

MRS. WHITTELYSEY'S

MAGAZINE FOR MOTHERS.

EDITED BY

MRS. A. G. WHITTELYSEY.

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace.—Rome.

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version, though the prospect may seem dark to you. Hope on. Pray on. Never give them up while life lasts. The Covenant stands firm. Do not doubt it. Let faith and patience have their perfect work in you. Happier days, we trust, are yet before you. God is only trying you for a while, and in a point, too, where, probably, you most of all need it. Soon you may hear Him say to you, as to one of old, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Or, is your child dead? and did he leave no decisive evidence, in his previous life, that he was prepared to die? Still, if you had given him up to God, and sought, with supreme desire, the blessings of the Covenant for him, then do not distress yourself needlessly about him. God may have changed his heart in his last moments, and when there was no opportunity for evidence of that fact to be given you. In such a case, hope in the general tenor of God's gracious Covenant, and do not let distrust plunge you into needless and useless trouble and sorrow.

"Ye mourning saints, whose streaming tears
Flow o'er your children dead,
Say not, in accents of despair,
That all your hopes are fled.
While, cleaving to that darling dust,
In fond distress ye lie,
Rise, and with joy and reverence view
A Heavenly Parent nigh."

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR IRRELIGIOUS HOUSEHOLDS?

BY JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D.D.

THE streets of our great cities present few more affecting sights than the groups of children who seem to be free from all parental discipline. If these forlorn creatures have any parents living, they obviously receive from them none of the care which religion enjoins on persons sustaining this relation. Many of these youth are men and women in precocious knowledge of good and evil; many of them already support themselves, and some

of them, by an unnatural inversion, support their idle, vicious, and exacting parents. The evil has attained such a head, as already to have caught the eye of municipal authority, and the public waits to see what manner of check the wisdom of civic legislation will impose on an abuse which threatens unexampled disorder in coming years.

But Christian piety and love can not postpone action till the sluggish mass is alarmed into motion. The hand of law, however weighty and imperative, comes often too late. It seeks punishment, or redress, rather than prevention, and strikes only when the evil begins to be intolerable. Before this point is reached, a thousand households may be demoralized, and myriads of souls irretrievably betrayed. Mightier than all arrangements of police is the quiet moulding touch of fireside influence. See its power in the Christian families which we love, and imagine such families multiplied a thousand fold. You will thus gain a glimpse of what might be accomplished for the salvation of the rising race. It is this consideration which gives us our interest in the baptismal covenant, the household catechising, the daily worship and the Scripture reading, the Sunday School, the Bible Class, the sermon to children, and the manifold varieties of method by which the Gospel turns the hearts of the children to the fathers. Only let these influences be so accelerated, deepened, and widened, as to reach whole societies, and we have hope for the future. Every sight of a wanderer in the streets should lead us to the prayer, "So might it be!"

Christian parents need the stimulus of these sights, and derive profit from the most painful examples of early error and incipient profligacy. Going home from these, they clasp their little ones to their arms with new affection, and kneel among them with livelier thanks, and stretch their intercession far beyond them with warmer prayers for the numberless households who lie near to ruin. Christian mothers, especially, with the characteristic compassion and activity of their sex, will feel themselves irresistibly impelled to bestow their share of effort toward the removal of so great a curse from our land. Here is just the point where family religion, strictly so called, connects itself with beneficent action in behalf of domestic ignorance, misery, and wickedness.

Every effort at home does good abroad—just as cleansing and ventilation in a single house remove a definite portion of unhealthful agency from the grand amount. No Christian family can live in the worst community, without contributing toward its benefit. No parent offers a prayer, reads a chapter, instructs a child, or enforces a right principle, within his own walls, without at the same time radiating some light and heat beyond those precincts. And the aggregate of this influence is increased by the action and reaction between one religious circle and another, and by the magical power of combination among good people. But all this, incalculably precious as it is, falls far short of the impression which Christian parents and Christian families, as such, are permitted to make on the ungodly world around them. We are not to eat our morsel alone, nor to seal up the fountain whose very nature it is to carry bubbling refreshment and limpid purity to many a door besides our own. If God has blessed us with privileges which we prize beyond gold, rubies, and all the heritages of the earth, and has caused the rays of His life-giving countenance to fall on the clustering domestic vine, and the olive branches around our table, we should derive from every one of these mercies an unanswerable reason for seeking to draw down like favors on the dark places which hitherto are but so many habitations of cruelty. And it is not to be doubted for a moment, that, to change the whole face of domestic life, in city and country, nothing would be more operative than a mighty putting forth of plain, humble, everyday effort, from the existing centers of household piety.

