, in any important sense, derive their complexion from our religious opinions : and the practical influence of this doctrine has been exhibited in confounding the most important distinctions in religion, and in annihilating, in a great measure, the importance of Christian faith. There are, no doubt, some truths in religion, concerning which a difference of opinion may be safely admitted ; but it is equally true that there are other great and commanding truths, which constitute the very soul of religion, and the belief of which must enter radically into our claim to christian character. For why have the truths of the Bible been revealed, if it is not that they should be believed : and of what use can a Revelation be to us, if it be not so explicit, that with the proper application of our facul-

ties, we can ascertain what are its leading and essential features? But it is the system of Divine truth, that is the basis of the whole fabric of practical religion. If religion consists exclusively in being a good neighbour, and in discharging the duties arising from our social relations, I will admit that faith in its doctrines may be dispensed with, and yet no very perceptible chasm be made in the system. But if religion be vastly more comprehensive in its demands; if it have respect to the manner of our reconciliation with an offended God; if it embrace all the mighty machinery of Providence, with respect to our redemption, and all the duties which we owe to God as well as man; then, it were as absurd to suppose that you can discharge the great duties of practical religion, while you are indifferent to the truths of the Bible, as that that man should calculate the distances of the planets, or conduct a ship through the ocean, who was either ignorant or incredulous with respect to the elementary principles of navigation or astronomy. It is the practical reception of truth, that constitutes

the very essence of piety : and though there may be a speculative belief of it, without a particle of vital godliness, rely upon it, there can be no such thing as genuine practical religion, without a speculative conviction of the truth of its doctrines. It appears, therefore, that faith, so far from being unimportant, is one of the essential constituents of piety.

As I hope you are now convinced that it is of great importance that your religious sentiments should be correct, I will proceed to suggest several rules, the observance of which will be likely to ensure this happy result. In the first place, *let your religious opinions be drawn entirely from the Bible.* Approach that sacred book, not with a determination to make it speak a language correspondent with your preconceived opinions, or that you will believe nothing but what is grateful to your natural feelings ; but with a firm resolution that you will yield your faith to all its truths, let their bearing upon your character and prospects be what it may. Remember that this is the only infallible

source of religious truth ;—the only book which contains not the least admixture of error ;—the line, by which all the opposing systems of theologians must be measured. I do not advise you to treat with contempt the opinions of distinguished, uninspired men : their writings may be of great use to you, in giving you a correct understanding of the sacred volume. But while you regard them with proper deference, make a weighty distinction between all human compositions and the sure word of prophecy. With respect to the former, you are at liberty to exercise your reason, in canvassing the principles which are advanced, and in deciding upon their reasonableness and conformity to the oracles of God. With respect to the latter, the only province of reason is to ascertain what is revealed : it is for faith then to receive it with the humility of a little child. If you derive your religious sentiments from any other source than the bible ; if you receive them by inheritance, or on the authority of great names, though they should chance to be correct, your faith will be blind and ir-

rational. An enlightened, intelligent faith can result only from diligent and impartial examination.

As another important help in forming your religious sentiments, endeavour by your observation of the world, and by proper attention to your own heart, *to gain a correct impression of the natural character of man* : and as the christian religion accommodates itself to our actual condition, you will not be likely to be misled in your examination of scripture, by having your mind preoccupied with theories which contemplate man in a state of native innocence. Such an impression will prepare you to find what the gospel actually contains ;—not merely a set of rules to regulate our intercourse with each other ;—nor yet, merely a more perfect system of natural religion ; but a system, which contemplates man as a rebel against the government of God, and which makes provision for the pardon, sanctification, and eternal life of those, who are naturally dead in trespasses, and sins. Nothing will expose you to more fatal errors, than having your mind prepos-



sessed with false notions of the character of man, and the purpose which religion is designed to answer. It is exactly such a preparation of the heart, as will render it barren of all impressions of evangelical truth ; but will cause the seeds of error to vegetate, and shoot forth with deadly luxuriance.

It is important also, as a means of preserving you from religious error, that your sentiments should be formed *under a strong, practical impression of death*. If you accustom yourself to remember that these opinions may have an influence in planting daggers in your heart in the hour of death, or in shedding over the dark valley the light of immortality ;—that they are to constitute a part of ‘the dying dress of the soul,’ to accompany you into eternity, and be witnesses for or against you at the judgment seat ; you will not be likely to take up with a system of religion, which has nothing in it to meet your necessities as a dying, and immortal creature. On the contrary, it will be your most earnest desire, that you may embrace the truths of the gospel, however ungrateful, or however humiliating.

Let me add that there is nothing more essential to the successful result of your religious inquiries, than *the teachings of the Holy Spirit*; and these will be granted to you only in answer to humble and fervent prayer. Let the throne of grace, therefore, daily witness to your devout and earnest supplications, that you may be preserved from all error;— that you may be led into all truth, and be an humble and teachable follower of the blessed Jesus.

That you may make the Bible your only guide, and receive the truth in the love of it, is the fervent prayer of

*Your affectionate Father.*

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## LETTER XIV.

### PROPER MODE OF TREATING RELIGIOUS ERROR.

*My dear Child,*

NOTWITHSTANDING I have advised you to search the scriptures as the only infallible standard of religious faith, and to admit no

doctrine into your creed merely upon human testimony, you cannot suppose that I am indifferent with respect to the result of your religious investigation. I have, indeed, no fear, if you read the Bible with an honest heart, and with a prayerful desire to know the truth, that you will fall into any fundamental or very dangerous error : but after all, it must be acknowledged, that not a small number of those, who have made the word of God their constant study, and have employed all the power of genius, and all the apparatus of criticism, in their biblical pursuits, have given us the result of their labours, in systems of religion, which have nothing to sanctify or elevate the affections ;— nothing to hush the clamours of conscience ;— nothing to illumine the cheerlessness of affliction, or the desolation of the grave. As the gospel is designed to furnish the means of restoration and salvation to ruined man, I am persuaded, if you examine it with a teachable temper, that you will find its cardinal and distinguishing doctrines to be, *atonement by the blood, and sanctification by the*

*Spirit of a Divine Saviour.* All the other truths which it reveals, you will find to be in perfect consistency with these fundamental ones ; making, in their combination, a system, which while it brings ‘ glory to God in the highest’ secures to the repenting sinner all, and more than all the blessings, which sin had forfeited.

