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THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.

JOB v. 24—*Thy tabernacle shall be in peace.*

MAN was made for society; and the earliest form of society was that of the family. The all-wise Creator had scarcely made the first parent of our race, before he said—*It is not good for man to be alone; I will, therefore, make an help-meet for him.* And to show the importance and permanence, as well as the close and endearing character of this connection, he added—*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.*

As domestic society was the first that was formed, so it lies at the foundation of all other, and enters more deeply into the order, the purity, and the happiness of our world than a volume could display. It does more to cement civil society, to create the tenderest relations, to soften the heart, to refine, polish, and harmonize the children of men, than all the laws which human wisdom ever formed.

The IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS, then, is to be the subject of the present discourse. It is this blessing to which *Eliphaz* refers in the words of our text. *Thy tabernacle shall be in peace.* The word "tabernacle" signifies a *family tent, or moveable dwelling.* Such dwellings formerly were, and, indeed, still are, exceedingly common in *Arabia*, where *Job* is supposed to have resided, and in many other parts of the Eastern world. The term here may be considered as designating, by a very common figure, not only the tent itself, but also the family inhabiting it. This domestic circle, in the circumstances to which the speaker refers, shall be "in peace," that is, tranquil and happy; free from those sources of annoyance and suffering to which, in a different situation, it would not fail to be exposed:—at peace among its own members, and at peace with all around.

In showing the IMPORTANCE OF domestic happiness, it is difficult to know where to begin, or where to end. Its points of contact with human enjoyment are so numerous, and its influence on the best interests of society, civil and religious, so deep and vital, that we can scarcely make an over-estimate of its value. A few of the more obvious and practical considerations which belong to the subject, will be presented with all plainness and brevity. May he who has the residue of the Spirit, direct our meditations, and grant that we may all know the happiness of which we speak, not by description only, but by the richest personal experience.

I. The inestimable importance of domestic happiness appears FROM THE UNAVOIDABLE INTIMACY AND EXTENT OF ITS INFLUENCE ON HUMAN COMFORT. The degree of enjoyment which we find in scenes and with persons with whom we have no necessary connection, and with whom we may, if we please, avoid intercourse, is of comparatively small importance. He who finds little comfort in traveling may refrain from it : and he who has no taste for rural pleasures, may confine himself to his dwelling, or transfer his residence to a populous city. But who can measure the importance of our finding comfort in that place, and in that society, which we call our *home* ; with which God, in his providence, has been pleased to connect us by ties of the closest kind ; where we habitually reside ; where, of course, we pass the greatest part of our time ; and from which we cannot escape without both sin and greater suffering ? Other scenes we occasionally approach ; with this we are, so to speak, ever in contact. Here we, as it were, “live and move and have our being.” To find one’s ties to this place, and to this society an alliance with misery, is indeed deplorable ! To such an one, a state of suffering is not merely an occasional occurrence ; it is the character of his abode ; it is an inmate of his tabernacle ; it besets him day and night, in going out and coming in, in sitting down and rising up. He cannot escape from it without abandoning his family. In short, he who finds no happiness in the bosom of his household, must be a stranger to it the greater part of his time ; and if the consciousness of the want of it *there*, do not poison his enjoyment wherever he goes, and cause him to look with something allied to painful envy on scenes of eminent domestic comfort, when he witnesses them in other families, it must be because all the finer sensibilities of his nature have been blunted by the long continuance of discord and suffering.

On the other hand, whatever may be our sufferings abroad, if our own dwelling be the habitual abode of peace and love ; and if, whenever we return to it, we are welcomed with the smile of affection, and surrounded with the comforts of a well-ordered family, and the endearments of conjugal and filial regard ;—we have secured to us the very best elements of social happiness that this world can give. Here the laborer finds a constant and rich solace when he returns from his daily toils. Here the man of business, leaving the scenes of anxious care which distract and exhaust him, comes to his domestic circle to be soothed, refreshed and lifted up. The scholar here unbends, and seeks among those to whom he is bound by the most endearing of all earthly ties, relaxation, repose, and intellectual renovation. And even the politician, wearied with the strife and conflicts of political parties, retires to the bosom of his family to find that disinterested affection, and genuine enjoyment which among rivals or sycophants he seeks in vain.

Accordingly, one of the most eminent statesmen of *Great Britain*, not long since deceased,\* bore a testimony on this subject which is worthy of being repeated and remembered. He declared, that whatever might be the clamor and violence of party zeal ; whatever the fatigue, the anxiety or the disgust which he suffered in the transaction of public business ;—he never entered his own dwelling, and sat down by his own fire-side, with his beloved family, without finding his wearied and agitated spirit immediately tranquilized, and filled with the most delightful serenity. There he found a refuge from all the heartless selfishness of political partizans, and was enabled to leave behind him every element of animosity or vindictiveness.

Surely, then, it is the wisdom of every one who wishes to establish his happiness on the firmest basis, to study to make his own dwelling, as far as possible, the abode of harmony and love. He who finds not comfort here, will probably find it no where. The absence of this blessing, will be like a worm constantly gnawing at the root of his enjoyment : while he whose domestic happiness is well established, will seldom fail to experience its benign influence in all the walks of life, and in the discharge of every public and private duty.

\* Edmund Burke.

II. Again ; the importance of domestic happiness appears from the consideration, that it is a blessing equally attainable by all classes of persons, and which may be enjoyed, not occasionally only, but every day that we live. Some of those attainments which we most covet, and which enter in no small degree, into the elements of personal comfort, can be reached only by a select few of our race. The pleasures arising from the pursuit of literature and science : the gratification, such as it is, which flows from stations of honor and profit, among men ; and even those transient and turbid enjoyments which are gained by frequenting the circles of gaiety and fashion,—can be enjoyed only by a small portion of mankind, and not even by them without many interruptions. But the happiness arising from a well-ordered and affectionate domestic circle, may be enjoyed by all classes of the children of men ; in all situations of life ; at all seasons : nay, it may be said to be most rich, sweet, and productive, when separated from the false pleasures of an ensnaring world, and left to its own resources. Of many other enjoyments we may be deprived by the caprice or the malignity of those around us. But those which the bosom of a happy family furnishes, the world can “neither give nor take away.” In short, we may say of the pleasures flowing from domestic love and peace, as the inspired Apostle speaks on another subject—“Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down this blessing from above ? or who shall descend into the deep, to bring it up from beneath ?” The blessing of heaven, indeed, creates it, and enables thee to enjoy it ; but when possessed, “it is nigh thee, even in thine heart,” and in thy dwelling, always, day and night, at hand, and ever ready to afford rich perennial refreshment.

