

For ourselves, we affirm, and we judge our experience to be that of thousands, that we believe that in boyhood we drank in more knowledge of Christian doctrine and duty, twice told over, on the Sabbath afternoon or evening at the parental fireside than, at that age, we did from either the preaching of the pulpit or the teaching of the Sabbath school.

The family circle on the Sabbath afternoon or evening was the grand school of Scripture Lesson, Shorter Catechism, Psalms and Paraphrases, wherein in many cases, all within the house, from the hired man down to the toddler in his pinafore, had to take a part. We have never seen a Sabbath school yet that in real efficiency could even approach, far less effectively supplant, such a system, both as to its intellectual and moral effects on all concerned.

This home institute made Bible scholars of both parents and children; and we venture to say that the theological student in his early rounds, has often had his theological knowledge sorely tried, and not seldom clarified, by an interview with some of the old giant products of this institute, now only too much ignored and neglected.

So far as our towns and villages are concerned, the morning and evening services of the church, with the Sabbath school of the afternoon, practically crowd the family institute out of existence. It may be said that parents should choose another day for home teaching, but this to very many is impossible from want of time; and parents with such excuse before them, are generally only too willing to devolve this part of their duty on the Sabbath school teacher.

We highly value the Sabbath school; but we say, by all means let it be held at such hours as not to interfere with the family institute, which is of more importance than itself. When the Sabbath school occupies a duly subordinate connection with the home institute, we shall say, here is progress, but not till then.

In short, we notice not a few changes and tendencies in the present day that are not characteristic of progress in the truest spiritual sense.

We have no end of means tried to raise money for the support of the Church. Week after week we read of tea-meetings, socials, bazaars, etc., by which sums varying from fifty to one hundred dollars are raised in aid of gospel ends; and the promoters of these things claim and receive some laudation as having accomplished big things.

A principle covertly recognized in most of these entertainments is that parties contributing on such occasions are not directly benefited by gospel ordinances, and they must needs get the worth of their money by some other means, viz., eating, drinking, or social enjoyment. We admit the Church has become wonderfully inventive in this respect.

In order to raise money for the cause of Christ, we sell indulgences, lawful enough to be sure, but none the less indulgences to the flesh for all that, just as if the cause of Christ could present no higher claim for our liberality than some common object of charity. We wish we could hear of more cases in which Christian people, disowning the use of such idle clap-trap, are not ashamed to put their hands into their pockets, and give avowedly and directly to the support of that cause which blesses them for time and eternity. If this might not indeed be very great progress, it would not at least be declension. Our forefathers gave up their lives and their all for Christ; we have difficulty in giving even a little of our means; and for part of that even, we must have some adequate return in the form of edibles, drinks, or social enjoyment. Is this progress? It may be said, perhaps, that these social tea-meetings are more for the object of promoting Christian fellowship among the people than for raising money. Very good, if that is their chief end; but, in many cases, we are given to understand very distinctly in their announcement that they are intended to raise funds for the church.