

committee endorse the words of the Hamilton Presbytery when it reports that "while the services of the sanctuary are well attended and highly appreciated, yet there is cause for regret that so many of our young people are allured to other places of worship by the ever increasing practice on the part of certain Churches of announcing strange and sensational subjects of discourse, thereby pandering to the morbid taste of a class of restless and unstable hearers." Your committee trust that our ministry will continue to hold fast the doctrine that God has ordained by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe—that we cannot without peril descend to other because more popular methods, that we have no right to substitute sacred concerts for the preaching of Christ, or to pervert the public worship of God into a semi-religious "free-and-easy," and that to attempt to draw the young to the Church by such attractions, is to pursue an ever receding "Will o' the wisp," that must soon lead us into a worship of sensualism, and away from the Spirit of God. Let us draw souls to Christ, and Christ will take care of His Church.

Similar uniform testimony is borne by all the Sessions to general appreciation of the sacrament of the Lord's supper by the mass of our Church members, usual average attendance ranging from seventy-five to over ninety per cent., and in most cases the absentees from the communion table can be accounted for by old age or other infirmity.

The interest manifested in the prayer meeting is not so general. Here the reports are less uniform. In Hamilton the interest is said to be "increasing." In Sarnia "the meeting is well attended,"—in one instance "by half the congregation." The general tone of the reports, however, is one of dissatisfaction and complaint. A small proportion take any interest in it, and most of these are ladies. Your committee think the Synod and General Assembly should not let this matter lightly pass? Is the fault with the people? Have they lost faith in prayer? Is it with the method of conducting the meeting? Should not a conference be held by this Synod at which this and kindred subjects of living practical interest might be discussed? The Church cannot afford to dispense with concerted prayer.

#### FAMILY RELIGION.

Similar in tone to those relating to the prayer meeting are, your committee regret to say, the reports concerning family worship. In a very few congregations it is said to be observed in all, or nearly all the households. But while most of the Sessions evidently do not know the exact numbers observing it, all declare it is not observed as it ought to be. This is matter for humiliation and alarm. The household is the basis both of the nation and the Church, and the stability, permanency and well-being of both are imperilled whenever irreligion characterizes the home life. It is no wonder that unworthy attractions are needed to draw the young to the Church, and it is no wonder that they also succeed in drawing away from the Church. The Church has evidently a work to do here.

Other aspects of religious life are reported on more favourably. The Sabbath is outwardly well observed by our people, though the temptations in some districts are much greater than in others. Some Sessions deplore Sabbath visiting and driving in districts populated by religious sects holding lax views of the sanctity of the Lord's Day. A Hamilton Session reports "Sabbath desecration as deplorably on the increase"; and another, that "the men are to a great extent at their ordinary work, and the quiet of the day of rest is destroyed by pleasure excursions and railway traffic." A Sarnia Session complains of "the idleness and improvidence of those who buy, and the godless greed of those who sell milk on the Lord's Day," while a London Session testifies that "for the enjoyment of a quiet Sabbath and a general refrainment from visible breach of it, their neighbourhood will compare favourably with any part of the world."

The Shorter Catechism and portions of Scripture are committed to memory in all our Sabbath schools, but not in all our homes. The Confession of Faith is not taught as such, and your committee doubt that it was intended to be. The spiritual wants of the aged and infirm are met by visitation and cottage prayer meetings, and in two cases by the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

(To be concluded.)

## Our Young Folks.

### WHAT FATHER MEANT.

Two little lads in the lamplight  
Saw, with their tasks to do,  
Bothering brains and finding—  
Oh, how little they knew!

Trouble of school and lessons  
"Bother it all," they said,  
"Playing at being pirates—  
Better were that instead."

Stories of treasure islands  
Ever they read and told—  
Tales of the good ships captured  
Laden with bars of gold;

Ever they dreamed of battles.  
Ever they longed to be  
Chiefs of the ocean rovers,  
Kings of the rolling sea.

But father was fixed and steady—  
"Stick to your tasks," said he;  
Only the man who labours  
Leader of men can be.

So when the lamp was lighted,  
Over their books they bent,  
Working away, not knowing  
All that their father meant.

Two little lads have laboured,  
Two little lads have grown  
Into a stalwart manhood,  
Making the truth their own.

Faded are boyish fancies—  
Faded and passed away,  
But in that noblest fashion  
Leaders of men are they.

Flashing the lamp of knowledge  
Into the darkest night,  
Boldly they teach the people,  
Standing for truth and right

So men for the right arising  
To glorious fight are led,  
And people grow old to follow  
These men of the heart and head

And now, when the lamp is lighted,  
And heads over books are bent,  
Sometimes they will whisper softly,  
"We've found what our father meant."

