

CHILDREN'S PRAYERS.

There can be nothing more important in the training of children than to teach them the habit of prayer. But before they can learn the habit they must understand the meaning of prayer. I suppose most children, who have had any teaching at all in religious matters, would tell you that praying is *speaking to God*, but I think a very large proportion of such children probably have a very imperfect conception of what this really means. They no doubt "say their prayers," but that is not necessarily praying. The very first thing they must have most clearly and definitely pressed upon them and fixed in their minds, is the truth that they are not really praying unless they feel that they are speaking to God, and that God is listening to them. It is a vast gain, a long step in the religious life, when they have once realized this; when, in other words, prayer has become a real thing to them, and not a mere empty form. I am speaking now of quite little children, and I am sure this lesson can be taught very early. One has constant evidence of the way in which quite little children do realize what prayer is in the petitions, often raising an inward smile, no doubt, which many a mother hears her little one utter as it says its baby prayers at her knee. Perhaps I ought to have gone even further back, and to have urged the necessity of creating in the opening mind of the little child a sense of the existence, and of the omnipresence of God, as well as of His love and of His wisdom. But I suppose any mother who cared at all for her child's true interests would begin with this. The child's prayers, I need hardly say, should be very simple, quite short, and such as the child would naturally wish to pray. And the parent should make sure that every word is thoroughly understood, for it is strange what curious mistakes little children will often make in the meaning of the simplest word. Very simple children's hymns are very valuable additions to prayer, but here even more care is needed to guard against mistakes in the meaning. I once knew a little girl who interpreted the line, "All that stained my soul this day" of "blackberries and bilberries," and I have known several who understood "The grave as little as my bed" as equivalent to "The grave no bigger than my bed;" and I could easily multiply examples of similar childish mistakes. But I will tell one much prettier story to illustrate the truth that a very little child can enter into the sense and meaning of prayer. Such a little child was once taken up to the top of the Malvern Hills, and was so lost in wonder at the beauty of the scene, that, after standing quite silent a little while, she whispered, "Mother, may I say my prayers?"

But now we must remember that children *will* grow bigger, and, as they do so the parents' task becomes more difficult. I am afraid a very large number of parents never make any real effort to teach their children to advance in prayer as they advance in years. We find a large proportion of confirmation candidates with strangely elementary habits or practices of prayer. And not infrequently grown-up people, if they pray at all, go on with their child's prayers, as if a child's prayer would fit a grown-up person any better than a child's clothes. Do let parents overcome that strange shyness and reserve which seems to beset them as regards the inner life and devotional habits of their boys and girls, and do let them speak plainly and lovingly to them, and show them how much more they have to pray about as years go on, what new temptations begin to assail them, what new duties unfold themselves, what new graces and blessings they need to ask for, how many more they would wish to pray for. And then I am sure it is of great

moment to teach them something of the practice of self-examination. Even a very young child can understand this in its simplest form, and I know well how a mother's gentle loving question at night as to anything wrong done through the day, with the confession to God of the wrong recalled, may be the beginning of a habit of self-examination which will prove a life-long blessing. I am always afraid of long lists of questions. First of all, they are seldom used with any great care, and generally they are apt to minister to some little self-satisfaction, since many of the questions will not touch any individual case. It is much better to let the child select (or to select for it) two or three of the faults it is most liable to, and to train it to question itself as to these particular faults before making its nightly confession to God.

Perhaps it may be useful to point out that the child's morning prayer should consist of praise and thanksgiving, prayer for safety from sin and danger, intercession, and the Lord's prayer; while the evening prayer should consist of self-examination and confession, prayer for protection through the night, intercession, and the Lord's Prayer. To these I would add a very simple morning and evening hymn, of which a good choice will be found in Mrs. Carey Brock's Children's Hymnbook [S.P.C.K.].

Let me only once more press upon parents the enormous importance of this subject. I cannot exaggerate that importance. Until there is real prayer there is not the first foundation of the Christian life. As Charles Montgomery says, "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath"—that is, the soul can no more live without prayer than the body without breathing. Oh, parents, do teach your little ones to be real with God. He does not ask them to be long on their knees, but He does ask for real prayer, and not sham prayer. It is a terrible thing to offer shams to the God of truth; and the prayer uttered by the lip but not spoken by the heart is a sham prayer. God help us all to be more real in prayer ourselves, and then we shall know better how to teach our children to pray.—BISHOP OF WAKEFIELD in *The Parents' Review*.