It is an old remark, that human happiness is much less dependent on great but infrequent events, which produce a powerful impulse on the mind, than on the ordinary and perpetually recurring incidents which enter into our daily habits and enjoyments. The former have been compared to the periodical inundations of a mighty river, which once a year pours down fatness and plenty upon the country on its borders :—while the latter may be likened to the gentle showers, and the silent dew of heaven, which descend at all seasons, return after short intervals, and kindly nourish every herb of the field.

Surely, then, it is a dictate of true wisdom highly to prize that calm and unostentatious but rich enjoyment which domestic peace and love are adapted to secure, and to guard with the utmost care against its derangement or diminution. We may prepare artificial and highly sapid forms of diet, which will gratify in the occasional use ; but they are by no means fit to be made the habitual sustenance of life. The simple and solid aliment which nourishes, without undue stimulation, will be preferred by every wise man for his daily food. The exhilarating gas which the chemist manufactures, may excite without essential injury, if it be sparingly and seldom employed. But nothing is so pleasant or salubrious for daily respiration as the atmosphere which God has made, and on which our organs perpetually feast without derangement or weariness. So it is with domestic happiness. It is the daily food of life ; simple, solid, ever new, ever delightful, never cloying, but rather growing in hallowed relish from day to day. “What enjoyment is there in all the pageantry of state, in all the gratifications of sense, in all the delirious joys of giddy dissipation, once to be compared with this ? O pleasures, cheaply purchased, placidly enjoyed ; ever rising ; ever disclosing new riches ; never languid, never remorseful ; why are ye so seldom adequately prized, and by so few pursued with complete success ?”

III. The inestimable importance of domestic happiness may be further demonstrated by the multiplied and wide spreading mischiefs which daily result from its absence.

If the mere privation of present comfort were the only evil resulting from domestic discord and strife, the mischief, though serious indeed, to each individual, would not be so deep and vital as we often witness. But this, in a multitude of

cases, is but a small part of the evil. In how many melancholy instances have domestic feuds and alienation, driven husbands from their homes to the haunts of vice; tempted wives to violate their plighted allegiance; impelled children to take refuge among strangers from the miseries of their parental abode; and betrayed all into habits as degrading and destructive as they were criminal!

When home is attractive it will seldom be deserted:—but if it be uncomfortable, it is an instinct of nature to fly for relief to some other society. And if there be no reign of moral and religious principle, recourse will probably be had to society of a corrupt character. Many a husband and father once orderly and respectable, has been tempted, by the absence of comfort in his own dwelling, to resort for pleasure to the tipping club,—to the gambling table,—or to the haunts of licentiousness—until he has made total shipwreck of his reputation, and of all standing in society; and perhaps made beggars of his wife and children. Had he found at his own fire-side that smile of affection which wins and attaches the heart; that spirit of kindness and accommodation which delights in conferring happiness; that neatness, attention and order which are so essential to family comfort, he might have been regular and respectable still. But, finding little or nothing of all this, in that domestic circle to which he was bound in duty, he was gradually but fatally estranged from it; and tempted to seek in other society, and sometimes among the basest and vilest of his species, that enjoyment which he found not in company with the wife of his bosom, and their common offspring. Yes, if we could look into the dwelling of many a degraded and ruined husband, we should see “DOMESTIC INFELICITY” inscribed in large and legible characters upon every page of his history, and upon every broken door and pillar of his wretched habitation!

In like manner, who can tell how many of the instances of coldness—of alienated affection—of illicit attachment—of conjugal infidelity—and of final wandering from a once happy home,—on the part of wives—are to be traced to DOMESTIC MISERY as their baleful source? There was a time, perhaps, when they enjoyed, in a good degree, the comfort arising from the love and the kind attention of their husbands. But this comfort was gradually withdrawn. Habits of vice entered to pollute and destroy. The diminished affection; the stern looks; the harsh tones; and finally, it may be, the habitual tyranny and brutality of their companions, made the conjugal bond a burden; rendered their domestic interviews scenes of sullen dislike, if not of ferocious violence; until they were tempted to look to others for kindness and protection; and to abandon their children and their home in pursuit of unhallowed attachments. Many a wife, whose sin and shame have torn in pieces and scattered once happy families, might, humanly speaking, have been saved from this ruin, and all its concomitant and consequent mischiefs, if their home had been made to them, what it ought to have been, the abode of respect, kindness and love.

But this is not all. The effects of domestic infelicity on the spirit and course of *children* are often marked and melancholy. There are no human means so effectual in binding children to their parents, and to one another, in bonds of the tenderest affection, as MAKING THEIR HOME PLEASANT. When parents walk before their children, not only in purity and order, but with uniform kindness and love; when they instruct with affection, exhort with tenderness, reprove without asperity or harshness, and continually strive, while they are faithful to the best interests of their offspring, to employ all the means in their power to render the parental roof a precious refuge, a pleasant abode, a scene of comfort and endearment:—and when brothers and sisters of the same family, while they vie with each other in showing affectionate duty to their parents, are devoted to the comfort of one another; when a spirit of harmony, of mutual concession, and even of sacrifice, for the happiness of each, reigns among them all,—continually prompting every one to exhibit an amiable, accommodating deportment, to abound in kind offices, and carefully to avoid

every thing adapted to wound or repeat:—in such a family, children will find themselves happy in their parents, and happy in one another. They will prefer the domestic circle to any other. They will leave their father's house with reluctance; will cast a wishful eye towards it, wherever they may sojourn or settle; and eagerly return to it as to a delightful centre of hallowed affection, whenever they are favored with an opportunity.