But if the result of your examination should be, that the system to which I have adverted, is that which the gospel reveals, you will find that the world abounds with other systems, some of which have scarcely any thing in common with that which you adopt. There is one system which exhibits the gospel as only the religion of nature in a more attractive dress ; which denies the obligation of man to obey the law of God, and pours contempt upon the impressions of the *awakened* sinner ; which blots out the precious doctrine of atonement, and cuts off the only hope of forgiveness, and leaves the mind to wander over a dark, blank waste, collecting, as it wanders, nothing but impressions of despair. There is another system, which per-

verts the doctrine of redemption, by representing the sacrifice of Christ as cancelling the obligations of holy obedience ; by mistaking the nature of evangelical faith, and by substituting, in place of that living principle, which purifies the affections and controls the life, the naked impression that *Christ died for us in particular*. And there is another system still, which completely neutralizes the most awful sanctions of our religion ; which represents all its terrors as a fable, and throws wide open the doors of Heaven to all the impenitent and unholy. And yet, after all, each of these systems professes to bear the impress of Divinity, to be the true and genuine gospel ; and their respective advocates expect you to hail them as fellow disciples of a common master. To assist you to a proper decision on this subject, let me request your attention to the following hints.

Make it a rule *never to withhold your charity on any slight or equivocal evidence*. To declare your conviction that a person holds 'another gospel,' is a thing of too much moment to be hazarded on any grounds which

are not the most satisfactory. I am fully of the opinion that it is better to err on the extreme of forbearance than intolerance. Mild measures are much better fitted to exert a reclaiming influence than severe ones. A little severity may place a religious errourist forever beyond your reach ; whereas a small degree of condescension may be the means of dissipating his errors, and establishing him in the truth.

Moreover, I would advise you *never to impute to others, doctrines which they disavow, because they may appear to you to form an essential part of their general system.* Cheerfully give them credit for every truth which they will acknowledge ; and be very slow to decide, that the connection between a fundamental doctrine and one which is not so, is so close, that the latter may not be renounced, while the former is, with some degree of consistency, retained. The system of religious truth is, indeed, perfectly harmonious ; but its parts are not all equally important. It is a structure from which you may remove some remote appendage, and you will only injure

its proportion, or deface its beauty ; but take away one of its main pillars, and the whole fabric tumbles to ruins.

Set it down as a principle, therefore, that all *minor* differences in religious sentiment are to be treated with candour and lenity. It is a reproach to the Christian cause, that the jealousy and intolerance of its professed advocates, have erected so many walls of partition, to exclude each other from the affectionate interchange of Christian offices : and it is a fact upon which my eye now fastens, as the day star of millennial glory, that the little strifes and jealousies which have prevailed among different denominations, to the distraction of the church, are beginning to merge in their growing attachment to the common cause. It is our duty, indeed, to endeavour to reclaim the wandering from every species of error : but the boundary of our *christian charity* must be nothing less than that sacred line which encircles the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. If we deliberately exclude from religious fellowship those who hold the grand peculiarities of our faith, we do it at

the peril of rejecting those whom God has accepted.

But while I make all these concessions in favour of catholicism, far be it from me to leave an impression on your mind, that you may safely receive to the hallowed embrace of christian charity, those who reject any of the fundamental truths of religion. With christian forbearance in respect to doctrines that are not fundamental, you must combine christian independence with respect to those that are ; and every christian ought to shrink from any act which implies an indifference to the great foundation of the gospel scheme, as he would shrink from the guilt of betraying his master with a kiss. The only consistent course for those who build their hopes of Heaven upon the great truths of the Bible, the only course which their own principles will justify, is to take their stand by the cardinal doctrines of the gospel, and whoever may lift the standard of persecution, or whoever may chant the praises of liberality, to guard these truths with the most sacred vigilance. You may as well attempt to blend



the darkest shades of midnight with the blaze of the noon-day sun, without dissipating the gloom of the one, or softening the radiance of the other, as to form any compromise between systems of religion, one of which admits, and the other rejects the great doctrine of redemption, by the atoning blood and life-giving Spirit of Christ.

But while I advise you to be decided in your treatment of fundamental error, I would caution you, even with respect to this, against every approach to a bitter and censorious spirit. It is not the spirit which will recommend your sentiments to others, or which can furnish to yourself any evidence of their correctness, from their practical tendency. Besides, as I have already intimated, no person was ever reclaimed from error by being calumniated or abused ; but not a few, have by such a course, been steeled against conviction, and driven to the extreme of heresy. The person whom you may not be able to recognise as a christian, you may still treat with the courtesy and kindness of a friend ; you may mingle with him in the kind offices

and charities of life ; you may cautiously avoid reproaching him with his errors ; you may go, like an angel of mercy, to his sick bed, and you may keep him constantly under the influence of your gentle and winning deportment ; and who knows but in this way, you may save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins ?

I will only detain you farther on this subject, with one word relative to religious controversy. I do not care how much theological knowledge you may acquire, but I beg you never to display it, by enlisting in any religious dispute. When a woman takes up the weapons of theological warfare, the native loveliness of the female is instantly eclipsed. The modest and retiring virtues, which are the chief ornament of your sex, always retreat from the din and clashing of religious combatants. It was my lot, not long since, to encounter a sturdy female polemick, who has been somewhat distinguished in the walks of controversy ; and though she certainly made an exhibition of strong powers of mind, I could not avoid the impression that

there was some mistake, either with regard to her sex or her profession. I confidently trust that the time will never come, when the cause of truth will require the polemick influence of females; and until that time, I hope you will be contented to have the business of controversy in other hands.

I have dwelt thus minutely on the several points involved in the subject of this letter, not from a conviction that they would all be of the same importance to you as they might be to a minister of the gospel, but because I wish you on every subject of practical life, to have some fixed principles, which will always be ready for application.

That you may combine that 'Charity' which 'suffereth long and is kind,' with that dignified Christian independence, which 'holds fast the form of sound words,' is the earnest wish of

*Your affectionate Father.*

## LETTER XV.

## IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICAL PIETY.

*My dear Child,*

IN the two preceding letters, I have endeavoured, on the one hand, to impress you with the importance of adhering firmly to a correct system of faith ; and on the other, to guard you against a spirit of intolerance and religious crimination. I trust you are convinced that correct speculative views of the great truths of the gospel, enter essentially into the constitution of the christian character : I wish now more distinctly to remind you, that such views, important as they are, may exist independently of a living principle of religion. Many who have been able defenders of the christian faith, and have gained the most decisive victories over infidelity, have furnished melancholy proof that they were strangers to the purifying influence of the gospel ; and while they have been engaged in skilfully defending its outworks, it

has been but too apparent that they have never penetrated into the inner sanctuary of experimental religion.

