

# The Family and the Sunday School.

## I. THE FAMILY.

In the purposes of Jehovah the curse of sin has been minimized and in some cases removed. The contingencies of sin have been provided for. In all the varied organizations and fellowships of men this is seen.

In fraternal organizations security against the ruin impending, through the effects of sin, is sought.

In political combinations the privileges of a righteous government are contemplated. This is of God's ordaining.

In the church of Christ the highest and purest regeneration of spiritual life is provided for.

In the family home is provided the cradle of humanity. Here the best chance possible for the man to begin his life, in a sin-cursed world, is given him.

It is well for us to notice that the last of these fraternities on our list is the first in order, when either their importance or their history is under consideration. First in history is the family. Not accidentally but by the purpose of Jehovah. A purpose and plan which cannot be improved upon to man's advantage. What relation of life is more fitting than that of helpless and needy infants, and wise, tender and loving parentage? And where can this relationship flourish and find its full opportunity but in the family? As it was only possible that one family could exist at the beginning of human history, the necessities of the people, as they have increased, have ever demanded the multiplying of the families.

The history of the world cannot be written if the history of the families be unwritten. Up to this date no organization of earth, having human or divine origin, is the peer of, or a suitable and complete substitute for a family, where the best welfare of humanity, from infancy to old age is properly consulted. In its organization it is simple and efficient. It is well officered. They whose right it is, and who are best qualified, bear rule. The constitution of the family is sound. The corner stone is love. The whole warp and woof of the service of the family is love. Here the instinct of love and the principle of love find their opportunity for glad expression. No relations of earth can duplicate that of parent and child. No joys of earth are so satisfying as are the joys of the family, no sorrows are so keen as the sorrows of the home.

Marvelously independent is the well ordered and well housed family. Wealth of character abounds here, in the poorest as well as the richest districts of earth. Political revolutions disturb the palace first, the home in the cottage last. The financial crash which puts the millionaire into poverty cannot destroy his family home if it be after the pattern of God's ordaining. The Eskimo in his snow hut in the dreary northern winter, with his family may live in the vestibule of heaven. Only family joys can give life in any clime its sweetness.

The assured perpetuity of the family in this world, is the brightest prophecy known of its coming joys and prosperity. The highest ambition the Christian parent can know will be satisfied, when, as his earth's pilgrimage is ended, and his feet touch the other shore, he says, "here am I and the children thou hast given me."

The binding most delightful which holds the sin-cursed man to his fellows is the family tie. When this is broken the curse and mark of Cain is carried by him. The harbor most safe, satisfying and accessible to the tempted and weary voyager of life, is the home, even though it be but a dugout on the prairie.

But the full status of the family is not seen as it stands by itself. Its completeness and worth most fully appear in its fitting relation to all the beneficent institutions of earth. The family is not supplemental but basal in all these, whether they be religious, benevolent, or political. The patriarchal is the ideal furnished by Jehovah. First the family, then the tribes, a people with family heads. Then the nation with its political executive, in which the tribes are represented.

It is seen that in all these combinations the family identity and its functions are retained intact. Otherwise the well being of the people is interfered with. The individual who it is a right in the family is a misfit in any society. A saint abroad and a devil at home is a monster, born of a foolish imagination. A limited study of political economy will reveal the fact that the family is the corner stone of the commonwealth. If the first compact is unbound the latter is unsafe. The constitution of the secret fraternity is a copy of the family compact. Men, religious and profane delight in the idea of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The church of Jesus Christ, the pillar and ground of the truth, finds its best description in the Scriptures as "the whole family in heaven and earth. And one is your father even God and all ye are brethren."

"Oae family we dwell in Him,  
One church above beneath."

## II. THE FAMILY AND THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

The education of the child begins with its birth. The family is the first educational institution provided for it. Jehovah says to parents "these words which I command thee shall be in thy heart; thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, Deut. 6. 6. At an early age the foundation for intellectual and religious culture is here provided. This arrangement for the young must not be slighted. If

properly carried out it cannot be outclassed. The only line on which outside influence can be permitted in the family, is to be subordinate and cooperative. All things must work together for the good of the child. Even so good an institution as the Sunday school must not be entertained as a rival of the family. Religion must have a large place in the education of the child, as efficiency in the service of God is the end sought. The Bible as the text book of religion must be the book studied in the family. Its precepts and principles must be known and observed that the highest efficiency may be attained, outside aid must come to the home. As by the aid of the municipality the family enjoys the advantages of the Public school, so the home, affiliated as it is with the church, may be assisted by the Bible school. The benefits of these arrangements are mutual and retroactive. The church by its school assists the family in the development of a Christian manhood and womanhood in its home; and the family supplies the Bible school in return with efficient workers. Then the attendance of the children at the Sunday school can but bring the subject of religion and a knowledge of the Bible into the family circle.

