

PRACTICAL SERMON, No. II.

(Written for the Record.)

HEATHENISM IN NOVA SCOTIA.

Don't be alarmed, gentle reader, at the rather startling title of this article. Heathenism does not necessarily mean the cannibalism of the South Sea Islanders, or the degradation of the New Hollanders. There are various types of heathenism in the world, and that which we find in Nova Scotia assumes the shape of carelessness regarding religious matters, absence from the house of God, profane blasphemy of His holy name, and the various phases of corrupting vice and degrading sin which we may see almost every day that we open our eyes. There are various causes for this state of affairs, and to two of these I invite your kind attention while reading the following lines.

First, and very prominent, is the neglect of parents in training up their children in right principles at home,—the almost complete absence of religion from fireside circles, even when the heads of the family are professing Christians. By this I don't mean to say that there is no family prayer. Of course there is the form sometimes, though far too seldom, gone through, of reading, praying, and occasionally singing;—I say the form, because it is in nearly nine cases out of ten, even when it does take place, a form and nothing more. There is the long dry prayer,—a terrible weariness of the flesh to the young people. No wonder they get out of patience waiting for the end of a sermon to God. But there is seldom a word, until next prayer-time, about the subject of personal religion; and too often when there is, it comes in the form of a lecture for some peccadillo, from a lecturer who, in his unchristian anger, forgets that he was once young himself. There is no attempt to make religion an attraction to the youthful members of the house, but, on the contrary, it is far too often made a burden and a task. As a consequence, they submit to the affliction so long as it can't be avoided, and not one moment longer. When the young men go into the stranger's land, they keep far as possible away from that which they never could enjoy at home. They carefully avoid the house of God, and soon fall back into that semi-barbarism which is the sure result of continued absence from the gospel's refining and elevating power. The remedy for this portion of the evil is a very simple one:—Endeavour to make religious exercises attractive as well as instructive; at the very worst, let them have the negative virtue of not being repulsive, and let not personal religion be a banished subject from the conversation of the drawing-room or fireside circle. Fathers and mothers of the present generation seem not to comprehend their responsibilities in the training of the children whom God gives into their charge. They appear to think that their whole duty is done when they furnish them with food to eat and raiment to put on, while the immortal spirit—the soul that never dies—is left to develop itself as best it may—to expand amid the companionship of persons whose moral and religious principles *may* be all right, but also *may not*, for aught the parents seem to care. Now all this is wrong. There is a sacred responsibility upon parents to train up their children in the way they should go—to look after them carefully—prayerfully to present their case before the Throne of Grace, and earnestly and kindly to tell the little ones that sweet old story of Jesus and His dying, ever-living, love. If there were more of this kind of dealing, there would be less practical heathenism in the world. If children were thus taught to love religion in their homes, there would be far fewer wandering ones found ending their lives in the penitentiary and upon the gallows. Home influence has a mighty power for evil or for good, and parents cannot—dare not—if they understand their true position, shift their responsibility off their own shoulders and put it upon the teacher of the common or Sabbath-school, or even upon the minister of God. Father! mother! God will