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RECIPROCAL DUTIES
OF
PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

BEHOLD that lovely cherub in the arms of its fond mother! It has been but a few months in existence, yet it has already learned to recognise its best friend: her faithful bosom is the receptacle of all its tiny sorrows and joys; its hopes are derived from her experienced kindness; its fears are allayed by her protecting care: on this well known being it depends, for all that can soothe and delight. The utmost ingenuity of the nurse, though aided by the delicious morsel, or the glittering toy, is

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of little avail when *she* appears, in whom is concentrated every gratification of which its infant mind is susceptible. Soon, under her assiduous care, its bodily and mental powers begin to expand; its joys and its woes are more intelligibly expressed; it grows fertile in schemes and contrivances for its own amusement (as yet it dreams not of existing for any other purpose); in these the fond parent participates, and is consulted on all occasions without reserve. In the frolicsome gambol she renews her interest, and again enjoys the pleasures of infancy with a double zest.

“ She feels and owns an interest in their play,
Adopts each wish their wayward whims unfold,
And tells, at every call, the story ten times told.”

The companion in health, the watchful, assiduous, and anxious friend in sickness, the prime of a mother's days imperceptibly glides along, bearing away her personal graces, and not unfrequently leaving her constitution a wreck.

As infancy ripens into childhood, her duties alter, but her zeal continues una-

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bated : she perseveres in accommodating her services to the growing necessities of her charge, till that important period arrives, when childhood emerges into youth, and a new epoch commences in the maternal feelings. Then, then it is, that the subjects of her solicitude begin to seek their gratifications from other sources ; and in proportion to their success, are prone to forget whence they were once derived : confidence gradually declines ; and that society which heretofore comprised all that was desirable, becomes, perhaps, irksome,—a burden and a restraint : so that the reserved and distant being we now contemplate, could scarcely be identified with the smiling cherub of former days.

The brute creatures, like the human species, attend their young progeny with anxious solicitude ; and when their services are no longer necessary, the parent first breaks the tender tie, and chases them away to know them no more : but human ties can alone be dissolved by death ; and whatever alienations ensue, they are not warranted by nature, or by nature's God. " Honour thy father and thy mother," is a command coeval

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with the existence of our parents ; and should be as deeply engraven on the human heart, as once it was on the table of stone written by the finger of God. If, unhappily, these characters have been erased, the loudest professions of religion, or the strictest pretensions to moral rectitude, are as the sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal : it is vain for those to profess love to God and their neighbour, who are remiss in affectionate duty to the individuals whom He has placed in the intermediate space, and distinguished by the peculiar honour of assuming His character, who styles Himself the universal parent.

Filial attachment is not a virtue of difficult attainment ; indeed, it is not a quality to be acquired, but is inherent in our nature. It is not to be *planted*, but *cherished* ; and is distinguished beyond all other virtues by promises of temporal blessings : nevertheless, there are parents who have to take up the lamentation, and say, “ I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.”

That the causes of such complaints may, in most instances, be traced to early indul-

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gence, or to a want of judicious, enlightened management on the part of the parent, forms no reasonable excuse for the conduct of an undutiful child ; but let parents, who, in the bitterness of their hearts, lament the unkindness or unmanageableness of grown-up children, look back to a time to which their children's memories can scarcely extend ; to the period of their childhood and infancy, when the engaging pettishness was winked at, and the amusing rebellion was half encouraged ; or when, immersed in cares of very inferior importance, or in recreations which every *good* mother will cheerfully resign, the nursery was consigned to hirelings. Let them call up such recollections, (which, we are persuaded, the memories of most complaining parents might furnish) before they feel surprised at the result, or consider their present circumstances as unaccountable.

But, more especially, let those parents who are only commencing their task, who have yet the future peace and happiness of themselves, and of their children, in a great degree at their disposal, recollect, that there are *reciprocal* duties between parents and

children ; and that those of the former stand first, both in order and importance. Let the fond mother survey the lovely infant in her arms ; let the delighted father contemplate the rosy groupe around his kness, and reflect with feelings of deep and anxious responsibility, that the real welfare of these *darlings* depends, as the means, almost entirely upon themselves,—upon their affection taking at once the right direction. That fondness, indeed, which excites parents to injudicious indulgence, is pure selfishness ; that which impels them to restrain and educate them, alone deserves the name of parental love.

There is no view which a reflecting mind can take of this subject, but what is calculated to impress upon it an idea of its vast importance. There is no relation we may bear to society, which has not an imperious claim on those who are furnishing it with new members ; no period, however remote, which present tuition may not affect : and shall the rearing of a family be deemed a light matter ? shall its duties yield to every frivolity that solicits attention ?—Should not this rather be the language of parental solicitude ? “ I have

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so many human beings—so many immortal creatures committed to my charge; I know the snares, temptations, and trials which have beset my own path; I anticipate similar ones in theirs: already they manifest their propensity to evil, their averseness to good: amid all their diversity of tempers and dispositions, I perceive one characteristic symptom of their corrupt original. O, thou God of the families of the earth! shall I ever give Thee reason to repent of having granted me children, as thou once didst of having created man, because of his evil imaginations? Who is sufficient for these things? Thou that givest wisdom to those who ask it, teach me to train up these children for Thy service here on earth, and for the enjoyment of Thee in the world above!"

For those who are thus earnest and sincere, there is abundant encouragement: they will not labour in vain, or spend their strength for nought; but will assuredly reap some fruits of their anxiety and toil, although, perhaps, not of the kind or degree which they had anticipated. Evil precepts

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and examples have *their* reward; and may not judicious discipline, and pious instruction, anticipate some reward also?

Yet, it must be confessed, that the best instructions, although founded on genuine piety, sometimes fail, from want of sufficient skill to direct them. Parents cannot acquit themselves well in this arduous task, if they have not acquired the habit of reflecting, and observing if their minds are unfurnished, and their knowledge of men and things narrow and circumscribed. Such persons deem it sufficient to tell their children, that this is right, and that is wrong, without being able to discover the motives which actuate or to warn of the consequences likely to result. Is it any wonder, if, while children enjoy the present gratification of an evil action, they resolve to repeat it, in spite of admonitions which do not excite their interest, or attract their attention? in spite even of chastisements, for which they are not taught to see the necessity, or discern the full meaning?

Besides these fundamental duties, there are others which belong both to parents and

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children, during the succeeding stages of life, and which extend to its latest period. To explain and enforce some of these subsequent obligations, is the more particular object of the following pages.

CHAP. II.

MUTUAL RESPECT.

“Cool age advances venerably wise,
Turns on all hands its deep discerning eyes,
Sees what befall, and what may yet befall,
Concludes for both, and best provides for all.” *POPE*.

“Children’s children are the crown of old men, and
the glory of children are their fathers.” *PROV. xvii. 6.*

YOUNG persons who are naturally disposed to “rise up before the hoary head,” will rarely be remiss in filial respect and obedience; but where this amiable sentiment of reverence for age does not exist, parents themselves are generally the first to feel the absence of it. Surely something beyond an internal expression of respect is intended by that divine injunction, something perhaps more honourable and advantageous to the giver than to