



TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE, AND IT MUST FOLLOW AS THE

NIGHT THE DAY, THOU CANST NOT THEN BE FALSE TO ANY MAN.

BY KEITH, SMITH & CO.

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A FAMILY PICTURE.

The following story, so admirably true to nature, is from the pen of Judge Longstreet, of Georgia. It is not embraced in the "Georgia Scenes," but was published some years ago, in an Augusta paper...

I describe a Georgia family. It is a fair specimen of Georgia families generally, the heads of which are parents of good sense, good morals and well improved minds.

They had been married about eight months when a dull November evening found me at their fireside. In the course of the evening the conversation turned upon raising children.

"By the way, Eliza," said Gilbert, "I have been thinking for some time past of interchanging views with you upon this subject; and there never can be a better time than now, while Abraham is with us, whose opinion we both respect and who will not as umpire between us."

"Well," said Eliza, "let me hear yours." "If we should ever be blessed with children, (Eliza blushed a little,) let it be a fundamental law between us, that neither of us ever interfere with the discipline of the other, either by look, word, or action in the presence of the children."

"Do that rule I most heartily subscribe." "When a child is corrected by one of us, let not the other extend to it the least condolence or sympathy."

"Well, I will be a little more specific. I believe it is universally admitted that laws should precede punishment; and that none should be punished who are incapable of understanding the law. In accordance with these principles, I should never punish a child who is incapable of understanding between right and wrong; nor until he shall have been forewarned of the wrong and taught to avoid it."

"These principles seem very reasonable to me," said Eliza, "but they can never be applied to children. If you do not correct a child until it is old enough to learn from precept the difference between right and wrong there will be no living in the house with it for the first five or six years of its life and no controlling it afterwards."

Gilbert received these views of his wife with some alarm, and entered upon a long argument to convince her that they were erroneous. She maintained her own very well, but Gilbert had certainly the advantage of her in the argument. All he could say, however, did not in the least shake her confidence in her opinion.

"I was at length appeased to, and I gave judgment in favor of Gilbert." "Well," said she, "I never was better satisfied of anything in my life as I am that you are both wrong. I'll agree to this—if ever I correct a child before it is old enough to receive instruction from precept and you do not approve of my conduct, I will then promise you never to do the like again."

"Well," said Gilbert, "that is very fair. One more rule will settle the fundamentals, and we may safely trust all others to future adjustment. Let us never address our children in the nonsensical gibberish that is so universally prevalent among mothers. It is very silly, in the first place, and it greatly retards a child's improvement, in the second. Were it not for this, I have no doubt children would speak their mother tongue as correctly at four years old as they do at sixteen."

Eliza smiled and observed that this was such a small matter that it had also better be left to future adjustment. To this Gilbert rather reluctantly assented.

About two months after this conversation Gilbert was blessed with a fine son, whom he named John James Gilbert, after the two grandfathers and himself—a profusion of names he had cause afterwards to repent. Just fourteen months and six days thereafter he was blessed with a fine daughter, whom Eliza named Ann Francis Eliza, after the two grandmothers and herself. Fifteen months thereafter, he received a third blessing like unto the first, which he called George Henry, after his two brothers. Thirteen months and nineteen days after the birth of George, a fourth blessing descended upon Gilbert in the form of a fine son. This took the name of William Augustus, after two brothers of his wife. Eliza now made a long rest of nineteen months, four days and five hours (I speak from the family record), when by way of amend, she presented her husband a pair of blessings. As soon as his good fortune was made known to him, Gilbert expressed regret that he had not reserved his own name until now, in order that the twins bear his own name and mine. Seeing this could not be, he bestowed my name upon the first born, and gave me the privilege of naming the second. As I considered "a good name rather to be chosen than great riches," I called the innumerate after Isaac, the patriarch, and a beloved uncle of mine. In this very triumphant and laudable manner did Mrs. Butler close the list of her sons.

