

HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER V.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

*Honour your Father and your Mother,
that your days may
be long in the land.*

(Page 364)

I. - DUTIES OF INFERIORS.

287. *Cham (known also as Ham), Cursed by his Father. -*

The most ancient example related in detail in the Holy Scripture, touching the respect due to fathers and mothers, is that of the children of Noah. After the Deluge; which he had miraculously escaped with his family, Noah applied himself to till the ground, and planted the vine, to eat of its fruit. At the end of some years, when the grape was come, he conceived the idea of pressing out its juice; he drank of it without knowing its strength, and found himself overcome by the vapours of that new wine. He retired to his tent and was soon fast asleep. It was at that moment that Cham (or Ham), his second son, having entered Noah's tent, perceived him in that state, and was so wicked as to make a jest of it. He goes quickly in search of his two brothers, Sem and Japhet, tells them what he had seen, and tries to make them accomplices in his improper conduct. But Sem and Japhet were

(Page 366)

careful not to fail in the respect they owed to their father; on the contrary, they took a cloak, softly entered the tent where Noah slept, and covered him with true filial care. The holy patriarch on awaking, learned what had passed; in God's name, he praised Sem and Japhet, and promised them the blessing of Heaven. As for Cham, he severely censured his conduct, and as he could not curse him himself, because God had already blessed him in person on their leaving the Ark, Noah heaped terrible maledictions on Chanaan, his eldest son. (Many Fathers of the Church suppose that this grandson was involved in the mocking of Noah as some sort of accomplice with Cham.) It was fitting that he who had no respect for his father, should himself be punished in his children.

- *Genesis*, Chapter IX.

288. *The Cook who Left off Cooking.* -

Obedience to superiors, my dear friends, is better than all that one could do, following merely their own will. A somewhat amusing anecdote occurs to me in this connection; I read it in the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, where we find many such. St. Pacomius, abbot of the famous monastery of Tabenna, in the Thebaide, in the Egyptian desert, visiting one day the other houses governed by him, arrived at one, the name of which I do not remember. As soon as he entered, the abbot, the monks, and all the other members of the community, hastened to gather round him to do him honour. Amongst the inmates of the house were some children who were boarders, being brought up in the fear of God and in the practice of the virtues proper to their age. One of them, with the simplicity of a child, said to St. Pacomius, as soon as he saw him,

(Page 367)

"Ah! father, you do well to come, for we have had very little to eat since your last visit; there is nothing cooked for us any more in the kitchen." - "Never mind, my dear child, I will take the matter in hands, and see if we cannot have something cooked for you." Thereupon the holy abbot sent for the cook, and asked him how it was that he no longer cooked either vegetables or any other food for the monks. "Father, I did so for some time, but I soon observed that these good brothers touched nothing that was cooked; they contented themselves with olives, or some other fruit, and took nothing else. Then I began to think that it was no use cooking for nothing, and, as the young brother who assists me was quite able to do all that was necessary for the refectory and the kitchen, I employed myself in making mats like the other religious." - "And how many have you made since then?" - "Father, I have made about five hundred." - "Bring them hither, that I may see them." - "There they are, father!" No sooner had St. Pacomius seen the fine pile of mats than he ordered it to be set on fire; turning, then, to the negligent cook, he said to him, with visible emotion: "I despise all that you have done, because you have acted contrary to the obedience due your superior. You were charged with preparing food for the brethren; it was your duty to have done so with the utmost care. If they are mortified, and do not touch what you have cooked, it is their business; yours is to practise obedience." After this reprimand all went

(Page 368)

on smoothly as before, because obedience was faithfully practised.

- D. GENEVAUX, *Histoires Choisies*.

289. *The Pupil Seated, and the Master Standing.* -

There are few facts relating to education so well and deservedly known, my dear children, as the history of St. Arsenus, preceptor (or teacher) of the Emperor Arcadius. It happened in this way: The Emperor Theodosius the Great, a prince as Christian as he was able and astute, having decreed, according to the custom of those times, the title of *August* to his eldest son, named Arcadius, who was yet but six years old, thought of giving him a worthy and capable preceptor. He found none who united these two qualities in a higher degree than St. Arsenus, deacon of the Church of Rome. He had him come to Constantinople, in 383, and confided to him the education of the young prince. Arsenus neglected nothing, you may be sure, that would make him an accomplished young man, not only in the talents and acquirements suitable for the presumptive heir of the empire, but also and much more in the virtues which make the good Christian. When placing him under his care, Theodosius said, - and his words are very remarkable, and may, to a certain extent, be applied to you, my dear children, in relation to your teachers, - "Henceforth you shall be his father much more than I myself." One day, the emperor having entered the chamber where St. Arsenus was instructing the young prince, was much surprised to find the master respectfully standing, whilst the pupil remained sitting.