But reverse the picture. Suppose a circle of children to be members of a family in which discord and strife habitually reign. Suppose the parents to be austere, harsh, tyrannical; repelling each other with mutual reproaches, and manifesting to all under their roof the most revolting despotism. Will such a family be apt to conciliate and attract the youthful mind? Will not sons be disposed to escape from it as speedily, and return to as seldom as possible? Can they venerate—to say nothing of love—can they venerate parents whom they are compelled daily to associate with such scenes? Can *home* present itself to their minds invested with any of those attractions which win and fix the heart? Will not *daughters*, when their paternal home is uncomfortable, be ready to make almost any exchange which promises relief; and sometimes, perhaps, in pursuit of this relief, take steps fatal to their peace, and perhaps even to their character, while they live? Alas! it cannot be doubted,—after making every reasonable allowance for the fact, that children, in family disagreements, are much more frequently culpable than parents;—still it cannot be doubted, that the melancholy aberrations of multitudes of young people of both sexes; once amiable and promising; their early abandonment of the parental roof; their false steps; their criminal connections; their blasted hopes; and their final destruction for both worlds,—may be distinctly traced to that domestic unhappiness, which rendered home distressing, and tempted them to believe that almost any change would be for the better. These, yes, these, are the disastrous trophies of domestic discord and strife! It is thus that the FAMILY, which ought to be a nursery for the Church and for heaven; and which, when it bears any thing like the character which it ought to bear, affords a lively foretaste of the purity, the harmony, and the love of that blessed world;—becomes a nursery of evil principles, and evil habits, and conspires with the great adversary of God and man, to degrade human honor, and to blast the brightest prospects of human felicity.

If there be the least truth in these statements, can we need further arguments to convince us of the inestimable importance of domestic happiness?—Every head of a family has the deepest interest in this subject, for his own temporal comfort, and that of her with whom, by the tenderest of all earthly connections, he has become “one flesh;” for his own spiritual peace and growth, which of course, can never prevail amidst discord and mutual alienation; for his children, whose preparation for living, and whose destiny in life, depend more on the character of that domestic circle in which they receive their youthful impressions than tongue can tell; in a word, for all those considerations which ought to affect the heart of a Christian and a man. He who does not see that upon the character of that domestic society over which he presides, are suspended temporal and eternal interests of incalculable extent; and that its maintenance in a happy state is worthy of all the vigilance, all the self-denial, all the unceasing labor, and all the fervent prayers, which he can bring to its aid, must be indeed blind to scenes of daily occurrence around him; scenes which must awaken the sympathies of every thinking man.

IV. Further, the great importance of domestic happiness appears from ITS ESSENTIAL AND UNAVOIDABLE INFLUENCE ON THE CHURCH OF GOD.

The family has been called “the nursery of the Church.” And, truly, in all the extent of what is implied in this figurative language, it is really the case. What the family is in itself, its members will generally be found to be in relation to the house of God. In fact, every Christian family is a little “Church” within itself. We have the authority of Holy Scripture for this

language. (*Colossians* iv, 15. *Philemon* 2.) And as the character of any aggregate body is necessarily formed by the character of its parts, so the visible Church of Christ will never fail to be such as are the families that compose it. If peace, order and love reign in every dwelling, or in a majority of them, peace, order and love will reign in the Church. But if domestic heart-burnings, and feuds, and strife, and alienation prevail, then just in proportion to the degree in which they prevail, will lukewarmness, indifference to the truth, heartless ordinances, "evil surmisings, and corrupt disputings," prevail in the house of God, marring, as a matter of course, all its spiritual beauty and undermining, or rather destroying every element of its edification.

We sometimes see professors of religion who, if we were to judge of them by the language of their social prayers, or by the character of their public services and efforts, we should judge to be eminently zealous and devoted Christians. But when we follow them to the bosom of their families, how sad the disappointment! "Of the carbuncle," says an eloquent writer, "it is remarked, that it looks on fire, but when touched, it is as cold as other stones. There are persons who soon rectify our mistakes concerning them, by our intercourse with them. They will not endure close inspection. Their piety is rather official than personal. It consists in certain exercises and appearances, which are resigned with the occasions that require them. In company, they are the merry companions, the temporising associates; in the house, the cruel husbands, the negligent fathers, the tyrannical masters."\*

We need not inquire what must be the unavoidable effects of such examples on the great interests of religion and the church of God. They are too obvious to be mistaken, and too injurious and melancholy to be easily measured. What will men of the world say, when they enter such families, and witness such examples? Will they not be naturally led to conclude, either that religion is a fable, or that most of its professors are hypocrites; and thus, on either supposition, draw most unfavorable conclusions concerning the church of God? What will be the influence of such families on the children who make a part of them? Will they think favorably of religion, when they find their parents, while professing to be under its governing influence, manifesting so unlovely a spirit? Who can doubt that one great reason why so many of the children of professing parents stand aloof from the church, and are finally found among its opposers and contemners, is that they saw so little in the domestic example which they daily witnessed, which was adapted to raise religion in their estimation?

Here is a consideration, then, which addresses itself to every principle of attachment to the Redeemer's kingdom. O ye who are called to preside over families! behold the top-stone of the fabric of your obligation! If your households are the abode of piety, order, harmony, and love, besides promoting your own personal and social comfort; besides promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of your children; you are recommending religion to those around you, and building up the church of God. You are letting a light shine before men which cannot fail of warming and animating the friends of Zion as far as its influence extends, and of frequently leading others to "glorify your Father in heaven."

V. Only one more consideration will here be urged, and that is, that THE MORE GENERAL AND PERFECT DOMESTIC HAPPINESS IS, THE MORE PURE, HARMONIOUS, AND HAPPY, WILL BE THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

Communities are made up of families. And as the whole is equal to all its parts, in the science of numbers and quantity; so it is equally plain that, in the department of morals, the whole body will ever be found to bear the character which is generally born by its component parts. Of course, irreligious and disorderly families; families in which discord, strife, and hatred reign, will generally be found nurseries for training up the ignorant, the profane, the

reckless, and the profligate. It is certain that all the disorders and crimes which disturb civil society, grow out of habits which are fatal to domestic happiness, and are the natural fruits of domestic infelicity. The intemperance, the profaneness, the fraud, the violence, and all the forms of profligacy, which are daily producing so much distress in the state, are precisely those habits which produce the great mass of domestic misery. Of course, when family government, order, and peace are generally maintained, there is just so much done toward the prevention of public crimes, and, consequently, just so much contributed to the promotion of happiness in the whole community. And, on the contrary, where they are neglected, the native fruit of the neglect is the raising up citizens, and the formation of habits, altogether unfriendly to the purity, order, and strength of civil society. Yes, from wretched, disorderly families, spring those youth, who ultimately afflict the land with violations of the laws, fill our penitentiaries with convicts, and consign to the gallows those who are unfit to live.