She now turned her attention to daughters, and in the short space of five years produced three that a queen might have been proud of. Their names, in the order of their births, were Louisa, Rebecca and Sarah. It was one of Mrs. Butler's maxims, "If you have anything to do, do it at once," and she seemed to be governed by this maxim in making up her family; for Sarah completed the number of children. John was about a year old when I was again at Gilbert's for the evening. He was seated at the supper table, with the child in his arms, addressing some remarks to me, when I called his attention to the child who was in the act of putting his fingers in the blaze of the candle. Gilbert jerked him away suddenly, which so incensed Master John James Gilbert that he screamed insufferably. Gilbert tossed him, patted him; but he could not distract his attention from the candle. He removed him out of sight of the luminary, but that only made matters worse. He now commenced this first lesson in the "principles of good government." He brought the child toward the candle and the nearer it approached, the more pacified it became. The child extended its arms to catch the blaze and Gilbert bore it slowly towards the flame until the hand came nearly in contact with it, when he snatched it away, crying "bunny fannies!" which is, by interpretation, "you'll burn your fingers!" Eliza and I exchanged smiles, but neither of us said anything.

The child construed this into wanton teasing and became, if possible, more obstreperous than ever. Gilbert now resorted to another expedient. He put his own fingers into the blaze, withdrew them suddenly, blew them, shook them, and gave every sign of acute agony. This not only quieted but delighted the child, who signified to him to do it again. He instantly perceived (what was practically demonstrated the minute afterwards) that the child was putting a most dangerous interpretation upon his last illustration. He determined therefore not to repeat it. The child, not satisfied with the sport, determined to repeat it himself, which the father opposing, he began to reach and cry as before. There was but one experiment left; and that was to let the child feel the flames a little. This he resolved to try, but how to conduct it properly was not so easily settled. It would not do to allow the infant to put his hand into the blaze; because it would burn too little or too much. He resolved therefore to direct the hand to a point so near the flame that the increasing heat would induce the child to withdraw his hand himself. Accordingly he brought the extended arm slowly towards the flame, the child becoming more and more impatient with every moment's postponement of its gratification, until the hand came within about an inch of the wick, when he held the child stationary. But John would not let the hand remain stationary, nor at the chosen point. He kept snatching at the candle, till finding all his efforts fruitless, he threw himself violently back, gave the father a tremendous thump on the nose with the back of the head and kicked and screamed most outrageously.

"You little rascal," said Gilbert, "I've a good mind to give you a good spanking." "Give him to me," said Mrs. Butler. "You'd better not take him," said Gilbert, in an undertone "while he is in such a passion." "No danger," she said, "hand him to me." As she received him, "hush sir," said she, very sharply, and the child hushed instantly and was asleep in a few minutes. "Strange," said Mr. Butler, "how much sooner the mother acquires control over a child than the father."

"Not at all," said Mrs. Butler. "You would have controlled him as easily as I did, if you had given him the same lesson before hand that I did. He got in such an uproar the other day and finding nothing else would quiet him I spanked it out of him. I have had no more trouble in quieting him since."

"I begin to think, Butler," said I "that Eliza is right in the only points of the difference between you, touching the management of children. I observe that you addressed the child just now in the gibberish you so much condemned before you were a father; and though it seems ridiculous enough, especially in you, it would have appeared more so if you had said to a child so young, 'John, my son, do not put your fingers in the flame of the candle, it will burn them.' And your experiment has taught you the absolute impossibility of governing children of very tender years by prescribed rules."

"I am half inclined to your opinion," said Butler. "Eliza's discipline has performed several good offices. It has relieved us of John's insufferable noise; it has taught him to control his temper at its first appearance and it learned him the meaning of a word (hush) which will often supply the place of correction and always forewarn him of dire consequences." Long before the second son arrived at reasonable age, Gilbert abdicated, unreservedly, in favor of his wife; contenting himself with the subordinate station of her ministerial officer, in which he executed her orders in cases requiring more physical strength than she possessed.

Passing over the intermediate period, I now introduce the reader to this family, after most of the children had reached the "age of reason." In contemplating the scene which I am about to sketch, he will be pleased to turn his thoughts, occasionally, to Gilbert's principles of good government.

