

A MOTHER'S DUTY

By Timothy Shay Arthur, 1859

The duties of the *housekeeper* and *mother*, usually unite in the same person; but difficult and perplexing as is the former relation, how light and easy are all its claims compared with those of the latter. Among my readers are many *mothers* — Let us for a little while hold counsel together.

To the mind of a mother, who loves her children, no subject can have so deep an interest as that which has respect to the well-being of her offspring. Young mothers, especially, feel the need, the great need of the *hints* and *helps* to be derived from others' experience. To them, the duty of rightly guiding, forming and developing the young mind is altogether a new one; at every step they feel their incompetence, and are troubled at their lack of success. A young married friend, the mother of two active little boys, said to me, one day, earnestly,

"Oh! I think, sometimes, that I would give the world if I only could see clearly what was my duty towards my children. I try to guide them aright — I try to keep them from all improper influences — but *rank weeds* continually spring up with the flowers I have planted. How shall I extirpate these weeds, without injuring the flowers?"

How many a young mother thus thinks and feels. It is indeed a great responsibility which rests upon her. With the most constant and careful attention, she will find the task of *keeping out the weeds* a hard one; but let her not become weary or discouraged. The enemy is ever seeking to sow *tares* amid her wheat — and he will do it if she *sleeps* at her post. Constant care, good precept, and, above all, *good example* — will do much.

The gardener whose *eye* is ever over, and whose *hand* is ever busy in his garden — accomplishes much. The measure of his success may be seen if the eye rests for but a moment, on the garden of his neighbor, the sluggard. Even if a *weed* springs up here and there, it is quickly plucked up, and never allowed to obstruct or weaken the growth of the healthy plants. A *mole* may enter stealthily, marring the beauty of a flower-bed, and disturbing the roots of some garden-favorite, but through the careful gardener's well-set enclosure, no beasts find an entrance.

So it will be with the watchful, conscientious mother. She will so *fence* around her children from external dangers and allurements, that destructive beasts will be kept out. And she will, at the same time cultivate the garden of their good affections, and extirpate the weeds — that her children may grow up in moral health and beauty.

All this can be done. But the right path must be *seen* before we can walk in it. Every mother feels as the one I have alluded to; but some, while they feel as deeply, have not the clear perceptions of what is right which others have. Much has been written on the subject of *guiding* and *governing* children — much that is good — and much that is of doubtful utility. I will here present, from the pen of an English lady, whose work has not, we believe, been re-printed in this country, a most excellent series of precepts. They deserve to be written in letters of gold, and hung up in every nursery. She says —

The moment a child is born into the world, a mother's duties commence; and of all those which God has allotted to mortals, there are none so important as those which devolve upon a mother.

More feeble and helpless than any other living creature, is an infant in the first days of its existence — unable to minister to its own needs, unable even to make those needs known: a feeble cry which indicates suffering, but not what or where the pain is — is all it can utter. But to meet this weakness and incapacity on the part of the infant, God has implanted in the heart of the mother a yearning affection to her offspring, so that she feels this almost inanimate being to be a part of herself, and every cry of pain acts as a *dagger* to her own heart.

And to humanity alone, of all the tribes of animated beings, has a power been given to *nullify* this maternal feeling. Beast, bird, and insect, attend to the needs of their offspring, accordingly as those needs require much or little assiduity. But woman, if she will, can *drug* and *stupefy* this feeling. She can commit the charge of her child to servants, and need only to take care that enough is provided to meet that child's wants, but need not see *herself* that those wants are actually met.

But a woman who does this is far, very far, from doing her maternal duty. Who is so fit to watch over the needs of infancy, as she who gave that infant birth? Can a mother suppose, that if she can so stifle those sensibilities which prompt *her* to provide for the needs of her children — that her servants, in whom no such sensibilities exist, will be very solicitous about their charge? How many of the infant's cries will be unattended to, which would at once have made their way to the heart of a mother! And, therefore, how many of the child's needs will in consequence remain uncared for!

