

would the state of things be improved by the abolition of the Sabbath school, for if it is a failure then it belongs to that order of things that is waxing old and ready to vanish away?

It may be conceded that there is too much ignorance of scriptural truth among many who have attended Sabbath school, and it is desirable that this defect be remedied. In return it might be asked, Are all who attend church wise scribes, instructed in the things of the kingdom? Ignorance of doctrinal truth is not the exclusive possession of certain Sabbath scholars. That, however, is no justification of inadequate Sabbath school teaching and study. Who are most sensitively alive to the need of more systematic and effective teaching of divine truth in the Sabbath school, if it be not the most intelligent superintendents and teachers of our Sabbath schools? The means of making these schools more efficient have of late years been almost indefinitely multiplied, and all progressive teachers have increasingly felt the need of more thorough preparation and training for their important work. The time when Sabbath school teaching can be taken up as a kind of religious pastime has gone past, and it can no longer be considered as an act of condescension for the best educated members of a congregation to take part in a work itself so delightful and on which results of the greatest importance depend. No better evidence of the progressive and adaptive character of Sabbath school work is needed than that various Churches, our own among the rest, have established well-considered methods for the higher Christian instruction of youth. These schemes are yet too recent in origin to enable one to estimate their results, but much may reasonably be expected from them. Another corrective influence will doubtless be found in the young people's organizations now forming a part of almost all congregational life. Hitherto too little interest has been taken in the scholars who in their own estimation have outgrown the Sabbath school. True, for nearly half a century conventions have discussed the question, How best to secure the older scholars? but the right answer has not seemingly been found. Now that Churches are awaking to the importance of securing the interest and co-operation of the young in active Christian work, a practical answer may be found, and in time the Sabbath school may prove more than ever the nursery of the Church.

The practical good accomplished by the Sabbath school is simply incalculable. Is the work of many thousand Sabbath school teachers in vain? Will even the most unsympathetic critic venture the assertion that all the consecrated and self-denying effort of these unostentatious workers is barren and unblest? No! the Sabbath school is not a failure. Thousands in this lower world, and thousands in the world beyond have reason to bless God that their steps were directed to the Sabbath school. It has been a centre of light in many a dark place. The work done by it no adverse criticism can belittle or efface. By all means let the light in upon its methods and working, improve these to the utmost, but if that be the purpose of the critics, the word failure in connection with the Sabbath school is one wholly inapplicable.

THE FAMILY IN MODERN CIVILIZATION.

THE series of Present Day Papers now appearing in the *Century* are devoted to the consideration of questions of vital importance. In the current number the second contribution to this valuable series is by Samuel W. Dyke, and though somewhat academic in tone is thoughtful and suggestive. It deals with Problems of the Family. The family, a divinely appointed institution, and one that forms the starting point of all civilization, is at present apt to be too much overlooked. Modern influences are not so conducive to the stability and well-being of the family as they should be. Both of the characteristic tendencies of the time seem rather injurious than beneficial to home life; individualism on the one side tends to lessen the sense of responsibility, and on the other co-operative effort in all industrial and philanthropic enterprise throws the claims of family life into the background.

It cannot be said that people are in these days indifferent to family life. In the struggle for existence, the desire to secure shelter and comfort for those dependent on them animates most men in whatever sphere of effort their daily toils may lie. The humblest labourer, the skilled artisan, the professional man, and those who aspire to the highest positions in the state, are anxious to make the most of their domestic life. Whether it may be to secure a humble home or to make a place in the highest ranks of social existence men strive with unceasing

energy to better their position. In the very struggle, however, there may be the sacrifice of much that is essential to the well-being of the family. This very individualism that makes self the centre round which activity and feeling revolve goes far to lessen interest in those that are even nearest and dearest, and too often gives a death-blow to some of the virtues that have hitherto ennobled and sanctified homelife. Industrial and commercial combinations are either absorbing or extinguishing individual enterprise and whatever economic changes and benefits they may ultimately produce, their immediate influence on family life is not an unqualified blessing. The marvellous inventions, and the no less marvellous adaptations of scientific discovery to industrial life, much as they have advanced civilization, have done little to mitigate the curse of labour to the toiling millions. It is not altogether reassuring to know that in the great industrial centres of the world thrifty and temperate citizens have to live under conditions that are in some respects harder than modern humane methods mete out to criminals in our gaols. The usual off-hand explanation of this is that if men were sober and industrious they would soon rise above such conditions, but this does not explain the fact that it is yearly becoming more difficult for increasing numbers of operatives to obtain such accommodation as can fairly be dignified by the name of home. Home not merely in sentiment but in reality is rendered impossible when several families are crowded into one or two apartments. Neither can many of the pleasures of home life be enjoyed, nor its better influences felt, when not only father and elder brothers have to devote themselves to incessant toil, but mothers and young children have perforce to become wage-earners, with little hope that anything beyond the bare necessities of existence can thereby be secured. Modern civilization doubtless is leading the way to grander and better things, but society as a whole may have to say as the Roman officer said to Paul, With a great sum obtained I this freedom.