If any doubt this, let them turn their eyes, for a moment, to those parts of the world, in which the retirement, the union, and the affection of domestic life, are but little cultivated;—where parents and children generally find their enjoyment, not at home, but in public; not in the hallowed endearments of the domestic circle, but in the never-ending varieties of fashionable dissipation. What is the state of society in those countries? Is it moral? Is it happy? No, never. There, conjugal indifference, alienation, and unfaithfulness, reign with a fearful sway. There, the family in a great measure loses its proper character. There, the filial affection and duty of children are comparatively unknown, or little regarded. There, of course, the influence of domestic ties is swallowed up in the heartlessness of separate pleasures. And there, as a natural consequence, every species of disorderly and selfish gratification is proportionably prevalent. In a word, show me a country in which domestic society is little esteemed, and little sought after as a source of enjoyment; and I will show you a country in which all the bands of social order are deplorably lax; in which dissipation, profligacy, and crime, are pre-eminently prevalent; and in which those whose taste is formed on scriptural principles, can never be happy.

It is plain, then, that every PATRIOT, as well as every MORALIST, and every CHRISTIAN, ought to prize domestic happiness as a most important matter, in which the State, as well as the Church has a deep interest; as a matter which lies at the very foundation of all social order; as a precious attainment, on which are suspended the intellectual, moral, and spiritual welfare of our children, and the real comfort of every form of human society, to an extent which nothing but the most ample experience can fully appreciate.

From the view which has been taken of this subject, we may see,

1. In the first place, THE PERFECT INFATUATION OF THOSE WHO UNDERVALUE THE HAPPINESS OF THE DOMESTIC CIRCLE, AND ARE CONSTANTLY SEEKING ENJOYMENT ELSEWHERE. There are those to whom this character belongs. They have little conception of the comforts of retirement and home. Whenever they think of pleasure, it is always in connection with something *abroad*;—the gay company;—the circle of fashion and splendor;—the haunt of riot and dissipation;—the convivial table;—the midnight party and song;—these, if not some still more criminal in their character—are the scenes in which a large portion of mankind seek their happiness. In domestic pleasures, pure and rich, and solid as they are, they find no enjoyment. They consider these as fitted only for the weak, the demure, the spiritless. For themselves a higher walk,—as they would express it—of enjoyment is marked out than the tame and insipid pleasures of the nursery, and the domestic fireside. Never was there greater infatuation! Such persons are “seeking the living among the dead.” They will never find real enjoyment until their taste is rectified; until they can relish those calm and pure gratifications which a sanctified home fur-

nishes, and which are never so delightful as when we are most devoted to them. O how much do those lose, who are destitute of this relish! Like the lost spirits, they loathe what is right; their meat and drink is mischief; and the result of all their toils is increasing disappointment and misery.

2. It is evident that this is a species of enjoyment for the securing of which it is WORTH WHILE, AS WELL AS NECESSARY, TO TAKE UNWEARIED AND CONSTANT PAINS. If domestic happiness be so rich in itself; so extensive in its influence; so vital to the best interests of our children; and so important in its consequences both to the Church and the State;—then, surely, that man is a wretched calculator who is not willing to take pains; to deny himself; to watch day and night; and to labor without ceasing for its attainment. Like most of those things in our world which are really precious, it cannot be reached or maintained without much attention, vigilance and effort. But it is richly worth them all. In all our well-directed labor in this field, there is “great reward.”

3. HOW MUCH REASON HAVE THOSE WHO ARE FAVORED WITH A GOOD DEGREE OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS TO REJOICE AND BE THANKFUL!—Highly favored of God! You enjoy a treasure. Prize it highly; improve it carefully; guard with the utmost care against every thing that may mar or diminish it; and pray without ceasing that it may be maintained unimpaired. You may part with a large portion of your outward wealth, or with those honors among men which you esteem so highly—without suffering any important privation. But if you lose your domestic comfort; you will be poor indeed! This ought to be watched with the utmost vigilance, and scarcely any earthly sacrifice that can be made, is too great as the price of its maintenance.

4. Finally; important as domestic happiness is to ALL the children of men;—to the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free—it is evident, from the foregoing statement, that THERE ARE SOME TO WHOM IT IS OF PECULIAR IMPORTANCE, AND WHO, OF COURSE, OUGHT TO LABOR AFTER THIS BLESSING WITH PECULIAR CARE. They are those whose station in society renders their conduct most conspicuous, and their example most influential;—such as ministers of the Gospel; public men of all classes; the wealthy; the learned; and, in short, all who occupy elevated places among men; and whose habits, whether they will or not, cannot fail of being noticed and spoken of by multitudes. Such is the language of Scripture; and such are the plain dictates of reason. O how peculiarly guilty, then, are those who, while they undertake to instruct and rule others, and to furnish models for those around them, are unskilful, unamiable, revolting, and perhaps reckless, in the management of their own families; and have so little government of their own spirits, and so little of the faculty of making their households orderly and happy, that they are constantly surrounded with ruffled tempers, and revolting disorders! Surely such ought to “consider their ways;” to form, in the strength of God, new resolutions; and to labor without ceasing, for rectifying their mistakes, and for the attainment of a blessing which we have seen to be invested with such inestimable value. Whatever toil or sacrifices others may undergo to reach and secure the blessing in question, *they* ought to be willing to make ten-fold greater sacrifices for this end. These, surely, ought to take PECULIAR PAINS so to *rule their own households*, as that *their tabernacles may be in peace*,—as ever they would wish to adorn the station in which God has placed them, and to be made instrumental in promoting extensively the Divine glory, and the benefit of their generation. God grant that they may be thus wise for His sake in whom all the families of the earth are blessed! Amen!



## SERMON CXCIX.

### THE MEANS OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.

JOB v, 24—*Thy tabernacle shall be in peace.*

AN attempt was made, in the preceding discourse, to unfold the IMPORTANCE of domestic happiness. We have seen that its relations and its value are incalculable; that its importance is deep and vital to ourselves, to our children, to the church of God, and to the community at large; that all have a deep interest in securing and maintaining it; and that those who undervalue and neglect it are among the most infatuated of mortals.