No one can *understand* so well the needs of a child as a mother — no one is ever so ready to *meet* those needs as she. And, therefore, to none but a mother, under ordinary circumstances, should the entire charge of a child be committed. And in all countries in which *luxury* has not so far attained the ascendancy that, in order to partake of its *pleasures*, a mother will *desert her offspring* — the cares and trials of maternal love are entered upon as the sweetest of enjoyments and the greatest of pleasures.

It was a noble saying of a queen of France, "that none should share with her the privileges of being a mother to her children." If the same sentiment found its way into every heart — a very different aspect in society would soon be produced.

How many, through ill-treatment and neglect in childhood — carry the marks to their dying day, in weak and sickly constitutions! These are but the too sure consequences of the *neglect* of a mother; and, consequent upon that, the neglect of *servants*, who, feeling the child to be a *burden*, lessen their own labors by not taking proper care for the child. And many a mother who, perhaps, now that her child has grown up, weeps bitter tears over his infirmities — might have saved his pain and her own sorrow — by attending to his needs in infancy.

"Can a mother forget her nursing child?" asks the inspired penman, in a way that it would seem to be so great an anomaly as almost to amount to an impossibility. Yet *modern luxury* not only proves that such a thing can be done, but it is one even of *common* occurrence!

But if done, surely some *great stake* must be pending — something on which life and property are concerned — that a mother can thus forget the child of her bosom? Alas, no! The child is neglected, that no interruption may take place in the *mother's stream of selfish pleasure!* For the blandishments of the theater, or the excitements of the dance — the child left to the charge of those who have no *love* for it — no *sympathy* for its sufferings, no *joyousness* in sharing in its pleasures.

A woman forfeits all claim to *the sacred character of a mother*, if she abandons her offspring to the entire care of others. For before she can do this, she must have stifled all the best feelings of her nature, and become "worse than an infidel" — for she neglects her own children!

Therefore should a mother, if she would fulfill her duty — make her child her *first* care. It is not necessary that her whole time should be spent in attending to its needs; but it is necessary that so much time should be spent, that nothing should be neglected which could add to the child's comfort and happiness. And not only is it needful that a woman should show a *motherly fondness* for her child, so that she should attend to its needs and be solicitous for its welfare — it is also necessary that she should know *HOW* those *needs* are best to be provided for, and how that *welfare* is best to be consulted.

To the natural *instincts* which prompt animals to provide for their offspring — to humanity is added the noble gift of *reason*; so that thought and solicitude are not merely the effects of *blind instinct*, but the product of a higher and nobler faculty.

Yet without a knowledge of *how* the physical needs of a child are to be met in the best manner, a mother cannot be said to be performing her duty. For the kindness which is bestowed may be but the result of natural feeling, which it would be far harder to resist, than to fulfill; whereas the lack of knowledge may have resulted from ignorance and idleness, and the loss of this knowledge will never be made up by natural kindness and love. It will be like trying to work without hands, or to see when the eyes are blinded.

But there is yet a higher duty devolving upon a mother. She has to attend to the *mental* and *moral* needs of her offspring, as well as to the *physical* needs. And as helpless as we are born into the world if reference be made to our *physical* needs — we are even yet more helpless if reference be made to our *mental* and *moral* needs.

We come into the world with evil passions, perverted faculties, and unholy dispositions. Let what will be said of the kindness and attractiveness of children — there are in those young hearts the *seeds of every evil*. It needs but that a note be taken of what passes in the every-day life of a child, to convince that all is not so amiable as at first sight appears — but that the heart hides dark deformity, headstrong passions, and wicked thoughts!

Also to a mother's lot, it falls to be the *instructress* of her children — their *guide* and *pattern*. She fails in her duty, when she fails in either of these points. But it may be said, that the requirement is greater than a mother can perform, and that it would need angelic purity, to be able fully to meet it. For who shall say that she is so perfect that no inconsistencies shall appear between what

she *teaches*, and what she *practices*? It would be, indeed, to suppose mothers more than human to think that their instructions should be perfect.