Religious truth has its proper effect, not when it remains locked up in the mind, or is converted into materials for speculation, but when it makes a powerful impression upon the heart, and exerts an active and controlling influence over the life. This is the kind of religion which alone can answer your necessities as an immortal being ;—the religion which emphatically proves its own Divinity. You may have a thorough knowledge of the Christian system, of its evidence and its doctrines ; and yet if you keep your heart closed against its practical influence, it will be as barren of consolation as a system of paganism. Christianity reduced to practice ;—Christianity shedding her benign and heavenly influence over the character, redeeming from vain conversation and worldly lusts, is the attractive object which I would especially hold up before you.

I say, my dear child, that unless the truths of the Bible have their proper effect upon

**your heart and life, your religion will be un-availing to all the great purposes for which it is needed. But the gospel embraced as a practical and life-giving system, will wonderfully accommodate itself to all your circumstances, and to every important exigency of your whole existence. If you are rich in this world's goods, it will increase your happiness, by increasing your thankfulness. If you are poor and depressed, it will sweeten your poverty, by mingling with it the joys of contentment. If you are brought into circumstances of difficulty and embarrassment, it will relieve you, by imparting to you of that wisdom which comes down from above. If your strength is withered by disease, and you are brought down to the gates of the grave, it will put to flight the terrors of death, and kindle a beam of joy in your closing eye. It will accompany you with its living consolations through the dark valley, and beyond where mortal eye can reach ; and in Heaven, it will fill you with joy, and surround you with glory which is unutterable. But remember that all this belongs peculiarly to**

practical religion ;—the grand elements of which are repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever else you may possess, if you have never felt the ~~un-~~<sup>-ing,</sup> ~~mer-~~<sup>ring,</sup> redeeming influence of the gospel, your prospect as an immortal creature, must be shrouded in sadness and gloom a thousand fold deeper than that of the grave.

I have rarely seen the legitimate operations of Christian faith in forming the character, so sublimely exemplified, as in the case of a reverend friend, whom, not many years ago, I followed to the grave. He was a man upon whom nature had bountifully bestowed her choicest gifts, and who combined every intellectual and moral quality, which was necessary to stamp upon his character the seal of greatness. But above all, he was a *practical Christian*. I knew him when his locks were silvered with years, and his eyes were dim with age, and his limbs tottered beneath their burden. On his furrowed cheek sat the smile of contentment, the living image of peace and joy. He could hardly open his lips, but in some expression of penitence for

his sins, or of gratitude for his mercies.— While he was cheerful in the enjoyment of temporal blessings, the eye of faith and hope was fixed on Heaven. I saw him when the impressions of disease had fastened upon his countenance ; when the symptoms of dissolution were advancing in slow but certain progress, and when eternity was opening its doors to receive his sainted spirit. I watched him to see if I could discover a symptom of terrour or agitation ;—any thing like the shrinking back of the soul from the grasp of death : but all was calmness and triumph. Just as he had reached the boundary between earth and heaven, I said, ‘ My father, art thou dying in peace ? ’ and his animated expression told me that the songs of seraphs were already trembling on his ear. His dying eye shot forth a beam of rapture, and told, in language more than mortal, the vigour of a spirit on the wing for immortality. Never before, did I behold Christianity march, with so much triumph, into the territories of death. The scene is imprinted upon my memory, and I would fain carry the impression of it to the grave.



Imitate the practical Christian, and while you will share in his consolations, you will give great joy to the heart of

*Your fond and affectionate Father.*



## LETTER XVI.

### SELF-GOVERNMENT.

*My dear Child,*

PERHAPS there is nothing in which religion displays a more heavenly triumph, than in the power which she gives us of controlling ourselves. The shock of the apostacy has given to the moral principles of our nature a wrong direction ; and all the power which Reason and Conscience can exert, without the influence of religion, is insufficient to subdue and control our native propensities. Practical Christianity, however, is powerful enough to deliver us from this unhappy thraldom. It is by her omnipotent and all-pervading influence, that the thoughts are disciplin-

ed to flow in a proper channel, the passions subjected to the control of Reason, and the tongue bridled against sinful levity and unhallowed reproach.

But inasmuch as Religion regards you as a rational and accountable being, she accomplishes this redemption, not by any magic or arbitrary influence, but by subjecting you to laws which are altogether fitted to your moral nature. If then, you will escape from the dominion of unhallowed passions and tempers, you must surrender yourself to the practical influence of the gospel ; you must resolutely break away from the enchanted ground of temptation ; you must be daily conversant with that Almighty Power, which alone can arm you for a conflict with yourself ; you must learn to detect the deceitful and wandering imagination, and station a vigilant sentinel at every watch tower of your heart. To think of acquiring a habit of self-government, independently of the influence of religion, were as wild as to think of assuaging the elements by a word, when they are wrought up to the fury of a tempest.

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An important branch of self-government respects the command of your *thoughts*. It is so natural for the mind to wander, that it is not easy to gain the conviction that much harm can result from such an exercise. We are apt to indulge the foolish delusion, that if we guard sufficiently our external deportment, the little world within us is so far removed from the observation of mortals, that it matters little what is passing there. But this little world, let it be remembered, is emphatically the scene of moral action; the region in which motives operate, and where are fixed all the springs of human accountability. The moment you yield to the conviction that no restraint is needed here, that moment you throw yourself within the power of the worst of tyrants. It is at the torch of the imagination that the passions are usually kindled, which so often blaze forth in deeds of impurity and violence. One of the most important parts of self-government, therefore, is to keep the imagination and thoughts in proper subjection. It is indeed a work which requires severe effort; but it

is, in an important sense, the key-stone to a virtuous character.

The government of the *passions* also, demands the most active and unremitting vigilance. When they are properly regulated, they answer an excellent purpose in our constitution ; but where they are suffered to have the ascendancy, they convert the breast into a nursery of vipers. It is important that the restraint which is imposed here, should be of the most vigorous kind ; for every instance in which you yield, will only arm a subsequent temptation with additional power. Nothing will preserve you from this evil, like a deep and practical sense of the presence of God. Just in proportion as you bring yourself under the commanding influence of religion, you will find this branch of self-government becoming easy, and the harmony of the passions and appetites restored.

There is little additional exertion necessary for the government of the *tongue*, provided the heart be kept with all diligence ; for inspiration hath said that ‘ Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.’

But if the inner man be neglected, the tongue is the organ through which the spite and venom of unruly passion, are, for the most part, discharged. Guard your heart, therefore, with the most vigilant effort, that that little member, which was given to be the glory of your frame, may never become its disgrace, by being converted into a channel of wrath and bitterness.

On the importance of self-government, it cannot be necessary that I should urge any additional considerations. If you would shrink from the iron grasp of a tyrant, who was seeking to deprive you of your natural liberty, you surely cannot be indifferent to that high moral freedom, which these internal enemies are aiming to destroy. Call in the aid of Religion, therefore, to give Reason and Conscience their proper authority, and you may hope to acquire that habit of self-control, without which you forfeit the highest dignity of a rational and immortal being.