(Page 369)

He could not help expressing his astonishment to St. Arsenus: "You are wrong," he said, "to act thus; my son is undoubtedly *August*, he is presumptive heir to the Crown, but you are none the less his master and his preceptor. I insist on it, then, that for the future you remain seated, and that he stands, head uncovered to hear you. As for you, my dear Arcadius, you will not be truly worthy of reigning, unless in so far as you know how to unite in your person *science and virtue*."

- D. GENEVAUX, *Histoires Choisies*.

290. *The Accursed Children.* -

You remember the appropriate terms in which the Fourth Commandment, that we are now explaining, is conceived. Therein God promises rewards, even temporal, to those children who faithfully observe it; but that likewise supposes that He punishes, sometimes even in this life, ungrateful and unnatural children. St. Augustine relates a terrible example of the kind. Here is the fact: Ten children of the same mother, of rather distinguished birth, of whom seven were sons and three daughters, lived at Cesarea, in Cappadocia, with their mother, who was a widow. It happened one day that the eldest of the brothers loaded his mother with abuse, and had even the impudence to lay hands upon her and strike her. All the others, instead of reproving and stopping him, gave themselves no trouble about the treatment their brother gave his mother. The woman, outraged by the unnatural conduct of her children, went early the next morning to the baptismal font, and there, prostrate

(Page 370)

on the ground, she prayed God that they might be made an example to all the earth, and that they might wander on the face of it, stricken by divine justice. Her prayer was immediately heard, and all her children were punished by God with a horrible shaking of all their limbs; so that being ashamed to appear in that frightful state before their own country-people, they wandered abroad over nearly all the different countries of the Roman Empire. "Two of those children," says St. Augustine, "came to Hippo, where we were; one was called Paul, and the other, his sister, was named Palladia. They arrived in that city about fifteen days before Easter, and they went every day to the church, where they prayed before the altar of St. Stephen, that it might please God to have mercy upon them, and restore them to their former state. On Easter Sunday, when the church was crowded with people, the young man was saying his prayers, when he suddenly fell on the ground as though he were asleep, yet without trembling, as he usually did during his sleep. All present were surprised, and still more so when they saw him arise without trembling any more, because he was perfectly cured. The crowded church immediately resounded with the praises and thanksgivings returned to God for this miracle." . . . "This young man dined with us," adds St. Augustine, "and told us exactly the whole story of his disgrace and that of his brothers and sisters. On Easter Tuesday I caused him to go up into the tribune with his sister, that the people

(Page 371)

might see them both while the history of their adventure was read. Every one was witness that the brother stood without any unnatural motion, whilst the sister, on the contrary, trembled in all her members. But she had no sooner descended from that elevated place, than she also went to pray in the chapel of the holy martyr Stephen, first of the seven deacons. There she fell, like her brother, into a sort of sleep, and arose perfectly cured. The entire church re-echoed again with cries of joy and admiration; the girl was once more made to ascend the tribune, and the people praised God anew for having restored her to the same state as her brother." Such is the story related by the holy doctor, a frightful story and very capable, dear friends, of restraining us within the limits of the love and respect we ought to have for our fathers and mothers.

- ST. AUGUSTINE, *City of God*, Book II., Chapter 8.

291. *The Good Son and the Bad Father.* -

It sometimes happens, my very dear children, that a son, by his good conduct, mildness, and submission, may at last win over a father or a mother who had long appeared insensible. I have known several who were thus converted by means of children quite young; here is a story of the kind, and an old story, too, for it goes back to the seventh century. A worldly man, living in Egypt, had several children, whom he brought up badly, and did not always edify by good example. Nevertheless, the eldest of his sons, named Abibe, had the happiness to escape this bad education;

