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THE WHOLE ART OF GOVERNMENT CONSISTS IN THE ART OF BEING HONEST.—Jefferson.

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From the Ladies' Repository.

## My Friend's Family.

"Edward," said I, to my much-loved friend, who had been my class-mate, and only room-mate for many months, one day as we were about closing our scene of studious toil, "Edward, give me a sketch of some of the most important incidents of your past life; and, if desired, I will return the favor. We are now about to separate for distant sections of the country, and should the strong bond of friendship and Christian affection, which has so long and firmly cemented us together, continue unbroken, it will be pleasant, in after time, for each, to refer to any interesting events connected with the other." For a few seconds, during which time Edward's mind probably scanned the whole history of his past life, he sat silent and motionless, with his eyes fast fixed upon our faithful, though rusty stove, which we had already commenced removing from our apartment. Then raising his head, said he, "My own history appears quite unimportant. The incidents of but one period of my life are worth relating, and you have so frequently heard me refer to them, that I am sure the subject must have become to you an old tale. I refer," continued he, "to the period of my conversion, and the remarkable conversion of my father, mother, and only sister—incidents, the results of which, I trust, will be the union of our domestic circle, unbroken, in the paradise of God."

"Such events," I replied, "may well assume a vast importance. They extend beyond the narrow bounds of visual objects; and, indeed, can only be measured by the countless revolving cycles of eternity. True, I have heard you refer to the conversion of yourself and parents, but have never heard you give the particulars, the relation of which would fully meet the object of my suggestion."

Edward, in compliance with my request, proceeded nearly as follows. (For I design to give his own language, as near as memory will enable me.) "My father, you know, was a man of wealth, and high standing in his profession. My sister and myself were the only children, and on us, from infancy, was lavished every thing to gratify us that immense wealth and boundless parental affection could supply. We were, indeed, the idols of our parents. Great expense was incurred to qualify us early in life to act well our parts in the highest circles of society. Our education, however, was entirely of a light character, calculated only for show. My father was a bitter opponent to all experimental religion, and we were consequently taught, that to be the best dancer, painter, pianist, &c., should be the high bounds of our ambition. Through my sister, who was two years older than myself, I was introduced much earlier than I otherwise should have been to the gay and fashionable scenes of youthful vice. When a little more than sixteen years old I was sent to school at H., some ten miles from home, my father having provided me with board in the family of Mr. M., an acquaintance of his, to whose charge he committed me, with the particular injunction, that I must be kept from all religious meetings or influences. During my stay in this family, which was near four months, I was frequently got into difficulty by being charged, by the children of Mr. M., with their own mischievous acts, and was as often severely reprimanded by him. On stating my situation, and wish for a new boarding house, to a student by the name of Frederick A., with whom I had formed a pleasant acquaintance, he informed me that his parents, who resided in the village, had a spare room, and would take one or two boarders. I at once engaged the whole room to myself, together with board, of which I soon informed my parents, as also the reasons for leaving Mr. M.'s. Here commenced an entire new era in my life. In the family of Mr. A. all was entirely new and strange. The table was approached with

