

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL, THE CHURCH AND THE HOME.

WHEN, a little more than a century ago, Robert Raikes, of Gloucester, conceived the idea of founding Sunday Schools, his purpose was to secure the religious instruction of those children who otherwise would not receive it at all. It was to be expected that in the course of time this original conception would be modified and expanded; yet there is room for doubt whether we have not wandered too far afield, so as to be in danger of regarding the Sunday School not simply as the guide of the vicious and neglected, but as a convenient substitute in all cases for the first training ground of life, which is the home.

Now, in so far as this erroneous impression exists, it is mainly the parents and not the Sunday School teachers who are responsible for it. For at the outset this principle must be clearly laid down, that no religious agencies, however excellent, can supersede the obligations of the home, much less furnish an apology for neglecting them. The universal conscience of the race unites with the law of God in emphasizing the sacredness of the parental relationship. We rightly call that mother "unnatural" who is indifferent to the physical well-being of her offspring. We look to her, and seldom in vain, for that patience, that self-sacrifice, that brooding care which, though to another they might seem irksome, bring to her their own reward in the comfort and happiness of her children. And shall we think that mother or that father less unnatural who ignores the spiritual needs of those committed to their care? How far the distractions of this busy age and the inexorable penance which the god of society forces from its devotees—how far these things interfere with the fundamental duties of the home, let those tell who are most afflicted by them. No one, at least, can be blind to the fact that there are in every community some to whom distance alone seems to lend enchantment, and who are prepared to regard any other duties as more binding than those which lie obviously among the familiar scenes of daily life. Whether the energies are dissipated by idle frivolity or by the multiplied and bewildering agencies through which Christian work is now sought to be accomplished, the result is substantially the same, namely,