Sarah was about two years and a half old when Gilbert invited me to breakfast with him one December morning, near the Christmas holidays. It was the morning appointed for his second killing of hogs, which, as the Southern reader knows, is a sort of carnival in Georgia. I went and found all the children at home and Gilbert's mother added to the family circle. John and Anna had reached the age when they were permitted to take seats at the first table, though upon this occasion John being engaged about the pork, did not avail himself of his privilege. The rest of the children were taught to wait for the second table. Breakfast was announced and after the adults and Anna had despatched their meal, the children were summoned. As they were bidden, and there were some preparatory arrangements to be made, they all gathered around the fire, clamorous with the events of the morning.

"By Jockey," said William, "didn't that old black barrah weigh a heap?" "Look here, young gentleman," said his mother, "where did you pick up such language as that? Now, let me ever hear you by jockey or by-log anything else, again, and I'll by jockey you with a witness, I'll warrant you."

"But the black barrah," said George, "did not weigh as much for his size as the bob-tail speckle, though." "He did." "He didn't." "Hush your disputing this instant—stop it. You shall not contradict each other in that manner. And let us hear no more of your hog-pen wouders; nobody wants to hear them."

At this instant William snatched a pig-tail out of Isaac's hand. "Ma," said Isaac, "make Bill gi' me mah tail." "You, William, give him his—thing. And if I was near you, I'd box your ears for that snatching. Mr. Butler you will really have to take that fellow in hand. He's getting so that I can do nothing with him."

"Ma," said Bill, "he took my blatha—'Hush!' " "I didn't." "You did." "Don't I tell you to hush your disputing?" "Well, ma, Uncle gave it to me." "He didn't; Uncle Monday gave it to me." "He didn't." "He did."

Here the mother divided a pair of slaps equally between the two disputants, which silenced them for a few moments. At this juncture Miss Rebecca cried out with a burst of anger, which she received in cooking another pig-tail. The burn was so slight that she forgot it as her mother jerked her from the fire. "You little vixen," said the mother, "what possesses you to be fumbling about the fire? Mr. Butler, I beseech you to forbid the negroes giving these children any more of these poison pig tails. They are a source of endless torment. And now, young gentlemen, one and all of you, the next one that brings one of those things in the house again, I'll box his ears so long as I can find him. Now, remember it—some along to your breakfast."

In a little time, after some controversy about places, which was arrested by the mother's eye, they were all seated, John, who had dropped in in the meantime, taking his father's seat. "Is-s-s!" said William. "Sassidge; that's what I love." "Hoo!" said Isaac, "spareribs; that's what I love."

"Well, cease your gab and eat what is set before you without comment. Nobody cares what you love or what you don't love." "Souse!" said Abraham; "I don't love souse—I wouldn't eat souse—'tain't fitten for a dog to eat."

"Get up, sir, right from the table and march out of the house until you learn manners. I'll be bound, if I say you shall eat souse, you'll eat it. Did you hear me, sir?" Abraham raked himself lazily out of his seat and moved slowly off, casting a longing look at the many good things on the table which he thought fitten for a princely eat.

"Ma," said he, as he retired, "I wish you'd make Bill quit laughing at me." "William, I've as great a mind as I ever had to do anything in my life, to send you from the table and not let you eat one mouthful. I despise that abominable disposition you have of rejoicing at your brother's misfortunes. Remember, sir, what Solomon says: 'He that is glad at calamities shall not go unpunished.'"

"Ma," said Abraham, "mayn't I come to my breakfast?" "Yes, if you think you can behave yourself with decency." Abraham returned and they all broke out at once: "Ma, mayn't I have some sassidge?" "Ma, I want some spareribs." "Ma, I aint got no coffee." "Ma, if you please ma'am, let me have some ham gravy and some fried hominy and some egg and—"

"And some of everything on the table, I suppose! Put down your plates—every one of you. George, what'll you have?" "Some sassidge and some fried potato." "John, help your brother George." "What do you want, William?" "I want some sparerib and some fried hominy." "Chaney, help William."

"What do you want, Abraham?" "I reckon," said John, smiling, "he'd like a little souse." "Now, John, behave yourself. He has suffered the punishment of his fault and let it there rest."

"I'll have," said Abraham, "some ham gravy and some egg and some hominy." "Help him, Chaney." "What'll you have, Isaac?" "I'll have some ham gravy and some hominy and some sassidge and some sparerib and some—"

"Well, you're not going to have every thing on the table, I assure you. What do you want?" "I want some ham gravy and some hominy." "John, help I—"

"No, I don't want no gravy; I want some sparerib." "John, give him—"

"No, I don't want sparerib; I want some sassidge." "Well, if you don't make up your mind pretty quick you'll want your breakfast, I tell you. I'm not going to be tantalized all day long by your wants. Say what you want and have done with it."