I am, with cordial wishes for your happiness,

*Your affectionate Father.*

## LETTER XVII.

## SELF-EXAMINATION.

*My dear Child,*

IF it is important that you should maintain a habit of self-government, and that much of your exertion should be applied to the regulation of the inner man of the heart, it must be of no small moment that you should possess a thorough knowledge of your own character: for unless you are familiar with the points at which the enemy is likely to assail you, you can never expect to be prepared for any effectual resistance. For this reason, therefore, as well as others, it is necessary that you should practise the duty of *self-examination*. In the present letter, I will endeavour to give you some directions on this important subject.

It is acknowledged that this is one of the most *difficult* duties of the Christian life. There is an indolent aversion of the mind to that kind of labour, which this duty requires :

it had rather be employed in any thing, than in analyzing its own operations. The influence of external circumstances too, is very great, in distracting the mind, and rendering it unfit for the business of self-communion. But the greatest obstacle of all to the successful prosecution of this duty, probably is, the dread which the soul feels to look down into the depths of its own pollution. If there were nothing in our characters to point the sting of remorse, nothing but what Conscience could survey with a calm and approving eye, I venture to say that the grand difficulty with regard to self-examination, would be removed.

With respect to the *manner* in which this duty should be performed, I would say, in the first place, that it must be with great *seriousness*. The mind ought to be composed for the exercise by devout meditation and prayer, and every advantage taken of retirement and other external circumstances. If you enter upon this duty with a light or distracted mind, or in the bustle and tumult of life, the most you will accomplish, will be to gain

a momentary relief to an uneasy conscience. The real object of self-examination will be completely overlooked.

But if seriousness is important to the faithful discharge of this duty, so also is *vigilance*: for without this, the inquiry will be too superficial and limited. The springs of action are so deep, and the machinery of the soul so complicated, that unless you look attentively, and for a long time, the real motives of your conduct will often escape detection. Never enter on this duty without a deep impression that 'the heart is deceitful above all things;' and let this humbling reflection be distinctly before your mind at every step of your inquiry. If you forget this important truth, all that you do in the way of examination, will be only a kind of intellectual farce, which can serve no other purpose than to deceive, or perhaps destroy you.

If you will be successful in your examination, you must add *resolution* to vigilance. If you find it a hard and painful process, you must still persevere: if difficulties thicken and throng upon you, you must double your



perseverance. If indolence bids you desist, if worldly business or pleasure puts in a claim upon your regard, if the adversary suggests to you the idea of waiting for a more convenient season ; let your resolution prevail over all such temptations. Resolve that the business of self-examination shall be done in season, and shall be done thoroughly ; let the claims of the world be ever so urgent, or ever so numerous.

But you must also be *impartial* as well as resolute. There is nothing so difficult as to deal honestly with ourselves. How differently do we estimate our own merits and defects from what we do those of others ; and how much more readily do we form excuses for our own faults than the faults of our neighbour. But when you enter upon the business of examination, this prejudice in favour of self must be laid aside ; and if you should judge yourself even more unfavourably than your real condition would warrant, it would be the safe extreme. It might, perhaps, somewhat abridge your present comfort, but it would be productive of no serious injury.

But after all, the object of self-examination can never be gained, unless you *refer your actions to the proper rule*;—to the standard of God's word. If you compare your character with the characters of others, or refer it to any other arbitrary standard, the result of all your efforts will be to confirm you in self-deception. In order to ascertain the extent of your moral depravity, you must see how far you have fallen short of the demands of the moral law; and that you may decide whether you have any claim to Christian character, you must see how you stand in relation to the milder requirements of the gospel. That you have fallen awfully short of your duty as a moral being, there can be no doubt: the more momentous question is, whether you have ever taken refuge in the gospel, by a compliance with its gracious conditions.

Th *subjects* of self-examination should embrace all your infirmities and sins, all your duties and wants. The *seasons* for this exercise should be frequent and stated. The close of each day, especially, ought to wit-

ness a solemn reckoning between you and your God ; and I know of nothing which is better fitted than this, to quicken the sensibility of conscience, and keep alive a principle of piety. If you accustom yoarself, in this manner, to keep a record of the events of each day, you will be in little danger of living a useless life, or of becoming insensible to your condition as an accountable being.

You see, then, my dear child, that a neglect of the duty which I have been urging in this letter, cannot consist with Christian comfort, or with any just claim to Christian character. It is essential at the very outset of the religious life, to guard you from self-deception ; and it is not less essential, as being identified with all your progress in Christian holiness. But take heed that you discharge this duty with fidelity : otherwise the very means which you use to avoid deception, may contribute to render your blindness still more desperate and incurable.

*Your ever affectionate Father.*

## LETTER XVIII.

## DEVOTION.

*My dear Child,*

THE spirit of *Devotion* is not less an essential constituent of Christian character, than it is an essential requisite for Christian enjoyment. In the same proportion in which this is cultivated, the Christian will ordinarily find the evidences of his gracious adoption becoming clear, the victory over indwelling corruption growing easy, the deceitful glare of this world's enjoyments fading away, and his own character advancing towards the purity and dignity of the spirits of the just.

As all the Christian duties and graces have a reciprocal bearing upon each other, you will find, on the ~~other~~ hand, that the strength of your devotional feelings will be very much in proportion to the strictness with which you observe other duties ; and on the other, that your regularity in other branches of Christian deportment, will depend not a lit-

tle on the frequency and fervency of your devotions. It is desirable, therefore, that you should constantly maintain a spirit of prayer, and carry it with you into all the business and circumstances of life : and in order for this, it is essential that *you should have stated seasons for devotion* : for though much may be done towards the culture of the affections, by a religious observance of the passing events of Providence, and by devout meditations on the works of nature, and the plan of redemption ; you can never hope to acquire a high state of spiritual-mindedness, unless you hold a regular intercourse with your closet. Have your fixed hours for prayer, therefore, and if it be possible, let no worldly care intrude to divert you from this duty. The more frequently you attend to it, the more pleasant it will be to you ; and instead of regarding it as a weariness, you will learn to anticipate it with the most devout satisfaction.

Think not that I wish you to substitute the duty of prayer in place of any of the active duties of life ; or that you should be found in

your closet, or on your knees, when the hand of Providence plainly points you to a different employment. The truth is, that if your time is properly husbanded, you will find it sufficient for all the duties which are allotted to you ; and as I have already intimated, the portion of it which is spent in your closet, will not be lost, even in reference to your active worldly employments. You have no right to allow the business of the world to crowd so much upon you, as to deprive you of opportunities for devotion ; and though every duty should be done in its proper place, nothing *can be* a duty, which will lead you habitually, or frequently to neglect your closet.