invocation, and left with thanksgiving. Each day began and ended with prayer and praise. The entire family were living Christians, whose altar fires, like that of holy Israel, never waned. I was informed that the ringing of a small bell would give notice of the hours of family worship, and that I could attend or not as best pleased me.—From respect to the order of the house, the summons of the little bell was always strictly attended to. Observation soon convinced me that this family had some source of bliss to which I was a stranger. What was it! Was it their religion! Perhaps it was. Observing Paley's Evidences of Christianity in the breakfast room one morning, I carried it to my room, supposing I should ascertain from its perusal what religion was. In this, however, I was disappointed though its argument satisfied me of its truth. An increasing anxiety to know what religion was induced me to get a Bible to gratify my curiosity. To this hour I believe I was as ignorant of what Christianity was as the darkest heathen. Paley had convinced me of its truth as a system, but upon what it was based, or what its object, and of what its importance, I was entirely ignorant. I had probably never read a verse in the Old or New Testament in my life. I commenced reading, and the commandment emphatically came home. I saw what religion was; that it was based upon the relations which man sustains to his Maker, and his entire universe; that all its commands and requirements, being based upon these relations, were just and right; and in the consequences of obedience and disobedience I saw, in some measure, its great importance. I believe, too, I had tolerably just conceptions of man's lost condition as a transgressor, and his remedy in the death and mediation of the Saviour. I do not mean to convey the idea that this amount of light burst upon my moral vision all at once. On the contrary, it was the result of investigating the subject for several weeks. Here, however, I made a complete stand. I saw, that in order for me to be saved by the atonement, and become an heir of eternal bliss, an entire new course of life was requisite—that I must wholly abandon all that I had been accustomed to prize. This I could not consent to. I concluded, therefore, to think no more of the subject, and, indeed, made every exertion for three weeks to banish it from the mind. But my efforts were worse than useless. The more I labored to keep my thoughts from it, the more complete seemed its influence over them. Every passing day awakened and convinced me more fully of the importance and value of religion. At this time a vacation of two weeks spent at home diminished greatly my religious anxiety. On being interrogated on the subject by my father, I told him that the folks where I boarded I believed were religious; but that I had a room to myself, and they said nothing to me about it, (which by the way was false) for as I was highly pleased with my boarding place. I wished to give such an account of it as would induce him to allow me to continue there—to which he assented. On my return to school, the subject of my own salvation forced itself upon my mind more powerfully than before I left. So strong was its influence, that in three weeks I was entirely incapacitated for my studies, and made up my mind to return home, and get my father to help me out of the trouble. Having packed my books and clothes, with the view of returning home the following day, as I was sitting in my lonely room, the two following questions forced themselves powerfully upon my mind: What is religion? and what is its price? To the first of which I almost inadvertently replied, Religion is that upon the rejection or attainment of which is suspended man's eternal interests—interests high as heaven, deep as hell, and vast as eternity. It is an institution of a God of infinite goodness and wisdom, and must, therefore, be conducive to man's highest interests in time, as well as eternity. But what is its price? It is the renunciation of sin. It requires the giving up of myself, and all my earthly interests. But as religion makes provisions for our highest interests, even in time, it of course cannot require the renunciation or giving up of any thing but what really conflicts with those interests. The price is certainly reasonable, and I will have religion. A little reflection, however, convinced me that I must sacrifice much more than I had for the moment realized. I felt that I should have to incur the sneers of my sister, and the scoffs of my associates; but this was trifling in comparison to the displeasure and violent opposition of my father, who would doubtless entirely disinherit, and turn me from his door penniless. On the other hand, I saw that to reject religion now was, in all probability, an eternal rejection—one that would involve, beyond hope, the ruin of the soul. I saw, too, that the wealth of my parents, two-thirds of which I had expected to inherit, might soon be scattered by adverse winds; or should I be permitted to possess it, very possibly it would be to me a curse, rather than a blessing. Added to this, who could assure me that I

should live to mature years to receive, even should my father be pleased to bestow. Instead of living to see my parents, to receive from them the opposition I had supposed, the morrow's rising sun might behold me dead, and damned, or (as hope for the moment lighted up the dark scene) some strange influence, like that which had operated on me, might awaken my parents and sister, and all of them, instead of opposing, might possibly accompany me home to heaven. Again, I felt that I would pay the price; I would have religion. For the first time in my life I fell on my knees, and asked God to help me make the sacrifice—to dispel my darkness, and enable me that night so to repent of my sins, and believe on his Son, as to be saved. On rising, I felt strengthened to go forward. I immediately called Mr. A. to my room, and told him my feelings. After giving me suitable instruction, and telling me it was my duty and privilege to experience saving grace and the evidence of it that hour, he proposed to have the whole family come to my room, and have a family prayer meeting for me, to which I readily assented. The exercises commenced by singing a few verses, which was followed with successive prayer by all present. While in prayer I believe I gave up myself, and all my interests, in solemn covenant to God. I asked the forgiveness of my sins, and acceptance through the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ, which I doubt not was granted. The winds were hushed, and the tempest calmed. I felt a peace that had in it all the sweetness of heaven itself. I then too saw the depth of the pit from which I had been taken—from the total ignorance of having lived more than sixteen years without so much as reading one verse in the blessed Bible—from the strongest irreligious influences which could possibly be thrown around me—from my own temple of worldly ambition—from all this I had been rescued by the mercy of God, by means, it seemed to me, of special interpositions of Providence, and was now placed as a lamb in the very bosom of my Saviour. My flowing tears, for hours, could only give expressions to the gratitude of my soul. I still saw before me the same opposition that I had before contemplated; but, O, to meet it all, or a hundred fold more, for my blessed Jesus, who had done so much for me, I thought would afford me the highest pleasure. The following morning I wrote to my parents, informing them of my conversion as simply and frankly as possible; also detailing minutely all the circumstances which had led to such a result. I expressed my fears that the step which I had taken would not meet their approbation, and solicited a candid investigation of the whole subject before passing upon me a final sentence of condemnation. When my father received the letter he was deeply indignant. The following day he came with his carriage, and took me and all my baggage home with him. He expressed much surprise and sorrow that I had been so foolish, and told me that I must give it up at once; if I did not it would ruin all my prospects for life—that he could not think of assisting me in a course so directly opposed to his wishes. Soon after our return home a ball was proposed, (for the purpose of overcoming my religious feelings,) and the following Tuesday evening appointed for it. I expressed my unwillingness to be present on such an occasion, and asked permission to spend the evening at class meeting. In return I received, from both parents and sister, nothing but scoffs, sneers, and reproaches. When the evening, however, arrived, I utterly declined being present, and did, in fact, go to class meeting. This exasperated my father to the highest pitch, and he positively declared, that if I attended another religious meeting of any kind he would disinherit me—that his roof should no longer be my shelter. Though my grief was inexhaustible, I still felt determined to serve God, whatever might be the sacrifice.—The class meetings of the village were held on Tuesday evenings; accordingly, on the afternoon of the next Tuesday my father came to me with a large whalebone horsewhip. "There," said he, "Ned, I think that will cure your religion, and keep you from class meeting. Should you conclude to go to-night, as you did a week since, against my wishes, you may rely upon having it worn up on your naked back in the morning." I had here a most severe trial, not in preference to the whipping, but as to what extent I ought to obey my parents in matters of religion. Should I obey them I must disobey God. But could I not give up all my meetings and religious privileges, in obedience to my parents, and still enjoy religion! After much prayer, I concluded my only way was to claim the enjoyment of all the helps which God had provided me. Should I stay from class that night, it would be considered a victory of the whip, and I should be required at once to recommence my old course at the same peril. I came to the conclusion that it was not my duty to obey my parents, when their requirements conflicted with those of God; and so with a heavy heart I again went to class. On my way I determined that I would not receive the threatened whipping with-