"I want some ham gravy and some sassidge and some hominy." "Help him, John." "John helped him to about a table-spoonful from each dish. "Now, ma, just look at bud John! He haint gi' me only these three little bit o' bits." "John, if you can't keep from tantalizing the children, tell me so, and I will trouble you to help them any more. I confess that I am at a loss to discover what pleasure one of your age can take in teasing your younger brothers."

"Rebecca, what do you want?" "I want my pig tail, ma'am." "Bless my soul and body, haw't you forgot that pig tail yet? Its burnt up long ago, I hope. Look, Bob, and see and if it isn't, give it to her. I wish in my heart there never was a pig tail upon the face of the earth."

Bob produced the half charred pig tail and laid it on Rebecca's plate. "There," continued her mother, "I hope now your heart's at ease. A beautiful dish it is, truly, for any mortal to take a fancy to."

"Ma, I don't want this pig tail." "Take it away. I knew you didn't want it, you little perverse brat—I knew you didn't want it, and I don't know what got into me to let you have it. But, really, I am so tormented out of my life that half the time I hardly know whether I'm standing on my head or heels."

"Misses," said Chaney, "Aunt Dorcas say please make Miss Louisa come out of the kitchen—say if you don't make her come out o' the fire she'll git burnt up presently—say every time she tell her to come out of the fire she make mouth at her."

"Why, sure enough, where is Louisa? Go and tell her to come into her breakfast this instant." "I did tell her, ma'am and she say she won't come till she gets done baking her cake."

Mrs. Butler left the room and soon re-appeared with Louisa sobbing and crying: "Aunt Dorcas jerked me just as hard as ever she could jerk, 'fore I did anything 'tall to her."

"Hold your tongue! She served you right enough—you'd no business there. You're a pretty thing to be making mouths at a person old enough to be your grandmother. If I'd thought when I gave you that little lump of dough that the whole plantation was to be turned upside down about it I'd have let you do without it."

Miss Louisa, after a little sobbing and pouting, drew from her apron a small, dirty, ashy, black, wrinkled, burnt biscuit, warm from the kitchen shovel, which would have been just precisely the accompaniment to Miss Rebecca's dish, and upon this, in preference to everything on the table, she commenced her repast.

"Well, Lou," said the mother, with a laugh, "you certainly have a strange taste!" "Every body knows that the mother's laugh is always responded to with compound interest by all her children. So was it in this instance, and good humor prevailed round the table.

"I'm sorry," said Abraham, "for Louisa's bis, bis, k-i-t, biscuit." "Well, really, said Mrs. B, "you are a handsome speller. Is that the way to spell biscuit?" "I can spell it, ma!" bawled out Isaac. "Well, spell it." "B-i-s, bis—(Well, that's right,)—h—"

"Ah, well, that'll do; you needn't go any farther; you've missed it farther than your brother." "Spell it, William." "William spelled it correctly." "Ma," said George, "what is biscuit derived from?"

"I really do not know," said Mrs. B, "and yet I have somewhere read an explanation of it. John, what is it derived from?" "John—From the French; bis twice and cut baked." "William—V-by, ma, you don't bake biscuits twice over!"

Abraham—Yes, ma does sometimes; don't you, ma, when company comes? "Mother—No; I sometimes warm over cold ones, when I haven't time to make fresh ones; but never bake them twice." "Butler—They were first made to carry to sea; and they were then baked twice over; as I believe sea biscuits still are."

Isaac—Ma what's breakfast derived from? "Mother—Spell it and you will see?" "Isaac—B-r-a-k, break, f-u-s-t, fust, breakfast." "Mother—Well, Iko, you are a grand speller. Breakfast, is the word; not breakfast. Abraham—I know what it comes from. Mother—What?"

Abraham—You know when you call us children to breakfast we all break off and run as fast as we can split. "Mother—Well, that is a brilliant derivation, surely. Do you suppose there was no breakfast before you children were born? Abraham—But, ma, everybody has children."