The best of mothers are liable to err, and the love a mother has for her child may tempt her frequently to *pass over faults* which she knows ought to be corrected. But making due allowance for human incompetency and human sentimentality, still a mother will be bound to the utmost of her power, to be the *instructress* of her child — equally by the *lesson* she inculcates, and the *example* she exhibits.

There is, indeed, too much *neglect* shown in the *instruction* of children. Mothers seem to think, that if amiable qualities are shown in the *exterior*, that no instruction is necessary for the *heart*. But this is a most futile attempt to make children virtuous; it is like attempting to purify water half-way down the stream, and leaving it still foul at the *source*.

The heart should be the first thing instructed. When the *heart* is made to love virtue — the *actions* will be those of virtue. For *it is the heart which is the great mover of all actions* — and the moment a child can distinguish between a smile and a frown, from that moment should instruction commence — an instruction *suited* indeed to infantile capacities, but which should be enlarged as the child's capacities expand.

It is very bad policy to allow the first years of a child's life to pass without instruction; for if *good* is not written on the mind when young — there is sure to be *evil* written there. It is a mother's duty to watch the expanding intellect of her child, and to *suit* her instructions accordingly. It is equally the mother's duty, so to learn the child's *disposition* — to study its wishes, its hopes and its fears — and to direct, control, and point them to noble aims and ends.

Oh! not alone is it needful that a mother be solicitous for the *health* and *temporal happiness* of her child on earth — a far higher and more important thought should engage her attention — concern for her child as an *immortal* and an *accountable* being to God!

To all who bear the endearing name of *mother*, thus would we speak:

That child with whom you are so fondly playing — whose happy and smiling countenance might serve for the picture of a cherub, and whose merry laugh rings joyously and free — yes! that blooming child, notwithstanding all these pleasing and attractive smiles — has a *heart prone to evil!* To you is it committed to be the *teacher* of that child; and on that teaching will mainly if not entirely, depend its future happiness — or misery; not for only a few brief years — not for only a life-time — but for *eternity!* For though a dying creature, the child is still immortal, and the happiness or misery of that immortality, depends largely upon your instruction.

Will you neglect or refuse to be your child's teacher? Shall the *world* and its *pleasures* draw off your attention from your maternal duty, when so much is at stake? Or will you leave your child to glean knowledge as best it can, thus imbibing all worldly principles and habits — most of them unwholesome, and many poisonous?

You can decide — you, the mother! You gave it life — you may make that life a blessing or a curse, as you inculcate good or evil. For if through your *neglect*, or through *bad example*, you let evil passions gain an ascendancy in your child — that child may grow into a dissolute and immoral man! His career may be one of debauchery and profaneness! And then, when he comes to die, in the agonies of remorse, in the delirium of a conscience-stricken spirit — he may gasp out his last breath with a curse on *your* head, for having given him life, but not a disposition to use it aright — so that his has been a life of shame and disgrace here on earth, and will be one of eternal misery hereafter!

That child's *character* is yet untrained; with you, that decision rests — his destiny is largely in your hands. He may have dispositions the most dark and foul — falseness, hatred and carnal lusts; but you may prevent their growth. He may have dispositions the most kind and attractive — and you can so order it, that contact with the world shall never sully them. Yes, you — the mother — can prevent the evil — and nurture the good! You can *teach* that child — you can *train* it, *discipline* it. You can make your offspring so love you, that the *memory of your piety* shall prevent their wickedness; and the hallowed recollection of your goodness shall stimulate their own.

It is equally in your power to *neglect* your child. By allowing *pleasure* to allure you — by following the *follies of fashion*, or by the charm of those *baubles* which the *world* presents to the eye, but keeps from your grasp — you may *neglect* your child. But you have neglected a plain and positive duty — a duty which is engraved on your heart, and put into your nature. A duty *neglected* is sure, sooner or later, to come back again as an *avenger* to punish! While, on the other hand, a duty *performed* to the best of the ability — returns back to the performer laden with a blessing.