Beside performing the duty of secret prayer, and joining in the public prayers of the congregation, as you have opportunity, I advise you occasionally to meet with one or two particular friends, to spend a season in retired devotion. While such a habit will contribute to strengthen and consecrate your mutual friendship, it will furnish you with rich materials for pious reflection, and ren-

der your intercourse fruitful in blessings to yourselves and others.

There is no evil in relation to this subject, against which you will need to be more on your guard than *formality*. Beside the natural aversion which we feel to the duties of the spiritual life, the constitution of our nature is such, that any duty which recurs *frequently* and *regularly*, is in danger of degenerating into a mere form. The danger, however, will be diminished, in proportion as you realize the presence of God, and cultivate a habit of devout and elevated meditation. Such a habit will keep the flame of devotion constantly alive, and will enable you to bring to the throne of grace a heart labouring under a deep sense of your obligation, and longing to unburden itself in devout confessions and thanksgivings.

Whether you have the spirit of genuine devotion or not, you may ascertain by the following marks. It will lead you to adore the perfections and government of God ; to rejoice in the various discoveries of his will, and especially those which are made to us

through the medium of his word. It will raise your heart to Him in grateful acknowledgement of your entire dependence ; in humble confession of the disorders and sins of your nature ; and in devout thanksgivings for the glorious scheme of redemption through Christ. It will lead you to intercede for the whole human family ; to pray for the universal prevalence of truth and righteousness ; and to aim at a constant conformity to the maxims and principles of the gospel.

The influence which this spirit will exert upon your own character, will be of the most comforting and elevating kind. It will, indeed, bring you down into the dust of abasement, but you will find in the moments of your deepest humility, that the Lord is lifting you up. It will open a free intercourse between you and your Redeemer ; and will serve as a channel, through which the blessings of Heaven will be sent down into your bosom. It will pour the joy of contentment over the darkest scenes of adversity, will be a refuge amidst the wintry storms of life, and a never-



failing pledge of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Cultivate this spirit, my dear child, and your character cannot fail to be such, as will awaken joy and gratitude in the heart of

*Your devoted Father.*



## LETTER XIX.

### HUMILITY.

*My dear Child,*

IN my last letter, I hinted that there was such an intimate connection and mutual dependence between the different graces of the Christian, that the cultivation of one must needs involve, in a greater or less degree, the improvement of others: and perhaps there are none of which this is more strikingly true than of Devotion, and the kindred grace of *Humility*. This latter quality holds so prominent a place among the attributes of the Christian, that I shall request your more

particular attention to it, as a distinct subject, in the present letter.

It is of great importance that you should distinguish between the humility of the gospel, and its counterfeits. For instance, the spirit of Christian humility is very remote from an abject spirit : the latter aspires only to mean and grovelling objects, while the former is directed towards the noblest objects in the universe. It is equally remote from a spirit of despondency ; for this is the legitimate offspring of unbelief, while that is always connected with a living faith. Persons may be much discouraged with respect to their usefulness in life, may be in darkness and doubt in regard to the genuineness of their Christian experience, and may have the most painful apprehensions respecting a future world, and after all, may not have a spark of genuine humility : but on the contrary, it may all be traced to the opposite principle of Pride. Humility, on the other hand, is perfectly consistent with forming large plans, and entering upon the most extensive field of action, provided it be from

Christian motives. You may be very humble in the most exalted station to which Providence can raise you ; and you may be very proud in the obscurest situation to which you can be reduced.

That is false humility also, which leads its possessor to speak more unfavourably of himself than his character will warrant. Expressions of this kind almost uniformly fail of their object ; for it requires but little discernment to detect the unworthy motive. If you attribute to yourself faults, with which you and the world know that you are not chargeable, instead of being taken as a mark of humility, it will be regarded as an indication of a weak mind, and an attempt to provoke commendation which you have not deserved.

The humility which the gospel requires of you, is one of the effects of Divine grace operating upon the heart. The apostle has described it as a disposition, which leads us *not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think*. It discovers itself in the modesty of our appearance, conversation and pur-

suits. It is an important part of Christian humility, to abandon our own works as a ground of justification, and to cherish a deep impression of the malignity and guilt of sin. It is opposed to Pride in all its forms, and includes Repentance as one of its first exercises.

The motives for the cultivation of this grace, are very numerous, and can, at present, scarcely be hinted at. I will only say that it is an essential part of Christian character, and a spring of the purest and richest enjoyment. One of the fathers once said, 'If I were asked what is the first grace of the Christian, I would say, Humility. If I were asked what is the second, I would say, Humility. If I were asked, what is the third, I would still say, Humility forever.' Every thing in the universe is part of a system ; and when it is in the place appointed for it, it is either at rest, or in harmonious motion. This is true of ourselves : but Pride disturbs this harmony, and by removing the soul out of its proper sphere, makes it restless and unhappy. The great secret of true happiness, in any

station, is to have a principle introduced, and in exercise, which will restore harmony to the passions, and will relieve us from the conflicts and tumults which they occasion.

Remember that a proud spirit cannot be concealed. If it exists in the heart, all the means which you can use to conceal it from the world, will be in vain. It will discover itself in your conversation and deportment, and will give a complexion to your character. I have known instances, in which the manners of persons have been formed in the morning of life, under the influence of a principle of Pride ; and though they afterwards gave evidence of true piety, the haughty and overbearing manner which they had early acquired, in spite of all their exertions to the contrary, remained till the close of life. This is one of a great variety of arguments, why you should early and diligently cultivate the humility of the gospel.

With a view to increase this most desirable spirit, meditate much on the example of Christ, who humbled Himself even to the cross. Endeavour to gain deep impressions

of your guilt, and of the punishment which your sins have merited. Dwell upon the precious promises of God to the humble and contrite; and remember that one employment of the Redeemed in glory, is to cast their crowns at the Saviour's feet.

*Your affectionate Father.*

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## LETTER XX.

### IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

*My dear Child,*

IN the present letter, I propose to give you some brief directions, with regard to the *improvement of your time*. As this is a talent which you receive at the hands of God, and for which you must render an account, it is of great importance to you, that you should make the best use of it which you can. It is an important thought, that if your time is wasted, most of your other talents are perverted, or buried of course; because the

proper improvement of them is inseparable from a right use of your time.

The first direction which I would give you on this subject is, *that you should cultivate a habit of industry.* Never allow yourself to be idle, when your health and circumstances will permit you to be employed. There is hardly any character which is not more desirable, than that of a drone. If you once form an industrious habit, you will never afterwards be able to content yourself in a state of inactivity ; and on the other hand, if you begin life with a habit of indolence, you will probably never after acquire a relish for active exertion. In whatever circumstances Providence may place you, take care that the whole of your time be employed ; and consider the first inroads of indolence, as a melancholy harbinger of the wreck of your usefulness, and the loss of your reputation.

