

home is not the social centre it formerly was.

#### CAUSES.

Such tendencies must have a cause. What conditions of our life have made them possible?

1. The undermining of many religious and moral traditions of our forefathers has lessened the authority of the home and the Church. The average home has lost the anchorage of religious faith and its traditions, and has not become adjusted to the new viewpoint. No matter how superior the new may be, in the transition many must suffer. It has tended to weaken for a time the authority of Scripture, and the sanctity of religious belief. When religious and moral authority is weakened, all other forms of authority will necessarily suffer. "Respect or disregard for law and authority is cultivated in the home. Obedience is vital if the home is to be properly regulated, if right character is to be formed and secured, and if law-respecting, law-abiding citizens are to be furnished the state." To have law-abiding and law-respecting citizens we need a revival of parental authority, founded on an intelligent and rational faith.

**Questions.**—Why is personal and family prayer not a prevailing custom? Why are so many families not associated with the Christian Church? Do the boys and girls to-day respect the Church and religious things as formerly?

2. The revolution in the methods of education and training has intensified these tendencies of social life. Fear is not considered a ground of obedience. Unquestioning obedience for its own sake is not demanded. The emphasis is laid on what a child would like to do, more than what he ought to do. The aim is to adjust a system to the needs of the child—his education and training—not the adjustment of the child to the system. The knowledge of the child-mind—its growth and needs—has tended to make us more sympathetic, and sometimes more lenient with children and young people.

Not until the home and the school see alike and work together, can our educational system be really effective. Children and young people shirk duty and obligation because they are disagreeable. But that will not train them for the burdens of life. We should, undoubtedly, encourage the child to develop his strongest gifts, but we should not neglect the necessary training of facing duty even if it be disagreeable.

**Questions.**—Is this one reason why young men do not like to learn a trade, or master any art? Why is it the young people will not face responsibility? Why do our Leaguers shrink from doing their share in the work of the League, Sunday School and Church? Why are not more young men being trained for the lay offices of our Church and the ministry?

3. Our social customs have changed very materially in the last few years. Boys and girls are allowed to mingle together at a very early age. They are together on the streets, at concerts, theatres, and parties, quite early in the teens. Bashfulness and reserve are considered old-fashioned. A girl of fourteen looks to have her boy friend. The safeguards of chaperon and adult supervision have almost disappeared. A mock modesty based on ignorance is condemned.

What influence has all this on the character of our growing children? Until the social consciousness becomes firmly established in these changes, and builds up a new code of laws and customs in accordance with this new spirit of freedom, there will necessarily be a lessening of restraint and greater familiarity between

the sexes than is prudent and wise. Liberty will be reduced to license.

**Questions.**—Should a girl go to a theatre, moving picture show, or concert, alone? Is it wise for her to go accompanied by a gentleman friend without a proper chaperon? Is the public dance a proper amusement for our boys and girls at the present high school age? Should schools allow dancing as part of their programme and closing exercises? Should boys and girls be allowed to meet on the streets at night and visit the parks and places of amusement together? Should a mother encourage her girls by a dress habit to enter the life of an adult prematurely? Should a mother allow her daughter to entertain gentlemen friends in the home in her early teens? At what age is it wise and reasonable for a girl to expect to entertain her gentlemen friends in the home?

4. Our present-day literature and drama have become so degenerate that it is difficult to find proper reading for our homes and public libraries. They have catered to the vulgar, obscene and immoral. Many boys and girls find their way into crime and immorality through the door of the dime novel, obscene literature, and the suggestive pictures and plays. The customary safeguards between the sexes, when seen violated on the stage and in the novel with no terrible consequences, are broken down with little thought and few scruples. Many young lives are poisoned and ruined by the virus of the suggestive novel and drama.

**Question.**—Would our young people be so hungry for such vulgar things if they had kept foremost a life of purity and virtue? Can a girl read such literature or see such plays without being less modest and more susceptible to the objectionable familiarity of her male friends? Does not our present freedom between the sexes feed the hunger for such literature?

