

THE HOME CIRCLE.

THE LORD'S DAY AT HOME.

We have no need, in considering Christian home-life, to argue the sacred obligations of the Lord's day. The object of this chapter is to show how this day may be, as good Philip Henry called it, "the queen of the days, the pearl of the week," to all the inmates of the house; how it may be identified with the early life of childhood as a happy day; how even children may be led to recognise

. . . . "The beauty of the Sabbath kept
With conscientious reverence, as a day
By the almighty Lawgiver pronounced
Holy and blest."

1. In order to this, the sacred obligations of the day must be faithfully maintained.

The great moral power of the Sabbath, and its great charm too, is in the fact of its Divine institution. No arrangement of convenience, no appropriation of a day to religious services by any legal enactment, could possibly stand in stead of this Divine ordinance. The recollection that God himself at the Creation blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; that he placed among the laws of unchanging moral obligation the command to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" the fact of the transfer of the day of rest and holy service to the first day of the week, a day signalized by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, all combine to give to the observance of this day an interest that no day of human appointment, whatever charm of "hoar antiquity" it might have, could possibly possess. It is identified with our warmest Christian sympathies, with our loftiest Christian hopes.

And it is a prime condition of Christian home-life, that the sacred character of the day should be fully and faithfully maintained. Laxity here will be sure to induce, if it does not indeed betray, laxness of religious principle altogether. The Lord's day must be to children, from the earliest period of consciousness, a day "holy of the Lord, honourable;" a sacred day, God's own day, to be regarded therefore, as distinct from all other days. Everything about the house, all the household and family arrangements, should show that it is held to be so by those who rule the house. Not only the cessation of ordinary worldly toil on that day, but the enforcement of wise restrictions upon the behaviour, the conversation, the general pursuits of the household, should accustom children to look upon it as set apart for holy purposes, a day which would be desecrated by the ordinary pursuits of this life.

This involves, with regard to children, the exercise of an amount of restraint on their conversation and behaviour, which to some may seem an unnecessary and even cruel limitation of their childish liberty. This restraint, however, will, if wisely enforced, be not a source of evil, but of good; and we shall show presently how, even by means of this restraint, the day may be made not only a holy, but a happy day for children.