

SIR MATTHEW HALE'S

AFFECTIONATE

EPISTLES

TO HIS

CHILDREN.

WITH

DIRECTIONS

CONCERNING THE

RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION

OF THE

LORD'S DAY.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

The LIFE of the AUTHOR.

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A NEW EDITION.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**H E Editor, in presenting this Work to the Public, avails himself of the prevalent good Sense of Parents, and a Consciousness of the Importance of putting Books of virtuous Tendency in the Hands of Youth in general : In this View, to doubt Approbation—would perhaps be Ignorance. He professes himself influenced by no Motive, but the Satisfaction and Desire of —*pointing to that which is good.*

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SIR MATTHEW HALE's  
E P I S T L E S  
T O H I S  
C H I L D R E N.

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EPISTLE THE FIRST.

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DEAR CHILDREN,

I  Intended to have been at Alderly this Whitsuntide, desirous to renew those counsels and advices which I have often given you, in order to your greatest concernment; namely, the everlasting good and wellfare of your souls hereafter, and the due ordering of your lives and conversations here.

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And

And although young people are apt, through their own indiscretion, or the ill advice of others, to think these kind of entertainments but dry and empty matters, and the morose and needless interpositions of old men : yet give him leave to tell you, that very well knows what he says, these things are of more importance and concernment to you, than external gifts and bounties ; wherein, nevertheless, I have not been wanting to you according to my ability.

This was my intention in this journey ; and though I have been disappointed therein, yet I thought good, by letters and messages, to do something that might be done that way for your benefit, that I had otherwise intended to have done for your person.

Affure

Affure yourselves therefore, and believe it from one that knows what he says, from one that neither can have any reason or end to deceive you, that the best gift I can give you, is good counsel ; and the best counsel I can give you, is that which relates to your greatest import and concernment ; namely, *religion*.

And therefore, since I cannot, at this time, deliver it to you in person, I shall do it by this letter ; wherein I shall not be very large, but keep myself within the bounds proper for a letter ; and those things only, at this time, which may be most of present use and moment to you : and by your due observance to these directions, I shall have a good character both of your dutifulness to God, your obedience to your father, and also of your discretion and prudence ; for it is most certain, that as religion is the best means to advance and rectify hu-

man nature, so no man shall be either truly wise, or truly happy without it, and the love of it; no, not in this life, much less in that which is to come.

1. Therefore every morning and evening, upon your knees, humbly commend yourselves to Almighty God in prayer, begging his mercy to pardon your sins, his grace to direct you, his providence to protect you; returning him humble thanks for all his dispensations towards you; yea, even for his very corrections and afflictions, intreating him to give you wisdom and grace, to make a sober, patient, humble, profitable use of them; and in his due time, to deliver you from them; concluding your prayers with the Lord's prayer. This will be a certain means to bring your mind into a right frame; to procure you comfort and blessing, and to prevent thousands of in-

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conveniences and mischiefs, to which you will be otherwise subjected.

2. Every morning read seriously and reverently a portion of the holy scripture, and acquaint yourself with the history and doctrine thereof: it is a book full of light and wisdom, will make you wise to eternal life, and furnish you with directions and principles, to guide and order your life safely and prudently.

3. Conclude every evening with reading some part of the scripture and prayer in your family.

4. Be strict and religious observers of the Lord's day; resort to your parish church twice that day, if your health will permit, and attend diligently and reverently to the public prayers and sermons; he cannot reasonably expect a



bleffing from God the reft of the week, that neglects his duty to God, in the due confecration of this day to the fpecial fervice and duty of God, which this day requires.

5. Receive the facrament, at leaft, three times in the year, and oftner as there is occafion, in your parifh church. The laws of the land require this, and the law of your Saviour requires it, and the law of duty and gratitude requires it of you. Prepare yourfelves ferioufly for this fervice beforehand, and perform it with reverence and thankfulnefs: the neglect of this duty procures great inconvenience and ftrangenefs; and commonly the neglect hereof arifeth from fome conceited opinion that people inconfiderately take up; but moft ordinarily from a fluggifhnefs of mind, and an

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unwillingness to fit and prepare the mind for it ; or to leave some sinful and vain course that men are not willing to leave, and yet condemn themselves in the practice of it.

6. Beware of those who go about to seduce you from that religion wherein you have been brought up hitherto ; namely, the true protestant religion : it is not unknown to any that observes the state of things in the world, how many erroneous religions are scattered abroad in the world ; and how industrious men of false persuasions are to make profelytes. There are Antinomians, Quakers, Anabaptists, and divers others that go about to mislead themselves and others ; nay, although the laws of this kingdom, and especially the statute of the 23 Eliz. cap. 1. have inflicted the severest penal-

ty upon those that go about to withdraw persons to the Romish religion, from the religion established in England, as any man that reads the statute may find: yet there are scattered up and down the world divers factors and agents, that, under several disguises and pretences, endeavour the perverting of weak and easy persons; take heed of all such persuaders. And that you may know and observe the better, you shall ever find these artifices practised by them: 1. They will use all flattering applications and insinuations to be master of your humour, and when they have gotten that advantage, they that seem before to serve you, will then command you. 2. They will use all possible skill to raise in you jealousy and dislike towards those who may otherwise continue and keep you in the truth; as to raise dislike in  
you

you against your minister ; nay, rather than fail, to raise dissention among relations ; yea, to cast jealousies and surmises among them, if it may be instrumental to corrupt them. 3. They will endeavour to withdraw people from the public ministry of God's word, encourage men to flight and neglect it : and when they have once effected this, they have a fair opportunity to infuse their own corrupt principles. 4. They will engage you, by some means or other, to them ; either by some real, but most ordinarily by some pretended kindness or familiarity ; that in a little time, you shall not dare to displease them ; you must do and speak what they will have you, because some way or other you are entangled with them, or engaged to them ; and then they become your governors, and you will not dare to disobey them.