The writer of the paper referred to draws attention to the fact that recent legislation has done but little for the family, and that in one particular such legislation is becoming increasingly urgent. The marriage relation, lying at the basis of the family, is being relaxed with a growing frequency that bodes ill for the family and the nation. It surely cannot be a matter of indifference, far less of complacency, to any one who longs for moral advancement to learn that in the United States alone no fewer than 328,716 divorces were granted within the last twenty years. The laxity which such a state of things implies is not only hurtful to family life, it is perilous to the nation. The more thoughtful of our neighbours across the boundary realizing the dangers and apprehensive of disaster, are pleading for reform of divorce laws and making them uniform throughout the nation, so that it may be no longer possible for husbands or wives to obtain the severance of the most sacred bonds by fraud or connivance or even, as is sometimes the case, without the knowledge of each other. Occasionally Canadian newspapers plead for greater facility in procuring divorce in this country, but with the experience of the adjoining country before us, surely it is better to let matters remain as they are rather than encourage a laxity that could only be productive of moral and social degradation.

Without reflecting on modern Church activities such as Sabbath schools and the various organizations for young people and missionary endeavour, the writer shows what many are ready to admit, that all these activities are conducted more or less at the expense of the family life. He does not suggest the lessening of these activities, nor would any who in a degree realize the urgent need of them all to undertake the work that presses for performance. He thinks, however, that as there are many people in sparsely populated districts as well as in densely crowded cities, who are, from circumstances, outside the influence of Christian effort, much good might be done by directing attention to the family itself as an integral factor in the work of evangelization. His remarks in his connection are worth thinking about:

In the judgment of the sociologist, that cannot be a healthful or permanent adjustment of the forces of the Church which does not distribute them proportionately among the three great forms of social institutions represented by the family, the congregation, and the larger bodies formed out of the latter. The family is the primary social institution. It is the most universal in its inclusion of members and in its presence; it is the most constant in its influence; it comes into the closest contact with persons of all ages and sex, though it touches especially the young; and it is the great channel of woman's influence. To develop into all their complex relations the other social institutions, and yet keep the life of the family sound and duly vigorous, is the great task of modern society. As our modern civilization pushes out its wonderful growth on this side and on that, it continually finds itself compelled to look to its primary

constituents and see that they are kept at their very best. It does this on peril of dissolution. The clearest lessons from the history of Aryan civilization, enforced, too, by the stress laid by early Christianity upon piety in the household, point in the same direction.

Here, then, is the place for some practical work in the development of the latest religious uses of the family. While we may not cease our talk with men about public worship, and the duties they owe it, we may well learn to go to them in behalf of the family. But this must not be done as if the family were a beggar, with self-respect lost, waiting for the dole others may condescend to give it. We have had too much of this sort of treatment of the home. We have made it helpless by the methods of our charity long enough. It is time to help the home to self-respect by our own respect for it. There is in it a slumbering consciousness of itself which needs to be called into activity. It is time we ceased to make people feel that there is no salvation except by way of the church-doors in simple justice, at least, to Him who said, "I am the Door." Where He is, there is the church is at least Protestant doctrine, and no form of ecclesiasticism, not even that of the most orthodox Protestantism, any more than that of Rome, can shut Him within church walls, or look to the congregation as the place for the greater part of His work.

The paper then considers the relation of the family to the public school to economic and political science and closes with a suggestion that the family in all its relations should become a subject of systematic and scientific study, and that educated young men and women should employ their talents in diffusing the results of such study so that ignorance of the subject may be dispelled. Surely in the complexities of our modern life the family, the Christian home, may become a higher, a more influential and a more blessed institution than it has ever been in the past.

Books and Magazines.

"THE BACKWARD BOY" is often the most difficult member of the family. His possibilities, and the best way of bringing out his talents, are to be discussed in the coming volume of the *Youth's Companion* by President J. B. Angell, of the University of Michigan, President C. K. Adams, of Cornell, and President D. C. Gilman, of Johns-Hopkins.

ST. NICHOLAS. (New York: The Century Co.)—This superb magazine for young folks presents a most attractive number for this month. Its contents are very varied, grave and gay, instructive and amusing, all of them seasonable. Eminent writers contribute and gifted artists vie with each other in doing their best to make *St. Nicholas* one of the most attractive magazines for young people.

THE CENTURY. (New York: The Century Co.)—A very striking portrait of Mr. James Bryce, M.P., author of "The American Commonwealth," serves as frontispiece for the January number, one of great excellence. There is also a slight biographical sketch of the distinguished author of one of the best books on the United States. Amelia B. Edwards' account of the recent Egyptian discoveries at Bubastis is most interesting. It is followed by another instalment of Joseph Jefferson's autobiography, which possesses a rare charm. Samuel W. Dyke makes a contribution on "Problems of the Family" to the Present Day Papers series. Henry James supplies a slight sketch of the French caricaturist, Honore Daumier, with which several specimens of his grotesque art are given. The portion of the Lincoln history is of the most intense interest, as the incidents of his tragic death are fully detailed. The fiction and poetry of the number are of decided excellence; the powerful poem, "To the Tsar," calls for special mention.

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.)—*Scribner's Magazine* for January begins the fourth year and seventh volume with the promise that during the current year it will follow its well-approved course of printing articles of interest in themselves, by writers who really have something to say; and of aiming that great variety shall be secured rather than that single undertakings shall monopolize its space. In the interest of timeliness and variety a department has been added where, under the title "The Point of View," an opportunity is given to the best writers for a brief and familiar discussion of subjects of both passing and permanent interest; literary, artistic and general. The principal articles of the number are "Water Storage in the West," "The Paris Exhibition—Notes and Impressions," "Tripoli of Barbary," "The Beauty of Spanish Women," and "Electricity in the Household." The series, "Expectation," by Octave Thanet, and "In the Valley," by Harold Frederic, are powerfully written. Poetry and short story receive a due place in the number. The illustrations are plentiful and of a high class.