(Page 372)

he was so wise, so virtuous, so faithful to all his duties, that his brothers almost hated him. But it was especially his father who abused him in every way, and went so far as to reproach him with his meekness, his sobriety, and other virtues, so true it is that people know neither what they say nor what they do, when they allow themselves to be blinded by passion or prejudice. Abibe bore all with patience, and only returned

kindness and attention for the bad treatment he received from his father and his brothers. When his father was about to die some one who loved Abibe requested him to pardon that virtuous son, and not to disinherit him. The dying man made no answer, but he sent for his eldest son. At first every one thought that it was only to make another painful scene for him, but what was their surprise when they heard the father say with much gentleness: "My dear son Abibe, forgive me all the bad treatment I have so long given you! I was wrong, I now see plainly. Pray to God that He, too, may pardon me; you did your duty, but I did not do mine." He then turned to his other children, and said to them: "My children, I am going to die, but Abibe will be a father to you; I leave him the disposal of all I possess; for whatsoever he does, will be well done." He died soon after, and it was not long before his son followed him to receive in heaven the crown he so well deserved.

- MOSCH, *Spiritual Meadow*, Chap. 61.

292. *Where will he put his Father?* -

Respect for

(Page 373)

our fathers and mothers, my dearest children, is something so natural that the most barbarous men and the most savage nations have had the same idea of it as the ablest philosophers. Here is an extremely curious proof of this: There is told of the pacha (or pasha) Djezzar, a famous Turkish tyrant, who terrified all Syria by his crimes from 1775 to 1804, an anecdote which proves that he had not totally abjured the sentiments of humanity. This incident, quite interesting in its way, is, moreover, a good lesson for unnatural sons. A young Christian, in whom Djezzar took some interest, was soon to be married. The best room of the house in which he dwelt was on the second story; it was occupied by his father, a man venerable by his age and entitled to respect on account of his infirmities. To please his future wife, the young man civilly asked his father to give up his room to her for some weeks, promising to give it back to him a little after the marriage. The father consented, and went down to the ground-floor, which was neither healthy nor agreeable. At the end of a month, he asked his room back, but they begged him to leave it a little longer. He consented, but when he came to ask it at the appointed time, his son refused to give it up, and went even so far as to abuse his poor father. The whole neighbourhood was indignant at this proceeding. Djezzar is informed of it by his spies; he sends for the son and receives him before the assembled divan. "Of what religion are you?" said the angry pasha. The terrified young

(Page 374)

man made no answer. The pasha repeats his question; then the man answers that he is of the Christian religion. "Indeed? Well! make the Christian's sign." The culprit made the sign of the cross without saying anything. "Pronounce the words." *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.* And so saying, he, of course, raised his right hand as usual to his forehead, then to his chest, and so on. "Ah!" cried Djezzar in a terrible voice, "so the father is above, and the son below? Go, wretch, to your house, and if it is not so there in a quarter of an hour, your head shall soon roll in the dust." It is unnecessary to say that the young man went to ask his father's pardon, and made haste to restore order in his house, because he knew that Djezzar's threats were not idle ones.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, V., 131.

293. *The Legacy of a Deceived Father.* -

Take care, my young friends, never to forget your duties in regard to your parents, to whom you owe, so to say, all that you have and all that you are. Listen to a curious story on this subject: A rich old man, named Conaxa, had been so imprudently kind as to divide his wealth between his two sons during his own lifetime. He too soon perceived that they had no longer the same respect for him that they used to have; they were not ashamed even to tell him frequently that he was living too long, and that they considered him a burden. The unhappy old man, in despair at such base conduct, on the part of children

(Page 375)

for whom he had done so much, asked advice of a sincere friend, whom he still had. "You have done very wrong, my dear friend, in acting as you did; nevertheless, there is one way of extricating yourself. Contrive to make your children believe that there are some debts still owing to you. You understand?" Accordingly, some days after, whilst Conaxa was at table with his two sons, a farmer comes in to pay him, as he said, *the remains of an old debt*. It was a big bag of silver lent him by his friend. Conaxa did not seem at all surprised, took the bag, put it away to count over at his leisure, gave the farmer something to drink, and gave not the slightest reason to suspect the trick he was playing. No sooner did his sons find out that he had not divided all his wealth between them, than they immediately became as kind and attentive as they had before been harsh and uncivil. Conaxa died some years after, leaving a heavy box which his greedy heirs hastened to open. What did they find in it, my dear friends? Bags full of stones and pebbles, with a little note to the following effect: "*I bequeath these stones to stone fathers who divide their wealth amongst their children before their death or as food to be feed to ungrateful and unloving sons.*" I leave you to guess who found themselves fooled and over-reached; did not the two ungrateful sons well deserve it?