But it may be said, **HOW are children to be trained, in order that both *temporal* and *eternal* happiness may be the result?**

It is quite impossible to lay down *universal* rules for the management of children; since those rules which would serve for guidance in regulating the conduct of one child — would work the worst results when applied to another. But we mention a few particular hints:

The grand secret in the management of children, is to *treat them as reasonable beings*. We see that they are governed by hope, fear, and love: these feelings, then, should be made the *instruments* by which their education is conducted. Whenever it is possible (and it is very rarely that it is not), a *reason* should be given for every requirement, and a *motive* for undertaking any task. This would lead the child to see that nothing was demanded out of caprice or whim, but that it was a requirement involving their happiness, as well as their duty.

This method would also teach the child to *reverence* and *respect* the parent. She would be regarded as possessed of superior knowledge. Then the child would the more readily undertake demands for which he could see no reason, from a knowledge that no commands of which he understood the design were unreasonable.

The *manner* of managing children, should be one of *kindness*, though marked by *decision of character*. An over-fondness should never allow a mother to gratify her child in anything unreasonable; and after having once refused a request — which she should not do hastily or unadvisedly — no coaxing or tears should ever divert her from her purpose. For if she gives way, the child will at once understand that he has a *power* over his mother, and will resort to the same expedient whenever occasion may require. And a worse evil than this is, that *respect* for the parent will be lost, and the child, in place of yielding readily to her wishes, will try the means of *trick* and *evasion* to elude them.

In order to really manage a child well — a mother should become a child herself. She should enter into its hopes and fears, and share its joys and sorrows. She should bend down her mind to that of her offspring, so as to be pleased with all those trivial actions which give it pleasure — and to sorrow over those which bring it pain. This would secure a firm and ardent love, and at the same time lasting. For as a child advanced in strength of intellect, so might the mother, until the child grew old enough to understand the ties which bound them; and then, by making him a *friend*, she would bind him to her for life.

There are none of the human race so sagacious and keen-sighted as children! They seem to understand intuitively a person's disposition, and they quickly notice any discrepancies or inconsistencies of *conduct*. On this point should particular attention be paid — that there be nothing practiced to *cheat* the child. *Underhand means* are frequently resorted to, to persuade a child to perform or abstain from some particular duty or object. But in a very short time it will be found out, and the child has been *taught a lesson in deception* which it will not fail to use when occasion requires.

And under this head might be included all that petty species of *deceit* used towards children — whether to *mislead* their apprehension, or to *divert* their attention. If anything is improper for a child to know or do — better tell him so at once, than resort to an underhand expedient. If a reason can be given for requiring the abstinence; it should; but if not, tell the child that the reason is such that he could not comprehend it, and he will remain satisfied. But if *trick* or *scheming* is resorted to — the child will have learned the two improper lessons of first being *cunning*, and then telling a *falsehood* to avoid it.

Always propose the highest and noblest *motive* — this will generally be a motive which centers in *God*. Thus, in teaching a child to speak the truth, it should be proposed not so much out of obedience to parents, as out of *obedience to God*. And in all requirements, the *love and fear of God* should be prominently set forth.

A child is born with feelings of religion; and if these feelings are properly called forth, the actions will generally have a tendency to good. Thus, with a child whose disposition is to *deceive*, a mother has no hold upon such a one; for the child will soon perceive that his mother cannot follow him everywhere, and that he can commit many actions of deceit with impunity. But, if you impress the child with the truth that a Divine Being is watching these actions, and that though done with the greatest cunning, they cannot be committed with impunity — and it is more than probable that they will never be committed at all.

