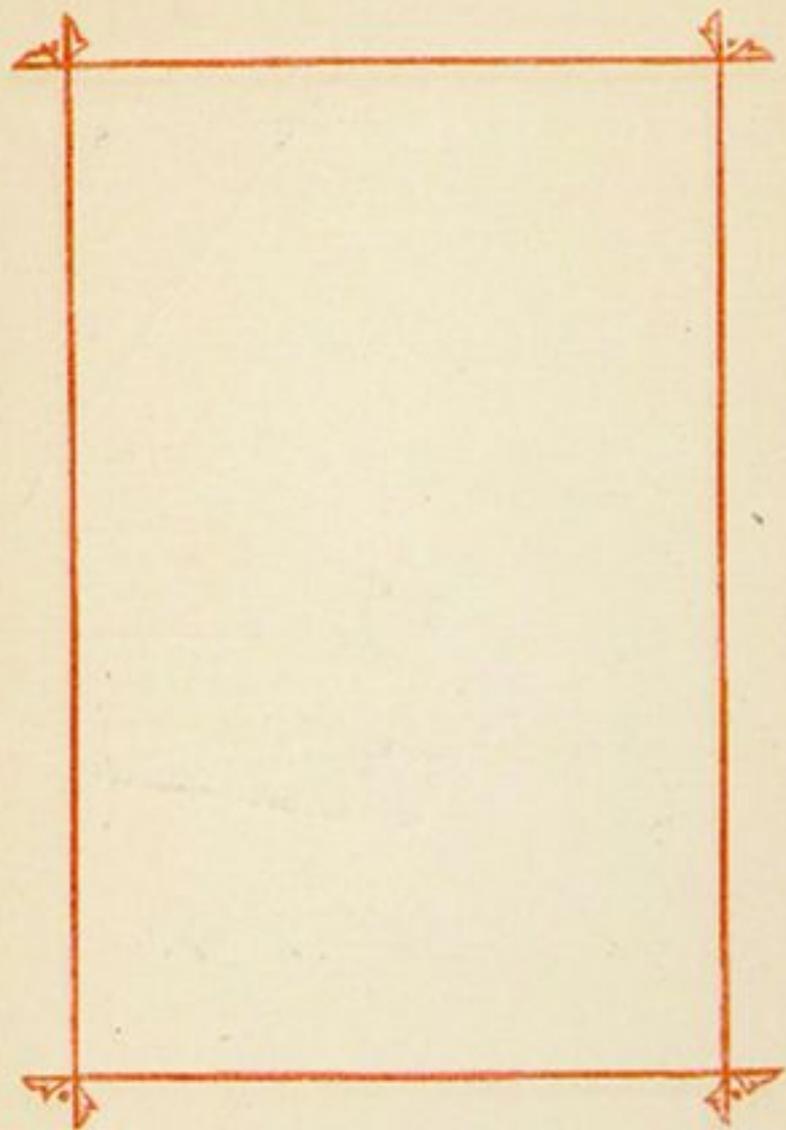


YOU AND
YOUR CHILDREN.

BY

JOHN HALL, D.D.

Presbyterian Historical Society
425 Lombard Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19147



47154

YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN;

OR,

HAPPY HOMES: HOW TO MAKE THEM.