It is a delicate task to prescribe what particular acts should be performed by Christian householders, in order to reform their erring neighbors. To lay down a rule in set phrase would be impossible. Place and circumstances would modify any specific recommendation. Over-hasty and pragmatism, officious rebuke, inquisitorial meddling, and pompous association do not belong to Christian beneficence, which proceeds from the meek and quiet spirit. There are limits both to human responsibility and to judicious intervention. We live in a world where it is unwise to pounce upon every mote in our neighbor's eye, and upbraid every man's servant, and where we must sometimes behold in silent grief the evils that we can not amend. But,

nevertheless, we are not exempt from obligation, even toward the profane, unthrifty, and ignorant parent, next door, or in the next street, who leaves his children in the paths of the destroyer. No one of us liveth for himself. No one of us may say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Love will find out a way. Patient, prayerful, benignant piety will, sooner or later, alight on ways and means of dropping some gospel-favor at the door even of the ill-natured or obdurate. The great thing is to have the intention; Providence will give the instrumentality. Bereavement, poverty, any sort of affliction may open to you the door that has been long barred. Kind looks, salutations, and offices will, perhaps, thaw away the icy obstructions. Your voice may be heard in prayer among those who never prayed before, but who send for you, or allow your approach, in the time of their distress. A visit to the diseased, or an alms to the poor, may prove your passport to spiritual labors. Thus it is that, throughout the field of Christian exertion, mercy to the body enlarges into mercy to the soul. The great deficiency is not in means to benefit irreligious families, but in the mind and will to do so. Probably few of us have sufficiently held up before our minds this precise way of honoring our Master, as a duty daily impending over us. A selfish hue has sicklied over the complexion of our household piety. We have forgotten those unregenerate ones without, while enjoying our own mercies, and have wrapped ourselves up in the comforts of our own spiritual privilege. This may be carried so far as to be almost a saying to the children of vice, "Go, serve other gods!" This, if carried out with full consistency, is incompatible with the existence of piety in the soul. And, so far as this exclusion of our neighbor from our thoughts and cares prevails, we have cause for fear and room for reformation.

Human society may be contemplated in various aspects; and among these, we may regard it as a collection of many families. When we arrive at the family, we arrive at a most sacred institution of God, second only to the Church. Indeed, a family may be a church, as, in a sense, the whole church is a family (Eph. iii. 15); and there have been two occasions since the fall, when the whole church was shut up in a single household. As things now are, in Christian lands, family acts on family, and,

from this multiplied and mutual influence, going on every moment, vast results of good and evil take place. The question is, how Christian families, or Christian parents who direct them, may convey the largest blessing to those parents and those families who are still in a lower degree of religious organization. Let us restrict the influence to one point: How may we, who call ourselves Christian parents, do the most to insure the godly rearing of children in the houses within our reach?

The great means for bettering the condition of ignorant, vicious, or undisciplined families, are instruction, example, and prayer. Instruction should have regard to this all-important point—*the right training of the children*. It may be conveyed in various ways: by the gift of the Scriptures; by reading and explaining the sacred lessons; by books, and tracts, and religious journals; by leading to teachers, to Sunday Schools, and to the house of God; by social meetings for this express purpose; by visits, and by occasional conversations. How plain and obvious are these means! How much neglected! Yet, how mighty! They should be abundant, frequent, persevering, patient, gentle, affectionate, discreet, and courteous. If possible, they should be methodical and concerted—in a given district, canton, ward, or street. How does the reader know but that her humble, loving endeavors may teach a dozen parents how to reform their households?

Example in bringing up our children is a potent religious engine. The subject is solemn, because we are all guilty before God. Yet we have ourselves felt the force of good domestic example. We have come home from a friend's house, admiring his holy art in commanding his household. (Gen. xviii. 19.) We have joined in the family worship next door, and learned lessons which never occurred to us in years. We have found a pious parent reminding the little ones of their baptismal obligations and privileges, and have been prompted to do the like with our own. We have seen, in some retired dwelling, how possible it is to keep up the ancient Protestant custom of catechising on Saturday or Sunday evening. Such examples have sunk more deeply into us than lectures and sermons. Shall not our example be such as to have similar effects on others? Shall we not, by opening our doors, make this example accessible to

those whose opportunities have been less than ours? Shall we not direct the eyes of such to better example than our own? We are prone to begin too far from the center. Let us begin at home. "Keepers at home" exert a benignant influence which often surpasses that of the most bustling itinerancy.

Prayer, for innumerable families who have no domestic means of grace, is a silent agency, but one which scarcely knows a limit. Pious mothers understand its efficacy. Their hearts go forth to the children of ignorance and sin, whose orphanage is often worse, in respect to spirituals, than if they were fatherless and motherless. You may meet in the judgment those whom you then see for the first time, but who will, under God, owe their eternal safety and bliss to your secret intercessions. Joint supplications for houses where there is no fear of God, may bring into them a Christian reformation. This is a way of reaching hearts that are bolted and barricaded against your most affectionate importunities. Yet prayer is the accompaniment of effort, and not its substitute. True prayer and true effort spring from the very same root, even that love which wisheth no ill to its neighbor. Remembrance of these prayerless and godless houses in our daily worship, might be more common and instant than it is. May we not stir up one another to this neglected duty?

Selected.

PARENTAL FAITHFULNESS REWARDED.

ABOUT eighteen hundred years ago, the angelic observers of Divine Providence might have beheld, at Lystra, in Lycaonia, a little group often gathered around the unrolled parchments of the Holy Scriptures. A lad, scarce weaned from his mother's arms, is leaning upon her knee, and, as he spells out the Holy Word, turns, from time to time, to look up into her face and hear the explanations which render it intelligible. With earnest affection she regards her child, and strives to find words and illustrations adapted to his infant mind. Nor is she alone in her happy, though anxious duty. Seated by her side is that