But another inquiry arises, no less interesting and practical—How SHALL WE ATTAIN THIS BLESSING? What are the most effectual means of securing domestic happiness? To the consideration and answer of this question let us now direct our serious attention.

And here, let none imagine that this blessing will come, as a matter of course, to all who desire it. Multitudes, in forming matrimonial connections, and in looking forward to the commencement of domestic life, dream of a happy family, as an object to be confidently expected. And provided they can begin their conjugal union with certain circumstances of outward comfort—such as a well-furnished dwelling, and a handsome equipage—they fondly believe that all will be well; that felicity in this new relation can scarcely fail of being secured. Alas! how often are expectations of this kind totally disappointed! How few families can with truth be called REALLY HAPPY! We see households, every day, in which wealth, rank, public honors, intellectual culture, and every external advantage that can well be imagined, are possessed; and yet no domestic happiness enjoyed. On the contrary, they evidently look for happiness *abroad*, and most of their intercourse at home seems to be marked by indifference, and weariness, if not by revolting discord and strife. The truth is, we are fallen, depraved creatures. We are compassed about with infirmities and passions which, unless some powerful corrective be applied, will, of course, make us proud, selfish, fretful, easily provoked, and, in short, generate all those evil tempers and habits which cannot fail of tarnishing the beauty, and diminishing, if not destroying, the comfort of domestic intercourse. This kind of happiness, then, is so far from being a blessing which, in given circumstances of external advantage, is secured as a matter of course, that we may rather say as experience teaches, that large possessions are unfriendly to it; the pursuit and the glare of public honors are hostile to its enjoyment; in a word, the more our feelings, plans, and interests, are absorbed in the great and the gay world, the less we shall be likely to enjoy of the blessing under consideration. Like every other valuable attainment in this world, it cannot be reached without close attention, assiduity, self-denial, self-government, and unwearied application to him who alone can make means and efforts effectual. But let us inquire, a little more in detail, what are the BEST MEANS of attaining this inestimable blessing. And,

I. *First*, if we desire to secure domestic happiness, WE MUST MAKE A HIGH ESTIMATE OF ITS VALUE, AND LABOR WITHOUT CEASING TO ATTAIN IT. The family, like the heart, is liable every day to go wrong, and will assuredly go wrong, unless it be guarded with the utmost vigilance. Such are the infirmities

and sinfulness of our nature, that the social machine will never work well when left to itself. We cannot safely intermit our watchful care of it for a single hour. And this watchfulness must extend to every *member* of the household, from the head to the youngest child and domestic; to every *interest* of the household, great and small, temporal and spiritual; to every minute *duty* and *comfort* of the household; obviating threatened evils before they come into existence, and securing important advantages which, without vigilance, would be lost. And, after all, this watchfulness must be conducted under the deep impression that it will be ineffectual without the Divine blessing. That blessing is indispensable to the accomplishment of any good, in this or any other field of duty. Unless the Lord keep the family, they labor in vain that watch over it. To unwearied watchfulness, therefore, unceasing prayer is to be added; and prayer prompted by that humble, weighty, solemn sense of the importance of the blessing sought, which gives earnestness and perseverance to importunity. It is evidently, then, no idle or easy matter to preside over a family, as it becomes a Christian man or woman to do. And none are so likely to succeed as those who address themselves to the work with a deep impression at once of its great importance, its unspeakable arduousness, and the absolute need of help from on high at every step. He who imagines that the blessing of which we speak is easily obtained, and that he can secure it by his own wisdom and strength, will assuredly be disappointed.

II. We cannot expect the reign of domestic happiness in any household, WITHOUT THE PREVALENCE OF SINCERE AND ARDENT DOMESTIC AFFECTION. And by domestic affection, I do not mean merely, or even chiefly, that transient feeling which is founded on personal beauty, or external graces; but that fixed, cordial, moral attachment, which is founded on the perception of moral excellence in its object, and which is made up of mutual respect, esteem, tender friendship, and endearing confidence. Without the prevalence of this unfeigned affection, there cannot be solid domestic happiness. It would almost require a constant course of miracles to maintain the one without the other. But where this attachment reigns among the various members of a family, it can scarcely fail to produce that habitual gentleness and kindness of deportment, and those numberless benevolent attentions, which always promote the personal comfort of those who practice them, as well as of those toward whom they are exercised; and bind together by ties of the strongest earthly kind. If it be desired, then, to attain and establish domestic happiness on a firm basis, "LET LOVE BE WITHOUT DISSIMULATION." Let the tenderest mutual affection be cultivated by all the members of the family. Let the utmost care be taken to guard against every thing adapted to impair its strength, or suspend its exercise. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things. Love covereth a multitude of sins." "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith."

III. THE HABITUAL GOVERNMENT OF THE TEMPER in the several members of the family, is essential to domestic happiness. In every family, occurrences will arise to try the temper. In this depraved world, where we all have our failings, we ought to expect this, and to make all our calculations, and set a guard over our spirits, accordingly. He who unites himself in marriage with a beloved object, ought to remember, that, as he is a sinful being himself, so she whom he takes to be the companion of his life, is also a sinful being; and if they have children, they will find, that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh;"—that the same corrupt nature of which they partake is transmitted to their offspring. Every household, then, is a little band of sinners,—and even if they all be pious, still they are but partially sanctified. The remains of indwelling sin still exist, and it will be well if they be not manifested every hour. In circumstances of this kind, "it is impossible but that offences will come." That is, it is morally impossible but that something should occur,

almost every day, adapted to jar the feelings, to wound, to incommode, in a word, to call for the exercise of forbearance and forgiveness. Now when any thing is said or done, either by mistake, by carelessness, or by sudden temptation, that tends to give offence, or to produce irritation,—unless it be met by a spirit of forbearance and self-government; unless there be such a curb placed on the temper as will guard against irritation, and prompt to that “soft answer which turneth away wrath,” there must ensue heart-burnings, hard thoughts, and a state of feeling wholly inconsistent with domestic harmony and love.

