

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

A PRIEST OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

BY THE REV. R. C. MOFFAT, WALKERTON.

Wanted, immediately, a Christian priest for every Presbyterian family.

We enter some household where family worship should reverently close the day, and we stand awed and humbled. The family altar is in ruins, the altar fires are all dark, no father kneels by the old arm-chair, no household group get first sweet glimpses of the crucified. The children are on the streets or worse, and as one by one they reach the home in which they eat and sleep, exhausted or disgusted by the world's follies, a family altar, a few sweet moments with a yearning Saviour, are moral impossibilities.

But now let us look at

A PATRIARCH'S FAMILY IN THE FAR EAST.

There are ten in Job's family circle to start in the journey of life. Shall they go out untaught, untrained, to be wrecked by the first subtle temptation, or shall they go out taking the hand of their father's God, more than conquerors all through life. There may be the aristocracy of wealth, but where there is also the aristocracy of godly culture, then are the loved ones fit either for tent or city.

It is one thing to be hungry to see life, fast, flippant, and godless; it is another thing to live life manly, nobly, and godlike. It is one thing to see the ill-fated "Waubuno" tossed amid rocks and stones, leaving no one to tell the story of that awful hour, but it would be another to see her firmly held by anchor sure and steadfast. So the sons one by one push out into life for themselves, and there is always room either east or west for the right men. And now the great question comes, shall it be as drudges, toiling sordidly for pelf and wealth, or shall it be patriarchal life of the noblest type—wherever a tent, there an altar. The "Cottar's Saturday Night," may either be a theme for godless mockery, or an abiding inspiration for an intensely practical life. Away then with all whining about the indifference of the young to religion, and let every Christian father be a warm-hearted Christian priest, and God assuredly will make good the covenant blessing.

Let us also glance at a

PATRIARCH'S GREATEST FEAR.

With some fathers the great fear is that their sons may not be able to reach wealth and position, with others that they may bring disgrace upon the family name. But with Job it was this fear, unhappily so rare, "It may be that my sons have cursed God in their hearts." We have not the slightest hint that they ever did curse God, in heart or speech. Yet if the old may too often forget God, so may the young, and should the heart be left unfilled and unguarded, then from life and lip there will be surely seen a viperous procession. Should the son forget his God well may a father fear, and such a terrible danger confronts every father with this question, What plans do you take to keep your children near to God. The father who continuously leaves his own altar fires black out is surely preparing for his own sons not a benediction but a malediction.

Let us further notice a

PATRIARCH'S MOST IMPORTANT BUSINESS.

We have everywhere professing Christian fathers who are busy about everything but the salvation of their own children. Fathers, your noblest work on earth is to bring your children to Jesus Christ. Let no one rob you of the eternal honour, and should you have been neglectful in the past, then listen even to a worldly poet, "Tis time to live if I grow old." Job's first business was to care for his children's souls, for their souls' prosperity, for if not that, then soul declension and soul ruin. "A burnt offering for each," not only a father's God, but a personal Saviour for every child.

Thrice happy is every son when he can honestly say, "Yea, mine own God is He." And mark well how prompt these sacrifices, "early in the morning," no waiting, the motto is, short accounts with God. An Eli may feebly remonstrate with his godless sons—Ah, it is too late, too late, the battle of "Mansoul" is lost, and Ichabod is a flaming beacon forever.

It would be a strange notice to post on the door of every Presbyterian church, "Wanted, a Christian priest, a church in every house; wages sure; the paymaster Jesus Christ." For in many a family we see fatal barriers in the way of sons coming to a living

Saviour. In one it is a father's indifference, in another it is a father's godless example, in another it is a father's incessant fault-finding with the minister or the church. The assertion is often recklessly made that Job was not yet a Christian, but even if he were not, he sets before every true Christian, the great truth that the father's most important business, in this world, is that his sons may be the true and pure sons of God Almighty.

Let us again mark well a

PATRIARCH'S LIFE-LONG RELIGION.

We have heard of a man who had married a godless bride giving up family religion lest it should offend her. The moment she knew it she quietly remarked that she thought she had married a Christian, but that the only Christian she could love and respect was one faithful and true to his God. Need I add, that night two souls side by side worshipped God. Oh weary mother, to-night, give the family Bible into the hand of him who swore to love and cherish you, and plead with him for your children's sake, for your sake, for Christ's sake, to be a man, a high priest for life before God's altar. Did Job's religion soon pass away? No! There may be utter poverty, terrific bereavement, passionate prayer to curse His God, but the anchor held. With Job eternal life had only one meaning, eternal life and nothing else. And wherever you have such a religion consecrating the dear old family altar, then you have one of God's mightiest powers to hold the scattered ones. A gray-haired father walking with God, a saintly mother in that old arm-chair, are sights never to be forgotten. These sons may go out into the world, but the prayers of such a father wrestling with a covenant-keeping God can reach their heart, either in the land of Uz or on the far Saskatchewan.