What the children learn at school is applied by them in home life, to the great advantage of the household. Added to this is the friendly visit of the interested Sunday school teacher; and the genuine social gratification of the child, in the pleasant intercourse with young associates, as they together recite and sing and worship in the Sunday school. In all this we have a powerful combination for the good of the family, the church, and the Commonwealth. It is in view of these facts, not hard to see that the Sunday school is the valuable complement to the family.

As "no man liveth to himself" so no family is complete in itself. Hermitage is a low form of life.

The happy civilized families are only found in the Associations of civilization. The highest type of the Christian household is best secured by a direct and close connection with the Christian church, and a hearty cooperation in all her enterprises.

## III. THE HOME DEPARTMENT OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

The weak spot in our churches today is the home life of our members. The home is the first place to feel the effects of spiritual decline. It is the first place in which to discover it. Impiety in the home is as rottenness in the bones of the church. It is sure to make its appearance. The members of the family who find no place in the Bible school or missionary efforts of the church, whether they have membership in the church or not, need to be missioned. This work can only be neglected at the peril of the home and the church.

Irregularity in the home bars the success of the Sunday school in its evangelistic work as few other circumstances can. The spiritual life of the child converted in the Sunday school is dwarfed and chilled in the prayerless home, as by no other influence for evil. The lad who comes into church membership by an honest confession of his faith in Christ is under all but irresistible temptations to lapse in his religious life, in the absence of the support and culture of a pious home.

Such homes as these are the chief fortress of evil in Christian lands. They harbor vice, they send abroad an evil influence. Here is housed the chief power confronting the work of the Sunday school. The capture of these homes opens the way for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

As a remedial agency for this deplorable condition of so many of our families, the Home Department of Sunday schools had its birth.

It is fitting that the Sunday school should come at this time to the rescue of our home. During the last fifty years of our history the operations of our churches along the lines of educational institutions in general, and of Sunday schools in particular, have been continuously enlarged. This has commanded the most strenuous efforts of our principal church workers. The magnitude of these enterprises has over-shadowed the home life of our people; and there has followed a corresponding decline in the careful culture of the child in the home. Parents have been handling over their children, with the larger share of their own responsibilities, to these public institutions, and evil has enlarged itself in the home-life. The piety remaining in the household is of a sluggish, negative type; which in turn casts its shadows on the church life, and chill's her zeal.

Then the wide circulation of Sabbath school literature, such as it is, has put the family Bible on the shelf or under gilded covers in the best room. The earnest and regular study of the Bible, by all the household, is the practice of but few families.

While by these literary helps the few workers in our churches have made commendable advances in religious knowledge generally speaking, the Bible is more an unknown and unused book in our families than it was a half century ago. Then the New Testament was a common reading book in our district schools. Large portions of it were committed to memory in our Sunday schools. Now only a small percentage of our scholars in our Sunday schools can recite the golden texts of the lessons. Carefully tabulated statements reveal the fact that only a few of the matriculates and graduates of our Colleges know even the books of the Bible. Among those who in our schools, are studying, with the ministry in view, may be found men who do not know enough of the history and contents of the

Bible to read the title page of our common version faithfully. And be it remembered these schools are under church patronage. In these facts we have animation that a more systematic study of the scriptures in our homes would introduce a valuable improvement in our educational methods. President B. S. Whitman has recently said "On general principles the Bible is needed in a system of liberal education."

Home Department of the Sunday School is the right thing in the right, place and if properly conducted, will surely do much to supply the needs of our day.

There is evidently, in the human a tendency to estimate the value of things by the size of them. In this way big things are popular. Large corporation are called into existence. The spectacular attracts. The small, the retired the quiet, however forceful, are overlooked. This trend, it may be, is no small factor in the move now on for the union of large religious bodies. This too may move our churches, Sunday schools, B. Y. P. U. s. and M. A. S.'s to public demonstrations of our sizes and numerical strength, and our elaborate plant for worship and church work. The efficiency of smallness is forgotten. The priceless power of little things, and cheap things, such as the rod of Moses, the Sling of David, the little lute of the lad, the needle of Dorcas and the widow's mite, under the touch of Jehovah are not recognized by the multitude. In the swim of this bigness, such as the large operations of religious trusts and syndicates the family finds scant recognition, except for its millions.