BY

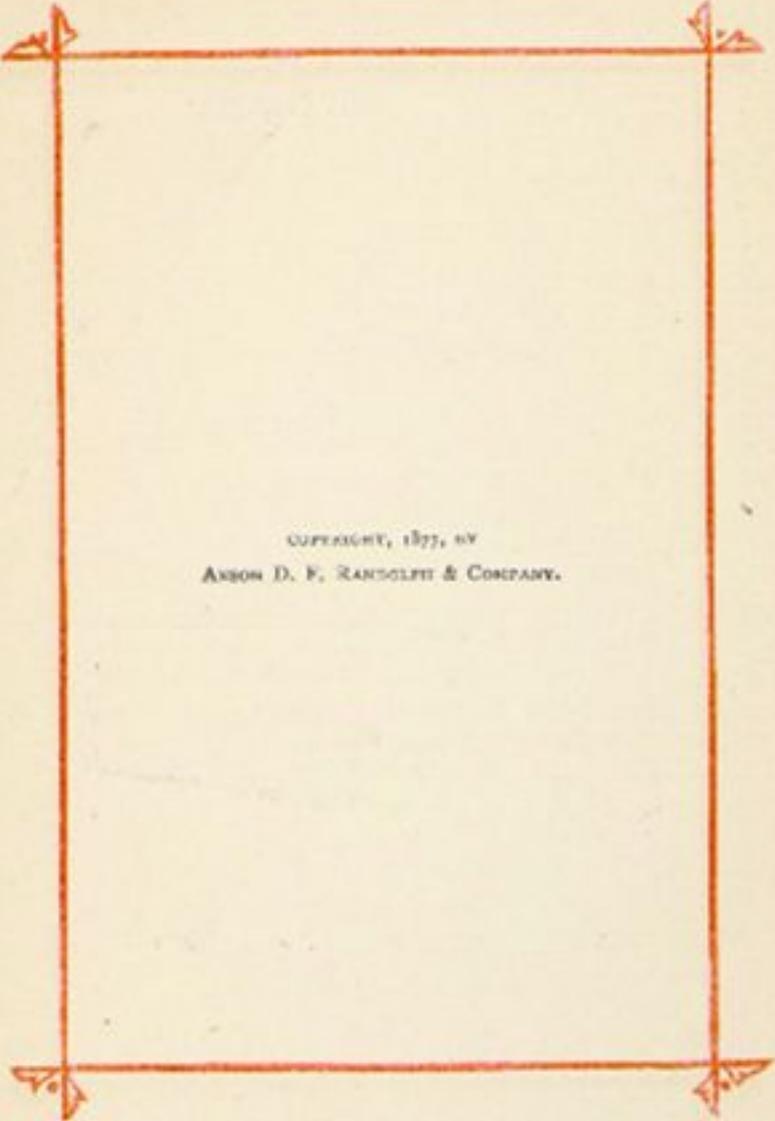
JOHN HALL, D.D.

NEW YORK:

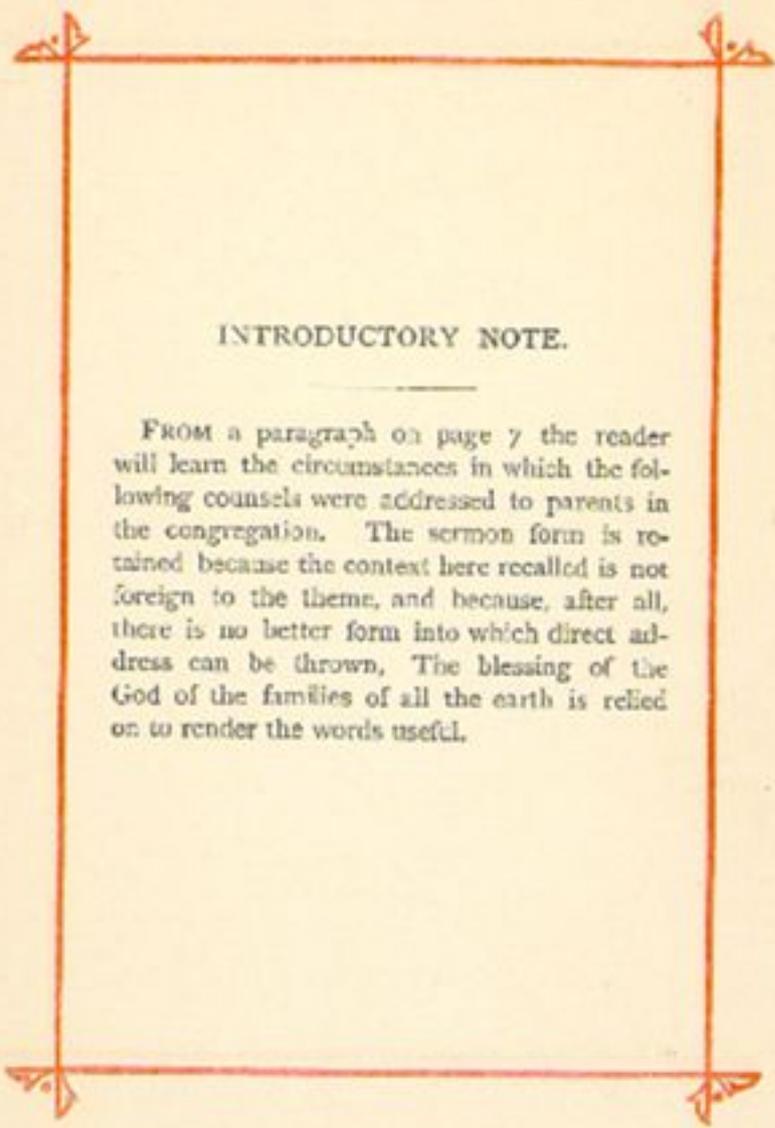
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,