There is a class of evil qualities which piety *ought* to cure, but which it is not always found *in fact* to cure to the extent which is desirable. He whose natural temper is churlish, fretful or irritable, will be apt to betray more or less of this temper, even after the grace of God has “transformed him by the renewing of his mind.” But there are many, alas! of this unhappy temper, whom the grace of God has never transformed. What is to be done when such a temper is found either in the head, or in any of the members of a family? With such an one it will be impossible to dwell with comfort, without a very large measure of forbearance and meekness. Such a temper is in danger, every hour, of extinguishing affection, and of enkindling strife:—and where it is met and repelled by a similar temper, how is it possible that harmony and love should dwell under that roof? Such a family must be the abode of discord, of mutual reproaches, and of habitual misery.

On the other hand, a sweet and amiable natural temper has a tendency to cover a thousand failings, to impart a thousand comforts, and to spread delight wherever it appears. Enter the abode where such a temper reigns. How pleasant the intercourse! How gentle and cheerful the conversation! How mild and conciliatory every look, tone and gesture! No revolting vociferation, no discordant sounds, no harsh upbraidings, no unkind words grate upon your ears. All is soft, placid and harmonious. If there be occasion to correct error, it is done in the spirit of love. The questions and replies,—the requests and commands,—yea, the very reproofs are marked with gentleness and affection. Happy the family where such a spirit reigns among all its members! And just so far as it is wanting or interrupted, domestic happiness will suffer a corresponding suspension or destruction.

It is obvious that this regulation of the *temper* is peculiarly important in those who PRESIDE OVER FAMILIES. It cannot, indeed, be deemed a small matter in the youngest and most humble member. For any single member of a family, by the indulgence of a wayward temper, may destroy its peace. But when a turbulent, harsh, fretful temper is indulged by either parent, or by both, the evil lies deeper than if such a temper were manifested by younger members of the household. It must pervade the mansion, and mar all its comforts. Besides, what probability is there that children will learn to curb and regulate their tempers, when their parents set before them so miserable an example? Will not the source of mischief be likely to be propagated and extended? Whereas if parents carefully and conscientiously govern their own tempers, and faithfully repress every ebullition of an opposite character, in every member of their households, peace may be expected to reign in those “tabernacles.” One of the most fruitful sources of domestic misery is banished.

IV. If we desire to cherish and secure domestic happiness, it is important that all domestic intercourse be MARKED BY HABITUAL AND MUTUAL RESPECTFULNESS. Amidst the intimacy and familiarity in which members of the same household live with each other, they are extremely apt to lose sight of that constant manifestation of respect which can never be abandoned without harm. In the presence of strangers, indeed, the most rough, and even brutal, generally maintain some degree of respectfulness in their domestic intercourse. The harsh tone, the rude address, the reproachful epithet, are seldom indulged *in public*, but by the most vulgar. But thousands who are awed and restrained

by the presence of others, in public, when they come to the privacy of home, feel free to indulge in all the revolting tones, and even language, of insolence and contempt. Few things are more fatal to domestic peace than this. Those who have no sincere respect for each other cannot live together in comfort.— And those who cultivate this respect, will always discover it in their deportment.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that in making these remarks, there is no intention to recommend, between members of the same family, in private, that system of formal and studied politeness which is practiced in circles of ceremony and fashion. But it is intended to be said, that, amidst all the freedom of the most secluded fire-side, every thing, either in language or in manner, indicating the least want of respect, ought to be carefully avoided. All coarse forms of speech; all undignified epithets and modes of address; every thing approaching the rude, the uncivil, the satirical, the contemptuous; every thing, in short, in speech or behaviour adapted to wound feelings, or to sport with feelings, must be carefully avoided in the intercourse of those who wish to live under the same roof in comfort. On the contrary, there ought ever to be the most conscientious care to manifest the tenderest love, by the most delicate mutual regard to each other's wishes and feelings, and the most respectful mode of address and treatment in every thing. A palpable and especially a frequent failure here, will often do more to wound and to alienate, than the most open act of hostility. An unfriendly act may be forgiven; but who can be reconciled to undisguised sneer, and habitual contempt?

V. HABITUAL PRUDENCE is another important means of securing domestic happiness. Prudence is practical wisdom. Without this, no society, from a family to a nation, can continue a day in comfort. Even domestic affection, and amiable tempers, cannot prove effectual where childishness and indiscretion reign. It is the part of prudence, in domestic management, to lay wise plans for duty and comfort; to foresee threatened evils, and guard against them; to consider and adjust circumstances; to study peculiar tempers and talents, and to accommodate our treatment to them; to avoid all embarrassing movements and connections; to make all due allowance for each other's dispositions and infirmities; and, in a word, to look through the whole machinery of the household, from day to day, and to see that all its parts be kept in such repair and order as to secure their happy operation. To do this requires prudence; that is, much close attention, and practical discretion. Not great talents; which are not always found adapted to this result; but sobriety of mind, calm discernment, and sound wisdom. And, of course, where the presiding head of a family is strikingly destitute of this wisdom, domestic peace and comfort cannot be expected to prevail. It is as true of families as the prophet represents it to be of nations, that their situation is woful indeed when "babes rule over them."

VI. Another important means of attaining domestic happiness, is, A CLOSE ADHERENCE TO REGULARITY AND ORDER IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. "Let all things be done decently and in order," is the express command of the great Father and Founder of families. Without order there can be no permanent peace or comfort. Where "there is confusion," there is apt to be "every evil work." In all societies there are various duties to be performed. Every member has his department of service; and upon the proper attention of each to his own department, depends not only the prosperity of the whole, but also the comfort of each individual. So it is in families. There must be system and regularity in our tabernacles, if we would desire them to be at peace. Every member of the household must know his own station, and perform his own duty. When domestic affairs are thus conducted there will be tranquility and comfort. Order begets neatness, neatness comfort, and comfort love. Examine the interior of a family in which times, seasons and appropriate departments of duty are constantly regarded; in which the hours for rising and retiring to rest, for meals, for domestic devotion, and other stated

engagements, are fixed and systematically observed; and where all the members are expected to yield a prompt and steady compliance with the prescribed order;—in such a family, we seldom fail to find the reign of peace, quietness and comfort. This regularity itself is one of the essential elements of social enjoyment. But, on the contrary, a disorderly family; a family without system; a family of which every member is a law to himself;—though it have all the external advantages that wealth and splendor can give, must be miserable in spite of them all.