- FILASSIER, *Dictionaire historique d'Education*, I., 138.

294. *The Magazine of Grenelle*. -

Abbe Carron, in his work on education, relates a very beautiful instance of the love of a son for his mother. I am going

(Page 376)

to tell it to you, my young friends, in order to induce you to do something similar, should the opportunity offer, to prove your affection for your good parents. In 1794, on the 31st of August, a frightful disaster occurred at Grenelle, near Paris. A powder-magazine, which contained an immense quantity of gunpowder, suddenly exploded. It shook Paris and its suburbs like an earthquake; but its effects were horrible in Grenelle, where nearly 2,000 persons are said to have been killed. The whole neighbourhood was thrown into consternation, and each one trembled for those near and dear to them. A boy of 12 years old, who was boarding at school three miles away from there, and whose mother resided at Vaugirard, only a little way from Grenelle, was so frightened by this disaster that he ran on foot, without a hat, and half naked, to make sure that his mother still lived. It seemed to his troubled imagination that he was every moment going to see her disfigured corpse. But, oh happiness! the first person he met at Vaugirard was that good mother. He throws himself into her arms, covers her with tears and kisses, presses her to his heart, and all that without being able to utter a single word, so much was he overcome with joy. After resting himself for a few moments, and wiping away the sweat that streamed from every part of his body, he remembered that he had left the school without telling any one, and thought he must return immediately. He hastily takes some refreshment, and hurries back to tell his teachers why he had gone home without

(Page 377)

permission. Alas! my friends, it was God's will to reward him immediately for his filial love; arriving at the school, he is seized with fever, goes to bed, and expires a few days after, sincerely regretted by his teachers, and still more so by his mother, whom he had loved so tenderly.

- GUILLOIS, *Explic. du Cat.*, 207

295. *A Grandfather's Sheets*. -

God is just, my friends, and if He rewards even in this life, children who faithfully discharge their duty to their good parents, in like manner He often permits those who have failed in duties so sacred, to be themselves ill treated by their own children. Listen to what I am going to tell you. In a small town of Germany, the name of which I do not know, there lived a good old man who was entirely dependent for support on a son who had been married several years. But alas! this unnatural son, in concert with his wife, finding doubtless that *the old father*, as he was not ashamed to call him, was too burdensome to them, took steps to get him into an hospital so as to have no more trouble with him. The good old man, on leaving the house where he had spent so many happy years, could not help shedding tears; but his son remained cold and impassible. Some days after, the father sent to ask him at least for a pair of sheets, so as to make him a little

more comfortable in the hospital. The wicked man took the worst he could find, gave them to his little boy nine or ten years old, and said to him:

"Here, take these to your grandfather in the hospital, and tell him not to trouble us any more." The

(Page 378)

little fellow set out, but his father, who watched him perceived that he stopped a long time behind a pile of faggots at the lower end of the yard. When he came back, he asked him what he was doing behind the faggots. "Why, father, I was hiding away one of those bad sheets amongst the faggots, so that some day when you go to the hospital, I'll not have to give you one of my good ones." These words were like a thunderbolt to the unhappy father; he understood his crime, and went himself, without delay, to bring his poor father back from the hospital, and took the greatest care of him till he died, so that his children might one day treat him the same.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 275.

296. *The Poor Woman's Arm-chair.* -

Here, my good friends, is one of the prettiest stories I know about filial affection. In a little village in the South of France, there lived a poor old woman so infirm that she could not even rise; every day she had to be lifted out of her bed and placed in her arm-chair, She was very resigned and bore her sufferings patiently for the love of God. Nevertheless, there was one day of the week on which she suffered more than the others, it was Sunday, during divine service. As often as she heard the church-bells she began to sigh and moan, crying with the tears in her eyes: "Oh how happy I should be, if I could only go to church to hear Mass! Alas! why is it that I am so helpless?" So saying, she lovingly kissed the cross of her beads, and then continued to say them all the time her

