

Family Circle.

The Domestic Altar.

It is morning—sleep has invigorated their frames—the unknown day comes on apace, with all its cares and joys—be it a palace or a cottage—the thickly-tenanted city, or the lonely dwelling of the travelled emigrant. The household is gathered; God's book is read; the manly voice re-veals with authority the words of peace and life; the prattle of the tiny listener is hushed, solemnity clothes every brow. The hymn of praise breaks forth, not with the pealing organ and the strong chorus of the great congregation, but with the subdued harmony of the few. They bow the knee, and then pray, as parents only pray; the voice of love speaks before God the emotions of those hearts. Grateful acknowledgments are made, sorrows and wants made known, and each individual presented to the Universal Father for a suited blessing. Is there an afflicted one in that household? It is then the earnest importunity of the fervent soul seizes its advantage.—“And straightway the father of the child cries, and saith with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help, thou, my unbelief.’” Is there an absent one? He is then least of all forgotten; and whatever circumstances may attach to that absence, either of joy or sorrow, parental solicitude strengthens with the distance and pleads—“The angel which re-deemed me from all evil, bless the lad.” They rise; affection places its fond token on each loved face, and “man goeth forth unto his work” and to his labour until the evening.” The anxieties of life beset him, its trials and temptations crowd about his path, but ever through the scene he is restrained, pacified, and strengthened, by the hallowing influence of that Domestic Altar.

It is evening. Once more there is a concentration of thought and affection upon all that is Home. Shutting out the interruptions of the world, domestic love hails its returning triumph, and closes as it began the day; again they read and again they pray. The energy of their early devotions may be subdued, but a new element is supplied in the experience of a day. Arguments mount heavenward on the facts and feelings of their private, but to them eventful history. Humbly but confidently Divine protection is sought and felt; and, through the darkness of the night, they sleep as safely as they had escaped the dangers of the day. Such is the peaceful, happy, and profitable alternation of household worship. It has, besides all this, its times of darkness its periods of jubilee, and its eventful epochs; but through them all it stands the palladium of their faith, their testimony for God.

New claimants come upon the scene, and have their share in the ceaseless supplication. Years roll on; and one who, in helpless infancy and playful childhood, was always present at the daily sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, must now forsake them. Frequent and fervent are the supplications which anticipate, attend, and follow the departure.

Happy is it for him and his when the recollections of the prayers at home are an ever-present influence for good. Death at length tears away one and another from the united group, and as each pays the debt of nature, it is felt by those who mourn, to the last survivor, that no such joys can be again experienced till all stand before the throne of God, and, with the entire family there, worship, “to go no more out for ever.”

Such is religion at home. Its grandeur may be more evident in the solemn assembly of the Sabbath; its greatest heights of spiritual attainment may belong more especially to the closet; and its triumphs may be more effectually seen in the works of faith and labours of love which it manifests to the world; but its loveliness in the family is brought down to the capacities of all. It is a fallacy to confine the limits of piety within the walls of the church or chapel. If not nourished there, its vigour will speedily decline; but feeble indeed will be its development unless it give light to all that are in the house.

How often has it been found that while the instructions of the house of God have

been beyond the intelligence of a child, or even a domestic servant, the simple tones of family admonition, and the closer appeals of truth, presented in its fireside dress, have reached the hearts of both. Thus parental piety and undeviating example have brought entire households into the Church of Christ. And even if there were none of the inestimable advantages so tenderly mingled by infinite wisdom with this and all the other obligations of religion, how pressing is the duty to maintain a perpetual acknowledgment of the Divine goodness, and to enforce a constant dependence upon the Divine aid—“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” There are serious grounds for apprehension that in the present day many Christians neglect the consistent and faithful instruction of the family which was manifested by our forefathers. In too many instances the employments of life, which, rightly limited, are a privilege, have, in deference to all-prevailing example, and ceaseless competition, become perpetual drudgery. The victims of such a delusion lose the highest enjoyments of life, in providing for those which are the meanest. Others profess their willingness, but plead their inability—they cannot pray extempore, they do not like a form. Does conscience acquit them of doing all they can? Let such beware—disinclination is the root from which spring all our present difficulties; and it is the slothful man who sayeth, “There is a lion without.”