#### THE REMEDY.

Where is the remedy for all this to be found? I think it is in the home. Before the child leaves home, his ideals and aims, the moral and social principle that will guide him, should be well established. With such a safeguard he may enter social life with safety. We are provided with a law within, which is quite sufficient, if only it is fully awakened and intelligently cultivated. Ignorance and superstition: only bury it but proper knowledge, precept and example awaken the divine law within, and protect the life from every attack. It is the indirect influences which unconsciously leaven the judgment and ideals of our young people. Direct commands and counsels are many times resented. Our aim should not be to force them to see as we see, but to awaken and guide their own ideals of life. The best safeguard is not to build a high fence of restriction, nor keep them in ignorance. Ignorance may be bliss, but knowledge is power, and intelligent self-control is the only road to victory. Let us find the real source of authority in the will of the child. Then let us guide it by high ideals and noble principles. To do this we must begin in early childhood to help the children form proper habits, and instill noble ideas, and train their choice and judgment so they will abhor the evil and cleave to the good in all things.

The best safeguard for personal and social purity is intelligent instruction on the sacredness of the human body—its growth and functions, the awakening of due respect for womanhood and the ideal of chivalrous protection of womanly virtue by our boys.

**Questions.**—Will the mutual love and respect between parents help to instill such a spirit in the children? Should

parents interfere in the class of books coming into the home? Will the giving of suffrage to mothers and sisters help to solve this problem? If boys are trained to respect womanhood in their mother and sisters, will they go astray afterwards?

Now we are purposing to leave the relation of the Church and these problems for your own consideration. To guide your meditation we give the following:—

**Questions.**—How can the Church co-operate with the home to provide proper social environment for our young people? Should the Church tackle the question of clean and wholesome amusement? If so, how? What part can the Sunday School, with all its departments, play in safeguarding our boys and girls? Is the Epworth League in any way responsible for a share in this question?

**Note.**—We hope those responsible for this subject will think out the problem for themselves. We do not expect you to agree with us in everything. Provoke discussion if you can. Clashing of opinions, in the proper spirit, sharpens our judgment for the problems of life. Pitch in and make this subject worth while.

### Personal Interviews of Jesus

#### XI. With Zaccheus a Publican

Luke 19: 1-10.

TOPIC FOR THE FIRST MEETING IN MARCH.

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**The Festive Band.**—Jesus for the last time had crossed the Jordan and was going up to Jerusalem, accompanied by his apostles and followers. At this season of the year many religious pilgrims were on their way to the Feast of the Passover. Picture in your mind the character of this festive band with Jesus at its head—their life, their conversation, their purpose, their destination.

**Jericho.**—Having crossed the Jordan they reached Jericho, a city of almost perpetual summer, lying low down below the level of the sea. Here were gardens of roses, groves of feathery palms, and sweet-scented balsam plantations, which perfumed the air for miles around—Edens of beauty in this fair land of the world. In the neighboring hills were to be found the lonely dwellings of the Anchorites and the hiding places of the robbers that waylaid the travellers (Luke 10:30). In the streets of the city might often be seen a motley crowd—pilgrims, traders and travellers; robbers, pickpockets and spies; citizens, soldiers, and courtiers; the wild fanatic, the idle dreamer, and the busy publican,—all with their diverse interests and their discordant notes.

**Jesus' Welcome.**—It was the custom in Palestine for the citizens of a place to welcome a pilgrim band when it was passing through, and we may be sure that no exception would be made with reference to this festive band of which Jesus was the head. The populace would be in a state of eager expectation, and ready to give him a right royal welcome, so that upon entering Jericho he was doubtless greeted by a motley crowd, pressing upon him to such an extent that women and children, and little people like Zaccheus, would find it impossible to get a glimpse of the Great Teacher.

**Zaccheus.**—Consider the work of a publican, how he was engaged in the service of a foreign nation, the enemy and oppressor of his own race, how he collected revenue from the Jews to fill the coffers of the Roman Government. What would likely be the character and the shrewdness of such a man? In what estimation would he be held by the members of his own race? What would likely be the character and the extent of his influence?