(Page 379)

children were at church. She had two sons already grown up, who were fine athletic young men They would have been well pleased to see their mother able to go to Mass, as she so ardently desired, but they had no means of accomplishing that object, so it was no use thinking of it. Yet see, my children, how ingenious love is; they found a way to do it; and what do you think it was? You would like to know, would you not? They took their good mother out of bed, placed her in her arm-chair, fitted two sticks to it, something like a hand-barrow, and set out in triumph for the church. But that is not all. No sooner was this touching act of theirs noised abroad, than the whole village would fair see it; the people stationed themselves in crowds along the street by which the good woman had to pass. They even strewed flowers before her as she went, and respectfully accompanied her to the church. Mass begins; after the Gospel, the priest ascends the pulpit, and instead of preaching the sermon he had prepared, he commenced by saying: "Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land." Every one was so affected, my dear friends, that I cannot tell you who was the happiest, the good woman, or her two sons, the pastor, or the people of the village. It was truly a touching and beautiful sight.

- GUILLOIS, *Nouvelle Explic. du Cat.*

297. *How Much I Cost my Parents.* -

Never, my dear children, can you know all you cost your good parents, and never can you repay them, either, all

(Page 380)

that they have done for you. Here is a little problem.

One day, in 1832, I think it was, Mgr. Augustine Gruber, Prince Archbishop of Salzburg, in Austria, visited the girls' school of a village in the Tyrol. He addressed himself to one of the children, who might be ten years old, and knew how to count well: "Tell me, my dear child, how much do you think you have already cost your parents?" - "I don't know, my lord; they didn't tell me."

- "Well! let us make this little calculation together. Do you think it cost them 25 centimes every day?" - "Oh yes, my lord, that, at least; everything is so dear now." - "I suppose we may add as much more for your clothes, mendings, books, and other little daily expenses." - "You may, my lord; that makes already 50

centimes a day." - "And about how many days are there in a month?" - "About thirty." - "How much does that make, then, at 50 centimes a day?" - "That makes 15 francs a month." - "And how many months are there in a year?" - "There are twelve, my lord." - "And twelve months, at 15 francs a month, how much does that make at the end of the year?" - "My lord, that makes 180 francs." - "Very well, my child, and how old are you?" - "I am ten years of age, my lord." - "Well! can you tell me how much you have already cost your good parents?" - "I have already cost them 1,800 francs." - "Yes, dear child, you have answered well, but that is not all, for you must add to that the expense of doctors and medicines, journeys, unforeseen expenses, things that you have spoiled or lost, etc.

(Page 381)

You must add to it all the sufferings, the griefs, the long and fatiguing toils of your father and mother, their good advice, their instructions, the good education they are giving you, etc. All that is not to be repaid by money, but by the love and gratitude of a good heart."

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 251.

II. - DUTIES OF SUPERIORS.

298. *The Sons of the high Priest, Heli.* -

You some-times complain, perhaps, my dear friends, that your fathers and mothers are a little severe towards you; you are wrong, it is their duty to bring you up well. Hear what happened to the high priest Heli (or Eli), for having neglected it. He had two sons, Ophni and Phinees. They were employed in the service of the Temple, but they discharged their duty very badly, committing shameful irreverence in the house of the Lord, and great injustice with regard to the faithful who came to offer their sacrifices to God. The high priest was aware of the evil courses to which his sons gave themselves up; but he contented himself with some slight remonstrances, instead of employing the most effective means of correcting them. For that reason it was that God, being angry with him, sent the young prophet Samuel, whose interesting story you know, to warn him of the vengeance that was going to fall on all his house. "I will take from his family," said the Lord, "the sovereign priesthood, to give it to another; most of his descendants shall be

(Page 382)

cut off in the flower of their age; his two wicked sons shall die on the same day, and, finally, his whole posterity shall bear the perpetual marks of their crimes." Do you see, my dear children, what misfortunes were the consequence of a father's negligence in punishing, and correcting his children? But, to accomplish these sad prophecies, God caused a new war to be made against the Jews, by the Philistines who were the declared enemies of that people. The armies having met, they came to an engagement; then, that of the people of God was utterly routed and defeated, the Ark of the Covenant was taken by the victors, the two sons of Heli found dead on the field, and himself, on hearing these disastrous tidings, fell backwards from his seat, and broke his skull on the pavement, at the age of 98. The wife of Phinees, learning the death of her husband and the taking of the Ark, died suddenly, giving birth to a child, who was thus an orphan from his birth. Finally, all the other misfortunes revealed to the little Samuel were successively accomplished in the same way, and all this, I repeat, dear friends, to punish a father who was wanting in just severity towards his children.