out saying something more in justification of my course than I had yet done. I determined too to say something to my father of his responsibilities as a parent. But what should I say, a boy seventeen years old, to one accustomed to sit in judgment, and listen to arguments from the finest talents? Of myself I could say nothing; but the promise of wisdom from on high led me to a grove just without the village, where the whole night was spent in prayer and preparation for the event. Thank God, as day dawned light and peace, like a flood, broke into my soul. I was strong as a giant. I knew not a word that I should say, though I felt a blessed assurance that God would give me words and wisdom; and I would as soon have made my defence before an assembled universe as any way. On my arrival at the house I found my father up, and walking his room. He had, in fact, fastened the doors, and remained awake all night, so as to meet me at the door.—"Well," said he, "this is the fruit of your religion, is it! Where have you been all night, you disobedient rascal!" "I have been up in the grove praying since class meeting," said I, very frankly. "Praying, ha! a pretty story that! I'll see if it can't be cured after breakfast." So saying, he left me, and I did not see him again till at the breakfast table. Breakfast over, taking the whip, he bade me follow him, and led the way to the stable, where I was ordered to take off my coat and vest, preparatory to the whipping. "Father," said I, "is it customary for you to condemn without giving a chance for defence? Of what have I been guilty, that I deserve the severe punishment you propose to inflict?" "Defence!" said he, "What defence can you make for willful disobedience? You deserve to be punished for trampling on my authority, and I will show you that authority shall be maintained." "I expected opposition," continued I, "when I embraced religion; but I embraced it in view of both worlds. I am prepared for any suffering that may be inflicted in this, but must save my soul in the other. Nothing can induce me to forsake it. Is it not possible that in the exercise of a father's authority you have transcended the proper bounds of parental control? And have you, dear father, fulfilled all the duties growing out of your relation to me as a son? Our duties grow out of our relations to our Maker and each other. It is my duty, as your offspring, to honor and love you, to study your highest interests, and obey you in all things when your commands do not conflict with the requirements of a higher authority—with those of my Maker. On the other hand, it is your duty, as a parent, to study my highest interests. You have been the instrument of bringing me into being—of giving me an existence co-extensive with that of the Deity—eternal. That eternity of existence, after the passage of the few short years of this life, must be in wo or bliss; and is it not your duty, dear father, the author of that eternity of being, to aid me all in your power to escape the one, and gain the other? O, let me ask you, (said I clasping his hands to my bosom) has this been the course you have pursued with me; rather has not your whole life, and the administration of your government, tended to lead both myself and dear sister directly to ruin—with wealth to sink us down to hell! O, father! father! Here my feelings overcame me and I burst into tears. I recovered myself as soon as possible, and raised my eyes to proceed, but observed that the whip had fallen from my father's hand, who stood before me motionless and white as a marble block. I picked up the whip, and placed it in his hand. "No," said he, "I shall defer using the whip, but you must leave my house." I told him that I preferred the performance of every duty as a faithful son, but must abide his decision; at the same time reminding him that nothing could relieve him of his high responsibilities as a parent. He dropped the whip, and left the stable, evidently in great agitation. I knelt down by the side of it, and thanked God for his goodness, and prayed that what I had said might result in the greatest good both to myself and father. In the course of the day but little was said by myself, mother, or sister. They supposed that I had received the whipping which had been threatened; and as I was silent, they did not feel like broaching that or any other subject. During the whole forenoon, and also from the dinner table, my father was absent. Our residence was in the outskirts of the village, not more than fifty rods from the grove which I have already referred to, to which I again resorted after dinner for another season of prayer. Soon after entering it, to my surprise, I discovered my father some distance from me, walking back and forward, apparently in deep study. Seeing that I was not observed I withdrew, and repaired to my chamber, where the afternoon was spent in prayer, that God would be with my father in the grove; for I was certain that he was under the awakening influence of the Holy Spirit. At the usual supper hour he had not returned, and after waiting for him till dark, my mother, fearing some accident had befallen him, (as such an absence had never before occurred,) requested me to go and see if I could

