

ON SABBATH SCHOOLS.

When the idea first entered the mind of the philanthropic Robert Raikes, that something might be done to check the reckless profanation of the Sabbath by the wild waywardness of the children of the city wherein he then dwelt, and reclaim them from the paths of ignorance and sin, and lead them in the paths of truth and holiness, he little dreamt of the stupendous results that would follow the trial of his plan of operations; and when hundreds of other benevolent hearts became animated by the same noble and God-like spirit, and marched forth to storm the strongholds of Satan in the hearts of the young in every corner of the land—notwithstanding all the lukewarmness of the Church on the one hand, and the stern opposition of an ungodly world upon the other, the cause became triumphant: and many who at first doubted the propriety of the movement, afterwards became its most strenuous defenders, and most efficient and successful labourers. The command given by Jehovah to the Jew of old is equally applicable to the Christian of the present day—"that he should diligently teach his children the Word of the Lord, should talk of it to them when he sat in his house, when he walked by the way, when he lay down and when he rose up;" and although there are many in our day who not only observe this command, but consider it as a privilege to do so, yet there are thousands of families in this and other Christian lands, where the name of God is never mentioned, unless it be in such a manner as is calculated to offend and insult the Majesty of Heaven. It is therefore not to be expected that the young of such families will be trained up in the fear of the Lord, but on the contrary will grow up equally if not more wicked than their fathers, destitute of that knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation, without God, and without hope in the world, and in imminent danger of everlasting destruction. Now, to endeavour to snatch these young ones from destruction, to show them the error of their ways, and to acquaint them with their lost estate by

nature, the necessity of an interest in the new and well-ordered covenant of grace, the love of a risen Redeemer, and to guide them in the paths of truth and holiness, is the simple yet grand object of Sabbath-schools; and although originally instituted for the purpose of instructing the children of the careless and profane, yet nevertheless they are likewise open to, and ought to be encouraged by, the presence of the children of godly, Christian parents. Sabbath-schools never were intended to set aside parental instruction at home; on the contrary, they are well calculated to supplement and assist the pious Christian parents in their endeavours to instruct their children in the things that concern their eternal peace, and in imparting to them a knowledge of the Scriptures of truth, which alone can make them wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The effect of Sabbath-school instruction on the general life and conduct of the children in the neighbourhood of any such school, is always evident in a greater or less degree from the salutary restraints it imposes on juvenile delinquency, which would frequently manifest itself in outrageous misconduct. Propriety of conduct is looked for and expected in every Sabbath scholar, whatever may be his or her natural disposition. But there are effects which often flow from Sabbath-school instruction of a more important and blessed nature. When the Holy Spirit applies the truth to the heart and conscience of the scholar, and who is then born again of incorruptible seed by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, *then* is the grand object of the Sabbath-school attained.

The Sabbath-school has very properly been designated "the nursery of the Church;" and well does it deserve the name. We can fancy to ourselves the little child, with shrinking timidity, led for the first time to take its seat in the lowest or initiatory class. With increasing curiosity it surveys its situation in the school, scans the face of its fellows in the class, but more particularly the face of the teacher, and at last ventures to repeat the few words of the required lesson. His confidence grows with his stature, as, Sabbath after Sabbath, he takes his accustomed place in the school,