### THE KING'S SON.

There was once a king's son, who heard that the people in one of the king's countries a long way off used to be afraid of the king, and used to say that the king did not care for them. So he thought to himself "I will go and teach them better." But he said, "If I go in my fine robes and crown, they will say, 'What do you know of a poor man's life? You do not know what it is to be cold and half naked and hungry.' I will put off my royal dress, and I will wear clothes like the poor people, and live and eat as they do." So he changed his clothes and left his palace, and went to that distant country, and there he lived among the poor, leading a harder life than any of them. And yet though he was often hungry and cold, and some times did not know where to find a night's lodging, he never complained and never broke the laws.

After he had lived in that country for some time, he went back to the king at home. It happened that soon afterward the people in the country sent messengers to the king to complain the laws were too hard. The king's son then said to the messengers: "Believe me, the laws are all for the best, and the king loves you as though you were his own children."

"Ah," said the messengers, "but you do not understand our way of life, how poor and miserable we are, and how hard it is to live."

"You are wrong," said the prince: "I understand your life quite well, for I lived myself as a poor man among you for a long time. I know you have suffered a good deal; every one of your troubles is known to me, for I have suffered the same things. Yet still I assure you that the king is very fond of you, and will make you perfectly happy in the end."

Then the people, when they heard that the king's son had lived among them, and knew all about their troubles, began to be more hopeful, for they said, "He knows what it is to suffer, and he will surely help us."

The King's son is Jesus, who is the Son of God the Father. Jesus was, as we are, tempted to do wrong.

He knew what it was to be poor and hungry and homeless—he felt the bitterness of death. More than this, he knew what it was to be persecuted by enemies and to be misunderstood and deserted by his dearest friends. Do not fancy then, when you have your little trials and troubles that Jesus knows nothing about them and cannot understand them. Jesus was a child as you are, and he has never forgotten that he was a child. You may tell Him of all your troubles—he will understand and sympathize with them all.

### THE LITTLE BOOTBLACK.

A hundred years ago there lived a little boy in Oxford, England, whose business it was to clean the boots of the students of the famous university there.

He was poor, but bright and smart.

Well, this lad, whose name was George, grew rapidly in favour with the students. His prompt and hearty way of doing things, and his industrious habits and faithful deeds, won their admiration. They saw in him the promise of a noble man, and they proposed to teach him a little every day. Eager to learn, George accepted their proposition; and he soon surpassed his teachers by his rapid progress. "A boy who can blacken boots well can study well," said one of the students. "Keen as a briar," said another, "and pluck enough to make a hero."

But we cannot stop to tell of his patience and perseverance. He went on, step by step, just as the song goes:

One step, and then another,

until he became a man—a learned and eloquent man, who preached the Gospel to admiring thousands. The little bootblack became the renowned pulpit orator, George Whitefield.

### WHAT IS FAITH?

So asked an unbelieving physician of his friend, a merchant, in whose room both were quietly sitting during an evening. "Yes, what is faith?" And the tone of his question involuntarily called to mind Pilate's question, "What is truth?" "My boy," said the merchant smiling to his son, a merry little lad of eight years, who had with much pains arranged a whole army of leaden soldiers, and now as an important general in his own estimation stood up to command them to engage in battle. "My boy, carry back your hussars to the barrack box and go to bed: and be quick and do it without objection; it is high time." The poor boy! It came so hard upon him to leave his favourite play! Who could blame him for it? He threw a beseeching glance towards his father, but at once he saw unbending sternness on his countenance. He swallowed down his tears, carried his soldiers back to their quarters, embraced his father and went. "See doctor, this is faith," said the merchant. Then, calling back his child, he whispered in his ear, "Listen, my child, since assurance now is as good as a permission when the time comes, I will take you with me to the Autumn Fair at Hamburg." Exulting for joy, the lad left the room. It came to him by anticipation as though he were already on the way to Hamburg. For a long time after they heard him singing in his sleeping chamber. And again the father said, addressing his friend, "That is called faith, doctor. In this boy is planted the germ of faith in man. May he yield himself to his heavenly Father with like humility and love, with like obedience and trust, and his faith will be as complete as the faith of Abraham, the father of the believing ones!" The doctor was clearly answered. After a moment of silence he said, "Now I know more of faith than I had learned from many preachers."

### NOW IS THE TIME.

"Not yet," said a little boy, as he was busy with his trap and ball; "when I grow older then I will think about my soul."

The little boy grew to be a young man.

"Not yet," said the young man. "I am now about to enter into trade. When I see my business prosper then I shall have more time than now."

And so he went on, saying, "Not yet"—putting off to some future time that which should have been first in his thoughts—until he was a gray-haired old man. He lived without God and died without any hope whatever.