But it is not enough that you should be industrious. Your time may be employed, and yet the purposes for which it is given, may not be answered. It is necessary, therefore, *that your activity should be directed towards*

*proper objects.* If you are ever so industrious in doing that which can be of no advantage to yourself or others, after it is done, there is as truly a waste of your time, as if your faculties had not been exerted at all. In selecting your employments, you ought to have reference to two things : first, to utility ; and secondly, to your own talents. There may be many useful employments in which you are not qualified to engage ; and those in which you actually engage, ought to be such as Providence has fitted you for, by giving you means and capacity.

If you will make the best of your time, *you must not be negligent of method.* As your general employments will grow out of the situation in which Providence places you, you will find no difficulty in reducing them, in a good degree, to system. In this way, you will prevent the different parts of your business from interfering with each other, and will be able, at the same time, to save every moment. Otherwise, you will be embarrassed by the variety of duties that present themselves ; and while you will sustain a great



loss of time in making a selection, you will be likely to do none of them so perfectly, as if you had regarded each as part of a regular system.

As a reason why you should make a profitable use of your time, let me remind you that 'the time is short.' Should your life be protracted to the period of old age, you will say at its close, that it was only 'as a watch of the night, as a dream when one awaketh.' But of this you can have no assurance ; and you must be sensible that the only conclusion which analogy warrants, is, that you will probably not reach an advanced period. And need I say that even now, some of your last moments may be spending ? Has the improvement of your life that is past, been such, that you can review it with peace and approbation ?

But after Death is the Judgment. When Time is past, then comes Eternity : and your improvement of the one must lay a foundation for your condition in the other. With this solemn thought, I take leave of the subject, earnestly praying that your time may be

spent in such a manner, that it shall be good for you and for others that you have lived.

*Your truly affectionate Father.*

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## LETTER XXI.

### OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH.

*My dear Child,*

As my last letter was occupied with some general directions in regard to the improvement of your time, in this, I wish to call your attention to some more particular hints with respect to the *observance of the Sabbath*. I have chosen to make this the subject of a distinct letter, from a conviction that there is a growing inattention to it, at the present day, and that it is of no inconsiderable importance in its influence on practical piety.

I do not wish you reasonably to incur the charge of superstition on this subject, or to forget that 'the Sabbath was made for man,

and not man for the Sabbath.' But I do wish you to cherish a most sacred reverence for that holy day, and to avoid every thing which can justly be considered a violation of it. It is a day which God has been pleased to hallow for his own immediate service ; and we cannot employ it for other purposes, without casting contempt upon the Divine appointment, and involving ourselves in aggravated guilt.

My first advice with regard to the improvement of the Sabbath, is, that if it be practicable, *a part of it should always be spent in the duties of publick worship.* Let no insufficient reason ever detain you from the sanctuary : remember that publick worship is a Divine institution ; and if you deliberately turn your back upon it, you have no right to expect the blessing of the sabbath in any other way. And when you are in the house of God, let all your deportment be marked by the utmost reverence and solemnity. Recollect that it is the place, in which Jehovah condescends, in a peculiar sense, to hold his residence ; the place where the offers of grace

are proclaimed, where angels are present to witness the solemnities, and where immortal souls are trained for Heaven or Hell. In such a place, and on such an occasion as that which calls you thither, it is not enough your external deportment be decorous and respectful; that you refrain from the significant smile, or the vacant stare: you are bound to take a deep and personal interest in the exercises, to make the prayers and the praises of the congregation your own, and to open your heart to the practical impressions of Divine truth. Never allow yourself in the habit of criticising the publick services. It will make you a captious and unprofitable hearer, and will lead to a state of mind quite inconsistent with that teachable and devotional spirit, which ought to characterise the Christian worshipper. It will be a useful exercise to you, to commit a general analysis of the sermons which you hear, to paper. While it will contribute to the improvement of your memory, and thus prove a useful intellectual discipline, it will increase your stock of theological knowledge, and will fur-

nish you with materials, which you can always command as the elements of useful meditation.

But think not that the duties of the Sabbath are over, when the services of the sanctuary are closed. The remaining parts of holy time you are to spend in a recollection and application of the truths which you have heard ; in private devotion ; in reading the scriptures, and other books of a practical nature, calculated for the promotion of Christian improvement. It is also a benevolent and useful employment, for a part of the Sabbath, to communicate religious instruction to the ignorant and destitute, to whom you may have access ; and your duty imperatively requires this, with respect to those whom Providence may place under your care. In short, every part of this sacred day is, in some way or other, to be given to the service of God. It is the portion of time which He has Himself designated, to be employed in this manner ; and if we profane it by secular engagements, by indolence, or trifling, we are guilty of robbing God, and of pouring contempt upon his authority.

I have already hinted that part of the Sabbath ought to be employed in practical meditation on Divine truth : and I would here add, that this will, at all times, be a profitable and interesting exercise. There is nothing more important to your progress in religion, than a familiar acquaintance with the word of God. You are to study it, not merely with a view to ascertain what are its genuine doctrines, but that you may imbibe copiously its heavenly spirit, and become experimentally familiar with its glories. The more frequently and diligently you read it, the stronger will be your conviction, that it is a treasury of knowledge and wisdom, which is inexhaustible. When you first cast your eye towards the Heavens, you sometimes discover but a solitary star ; but after looking intensely for a few moments, your vision detects thousands of these luminaries, and the whole firmament seems clad in robes of splendour. So when you begin to meditate on Divine truth, you will discover but a small part of its whole excellence and glory ; but as you continue your meditations, new beauties will unfold to the

eye, till it becomes gradually fixed in devout admiration.

There is another subject connected with this general one, to which I shall advert for a moment : I mean the subject of *extra religious meetings*. From attending occasionally, and even frequently, on services of this kind, you may find no small satisfaction and profit : and if you have much of the spirit of religion, I venture to say, that you will not be disposed to neglect them. But never think of putting them in the place of a Divine institution, or of making them the standard by which you judge the Christian character of your neighbour. And do not suppose that it is impossible to err, by multiplying exercises of this kind to an improper extent. You may attend them so frequently, as to prevent your proper attention to the duties of the family and of the closet ; and indeed a constant round of public religious services, would leave you with so little time for reflection and self-examination, that their very object would be, in a great measure, defeated. While I am a warm advocate for religious conferen-

ces, at proper times, I would always protest against religious dissipation.