A *temptation* may be thrown in the way of such a child, but the child will not be powerful enough to overcome the feeling that the action is being watched. That child may eagerly pant to perform the forbidden action, or to partake of the forbidden pleasure; but he will not be able to rid himself of the feeling that it cannot be done without being *observed*. He will stand in a state of anxiety, and steal a glance around, in order to see the Being he feels is looking upon him, and every *breeze* that murmurs — will be a voice to chide him, and every *leaf* that whistles — will seem a footstep; and never will he be able to break the restraint. For wherever he goes and whatever he does, he will feel that his actions are watched by One who will punish the bad actions, and reward the good actions.

And in the same way might this be applied to all dispositions and feelings. How cheering is it to a timid child, to be told that at no time is he left alone: but that the Divine Being who *made* everything — *preserves* and *keeps* everything, and that nothing can happen but by His permission! This is to disarm fear of its terrors, and to implant a confidence in the mind, for the child will feel that while his actions are good, he is under the protection of an Almighty Parent.

In the same way, in stimulating a child to the performance of a duty — the *motive* and *end* proposed, should be the *favor of God*. This would insure the duty being entered upon with a right spirit — not merely for the sake of show and effect, but springing from the *heart* — and, at the same time, it would prevent anything of *hypocrisy*. If it were only the estimation of the world which was to be regarded, a child could soon understand that the applause would be gained by the mere *exterior* performance — be the heart motive whatever it might be. But when the motive is centered in God, it is readily understood that the feeling must be genuine; otherwise, whatever the world may say, God will look upon it as unworthy and base.

We believe it would be found to work the best results, if all the actions of a child were made thus to depend upon their harmony with the will of God; for it would give a *sacredness* to every action; make every motive a high and holy one; and harmonize the thoughts of the *heart*, with the actions of the *life*.

But in this mode of teaching, it is absolutely necessary that a mother should herself be an *example* of the truth she teaches. It will be worse than useless, to teach a child that God is always at hand, 'and sees all our ways,' if she acts as though she did not believe in the existence of God.

In the same way, it will be vain to teach a child that *lying* is a great crime in God's sight, when a mother in her own words shows no regard to truth; and equally so of all other passions and feelings. It is idle to teach a child that pride — hatred — revenge — anger, are sinful passions — if a mother's own conduct displays *any* of them. How useless is it to teach that *vanity* should never be indulged in — when a mother delights in *ostentation* and *display*! Such instruction as this, is like the *web of Penelope* — unraveled as fast as done.

Previously to becoming a teacher, a mother should learn this hardest of all lessons — '*Know yourself*.' Without this, the instruction she gives to her children will at best prove very imperfect. It is quite useless to teach children to reverence anything, when a mother's conduct shows that, *practically* at least, she has no belief in the truths she inculcates. And a very hard requirement this is: but it is a requirement absolutely necessary, if the child's education is meant to be

anything more than *nominal*. The finest *lesson* on the *beauty of truth* — must be enforced by a mother never herself saying what is false; for children pay great regard to *consistency*, and very soon detect any discrepancies between that which is *taught* — and that which is *practiced*.

The best method of *inculcating truth* on the minds of children, is by *analogy* and *illustration*. They cannot follow a logical argument, though they readily understand an illustration. And, by a judicious arrangement, everything, either animate or inanimate, might be made to become a teacher.

What lesson on *industry* would be so likely to be instructive as that gathered from a bee-hive? The longest dissertation on the *evils of idleness*, and the advantages of *industry*, would not prove half so beneficial as directing the observation to the movements of the bee — that ever-active insect, which, without the aid of reason, exercises prudence and foresight, and provides for the needs of winter. A child will readily understand such instruction as this, and will blush to be found spending precious hours in idleness.

And in the same way with all other duties, whether to God or mankind — the *birds* of the air and the *flowers* of the field might be made profitable teachers — and the child would, wherever he went, be surrounded with instruction.

This mode of teaching has this special recommendation — it raises up no evil passions: and a child which would display an evil temper by being reprov'd in words — will feel no such rancor at a lesson being inculcated in a way like this.

This instruction will also be much *longer remembered* than one delivered in words, forasmuch as the object upon which the instruction is based, would be continually presented to the eye.