VII. The last means of securing domestic happiness which I shall mention, and that which may be said to embrace all the rest, is, THE REIGN OF PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION. All the means which have been hitherto mentioned may be in a good degree possessed, and yet if Religion be absent, there is no security that the tabernacle will be in peace. A venerable divine of the last age was accustomed to say—“A family without Religion, is like a house without a roof, exposed to every storm.” Never was there a more correct and weighty maxim. Where the principles of genuine piety have no place, domestic affection, amiable tempers, prudence, mutual respect, and the strictest order may all be maintained, and yet all be in vain; for they may all vanish in a day; and even while they last, there are important sources of domestic enjoyment over which they can exercise no effectual control. There are exigencies in domestic history in which they are all utterly unavailing. In a word, the means before described are all highly important as *auxiliaries*; but none of them, nor even all of them combined, furnish the essential element of the blessing which we seek. This is to be found only in the religion of the Gospel;—that religion which does not merely cherish devout sentiments toward God as our Creator and Benefactor; but also cordially rejoices in “redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace;” which binds the disciples of Christ to one another as one body, and all to their God and Saviour, by the ties of redeeming love; and which constrains all who feel its power to “live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.” This is that “godliness which is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

That real religion has a tendency to sweeten the tempers of those who embrace it;—that its native spirit is a spirit of love, order, benevolence, patience, forbearance and charity;—and, of consequence, that its native effect, wherever it really reigns, is to render husbands and wives more affectionate and harmonious; children more dutiful to their parents, and more united among themselves; and servants more faithful and diligent, is acknowledged by all who believe that religion is a reality. If this be so, it follows, that the more genuine religion there is in families, the more reason have we to hope that peace and happiness will be found in their dwellings.

Nothing has so powerful a tendency to refine and strengthen domestic attachments as real religion. The ties of grace are the purest and the strongest on this side of heaven. And where to the bonds of natural affection these are added, the union becomes endearing and precious in the highest degree. They do more than all other things put together to cement family attachments, to promote family enjoyments, to constrain its members to “put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor and evil speaking, and to be kindly affectioned one to another, in honor preferring one another.” Where grace dwells and reigns in the domestic circle, love is augmented; trials are sanctified temporal enjoyments are doubled; temporal sufferings are softened; and the members of the household are led on with united hands and hearts toward the kingdom of heaven. Yes, there can be no doubt that the reign of grace under any roof, affords a more certain pledge of domestic comfort, than the most diligent study of all the rules, counsels and laws that human wisdom ever formed.

A religious family will, of course, be a family of PRAYER, both secret and social. Every occupied apartment may be expected to be a closet of devotion; and every morning and evening to witness the praises and supplications of the assembled household. How strong the tendency of such habits to cement affection; to inspire mutual confidence; to diffuse a hallowed conscientiousness over all domestic intercourse; to prevent heart-burnings and strife; and, in a word, to banish every thing adapted to mar the individual and social enjoyment of the family! Surely those who daily and sincerely bow together before their common Father, unitedly confessing their sins, and unitedly imploring all needed mercy, will be far more likely to dwell together in peace, than those who never recognize this most tender and most interesting of all relations.

Religion in itself, has a direct tendency to draw down the blessing of God upon a family. It constitutes an affectionate relation with Him. "The tabernacle of the righteous," says the wise man, "shall flourish." And again, "He blesseth the habitation of the just." And how happy is that family which is the object of Jehovah's blessing! Whether they have much or little, it is sanctified. Whether prosperity or adversity attends them, it is ordered in covenant love. The presence of their covenant God is with them. His protecting providence is over them. He causeth his angels to encamp round about their dwelling; their "walls are continually before him."

Let it also be remembered that there are various domestic trials under which nothing but religion can afford a sustaining power. When the loss of property reduces the affluent to poverty; when the loss of honors brings down the pride of a household once elevated among men; or when the "king of terrors" enters the domestic circle, and bears away one after another of its beloved members; what consolation can human wisdom bring? Let the history of its powerless wailings give the answer. But visit, in the hour of its calamity, a family in which "pure and undefiled religion" reigns. How calm, how peaceful, how resigned under the stroke! What meekness, what Christian dignity, what joyful confidence in God, amidst all the pressure of his dealings! "Here is the patience of the saints!" Here is the precious privilege of those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus!"

Such is the vital importance of religion to domestic happiness. There can be no adequate substitute for it. Accordingly, in what families are we most apt to see animosity, strife, disorder, and every evil work? In what families do we most frequently witness the authority of parents trampled under foot; and the disobedience and profligacy of children bringing grief and shame? In what families are we most frequently called to contemplate jealousies, hatred, jarrings, and wretchedness? Are they not met with, *for the most part* in those families in which religion does *not* reign; where the worship of God is not maintained; where his blessing is seldom, if ever, asked; and where, if there be "the form of godliness," its genuine "power" is unknown?

It is not asserted, indeed, that no families destitute of religion, are *comparatively* happy; or that none of those families over which *professors of religion* preside, can be called disorderly and miserable. There may, undoubtedly, be strong natural affection, and many amiable qualities, where there is no piety. But it *is* meant to be asserted, on the one hand, that where there is no religion in a family, that family is destitute of the surest and the richest means of domestic comfort; nay, that the most important ends for which domestic society was instituted, cannot be attained at all;—and, on the other hand, that where a family *reputed* pious, is a stranger to domestic happiness, we must suppose, either that the profession is a vain pretence, or that, though sincere, it is counterbalanced by defects adapted to nullify its best influence. To doubt this, would be to doubt whether the religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of love and purity. To doubt this, is to doubt whether the native fruits of the Holy Spirit of Christ are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance;" and to doubt whether, where these reign, there will be found, of course, the most solid individual and social enjoyment.

The view which has been taken of this subject suggests a variety of reflections, which are worthy of our serious regard.