That you may have the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, to lead you into all duty, is the earnest prayer of

*Your devoted Father.*

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## LETTER XXII.

### CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

*My dear Child,*

IT is unnecessary that I should add any thing more on the general subject of your obligation to improve all your time and talents for the glory of God. There is, however, one branch of this subject, which the present condition and prospects of the church, seem particularly to commend to your attention, and which I am unwilling to pass over, without at least a cursory notice, I refer to *the influence and exertions of females in the spread of the gospel*: and I am the more disposed to



call your attention to this, from the circumstance that there are different opinions in relation to it, abroad in the Christian community.

It is professedly the expectation of all Christians, that the knowledge and influence of the gospel will one day become universal ; and that this is to be the effect, not of any sudden or miraculous display of Omnipotence, but of the enlightened and persevering activity of the church. But notwithstanding this expectation has so long, and so universally prevailed in Christendom ;—an expectation, which is indeed abundantly warranted by the promises of God ;—it is a melancholy fact, that from a very early period of the church, until within a few years, the great body of professed Christians have appeared to act from a conviction, that the mighty work of evangelizing the world, was reserved as a splendid subject for some stupendous miracle. In our day, we have reason to bless God, that Christians are waking to a sense of their obligation, and are actually doing much to send the Bible over the world. Indeed, the

great moral machine seems now to be fairly in operation, by which the regenerating influence of the gospel is every where to be extended, and the wide wilderness of paganism is to bloom with spiritual verdure, and become fragrant with offerings of piety.

But amidst all this mass of complicated and benevolent effort, which, for a few years past, we have had the pleasure to witness, it is still a problem in many minds, whether this be a proper field for the pious activity of females : and not a few have been found to advocate the opinion, that they are fairly excluded, by the distinguishing qualities of their sex, from any part in these benevolent operations. I am glad to observe that the good sense and pious feeling of the Christian community, are gradually prevailing over this unhappy prejudice ; but even now, the female, who will be a *champion* in the cause of Christ, will sometimes have to encounter from the cold and calculating, the sullen frown of disapprobation. But when you come to analyze this prejudice, you will find that the grand element of which it is compos-

ed, is a frigid indifference to the interests of religion : for where has Inspiration said that females are excused from bearing a part in the extension of the gospel ? And what dictate of Reason is that, which bids ~~our~~ <sup>one</sup> sex engage with all alacrity and zeal, in the diffusion of Christian light, and allows them to monopolize the glory of this godlike employment, and bids the other sit down and silently watch the progress of these benevolent efforts. Your obligation to enlist, according to your ability, in the Christian charities of the day, is as clear as any other duty. It may expose you to the sneer of the stupid worldling, and even of the heart-frozen professor ; but if you are governed by Christian motives, it will secure the approbation of your God, and exalt you to a higher mansion in glory.

But while I am far from admitting that females are forbidden to take part in the great work of christianizing the world, I have no wish to see them passing the legitimate boundary, by which the hand of Providence, in giving a complexion to their character, seems to have limited the field of their ope-

rations. I do not wish you to assume any thing in the work of charity, which does not properly fall within your province ;—any thing which can reasonably be considered a violation of the strictest rules of delicacy and decorum. But you may devise as many plans for sending the gospel to the heathen, provided they be wise and practicable, as you please ;—you may cast in a mite into the treasury of Christian benevolence, as often as your circumstances will admit ;—you may labour with your hands to provide apparel for the children of the wilderness, and those who are sacrificing their worldly ease to civilize and sanctify them ;—you may appear as the modest advocate of Bible and Missionary Societies, and endeavour to impart life and energy to their operations : all this you may do, and if the finger of scorn is pointed at you, you will suffer for righteousness' sake. Indeed, it is no matter how active you are in this great cause, provided your activity is regulated by Christian prudence ; and the more you accomplish, the more ' blessed will be your memory,' and the brighter your anticipations of eternity.

I know not how to form a greater contrast, than must exist between the dying bed of an actively benevolent female, and one who has lived only for purposes of self-gratification. Can you conceive, on the one hand, of any thing more delightful, than to look back, from a death-bed upon a long series of pious efforts for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom ;—to think that those efforts may have been instrumental in opening fountains of salvation in heathen lands ;—to feel all the composure and joy which the approaching dawn of immortality can shed over the heart ; and to look forward to a crown of victory studded with innumerable gems, in each of which you may recognize the ransomed soul of a once perishing heathen. And on the other hand, can you conceive of any thing more dreadful, than to review from the gates of the grave, a life full of trifling and vanity,—to have your dying eye fasten upon a picture on which no bright spots of active benevolence appear, to relieve you from the sickening gloom of a uniform waste ; and to be haunted by the ghosts of departed and mis-

spent years, which come up in frightful succession, to give you a deeper chill of horror in the valley of death? If there be any thing alluring, or any thing appalling in this contrast, then choose the life of the active Christian, that you may share in his present consolation, and reap his eternal reward.

*Your affectionate and devoted Father.*

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## LETTER XXIII.

### DISCIPLINE OF PROVIDENCE.

*My dear Child,*

As we are constantly subject to a *providential discipline*, while we are in this state of probation;—a discipline which is closely connected with the formation of our characters, it becomes a matter of no small moment, that we should not defeat the design of Providence, by perverting the means which He uses for our moral and religious improvement. I shall, therefore, in the present let-

ter, call your attention to a few thoughts on this subject so interesting to you as a rational and accountable being.

It has pleased God, in the exercise of his moral government, to open before you a great system of means and motives, which derives its complexion from the circumstances in which you are placed, and the tendency of which is to prepare you for a state of higher enjoyment. It is in your power, therefore, by a proper improvement of this moral discipline, in connection with the aids of Divine grace, to form a virtuous character, and to attain to a happy condition ; and it is in your power also, by a perversion or neglect of these advantages, to become useless, vicious and miserable.

If you will conform yourself to the design of Providence, in this respect, I advise you to form an early habit of attentively noticing the events of your life. While such a habit is fitted more than any thing else to enlarge your knowledge of human nature, and of the general plan of Providence, it will furnish you with a kind of record of the Divine dis-

pensations, which you may always consult, and with no small advantage. There are some persons who seem to pass carelessly along through life, without supposing that they have any other interest in its events, than as they afford a momentary pleasure or pain at the time of their occurrence. But if you will properly improve the discipline of Heaven, you must always maintain the attitude of a vigilant observer ; and every important event which befalls you, you must learn to consider as a means of moral improvement. Often institute the inquiry with yourself ‘ What is the design of Providence in bringing me into these peculiar circumstances ? What is there in my character which they are designed to correct ? And what are the various uses which I am bound to make of them ? ’ In this way, you will soon find that nothing happens to you in vain ; and that your character, instead of being stationary, or upon the retrograde in virtue, is advancing by a regular process of moral improvement.