And, we believe, almost all duties might be inculcated in this same manner. Thus, *humility* by the violet, *patience* by the spider, *affection* by the dove, *love* to parents by the stork — all might be rendered teachers, and in a way never to be forgotten. And that this mode of teaching is the best, we have the example of Christ himself, who almost invariably enforced his instructions by an allusion to some created thing. What, for instance, was so likely to teach men dependence upon God, as a reference to the 'birds and the lilies,' which, without the aid of reason, had their needs cared for? And in the same way with children — what is so likely to teach them their duties, as a reference to the varied things in nature, with whose uses and habits they are well acquainted?

God should be the *object* upon which the child's thoughts are taught to dwell — for the minds even of children turn to the beautiful, and the beautiful is the Divine. All thoughts and actions should be raised to this standard. The child would then rise above the feelings of self-gratification, and vanity, and the panting for applause — to the favor and love of God. Thus should religion be the *great* and the *first* thing taught. And a mother should be careful that neither in her own *actions*, nor in the *motives* she holds out to her children — should there be anything hypocritical, or contrary to Scripture. And by this course, the best and happiest results may be expected to follow.

The perverse and headstrong passions of the human heart are so many, that numerous instructions may *seem* to be useless, and a mother may have often to sigh over her child as she sees him allowing evil habits to obtain the mastery, or sinful dispositions to reign in his heart. But, as we have before said, we do not think that the instruction will be *lost*, but that a time will come when she will reap the fruits of her toil, care, and concern.

Such then is the duty of a mother — to *tend* and watch over the needs of her child, to *guard* it in health, to nurse it in sickness, to be solicitous for it in all the changes of life; and to prevent, as much as possible, those many evils to which flesh is heir from assailing her fondly cherished offspring.

It is also her province to instruct her children in those duties which will fall to their lot, both as reasonable and as immortal creatures. And by so doing she will make her own life happy — leave to her children a happy heritage on earth, and a prospect of a higher one in Heaven. But if a mother neglects her duty, she will reap the fruits of her own *negligence*, in the ingratitude of her children — an ingratitude which will bring a double pain to her, from the thought that *her own neglect was the cause* of its growth.

Mrs. Child, in her excellent "Mother's Book," a volume which should be in the hands of every woman who has assumed the responsibilities of a mother, gives some valuable suggestions on the subject of *governing children*. I make a single extract and with it close my present rambling work. She says:

Some children, from errors in early management, get possessed with the idea that *they may have everything*. They even **pester** for things it would be impossible to give them. A child properly managed, will seldom ask twice for what you have once told him he should not have. But if you have the care of one who has acquired this habit, the best way to cure him of it is never to give him what he asks for, whether his request is proper or not; but at the same time be careful to give him such things as he likes, (provided they are proper for him,) when he does not ask for them. This will soon break him of the *habit of pestering*.

I cannot say too much in praise of **gentleness**. Its effects are beyond calculation, both on the *affections* and the *understanding*. The victims of *oppression* and *abuse* are generally callous, as well as selfish and hard-hearted. How can we wonder at it? They are all the time incited to evil passions, and nobody encourages what is good in them. We might as well expect *flowers* to grow amid the snow and ice of winter!

But gentleness, as important as it is, is not *all* that is required in education. There should be **firmness** united with it — great firmness. Commands should be reasonable, and given in perfect kindness; but once given, it should be known that they *must* be obeyed.

I heard a lady once say, 'For my part, I cannot be *so very strict* with my children. I love them too much to *punish* them every time they disobey me.'

I will relate a scene which took place in her family. She had but one servant, and at the time to which I allude, she was very busy preparing for company. Her children knew by experience, that

when she was in a hurry, she would *indulge* them in anything for the sake of having them out of the way.