Mrs. Butler explained the term. Isaac—Ma, I know what sassidge comes from. "Mother—What?" "Isaac—Cause its got sass in it."

"Mother—Well, there, there, there—I've got enough of your derivations, unless they were better. You'll learn all these things as you grow older." "Just here, Miss Sarah, who had been breakfasting at a side table, was seized with a curiosity to see what was on the breakfast table. Accordingly, she undertook to draw herself up to a convenient elevation by the table cloth. Her mother arrested her just in time to save a cup, and pushed her aside with a gentle admonition. This did not abate Miss Sarah's curiosity in the least, and she recommenced her experiment. Her mother removed her a little more emphatically this time. These little interruptions only fired Miss Sarah's zeal, and she was returning to the charge with redoubled energy, when she ran her cheek against the palm of her mother's hand with a rubifacient force.

Away she went to her grandmother, crying, "Gramma, ma whipp'd your precious darlin' angel baby?" "Did she, my darling? Then grandma's precious darlin' angel must be a good child and mother won't whip it any more."

"Well, I will be a good child." "Well, then, mother won't whip it any more." And this conference was kept up without a variation of a letter on either side, until the grandmother deemed it expedient to remove Miss Sarah to an adjoining room, lest the mother should insist upon the immediate fulfillment of her promises.

Ma, just look at Abe," cried out William. "He saw me going to take a biscuit, and he snatched up the very one I was looking at."

"Abe," said the mother, "I wish I could make you quit nick naming each other; and I wish more that I had never set you the example. Put down that biscuit, sir, and take another."

Abraham returned the biscuit, and William took it up, with a sly, but triumphant giggle at Abraham. "Ma," said Abraham, "Bill said Gud-durn."

"Law, what a story! Ma, I declare I never said no such thing." "Yes you did, and Chaney heard you." William's countenance immediately showed that his memory had been refreshed; and he drew out, "never none now," with a tone and countenance that plainly imparted guilt to some extent. His mother suspected he was hinging upon technicals, and she put the question—"Well, what did you say?"

"I said, I be tets'ly 'od'durn." "And that's just as bad. Mr. Butler, you positively will have to take this boy in hand. He evinces a strong propensity to profane swearing, which if not corrected immediately will become ungovernable."

"Whenever you can't manage him," said Butler, as before, "just turn him over to me, and I reckon I can cure him." "When did he say it?" inquired the mother, returning to Abraham. "You know that time that you sent all us children up to the new ground to pick peas."

"Why that's been three months ago at least, and you've just thought now of telling it. Oh you malicious toad you, where do you learn to bear malice so long? I abhor that trait of character in a child."

"Ma," said Bill, "Abe haint said his prayers for three nights." "Abe and Bill now exactly swap places and countenances." "Yes," said the mother, "and I suppose I should never have heard of that, if Abraham had not told of your profanity."

"I know better," dragged out Abraham, in reply to William. "Abraham," said the mother, solemnly, "did you kneel down when you said your prayers last night?" "Yes, ma'am," and Abraham brightened a little. "Yes, ma," continued Bill, "he kneels down, and 'fore I say, 'now I lay me down to sleep, he jumps up every night and hops in bed, and says he's done said his prayers when he hadn't time to say half a prayer."

During this narrative, my namesake kept covering under the steadfast frown of his mother, until he transformed himself into a perfect personification of idiocy. "How many prayers did you say last night, Abraham?" paused the mother in an awfully pretentious tone. "I said one and—" (here Abraham paused.) "One and what?" "One and a piece of 'tother one." "Why, ma, he couldn't ha' said it to save his life, for he hadn't time—"

"Hush, sir; I don't ask for your assistance." "I did," muttered Abraham, "I said 'tother piece after I got in bed." "Abraham," said his mother, "I declare I do not know what to say to you. I am so mortified, so shocked, at this conduct, that I am completely at a loss how to express myself about it. Suppose you had died last night after trifling with your prayers as you did; who can say what would have become of you? Is it possible that you cannot spend a few minutes in prayer to your Heavenly Father, who feeds you, who clothes you, and who gives you every thing [CONCLUDED ON THE FOURTH PAGE.]