But while you are to be vigilant with re-



spect to the events which fall within your own private experience, you are not to be inattentive to the occurrences which mark the lives of others. Not that I would encourage an inquisitive spirit, with respect to the private concerns of your neighbour ; but there are a thousand interesting events, that chequer the life of almost every person, which are subject, in a greater or less degree, to public observation : and these are the events from which I wish you to derive instruction. In short, endeavour to be familiar with every part of the volume of Providence, so far as it is unfolded to you ; and as you read, keep constantly in mind the thought, ‘ these things were written for my admonition.’

One of the greatest dangers with respect to the discipline of Providence, results from our natural disposition to repine in seasons of adversity. There is no doubt that the severest strokes of our Father, if properly improved, are often the most salutary ; but our poor, imperfect nature too frequently recoils, and we defeat his benevolent intentions, by

yielding to a spirit of impatience and restless discontent. You can never make a proper use of your afflictions, unless you preserve a state of humble submission. You are not forbidden to feel the rod which chastises you ; but you are required to bow before it with the submissive temper of a child : otherwise, instead of reaping the fruit of this discipline, in the increased ardour of your religious affections, and in a more holy and exemplary life, your experience may be a living comment upon that fearful declaration, ‘ He that being often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.’

But if you are in danger of perverting the corrective dispensations of Providence, by a spirit of complaint, the danger is not less, that you will yield to a spirit of self-confidence, in the time of prosperity. The legitimate effect of the blessings of Heaven, is to increase our gratitude, to impress us more deeply with our unworthiness, to make us more actively disinterested in our intercourse with the world, and to quicken every pious

and devout affection. When this effect is produced upon your character, prosperity may well be regarded by you as a blessing. But if, instead of this, it only nourishes a spirit of Pride, and makes you more forgetful of the great Benefactor ; if it produces the unhappy conviction that your mountain stands strong and can never be moved, then every blessing which you enjoy will be a thorn in your bed of death, and a swift witness against you at the bar of judgment.

With sincere wishes that you may improve under all the dealings of Providence,

*I remain your very affectionate Father.*



## LETTER XXIV.

### CONSISTENCY OF CHARACTER.

*My dear Child,*

I flatter myself that a proper attention to the various articles of advice contained in these letters, will be sufficient to secure to

you a good degree of *consistency of character*. This, as you are aware, does not consist in any single, distinguishing trait, but in a union of all the various qualities necessary to form a desirable character, in their due degree and proportion. You may possess one dazzling attribute, which will attract the admiration of the world, but it will not secure to you the reputation of a consistent character. Indeed, you may have many estimable traits, and in many respects, may be all which your best friends could wish ; and yet if there be no harmony between the different parts of your deportment, if you have only one prominent foible which always appears to cast a shade over your excellences, there will be a deficiency, which cannot fail to be felt by all with whom you associate.

To assist you to the attainment of a consistent character, I will give you two general rules : The first is, *that you should always keep in your proper sphere*. Be contented with the station in which Providence places you ; and let not ambition or vanity excite a wish to rise above it. In the family, in the

neighbourhood, in every relation which you sustain, endeavour to keep within your own limits. In this way, you will always be found in the right place ; and will never subject yourself to the charge of stepping out of your appropriate station, for the sake of interfering with concerns, which are not your own.

The other general direction is, *that you should do every duty in its proper place.* On this article, I know not that I have any thing to add to the remarks already made, under the head of *improvement of time.* An attention to this rule, while it will prevent confusion in your different pursuits, and will be a guard against the waste of time, will impart to your mind a habit of regularity, which you cannot too highly appreciate.

If you observe these two directions which I have here given, your character cannot fail to be consistent. If there are natural defects in your disposition, this will be the best way to remedy them : if they will yield to any thing, it will be to a strict and conscientious regard to every part of your duty. And let

me say, the character which is formed under such an influence, is incomparably to be preferred to any other. Give me the character whose proportions I can measure, and whose different traits exist in harmonious combination, and I would greatly prefer it, even if it had not a single striking feature, to the most dazzling combination of qualities, existing without proportion, and without order.

*Most affectionately, your Father.*



## LETTER XXV.

### CONCLUSION,

*My dear Child,*

I have now gone through with a consideration of the various subjects, to which I had designed to call your attention in these letters. The limits which I have prescribed to myself, have obliged me to be very general, with respect to all of them, and on some, to confine myself to mere hints. But I trust

they are subjects which you will revolve frequently in your thoughts, and will pursue them in their various parts and ramifications. I need not say that all that I have written has been dictated by a heart, which beats with the most anxious concern for your happiness ; which has bled for the loss you have sustained in the early death of your mother ; and which can know no greater joy, than to see you walking in the love and fear of God.

And now, my dear child, if there be an additional consideration, which I can use to induce you to become, in all respects, what a father's wishes would make you, it is one which addresses itself to your feelings of tenderness as a daughter. Your mother was not, indeed, permitted to watch the development of your mind, or to engage in the culture of your heart ; but she had formed plans, under Providence, for making you wise, and good, and happy. She was not permitted to carry you to the baptismal font, but she carried you to a throne of mercy, and bedewed your infant face with her dying tears. She dedicated you to God in the arms

of faith, but a little before her spirit took its flight for glory. And will it not heighten even the transports of Heaven, if she may look down from the mansions of the blessed, and see the fruit of her dying, but faithful efforts, in a daughter, who is walking in the truth, and ripening for immortality ?

If I should suggest as another argument for your walking in wisdom's ways, that it will give unspeakable delight to the heart of your father, I know your sensibilities would not allow you to resist it. You need not be told that with you are associated a thousand interesting hopes, as the living representative of one, whom the grave prematurely snatched from my embrace. It does not become you or me to proclaim the excellences of one so near to us ; and yet I cannot forbear to say, that if I may be permitted to see in you, all that I have seen, and known, and loved in her, I shall bless God for having given me such a daughter. But in a little while, probably, the endearing relation, which I sustain to you, will be dissolved. The ties of parental tenderness, though entwined with



every ligament of my frame, are not more sacred or more secure than were those of conjugal affection. I may be called to leave you, even in early life, a solitary and unprotected orphan. But even then, if my wishes with respect to your character, may but be realized, I will indulge no anxiety in regard to what may befall you from this cold, ungrateful world ; but my mind shall fasten, without a chill of apprehension, on the scenes of another day, when we shall meet and mingle with the spirits of the just.

I commend you to the blessing of a covenant-keeping God ; and am, with most earnest desires for your present and eternal happiness,

*Your devoted friend and Father.*

DECEMBER 1, 1821.