Reader! When these lines meet your eye, a new year will be opening upon you. No season can be more appropriate for the establishment of your family altar. Amidst all the purposes you form for the advancement of your interests, personal and relative, let this be foremost. Resolve, by the aid of God, with the Psalmist—“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hand as the evening sacrifice.” Then the unseen blessings which await you, coming in sweet communion with your prayers, will have new interest—will be doubly blessed; and the unknown trials that you meet will find you, morning and night, prepared, by confidence in God, to rob them of their sting. You will henceforth encourage your family, as Hēzekiah did his otherwise disheartened troops—“With us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles.” You will find that there is no comfort in prosperity, no solace in affliction, even in that which you call HOME, that can so much bless as THE DOMESTIC ALTAR.

Many of us are reminded, in reviewing the past, that our family devotions have been too often formal, cold, and unprofitable. Let us reflect how much the prosperity of our dwellings, and the interests of personal religion, depend upon the frame of mind in which we conduct these seasons of supplication. Frequency of prayer is of no avail without fervency. And where is the family in whose circumstances there are not ever open springs of sorrow and floods of mercy calling for earnestness at the throne of grace? Let us learn the gradations of true religion. Let us seek enlightened and enlarged communion with God in secret prayer, and then parents, children, servants, churches, cities, will share the blessings which are sought and found at THE DOMESTIC ALTAR.—*The Pathway.*

An Eastern Story.

A man was travelling in Syria, leading his camel by the bridle. Suddenly the animal is seized with a panic of fear; he raises himself with impetuosity, foams and bounds in a manner so horrible, that his master abandons him in anguish, and tries to save himself. He perceives at a distance in the road a deep stream, and as he still heard the frightful neighings of the camel, he sought a refuge there, and fell over a precipice. But a shrub held him up. He clung to it with both hands, and cast on every side his anxious eyes. Above him is the terrible camel, of which he does not lose sight for a moment; in the abyss below is a dragon, who opens his monstrous

jaws, and seems waiting to devour him. At the side of him he sees two mice, the one white, and the other black, who gnaw in turns at the root of the shrub which serves him for a support.

The unfortunate man remains there, frozen with terror, and seeing no retreat, no means of safety. Suddenly, on a little branch of a shrub he discovers some fruit. At that moment he ceases to observe the rage of the camel, the jaws of the dragon, and the frightful activity of the mice. He reaches out his hand toward the fruit; he gathers it; and in the sweet taste forgets his fears and his dangers.

Do you ask, who is this madman, who can forget so quickly a mortal peril? That man is thyself. The dragon of the stream is the ever open abyss of death; the camel represents the sorrows of life; the two mice who are gnawing at the root of the shrub are day and night; and in this situation the fruit of pleasure attracts you. You forget the anxieties of life, the threatenings of death, the rapid succession of day and night, to seek the plant of voluptuousness on the borders of the tomb.

What have you lost to-day?

“How is your head, dear?” asked Mrs. Light, as she entered her husband's sick-room, followed by half a dozen little ones. “Better, thank you,” replied the good man; “I hope you have all enjoyed the service of God's house to-day,” he added, looking around upon the group. “Oh, no indeed, I have not,” replied the wife, curling her lip. “I assure you, you have not lost much by being at home, for our minister was very dull.” “Very dull,” rejoined Henry. “VERY DULL,” echoed little Susan. “Ah, my dear,” said the husband sorrowfully, “I have lost something, I know, to-day; I have lost the assembling with God's people for prayer and praise; and I have lost, at least, some good I might have derived from the sermon; but I have been the Lord's prisoner, and He has not left me without comfort.”

In the evening Mrs. Light returned to her home in a great bustle, calling aloud, “Where is Charles? he has not been out this evening.” Nobody could answer, and Charles was not to be found. After supper Master Charles walked into the parlour, and took a candle from the sideboard to retire. “Stop, Charles,” said his mother, “tell were you have been, and why you were not worshipping with us this evening?” “Oh, I thought it was of no use going with you, mother!” “No use, child! What do you mean?” “Well, mother, I heard you say in the morning it was no loss to my father being absent, so I thought I might as well go for a walk.” The mother was dumb; but the very sermon she had thought so little of was the means of converting the grandmother of the family. Mothers! would you have your children love God's house, and God's day, and God's ministers? Then speak well of them before your household; be all you wish them to be, and teach them that for every sermon they hear they will have to give an account, in the day of judgement!

