

YOUTH'S DEPARTMENT.

We take the following very simple and touching lines from the Christian Messenger, where they are not credited, though we presume they are not original. We borrow them for our younger readers.

THE CHILD'S DREAM.

"Oh mother, mother! such a dream
As I have had to night,
Such fields, such flowers, and such a stream
Of pure and heavenly light!

"As I was sleeping on my bed,
A glorious angel came,
His eyes were stars, like gold his head,
He called me by my name.

"O mother, once I thought his face
Was like my father dear,
But then for tears I could not see
What was before so clear.

"He hung above me, o'er me bent,
As did my father too,
Ere to his lowly grave he went,
Under the churchyard yew

"And then what tender words he said,
And what a garland sweet,
He gently placed upon my head,
And raised me to my feet.

"Up, Mary Ann," he said, "arise,"
And far away we flew,
By clouds and stars, among the skies,
All silvery with dew.

"And up, and up, and up we soar'd,
And stars were everywhere;
And mild and murmuring music pour'd
Along the balmy air.

"And of the change I nothing know,
So sudden and so bright;
But, mother, there I stood below
A throne of burning light.

"Angels in thousands crowded round,
And bowed before its blaze,
And struck their harps of heavenly sound,
And sung sweet hymns of praise.

"One like the Son of Man, so mild,
Was sitting on that throne;
To me, my mother, when he smiled,
My blessed Lord was known.

"And then, methought, an angel fair,
Did beckon me away,
A little child was sitting there,
As lovely as the day.

"Mother, it was our little one,
For whom you wept so much;
To clasp it in my arms I ran,
But could not feel its touch.

"His cheeks were like the roses red
His hair like golden bright,
A wreath of flowers upon his head,
His garments shining white.

"He said 'What does my mother do,
So long away from me,
My father here, and sister too,
O where, O where is she?'

"I turn'd to seek my father nigh,
But he had flown away,
My brother too was gone, and I
Upon my pillow lay.

"The meaning of my dream, now tell,
Dear mother tell to me,
As thou hast ever loved me well,
As I have still loved thee."

"Alas, my child;" the mother cried,
"Thy dream I well do know,
I have but thee, and none beside,
And now thou too must go!"

And so it was—the little maid
Soon droop'd and died away;
And in her brother's grave was laid,
Near where her father lay.

Of where those precious relics sleep,
When summer evenings gleam,
The lonely mother comes to weep,
And think of that sweet dream.

To pray in faith she may abide,
Till God's good time shall come,
Then lay her down by their dear side,
In her good husband's tomb.

DEVOTIONAL.

PRIVATE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SABBATH.

The public worship of God, important and delightful as it is, ought not to occupy the whole of this sacred day, nor indeed, usually, the greater part of it. I shall, therefore, proceed to show how the remaining hours of the day should be spent. And here I would premise, that we ought to guard against the extremes of excessive laxness on the one hand, and excessive rigour on the other; remembering that we "are not under the law, but under grace." It is confessed, that we have no express precepts in Scripture to direct us how every hour of the Sabbath should be employed, nor do we need any. It is enough that we are there taught what is the great end of our being, what the happiness for which we are created, and what is necessary to fit us for the enjoyment of it, that we are instructed concerning the nature and perfections of God; the general duties we owe him; the necessity of maintaining intercourse with him, and the importance of a growing conformity to the image of his moral attributes. A due attention to these particulars will be sufficient to direct us to our duty, in matters about which we have no positive written rules, and among others in that now under consideration. If we keep in view the great ends of the Sabbath, as an institution designed for our religious improvement; to promote our advancement in divine knowledge, and in all the branches of virtue and goodness, as the means of fitting us for heaven, we shall easily perceive in what manner this day may be most profitably spent; and if we are truly disposed to improve it to the best purposes, we shall find business enough to employ the whole of it.