And many a sacred memory comes back of the lowly family altar, the dear old church, the much-loved minister of our childhood, and the seed long buried springs up into vigorous life, useful and eternal. The special want of this busy age is a religion which, starting from the family altar, will stand the wear and tear of the longest life, ever growing in every Christian grace. For years the family may be unbroken, but soon death enters, all the ten are gone, swept by one strange blow. Would Job then in that dark hour regret these sacrifices, these prayers, these years of godly example? Regret them! no, the very thought were madness.

Fathers, would you hold high office in God's sight, be God's high priests in your own families? We have religious life in many a public form, but never forget the dear home vineyard; it is your sacred trust, see to it that it is well kept. If living piety fills the home there is no fear of the Church; if the altar fires are all aglow there is no fear of the family; if the blood of sprinkling is on every conscience, then there is no fear of the outgoings of every son's life. I urge upon you in the strongest language your personal accountability to God and to your family. Would it not be overwhelming shame if, before God and the world, one after another of your sons were to rise up and say, "I never heard my father plead with God; I never heard my father read one chapter; I never heard God's worship spoken of by my father with joy or gladness; I never heard my father speak of true religion with any other spirit than a sneer; and I rarely ever knew my father to speak of our minister and his life-work otherwise than with the coldest criticism." With such grave evidence possible from any child's lip, at once, through Him mighty to save, confess your madness, get grace from on high for your great priestly work, and then in the midst of that wondering family group you can face the world and say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

And if that life is truly in earnest, then, in some coming year, that dying father may get his last glimpse of his grand life-work, family religion ripening for family salvation. It was once asked, "Is the sermon done already?" "It is finished; but it is not done yet," was the thoughtful answer. Then let this be the glorious beginning to you, oh father, "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." And then will be seen in the far west, as in the far east, another priest of the old school, surrounded by godly sons, all heirs of the new life, the "King's Own" for work and worship evermore.

If Christ wholly sets Himself apart for believers, how reasonable is it that believers should consecrate and set themselves apart wholly for Christ.—*Flavel*.

PLAN OF STUDY FOR SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHERS.

MR. EDITOR,—I wish to address to your readers a few considerations explanatory and in support of the plan put before the Church for promoting Bible study among our people, especially our Sabbath school teachers.

The plan is simple and thoroughly practical, it is an experiment only as it applies to our Church. Three things are all that is needful to find in it a great benefit.

1. Thoughtfulness on the prescribed subjects.
2. Patient effort in their weekly and daily study.
3. Concerted and prompt action on the plan of a time table to be furnished to applicants.

There is no doubt that those in real contact with Sabbath school work and who are alive to its importance as a department of church duty, feel that *its strongest and its weakest point* is the teachers who are called to do the work.

It is no disparagement of our public ministrations to say, that the methods of presenting truth, the aims that must control the preacher, and the results he labours to secure, are diverse from those that are adapted to equip and qualify the Sabbath school teacher for his work; while the truth is the same, the successful and wise handling of it to the soul, by the preacher and the teacher are diverse; and because the pulpit ministration of the truth is mainly what the teacher has to depend on, our teaching work is not what it ought to be, not what under other circumstances and methods it might be; and if we are to do the best that is possible in our day and generation, we must adapt ourselves to the work to be done. The Assembly's Sabbath School Committee have felt that to do something in the direction of the plan submitted was desirable, and to do the best that was possible, was necessary.

Practical educationists say there is nothing unworkable in the scheme unless from the difficulties that arise from the *vis inertia* of the Body. The Committee earnestly ask the Church to make a commencement. The scheme in its essential points has been wrought out by the Christian Evidence Society of England, also by the Young People's Improvement Committee of the Free Church of Scotland—indeed it is but an adaptation of our system of public education as applied to S.S. teachers. Permit me to state a few reasons why the Church should give the plan submitted a prayerful and honest trial.

1. It utilizes secular education for moral and spiritual work. Methods of drill, methods of defined presentation of facts and principles, methods of testing attainments and knowledge by question and answer and by written examination, are essentials to mental growth and moral power, and the Church in her duty to train workmen that need not be ashamed, can just here become vitally and hopefully united with the school training, and the business training, and the home training, of our youth and through them augment the influence and efficiency of our Sabbath school work.

2. It is in the direction of meeting a felt want in the best of our 9,000 Sabbath school teachers and another 9,000 senior scholars. It is from this latter class that we must expect our future teachers and church workers, in elders and deacons. That this is a felt want, and that the Church in her corporate capacity has not met it, is manifest from the eagerness with which associations and societies promising help are sought after; these institutions have done the important work of deepening the sense of need, and calling attention to the adaptation of means to meet that felt want. This scheme, if taken hold of by the Church, would in an appreciable degree act directly and indirectly upon 18,000 of our people, as a magnet drawn through the sand that is rich in ore, year by year it would attract to itself the precious, the susceptible, the hopeful and the waiting.

3. The adoption of this plan of study would inspire the whole Presbyterian body of the Dominion with an *esprit de corps*, that is desirable, that is laudable, hopeful and healthy in its influence.

4. The scheme is adapted to the condition of any congregation and to the circumstances of any pastor. It sets no limit to age or sex, it does not make a written examination compulsory, it invites all to enter upon the work, they are to be reported as in the work, and it holds out inducements to proceed to the final examination in his, or her, own Presbytery, or even