

## The Withered Bough.

BY R. WALTER WRIGHT, B.D.

Majestic maple ! Of the landscape queen !  
What quiet strength, what comely  
sweep of arm,

What symmetry in cumulative form,  
Of foliage magnificent, what mien  
And grace imperial domes thy living  
green !

With dauntless voice thou dost defy  
the storm,

From thy deep silence suns the zephyrs  
charm

Angelic whispers. On such tree I've seen  
One withered bough, a parasitic cage  
Unclean, which marred the beauty of  
the whole.

So have I marked upon Time's land-  
scape bright,

A mind and heart of wondrous dowerage,  
Which one great fault defiled, and  
every soul

Forgot the beauty gazing on the blight.  
Delhi, Ont.

## The Home Class Department.

BY J. J. MACLAREN, Q.C., L.L.D.

The Home Class Department is the latest addition to Sunday-school work, and one of the most promising aids to systematic Bible study. For its inception and development we are indebted, chiefly, to Dr. Duncan, the well known secretary of the Chautauqua Assembly. It is now over seventeen years since he first endeavoured to carry out the idea; but the chief progress has been made within the last seven years. It is not a new organization, but rather an extension of the Sunday-school.

Recognizing the fact that there are many people who either will not or cannot attend the Sunday-school, the design is to induce them to undertake to study the regular Sunday-school lesson at home, for at least half an hour each week. They are waited upon at regular intervals, usually quarterly, by visitors who collect the record cards filled up with the time devoted to the lesson each week, and leave with them the lesson helps and blank record cards for the ensuing period.

All those under the same visitor are considered a class, and the aggregate of the classes makes up the Home Department of the school. The reports are all handed in to an officer of the school and they are all recognized as members.

As may be imagined, the success of the scheme depends almost entirely upon the faithfulness and efficiency of the visitors. It has now been sufficiently tried to establish satisfactorily the fact that it is admirably adapted to widely different communities, from the prosperous city church to the sparsely settled rural neighbourhood. It would be difficult to find a church or locality where there is not at least sufficient material for such a work. Those who are not able to attend the Sunday-school on account of distance, or home-duties, or want of health; or persons who are frequently absent, such as commercial travellers, railway employees, and the like, have in many cases been induced in this way to take up the systematic study of the Word of God under the International Lesson system. If parents or other adult members of families where the children attend the Sunday-school join the Home Class Department, and especially if at family worship the daily readings of the International Bible Reading Association are adopted, the additional interest created is very marked.

It has been thought by many that one of its effects would be to furnish an excuse for some giving up the Sunday-school on the plausible ground that they can now study the lesson at home. Experience, however, has shown that this is a fallacy. A few illustrations may be given. In a city Sunday-school, numbering eight hundred members, with a Home Department of two hundred and seventy-five, no less than one hundred and thirty-one students were transferred in nineteen months from the Home Department to the main school. They had become so much interested in the study of the Word of God, and so influenced by the continual invitation of the visitors that they were induced to make this change.

At the Provincial Sunday-school Convention, held in Toronto, the subject was presented in a very convincing way by the Rev. G. B. F. Hallock, of Rochester, N.Y., who spoke from an experience of two years. One of those who listened to him was a pastor from a small western town, who resolved to give it a trial. In two years he was able to report that he had over two hundred members enrolled, chiefly in the country districts

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