

Our Contributors.

Home Influence.

Its Power and Influence in Character Building.

BY REV. J. S. LOCHHEAD, M. A.

(A paper read at North Gower at the Carleton Sabbath School Teachers' Convention.)

This is the subject which has been assigned to me on this occasion and I may say that no more important subject can engage or occupy the attention, or occupy the thoughts of parents and Sabbath school workers. The family was the earliest form of Society, and lies at the foundation of all, and enters more deeply into the order, the purity, and the happiness of our world than any other. It does more to cement civil society, to create the tenderest relations, to soften the heart, to refine, polish, and harmonize the children of men, than all the laws which human wisdom can found. In speaking of home influence, it is difficult to know where to begin, or where to end. Its points of contact with the welfare of society are so numerous, and its influence on the best interests of society, civil, and religious so deep and vital, that we can scarcely make an overestimate of its value. Communities are made up of families. As the whole is equal to all its parts, in the science of numbers and quantity; so it is equally plain that, in the department of morals, the whole body will ever be found to bear the character which is generally borne by its component parts. Of course, irreligious and disorderly families; families in which discord, strife, and hatred reign, will generally be found nurseries for training up the ignorant, the profane, the reckless and the profligate.

Religion purifies and sweetens all the tender and endearing relations of the members of the home. It adds a silken cord to the bonds of sympathy and love. It diffuses a softening, hallowed influence among all its members, and makes the good parent, the obedient child, the affectionate brother and sister, the amiable companion, a better parent, a more obedient, loving child, a more affectionate brother or sister, and a more amiable companion. Religion produces such a union of feeling and sentiment that a discordant note seldom mars the harmony of their lives. If one suffers, all others suffer alike with him; and if one rejoices, all are made happy.

Religion erects, too, in the pious household, an altar, around which all the members daily assemble with united and joyful hearts. The priest of the household now opens the sacred volume. The world for a little while is dismissed; every passion is hushed, every bosom quieted, every mind awake, and every thought is fixed. The words of the eternal life fall as if from the lips of the Almighty. The song of praise now unites every voice in sweet melody; then all bow in solemn prayer, and offer incense as a pure offering to their Maker. Here around this altar, their union and love are most perfect and endearing.

If there is here below an emblem of the household of the blessed, it surely is the united, affectionate Christian family. What power there is in that religion which can make such a scene in such a sin blighted world as this!

Home influence is indeed the most powerful that we have any knowledge of.

Several years ago facts were gathered in regard to the influence of Christian homes very encouraging to pious parents, and not less suggestive and admonitory to irreligious parents. These facts were as follows:—In one neighborhood there were in all 98 families. Of these families, both parents in 27 were hopefully pious; and of their 123 children over 15 years of age, 84 or about 73 were hopefully pious. Four of these children was ministers, 5 other church officers and but one of the 41 unconverted children were dissipated. But his father, though a professor of religion, was in the daily habit of using intoxicating drink.

In 19 out of these families only one parent in each was professedly pious, and not one of these became so while living at home, 25 of the unconverted children were dissipated.

There were two families in that neighborhood in which there were 10 children each. The outward circumstances of the families were much the same. They both attended the same church on the Sabbath. The parents in one family, while they were moral, kind to the poor, and good neighbors were not professedly Christian, and not one of their children has ever become personally interested in the subject of religion. The parents of the other family were members of the church. The domestic altar was established when the family was instituted and it was ever maintained; and all the ten children became members of the church, nearly every one while under age. Three of the sons entered the ministry, and two others studied with the ministry in view but in the providence of God did not enter the sacred profession. Two of the daughters became the wives of clergymen.

In a certain town some years ago, there were three brothers who resided near each other, all with large families; in two of them there were ten children, and in one eleven. The parents of two of these families, including the one of 11 children, were members of the church of Christ and maintained family worship; and they had the satisfaction of seeing all their children walking in truth, and honoring a Christian profession. The parents in the other family were not professedly pious. They were moral and upright in their dealings with men, observing conscientiously the last 6 of the 10 commandments, but their hearts were not right towards God. They were kind and affectionate towards their children, but they did not by example and instruction bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and not one of their ten children gave evidence of having become a child of God, and three of them became wayward and intemperate. How can we account for facts like these without acknowledging the power of the Home influence to mould the character?

The character of the future generation depends upon the character of the home influence. It is while the children are at home, and in the early years of childhood and youth that those principles are imbibed which form the character. A well known Jesuit used to say, "Give me the boy or girl until he is 7 years of age, that I may teach him the truth, and impress upon him the nature and importance of religion, and I care not who henceforth has the care of him." So confident was he that the lessons imparted and the impressions received in youth would never cease to influence the life. Who can doubt

that one great reason why so many of the children of professing parents stand aloof from the church and are finally found among its opposers is that they saw so little in the home which was adapted to religion in their estimation.

Here then is a consideration which addresses itself to every one who desires the welfare of our land—O ye who are called to preside over families. Behold the top stone of the fabric of your obligation. If your households are the abode of piety, order, harmony and love, besides promoting your own personal and social comfort; besides promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of your children; you are recommending religion to those around you, and building up the Church of God. You are letting a light shine before men, which cannot fail of warning and animating the as far as its influence extends, and of leading others to glorify your Father in Heaven.

The Sermon in The Child.

BY REV. R. C. GILLIE, M. A.

God has many preachers who never occupy a pulpit. Spring and Autumn, Birth and Death, Sorrow and Joy, Poet and Historian are all His messengers. Among this great throng unordained by the hand of man there is none more effective more irresistible than the child. The boy or girl who preaches with intention is a monstrosity, but the preaching to which I refer is unconscious, done not by word, but by look and smile and mere presence. It is reflex influence. Each child is really a casket of sermons, an armoury of appeals, a perfect though unconscious master in the art of rebuke. When the most indignant moralist cannot convince us of our sin, some infant immortal, given to play and sunshine and sleep, unreasoning and almost unthinking, will move us profoundly and make us conscious of our fall and our offence.

It was Jesus who discovered the sermon in the child. Saints and teachers of the Old Testament had spoken of children, and to them, but had never discovered what was in them. The author of the eighth Psalm uttered an unusual and very daring thought when he said, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise," but the mine thus opened was never worked until our Saviour came. He, on the other hand, is never able to exhaust this subject. Again and again, in one fashion or another, He makes some trait of childhood His text or a test of character or His defence. He has forever set the child in the midst to be not only the loadstone of our hearts, but also a ministrant to our souls.

Poets, the far seeing and deep, have recognized something of this. To quote the simpler ones only, Moore in "The Peri at the Gate of Paradise," a poem of silver filagree work but not without moral judgement, describes how one hardened in evil weeps tears of penitence as he beholds a little child turn from his play to prayer in the evening hour. Longfellow, too, in well known words finds rest and meaning in life through the society of children.

Come to me, oh ye children,
For I hear you at your play,
And the questions that perplexed me
Have vanished quite away.
Come to me, oh ye children,
And whisper in my ear,
What the birds and the winds are singing