find him. I proceeded directly to the spot where I had seen him a few hours previous. When I first came in sight of him he was sitting with his head leaning against a tree; but on observing me, he rose up and met me. I extended my hand to him, saying, "I am glad to see you, father." Mother feared some evil had happened to you, and I sent me to see if I could find you." He made me no reply, but taking my hand in his, walked slowly toward the house. His heaving sighs bespoke the deep emotions of his soul. Perceiving that he had not yet settled the great question of life or death, I offered up my silent prayers that God would not leave him in this important hour, upon the decisions of which were suspended heaven and hell. "We had not reached the outer edge of the grove, when my father stopping short, clasped me to his bosom, and exclaiming in tears, 'O, Edward! Edward! forgive me, O forgive me, my dear son, O forgive me.' He never seemed so precious to me before. I clasped my arms around his neck, and pressed my lips to his cheek, as my only method of giving expression to my feelings, or a pledge of the forgiveness he sought. On arriving at the house we met my mother in the dining-room. My father, bathed in tears, clasped her to his breast. "Will you go with me?" said he. "I have determined to have religion, and accompany our dear Edward; and will you go with us, daughter?" (addressing himself to my sister, who was just entering the room) "Yes, I am sure you will both join me; and here is dear Edward, who has forgiven me, he will pray for us." So saying, he drew myself and sister, as near into his arms as he could, with our mother; and as though he had obtained the assent of all, immediately fell upon his knees. "O Edward," said he, the big tears still flowing down his cheeks, "O Edward, do pray for a wicked father; pray for us all; God has heard your prayers, and he will still hear them." We all bowed with him, but the deep emotions of my soul forbade me utterance, and nearly overcame my physical strength. In fact I did not know when I commenced vocal prayer. I only know I found myself (how long after I cannot tell) in the arms of my father, our voices both mingling in mighty prayer for his salvation. Our prayers, through the mediation of our great High Priest, were heard on high, and salvation's tide soon rolled o'er his soul. He sprang upon his feet with shouts of praise for God's redeeming grace. My thoughts then became wholly absorbed in the case of my mother, the dear mother that bore me, on whose bosom I had been cherished, and who had constantly watched over me with all the affection of a mother's heart. My whole soul was drawn out in prayer for her immediate conversion. The chariot wheels for a time, seemed stayed, but our supplications were incessant. My father, who had again knelt by her side, tried to encourage by conversing with her, or rather he prayed and talked together; praying a part of a sentence, and talking the balance. My mother and sister were both weeping in bitter accents; part of the time praying for themselves, having taken courage from the speedy deliverance of my father. Their prayers and groans, and the prayers, exhortations, and shouts, with which my father seemed overburdened, together with my own prayers, all commingling together, produced what would generally be termed wild confusion. How long I continued in prayer for my mother I do not know, but catching the eye of my weeping sister, it occurred to me that I had entirely forgotten her—that I had not even prayed for her at all. Bitterly reproaching myself, and still upon my knees, I clasped her to my bosom, and bathed her with tears of sorrow that I had been so thoughtless. I besought God with all my soul for that dear, that only sister, that he would enable her to renounce the world and all its allurements, and cast her naked soul on Jesus for salvation. My parents also prayed with me; and while we wrestled, the symbol of the divine presence was manifested. "Ellen," said I, "God has blessed you."—"Yes," said she, (as we bathed each other's cheeks in tears,) "I know I love the Saviour." On rising from our knees, we found, to our surprise, that the morning had dawned. The following sabbath, we all received the solemn seal of our consecration; and for months our bliss seemed complete. But the destroyer came, and they have been carried, one after another, to the silent and lonely habitation of the dead. Over those countenances, once so fresh and lovely, have gathered the cold damps of death, and the unfeeling worm now feeds upon those I so fondly loved. But two short years had passed ere they had all left me; but they left in joyous hope—they rest in peace. Consumption first poised its fatal dart at my lovely sister, and like the early rose, nipped by the untimely blast, she soon fell its withered victim. While the rose faded from her cheek, and her sparkling eye grew dim in death, joy and hope cheered her soul, and lighted up her passage through the dark and dreary waves of death's cold flood. A few moments