On these principles, it will appear that to waste any part of it in sloth and indolence is highly criminal, and indeed more inconsistent with the great design of it, than engaging in our honest secular callings. This reminds me of the great impropriety of indulging in sleep more on this day than on any other; a practice not uncommon even among the professors of religion. Many persons who rise early every other day in the week to pursue the labours of their respective callings, seem as if they thought the chief use of the Sabbath was to give rest to their bodies, by indulging them some hours longer than ordinary in bed; in consequence of which they are unable to get ready for the public worship of the morning, and thus are either detained from it, or not present till a part of it is over. No longer time can warrantably be allowed to sleep on this day, than is necessary to the comfortable discharge of the religious duties of it; in all of which it behoves us to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Besides the duties of the sanctuary, already considered, there are those of the closet and of the family, which equally call for our attention. As to the former: if the private exercises of devotion demand some part of every day, it seems reasonable that a larger proportion of our time should be devoted to them on the Lord's day, which usually affords more leisure for them. In the morning, solemn acts of prayer and meditation will be particularly useful to divest our minds of earthly cares, and prepare them for the public services of God's house. And in the evening the like exercises will be highly beneficial for fixing what we have heard in our memories, and strengthening the impression of them upon our hearts. Reading and studying the holy Scriptures also, with other books of divinity, will be a profitable employment of some considerable portion of our sacred time; which those persons more especially should be careful to improve for this purpose, who, in consequence of a multiplicity of business and connexions in the world, can on other days command but little leisure for it.

That family worship and instruction, are duties of

high importance, I shall not attempt to prove. It is not to be conceived that any one who possesses a principle of religion himself, can be indifferent to the spiritual welfare of others, especially of his domestics, and of the rising generation. Like faith Abraham, whom the Almighty so highly applauded, he will "command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." This pious care should more or less be exercised by Christian parents and masters every day. But the Lord's day affords peculiar opportunity for it. The several members of families may then generally be most easily convened. Time may in common be most easily secured, and the interruptions to which most families are on other days liable, may on this, with a little resolution, be most easily avoided. The subject of public discourse also may be of special use to furnish matter for inquiry, admonition and prayer.

Domestic employments of this nature, are of such great importance to the young, and may be attended to with such peculiar advantage on the evening of the Sabbath, that nothing should be tolerated in a Christian family that is inconsistent with them. For this reason the common practice of paying ceremonious visits on the Lord's day is to be discountenanced. Though it cannot be justly pronounced criminal, so far to show hospitality on this day as to entertain a friend, especially one from a distance, the less company we admit, and the less festivity we indulge, the better. And care should be taken that the social intercourse of friends and relations be not protracted to an unreasonable length, so as to infringe upon the religious order of the family. It may be proper to add, that such as have time to spare from their own personal and domestic concerns would employ it well in visiting Sunday Schools, and instructing the children of the poor, of whom there are great numbers who need, and are disposed to receive their aid. Such Sunday visits will turn to good account.—*Palmer's Apology.*

SACRAMENTS.

It is sinking the sacraments very low, says Burret to represent them as mere Rites and ceremonies. St. Peter says, 'Baptism saves us.' St. Paul calls it, the 'laver of regeneration;' to which he joins the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Our Saviour said, 'he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and except ye are born again of water, and of the spirit, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' These words have a sense and signification, that rises far above a mere ceremony done to keep up order, and to maintain a settled form. The phrase 'communion of the body and blood of Christ,' above the nature of an anniversary or memorial feast, this opinion we think is very unsuitable to those big expressions; and we do not doubt but that Christ, who instituted those sacraments, does still accompany them with a particular presence in them, and blessing upon them; so that we coming to them with minds well prepared, with pure affections and holy resolutions, do certainly receive in and with them particular largesses of the favour and bounty of God. They are not bare and naked remembrances and tokens; but are actuated and animated by Divine blessing that attends upon them.—*Gos. Ma.*

FASTING.

In the practice of fasting, the intelligent Christian will not rest in the outward act, but regard it only as a means to a good end. All must acknowledge that this restraint, even upon the innocent appetite of the body, is eminently beneficial in assisting the operations of the mind. It brings the animal part of our nature into greater subservience to the spiritual. It tends to prevent that heaviness and indolence of the faculties, as well as that perturbation of the passions, which often proceed from the indulgence and repletion of the body. It is thus highly useful in promoting that calmness of mind, and clearness of thought, which are so very favorable to meditation and devotion. The great end of the observance is to "afflict the soul," and to increase a genuine contrition of heart, and godly sorrow for sin. This being understood, abstinence will be approved of God, as made conducive to a growth in spiritual life.—*Dictionary of the Church.*