- *I. Samuel* (or *I. Kings* in the Douay), Chap. IV.

299. *St. Anselm's Good Advice.* -

It is not always easy, my young friends, to bring up children and to form youth. The high priest Heli was punished in a terrible manner, for having been too lax and indulgent with his children; but it is possible that he might have drawn other evil consequences on himself, if he

(Page 383)

had been too harsh and too rough in his punishments. We must, in this respect, follow the advice of St. Anselm. It is related of him that the superior of a house, who was in repute for piety and learning, was one day complaining to that celebrated Archbishop of Canterbury, of children who were being brought up in his monastery. "It is singular," said he, "we punish them severely every day, yet they do not become better; on the contrary, they are worse after than before." -- "And when they are grown up," demanded the holy Archbishop, "how are they?" -- "Ah, father, they are only beasts and idiots," simply answered the superior. "That is a fine education which changes men into beasts! But, tell me, my Lord Abbot, if, after having planted a tree in your garden, you enclosed it on every side, so that it could not extend its branches, would it not become stunted, crooked, bent and useless? So, let me tell you, in cramping these poor children as you do, without leaving them any freedom, you cause them to nourish within themselves ideas and sentiments the very opposite of what you would fain teach them, and which, acquiring strength from day to day, make them end by disregarding and defying all your punishments.

"These sentiments grow in them as they grow older, their soul having never been nourished in charity, they see the whole world through a distorted medium.

"To make a piece of jewellery out of a gold plate, does the artificer content himself with giving it great blows of his hammer? Does he not take care, on

(Page 384)

the contrary, to smooth, to polish, to soften, etc.?

"Even so must you do with your children." The superior, having heard this discourse, threw himself at St. Anselm's feet, acknowledged that he had acted unwisely, and promised to do better for the time to come.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 297.

300. *A Good Master with His Servants.* -

Persons who have workmen, clerks, or even servants, my good friends, ought to love them, instruct them as far as they can, and study their interests in every way. Remember this, that good employers make good workmen, and that good masters make good servants. St. Francis de Sales, that mild and amiable bishop, was fond of relating the following story which was probably his own: A prelate of great distinction was so ready to admit to his service all those who presented themselves that he had a great number of domestics who were of no use whatever to him, and cost him a great deal. He was told of this; his relations themselves made him understand that he was wrong to act so, and that he was incurring great expense. "I will dismiss some of my people," said he then, "but give me the exact list of all those who are useless to me." It was done accordingly. After reading it attentively he sent for all those who were inscribed in it, and said to them "My poor friends, I am told your services are no longer necessary in my house, and I find myself under the sad necessity of discharging you. What do you think of it?" - "Ah! my lord!" they all cried

(Page 385)

out together, "if you send us away we are lost people. What will become of us?" - "Since that is the case, my friends, I swear to you I will not send you away. I kept you before because I had need of you, and now I will keep you because you have need of me. Stay, then, and whilst there is bread in my house, you shall have your share of it; when there is no more, we shall mingle our tears and die of hunger together." Was not that what you might call a good master, dear friends? Well! let us act in the same spirit as far as occasion requires, and our name will be blessed by all those who are in our service.

- FILASSIER, *Dict. d'Education*, I., 487.

301. *Racine's Carp.* -

We sometimes meet, dear friends, with young people who, instead of placing their happiness in their own family, go and seek pleasure and amusement in public places, or amongst strangers. I consider that very bad. That was not what Racine did, one of the greatest poets of the reign of Louis XIV. One day when he had returned from Versailles, to enjoy a little rest and peace in the midst of his family, a squire of the Prince of Conde's came to announce that his master expected him to dinner.

"I thank the Prince for his invitation, but I shall not have the honour of dining with him to-day. It is eight

days since I saw my wife and children; they are looking forward to the pleasure of eating a fine carp with me this evening; so, you see I cannot be excused from dining with them."

- "But, Mr. Racine," said the squire, "your absence will mortify His Highness,

(Page 386)

for he has invited a large company on purpose to meet you." Racine was still immovable; he went so far as to have the carp of which he had spoken brought in and he said to the Prince of Conde's messenger: "Judge for yourself, sir, whether I could excuse my self from dining with my children to-day, and sharing that beautiful, tempting carp with my family. Once more, excuse me to the Prince; I am sure he will himself approve of my refusal. The father of a family belongs entirely to his wife and children." Racine was right, my friends, and his excuse was accepted and even applauded by every one.