Yet has it pleased the heavenly Father to place, on this sin-cursed world in the family a reservoir of love and grace and power; without which the nation and the church are failures. The Home Department of the Sunday school does well to assist the family, in its sovereign and God-appointed place among the institutions of earth, to fulfil well its mission.

J. H. SAUNDERS.

# The Pleasant Valley Meeting House Where the Old Folks Went to Meeting.

BY REV. D. O. PARKER.

The scenes of my boyhood are treasured with care, Respecting the ways in the old house of prayer; The house in the Valley, where the elms yet grow,— That hallowed old spot in the green Long Ago.

A passion for worship the people possessed; The young and the aged were anxious for rest; The men and the matrons, the girls and the boys, Came longing to drink of its pleasures and joys.

They came to that house in the Valley of old; The home of the saints, and the Shepherd's safe fold; They came from the east, and they came from the west, And down from the mountains they came to be blest.

The preacher was perched in a box in the air, Like a bird in a cage when shown at a fair, And over his head hung a board from the sky, To keep all his words from soaring too high.

And under the pulpit and filling their place, The deacons sat gravely with smooth shaven face, Unseen by the preacher, yet known to be there, The sermon to follow with well worded prayer.

The sermon is done, and aloft from his cage, The preacher looks downward his help to engage; The silence is broken, a voice in the air Is heard:—"Deacon Parker, please lead us in prayer."

That Deacon responding, stands up in his place His soul overflowing with glory and grace, And prays that the gospel, "right onward may go, As oil from the vessel to vessel does flow."

Meanwhile, all the people stand up in their place, According to custom, and right about face; Their backs to the preacher, their eyes to the door, Inspecting the girls and the dresses they wore.

The preacher now reads for the choir to sing, A hymn to the praise of his Saviour and King; Not from the "New Hymnal," but Winchell and Watts;— Most precious in lyrics and beautiful thoughts.

The man in the choir who leads in the song, The master of music who never goes wrong, A pipe from his pocket he takes,—gives a toot, And people enraptured, in silence are mute.

The songs of the choir were ancient and rude If now in the light of the present were viewed, And wanting in culture and musical art, Were full of the music that comes from the heart.

This old Valley meeting house was raised about the year the church was organized, 1828, and was used unfinished with rough seats and single floor for several years, when it was neatly finished in the quaint style of that period. It was for many years the headquarters of the Baptists for all Western Cornwallis. The Rev. Wm. Chipman officiated here for thirty years. He was forty-seven years old when ordained. Father Theodore Harding preached his ordination sermon, March 19th, 1829, in Alfred Skinner's house in Welsford. It was the scene of many and powerful revivals of religion. It was taken down some years since and portions of it used in building the Grafton Meeting House. The ground on which it stood was the gift of Mr. Chipman and is yet encircled by large and beautiful elms planted by Professor Isaac Chipman and Sidney Shaw. Like a two-story house it had two tiers of small windows and an entrance porch on the front end, christened by Professor Chipman a "anal appendage." The gallery covered a

ly the whole as the gallery with a side over it was and under it munion tab orthodox se from their fa and facing was quite looking d lead in pray and often n singing and preach chorister, an pipe, which adjustable than small tons. The lar backs, or jecting in wa ness and wa the pulpit. this old hou any other in N Spring

"What m that little w his mighty y next doing do nothing s she may onl such advice, where I lead that meant and in Matt and in both waiting for him for an e That was th Now, in th act as to ple speaks to yo telephone; h friend who vation was i She had also in itself a su said within and the best to meet Chr her soul am of pleasure a decisive ac after a world be saved? frivolous, so conscience, s side, and she election day, meeting coul there was an conversion We have c is implied by be applied in step taken in science is a s the conscien quietly the H the heart of f commonly se for Christ an proved that s she did was t in trust and Saviour. If Lydia would Europe and h actions spok so wonderful wife of her hu by that serm youth had be faithful serm boy's conduct his conversion since. The r Salvation is of the atomi Jesus works, him. Doing serve what a "What must answer at the