For Farmers.

WORK FOR THE SEASON.

AUGUST.—Before the close of this month, the scythe, the sickle and the cradle will have passed over many fields and shorn them of their crops. Much of the grandeur and beauty that have adorned nature the previous months will be gone. During a part of August, the farmer has some little respite from his hard labour, yet there is much to do in securing the matured crops, taking care of those that are growing, and doing many things in preparation for the future, which cannot generally be so well done in any other season.

Haying is not yet completed in many parts of New England, and the sooner it is done the better, as grass dries up very fast, after it is fit for the scythe, and it soon loses much of its good qualities. When hay has many bushes, brakes and other weeds among it, put about a half peck of salt to each ton,

and the cattle will eat up the coarse part much better.

Cutting Grain.—The greater part of the wheat harvest comes off in New England during this month. It should be cut soon after the berry begins to harden, as the straw is then drying up, and can afford no more nutriment to the grain. By cutting it rather early, there is often a chance to save it from a long storm, or a long time of dull weather, which is often very destructive.

Weeds.—These require considerable attention, and yet they have generally been neglected during the haying season, and if not destroyed immediately, they will seed the ground plentifully. Those that are maturing their seeds should be burned, or put into compost and the seed allowed to vegetate before the manure is applied to the land.

Bushes.—Cut bushes about the middle of this month, and they will sprout but little—less than if cut at any other season. On many farms in New England bushes are numerous, and occupy no small part of field and pasture. Their extermination would render the farm more beautiful, more pleasant to work, and greatly increase its profits.

Pruning Trees.—August is one of the best, if not the best month for this operation. The bark does not readily start from the wood; and as the tree is in foliage, the operator can see to thin the limbs judiciously. But the great advantage in pruning at this time, is that where the limb is cut off, the trunks remain sound whether it heals over soon or not.

Digging Wells.—In August or early in September, when there is a great loss in attending to this business when water is plenty, and the well is not sunk deep enough, and must be made deeper in a dry time at great expense.

Wet Lands, properly improved, are our most profitable grass lands, and though much has been done, in some sections to reclaim these valuable lands, in other parts they are almost wholly neglected, while the grass crops are failing on high lands. This is a good season for clearing up, ditching, ploughing, hauling on sand or gravel, manuring and sowing wet land to grass, and if well done, a good crop of grass will pay no small share of the expense another year.

Weaning Lambs. In this month, or early in September, according to their age, lambs should be weaned, while the feed is sweet and succulent. They bear weaning better at this season, than late in the fall when the feed is dry, hard and in nutritious, and the sheep are far better for early weaning, as they have a chance to get in good condition before winter. See that the lambs have plenty of good sweet feed on being separated from their mothers.

Winter Wheat.—Prepare for sowing winter wheat, which should be sowed in this month, or early in next. Large quantities of this grain are now raised in Maine, and generally with profit. The Blue Stem is a variety that succeeds well there.

Manure.—Mud, muck and peat must be carted from the low lands, and put in the barn yard, and also laid in a proper place for making compost, and a supply must be provided for the barn cellar in winter, and for bedding for cattle where there is no cellar, that the liquid manure may be saved.

Stone Wall, when the material is convenient, is the best and cheapest fence the farmers can make. Animals seldom attempt to go over it, or throw it down; and if it falls down a little in the course of the year, the materials are always at hand for repairing it. But do not cut the farm up into too small lots, as they are more difficult to till and to mow than open fields; besides the great waste of land for many interior fences. We have known farms of moderate sizes on which the waste of land for unnecessary fences, and the strips on each side not convenient to till, was sufficient to produce \$100 worth of fruit annually, if set in trees.—*New England Farmer.*

To PRESERVE FLOWERS.—Nitrate of soda, as much as can be held between the finger and thumb, placed in the water in which flowers are to be preserved, will keep them fresh and blooming for a fortnight.