- FILASSIER, *Dict, d'Education*, I., 248.

302. *The Moon in a Pail of Water.* -

Do you know what a spoiled child is? I am going to tell you, my dear friends, so that you may not become so yourselves. A spoiled child is one who is allowed by his parents to do his own will in all things; then he becomes a little peevish, disagreeable, grumbling, ridiculous creature, insupportable to every one, and especially to himself. You will understand it better by the following little anecdote, which we read in *Morality in Action*, and in the *Historical Dictionary of Education*: A lady of Paris, who lived in the eighteenth century, had a son whom she was so afraid of making sick by contradicting him, that he became a little tyrant, and grew furious when they refused him the least thing. The lady had often been warned by her husband and friends of the injury she was doing her child by yielding to all his caprices; but all was in

(Page 387)

vain. She was in her chamber one evening, when she heard her son crying in the yard as if he were burned; he even scratched his face because a servant would not give him what he wanted. "You are very impertinent," said she to the servant, "to refuse my son what he asks for; I want you to give it to him immediately." - "If he cried till to-morrow, madam, he couldn't have it." At these words the lady herself becomes furious, and runs to her husband, who was in the parlour with some of his friends, to have him instantly dismiss the impudent servant who had opposed her will. The gentleman follows her to the yard, whilst the others go to the window to see how the matter was going to end. "You saucy fellow," said the master, "how did you dare to disobey your mistress by not giving the boy what he asked for?" - "Indeed, sir, the mistress cannot give it to him herself; there a little while ago, the little boy saw the moon shining in a pail of water, and he insists that I must give it to him." At these words the gentleman and the rest of the company burst out laughing; the lady herself, angry as she was, could not help laughing, too. But, at the same time, she was so ashamed of the ludicrous scene to which she had given rise, that she corrected herself, and made the little rebel an amiable and engaging child.

- FILASSIER, *Dict Hist. d'Education*, I., 768.

303. *I Do as My Father Does.* -

It is a very great misfortune, my friends, when fathers and mothers, in short, all superiors, do not give good example to

(Page 388)

their children or inferiors. Father Guyon, a famous preacher of the 19th century, has quoted a remarkable example of this. A pious lady had taken particular care of the education of her son, and had brought him up in the purest principles of religion. He made an excellent first communion, and afterwards his piety, his fidelity to all his duties seemed to go on increasing. Nevertheless, when he had reached the age of about seventeen, he appeared to relax very sensibly; his mother was grieved to see him gradually laying aside his pious practices; at last he even ceased to frequent the sacraments and to discharge the first duties of a Christian. Alarmed by such sad results, his mother knew not to what to attribute the cause, for it seemed to her that Alphonse (which was the young man's name) frequented no bad company, or read no bad books. One day she goes into his chamber, and there, alone with him, she sheds a great abundance of tears, and conjures

him to tell her whence came this change in his conduct. "Why, mother, you are wrong to trouble yourself so about me, I am always the same, I love you as much as ever." - "Ah! my son, you are making believe that you do not understand me; I do not doubt your affection for me; but was not God deserving of all your love? Why, then, have you changed in His regard?"

- "But, mother!" -- "Come, come, my son, hide nothing from me." -- "Well! since you require it, I will tell you. In my first years, formed by your pious lessons, I loved religion, I practised it with all

(Page 389)

my heart, and I was happy, oh! yes, I was happy! - But, since then - I have reflected. I love you still very much, my dear mother, but I see that I am old enough now not to imitate you. Now, I am going to do as my father does; he is a good man, every one says, but I see that he performs no act of religion, and I want to be like him, for fear of displeasing him." -- "Ah my son, what do you say? What a revelation!" Thereupon she goes, as fast as her trembling limbs would carry her, to her husband's apartment, alarms him by her tears and sighs, and has only strength to say these words -- "*Oh husband, your son!*" then she faints away. Her husband does all he can to restore her to consciousness, succeeds at last, questions her and is made acquainted with the scene that has just passed. The worthy father is overcome; he understands and confesses his fault, goes to his son and exclaims: "Ah! my son, that lesson is too much for me, I cannot resist it - you bring me back to virtue." The same day they both went to a priest, confessed, and returned to the way of religion, from which they strayed no more.

- NOEL. *Cat. de Rodez*, V., 82.