George began, 'Mother, I want a piece of mince-pie.' The answer was, 'It is nearly bed-time; and mince-pie will hurt you. You shall have a piece of cake, if you will sit down and be still.' The boy ate his cake; and liking the system of being *hired to sit still*, he soon began again, 'Mother, I want a piece of mince-pie.' The old answer was repeated. The child stood his ground, 'Mother, I want a piece of mince-pie — I want a piece — I want a piece,' was repeated incessantly. 'Will you stop pestering me, if I give you a piece?' 'Yes, I will — certainly.' A small piece was given, and soon devoured.

With his mouth half full, he began again, 'I want *another* piece — I want *another* piece.' 'No, George; I shall not give you another mouthful. Go sit down, you naughty boy. You always act the worst when I am going to have company.' George continued his pestering; and at last said, 'If you don't give me another piece, I'll start shouting!' This *threat* not being attended to, he kept his word. Upon this, the mother seized him by the shoulder, shook him angrily, saying, 'Hold your tongue, you naughty boy!' 'I will, if you will give me *another* piece of pie,' said he. Another small piece was given him, after he had promised that he certainly would not pester any more!

As soon as he had eaten it, he, of course, began again; and with the additional threat, 'If you don't give me a piece, I will start shouting after the company comes, so loud that they can all hear me!' The end of all this was, that the boy had a sound whipping, was put to bed, and could not sleep all night, because the mince-pie made his stomach ache!

What an *accumulation of evils* is in this little scene! His health injured — his promises broken with impunity — his mother's promises broken — the knowledge gained that he could always vex her when she was in a hurry — and that he could gain what he would by pestering. He always acted upon the same plan afterward; for he only once in a while (when he made his mother *very* angry) got a whipping; but he was always sure to obtain what he asked for, if he pestered her long enough.

His mother told him the plain truth, when she said the mince-pie would hurt him; but he did not know whether it was the truth, or whether she only said it to put him off; for he knew that she did sometimes *deceive*. When she gave him the pie, he had reason to suppose it was not true that it would hurt him — else why should a kind mother give it to her child? Had she told him that if he asked a second time, she would put him directly to bed — and had she kept her promise, in spite of entreaties — she would have saved him a whipping, and herself a great deal of unnecessary trouble. And who can calculate all the whippings, and all the trouble, she would have spared herself and him? I do not remember ever being in her house, without witnessing some scene of *contention* with the children.

Now let me introduce you to *another acquaintance*. She was in precisely the same situation, having a comfortable income and one servant; but her children were much more numerous, and she had had very limited advantages for education. Yet she managed her family better than any woman I ever saw, or ever expect to see again. I will relate a scene I witnessed there, by way of contrast to the one I have just described.

Myself and several friends once entered her parlor unexpectedly, just as the family were being seated at the supper table. A little girl, about four years old, was obliged to be removed, to make room for us. Her mother assured her she should have her supper in a little while, if she was a good girl. The child cried; and the guests insisted that room should be made for her at table. 'No,' said the mother; 'I have told her that she must wait; and if she cries, I shall be obliged to send her to bed. If she is a good little girl, she shall have her supper directly.' The child could not make up her mind to obey; and her mother led her out of the room, and gave orders that she should be put to bed without supper.

When my friend returned, her husband said, 'Hannah, that was a hard case. The poor child lost her supper, and was agitated by the presence of strangers. I could hardly keep from taking her on my knee, and giving her some supper. Poor little thing! But I never will *interfere* with your management; and much as it went against my feelings, I entirely approve of what you have done.' 'It cost me a struggle,' replied his wife; 'but I know it is for the good of the child, to be taught that *I mean exactly what I say.*'

This family was the most harmonious, affectionate, happy family I ever knew. The children were managed as easily as a flock of lambs. After a few *unsuccessful attempts at disobedience*, when very young — they gave it up entirely; and always cheerfully acted from the conviction that their *mother knew best*. This family was governed with great strictness; yet *firmness* was united with *gentleness*.

But the *indulgent* mother above, who said she *loved* her children too much to punish them — was actually obliged to punish them *ten* times as much as the strict mother did!