DEATH OF THE BISHOP OF NIGER TERRITORY.

The Right Rev. Samuel Adjai Crowther, D.D., bishop of Niger Territory, died Dec. 31st. He was a native African and his history, extending over seventy years or more from a state of abject servitude to the episcopate, it is a very romantic one. His original name was Adjai, and his family lived at Ochugu, in the Korubu country, 100 miles inland from the coast of Benin. He was carried off in 1821 by the Eyo Mahometans, was exchanged for a horse, was again exchanged at Dahdah, where he was treated with great cruelty, was again sold as a slave for some tobacco, was captured by an English man-of-war, and landed at Sierra Leone in 1882. He was baptized in 1825, taking the names of the evangelical vicar of Christ Church, Newgate st., London, Samuel Crowther. In 1829 he married a native girl who had been taken to the same school with him. Then for several years he served as schoolmaster of Regent's Town, and subsequently accompanied the first Niger expedition. After arriving in England and studying at the Church missionary college at Islington, he was ordained by the Bishop of London. In 1854 he accompanied the second Niger expedition and wrote a very able account of it. He was afterwards an active clergyman at Akessa, translated the Bible into Korulu, and undertook several other literary works of a religious character for the benefit of his African brethren. He was consecrated first bishop of Niger Territory, West Africa, June 29th, 1864. In May, 1880, the council of the Royal Geographical Society awarded a gold watch to Bishop Crowther "in recognition of the services he had rendered to geography."

News from the Home-Field.

Diocese of Fredericton.

DALHOUSIE.—In conjunction with the neighboring parish of Addington, St. Mary's Parish has localized the *Church Monthly*, the most widely circulated of any Church of England magazine. There is a weekly Eucharist in both Parishes.

PERSONAL.—Rev. Wm. Baylee has been appointed to the Mission of Derby and Blackville.

Diocese of Quebec.

MAGOG.

Nine members of the St. Luke's choir took part in the choir festival, at St. Peter's, Sherbrooke, last week. They report having had a most happy time. Though, as in the case of Magog, the choirs of the surrounding parishes were only partially represented on account of the prevailing sickness, there assembled for the service about 70 singers. A large congregation filled the body and galleries of the church. The clergy accompanying the various choir detachments occupied the chancel in their vestments. The Rev. Canon Thornloe and the Rev. Dr. Allnott intoned the prayers, and the Rev. Dr. Adams preached the sermon. The whole service was spirited and well rendered. The united choirs, considering that they had each practiced independently, sang together with remarkable smoothness and precision. After the service a very enjoyable social gathering was held in the church hall, at which a permanent choir association for the Deanery was organized, with the Bishop and Rural Dean as Patron and Vice-Patron respectively, the Rev. Canon Thornloe as President, Mr. Arthur Dorey as Musical Director, and Mr. H. R. Fraser as Secretary Treasurer. Mr. Dorey received congratulations on all sides on the success of his efforts as promoter of the festival and of the association. *St. John's News*.

Diocese of Montreal.

MONTREAL.

St. JAMES.—It is announced that the Rector elect, Rev. W. Windsor will not be able to enter upon his duties here until next month, owing to the objections of his present parishioners to his leaving them sooner.

St. GEORGE'S.—The annual meeting of the Sunday-school teachers of St. George's Church was held on Friday evening, Jan. 29. The Rev. L. N. Tucker occupied the chair in the absence of the Dean. The superintendent gave a very exhaustive report of the work done during the past year. The treasurer and librarian also read their reports which were very satisfactory. The number attending the school is considerably over 600; largest number on any one Sunday, 580; number of books in library about 1,820. The following contributions were made during the year:—To the General Hospital, \$50; to the Shingwauk Home at Sault Ste. Marie, \$75; to the Rev. Mr. Barman for Indian school in Manitoba, \$50; and to Bishop Reeve for his work in the Diocese of Mackenzie River,