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These are some of those artifices whereby crafty and subtle seducers gain profelytes, and bring men under captivity.

7. Be very careful to moderate your passions, especially of choler and anger; it inflames the blood, disorders the brain, and, for a time, exterminates not only religion, but common reason; it puts the mind into confusion, and throws wildfire into the tongue, whereby men give others advantage against them; it renders a man incapable of doing his duty to God, and puts a man upon acts of violence, unrighteousness, and injustice to men: therefore keep your passions under discipline, and under as strict a chain as you would keep an unruly curst mastiff; look to it, that you give it not too much line at first. But if it hath gotten any fire within you, quench

quench it presently, with consideration, and let it not break out into passionate or unruly words and actions ; but whatever you do, let it not gangrene into malice, envy, or spite.

8. Send your children early to learn their catechism, that they take in the true principles of religion betimes, which may grow up with them, and habituate them both to the knowledge and practice of it ; that they may escape the danger of corruption by error or vice, being antecedently seasoned with better principles.

9. Receive the blessings of God with very much thankfulness to him, for he is the root and fountain of all the good you do, or can receive.

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10. Bear

10. Bear all afflictions and crosses patiently ; it is your duty, for afflictions come not from the dust. The great God of heaven and earth is he that sends these messengers to you, though possibly evil occurrence may be the immediate instruments of them : you owe to Almighty God an infinite subjection and obedience, and to expostulate with him, is rebellion ; and as it is your duty, so it is your wisdom, and your prudence : impatience will not discharge your yoke, but it will make it gall the worse, and sit the harder.

11. Learn not only patience under your afflictions, but also profitably to improve them to your soul's good ; learn by them how vain and unprofitable the world, and the pleasures thereof, are, that a sharp, or a lingering sickness renders utterly tasteless. Learn how  
vain



vain and weak a thing human nature is, which is pulled down to the gates of death, and cloathed with rottenness and corruption, by a little disorder in the blood, in a nerve, in a vein, in an artery. And since we have so little hold of a temporal life, which is shaken and shattered by any small occurrence, accident, or distemper: learn to lay hold on eternal life, and of that covenant of peace and salvation, which Christ hath bought for all that believe, and obey the gospel of peace and salvation: there shall be no death, no sickness, no pain, no weakness, but a state of unchangeable, and everlasting happiness: and if you thus improve afflictions, you are gainers by it; and most certain it is, that there is no more probable way under heaven to be delivered from affliction, if the wise God see it fit, than thus to improve it; for affliction is a messenger,



messenger, and the rod hath a voice; and that is, to require mankind to be the more patient, and the more humble, and the more to acknowledge Almighty God in all our ways : and if men listen to this voice of the rod, and conform to it, the rod hath done his errand ; and will either leave a man, or at least give a man singular comfort, even under the sharpest affliction ; and this *affliction which is but for a moment, thus improved, will work for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

12. Reverence your minister ; he is a wise, and a good man, and one that loves you, and has a tender care and respect for you : do not grieve him either by neglect or disrespect. Assure yourselves, if there be any person that sets any of you against him, or provokes or encourageth any of you to despise or  
neglect

neglect him, that person, whoever he be, loves not you, nor the office he bears; and therefore, as the laws of the land, and the Divine Providence, hath placed him at Alderly, to have a care of your souls; so I must tell you, I do expect you should reverence and honour him for his own, for your, and for his office sake.

And now I have written this long Epistle to you, to perform that office for me, that I should have done in person, if I could have taken this journey. The Epistle is long, but it had been longer had I had more time. And although perchance some there be in the world, that, when they hear of it, will interpret it to be but the excursions and morose rules of old age, unnecessary, and such as might have been spared; yet, I am persuaded, it will find better acceptance

tation from you that are my children. I am now on the shady side of three-score years; I write to you what you have often heard me in substance speak: and possibly when I shall leave this world, you will want such a remembrancer as I have been to you. The words that I now, and at former times have written to you, are words of truth and soberness; and words and advices that proceed from a heart full of love and affection to you all. If I should see you do amiss in any thing, and should not reprove you; or, if I should find you wanting counsel and direction, and should not give it you; I should not perform the trust of a father; and, if you should not thankfully receive it, you would be somewhat defective in the duty you owe to God, and me, as children. As I have never spared my purse to supply you according to my abilities,

abilities, and the reasonableness of occasions ; so I have never been wanting to you in good and prudent counsels ; and the God of Heaven give you wisdom, constancy, and fidelity in the observance of them.

I am,

Your ever loving Father,

*May 20.*

MATTHEW HALE.

EPISTLE