1. The first reflection is, that ALL THE MEANS WHICH ARE NECESSARY FOR SECURING AND EXTENDING DOMESTIC HAPPINESS, ARE EQUALLY CONDUCTIVE TO INDIVIDUAL ENJOYMENT. In many of our efforts to obtain worldly comfort, we are compelled to make *great sacrifices*; in other words, to endure much painful privation for a time, that we may ultimately secure advantages which more than counterbalance it. And to do this in a multitude of cases, is called, and justly called, real wisdom. But in the case before us, no such sacrifice is required. That is, all the principal means which we are called upon to use for the promotion of domestic comfort, are precisely those means which are most conducive to our own individual happiness. Reckon them up in order, as they have been enumerated and recommended;—The cultivation of DOMESTIC AFFECTION;—the government of the TEMPER;—UNIFORM RESPECTFULNESS;—habitual PRUDENCE;—REGULARITY and ORDER in conduct;—and pure and undefiled RELIGION:—Can any one doubt that the more we possess of all these, the more personally happy we shall be, irrespective of the comfort of our families? We may say, then, to every head, and to every member of a family—“Thou art inexcusable, O man!” O woman! for wherein thou failest of cultivating all these, it is not merely of domestic peace that thou art making a sacrifice; thou deprivest *thyself* of personal enjoyment; thou “wrongest thine own soul;” thou art an infatuated traitor to thine own present comfort!

2. It is an obvious reflection, from what has been said, that, if we desire to derive all those benefits from religion in our families which it is adapted to produce, IT MUST BE CONSTANTLY KEPT IN VIEW, AND MADE A PROMINENT OBJECT, IN ALL OUR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. One reason why religion is not more influential in securing family comfort, doubtless is, that it is too little, or too unhappily, brought into view; that it is not presented with either sufficient constancy, or sufficient attraction to the several members of our households. Some parents and heads of families, indeed, in attempting to reach this object, have sought it unskilfully. They have endeavored always to make Religion the most prominent thing in their intercourse with the members of their households; but they have presented it under an aspect of such rigor and severity, and in all their deportment, have indulged in so much of the austere and forbidding, that they have repelled rather than conciliated those around them who were not pious. This is unhappy. It is presenting rather a *caricature* of religion than its real character. Can we wonder that the children of such families often grow up with an aversion to religion; nay, that they are sometimes the most reckless and impious members of the community. But a much more common fault, even among heads of families who appear to be truly pious, is, that their religion is not kept sufficiently in view, either in their spirit, or in their treatment of their children and domestics. If children see that religion makes but a small figure in the daily example of their parents, and that while they recommend it in words, they manifest but little of its spirit in their temper and conduct; they will be apt to receive injury rather than profit by such an exhibition. Or, if their parents, however serious and exemplary in their outward deportment, seldom mention the subject of religion to them, and do not appear to feel that habitual and weighty sense of its importance in their plans and measures with regard to their children which it obviously requires—who can expect the influence, in this case, to be of a salutary kind? If we desire religion to exert its benign and *appropriate power* in our families, it must shine forth in something of its *appropriate character*. It must be seen, as mild, amiable and attractive. It must be seen, to be reasonable and lovely, as well as firm, steady and unyielding. It must show itself in the sweetness of reward, as well as in the solemnity of punishment. In short, let children and servants see that this is the grand principle which *governs* in private as well as in public; in refusing as well as in granting their requests; in selecting the places of their education; in choosing their associ-

ates; in every plan and measure without exception. Then will Religion occupy its proper place; for if it be ANY THING it is EVERY THING. Then will it appear "THE ONE THING NEEDFUL." Then will it be likely to make a daily and salutary impression. Then, and not till then, may it be said to REIGN in a family; and then may we hope that it will, in some good degree bind all the members together as "one body, and every one members one of another."

3. Another reflection suggested by what has been said, and of no small importance, is this—HOW EASY IS IT FOR A SINGLE UNHAPPY MEMBER OF A FAMILY TO DESTROY ITS PEACE! As the humblest individual who fears God, sent by his good providence into a family, even of heathenish impiety, may prove a rich blessing to it, so remarkably exemplified in the influence of the little Hebrew maid in the family of Naaman the Syrian; so a single corrupt member received even into a family in the main pious, may prove a source of mischief deep, lasting and deplorable. Often has the peace of a family been destroyed by one such member. Nor is it difficult to conceive how an unprincipled domestic of either sex, or a vicious inmate of a family in any station, may be secretly deceiving, ensnaring and leading to ruin other members or inmates, before the evil is even suspected. He who allows such an individual to remain under his roof for a single week or day after detecting his character, is infatuated, and unfaithful to the most precious interests of his family. It is evident, then, that heads of families, if they desire to secure domestic happiness, ought to exercise peculiar vigilance with regard to this point. Let them consent to incur serious temporary inconvenience rather than introduce such domestics or inmates into their households. If they cannot have *sincere piety* in all, let them at least require *pure morals*. Especially let them receive none under their respective roofs who refuse to conform to the religious order of their families. Such was the resolution of the inspired Psalmist. "He that worketh deceit," says he, "shall not dwell in my house. He that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight."

4. Finally; we are led to reflect, from all that has been said, HOW LITTLE REASON WE HAVE TO BE SURPRISED THAT MANY FAMILIES, RESPECTABLE, AFFLUENT, AND PLACED UNDER MANY OUTWARD ADVANTAGES, ENJOY SO LITTLE REAL HAPPINESS. The reasons are various; but any one of them is quite sufficient to account for the fact. In some, domestic *affection* is wanting; in others, domestic *order*; in a third class, the proper regulation of the *temper*, and the maintenance of mutual *respectfulness* are scarcely at all regarded; while a still larger portion have no RELIGION to guide, soften and cement them amidst the trials of life. Would it not be strange indeed, if happiness were found in such tabernacles? Q ye who desire to invite and retain this blessing under your roofs, but have hitherto failed of realizing your desire,—try the means which have been suggested. Fairly and in good faith make the experiment. And, remembering the weakness and imperfection of all human efforts, "pray without ceasing" to the God of all grace that you may be inspired with wisdom and guided with strength in reference to this great interest; that your houses may be "temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in;" that the hearts of all the members of your households may be "knit together in love;" and that, after mingling in all the endearments of the domestic relation here below, you may not be mournfully separated through eternity; but that you may all be prepared by grace to be members of that blessed family above, into which no discord or strife, no sickness or death shall ever enter; but in which perfect harmony and perfect love shall reign without interruption and without end. Amen!