200 BROADWAY, COR. 20th ST.

PAM.
H 8
769.3
H 34
1877

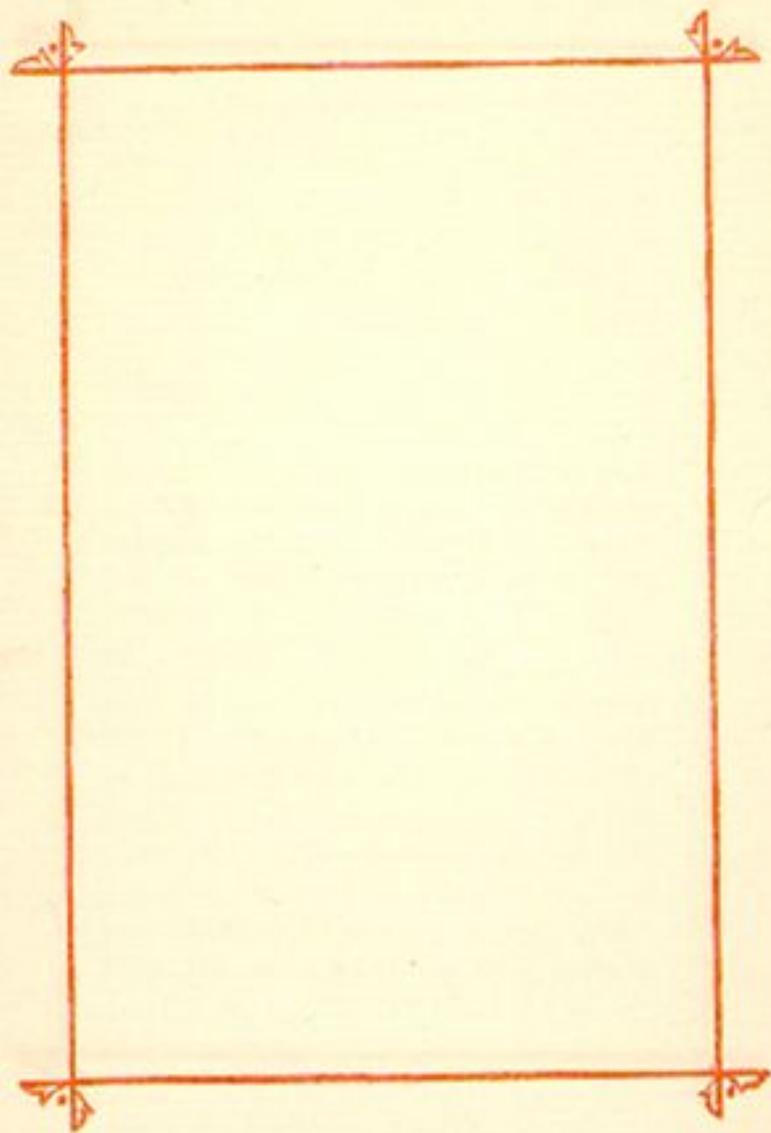


COPYRIGHT, 1877, BY
ANNON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY.



INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

FROM a paragraph on page 7 the reader will learn the circumstances in which the following counsels were addressed to parents in the congregation. The sermon form is retained because the context here recalled is not foreign to the theme, and because, after all, there is no better form into which direct address can be thrown. The blessing of the God of the families of all the earth is relied on to render the words useful.



"YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN."

"If she have brought up children."—1. TIM. v. 13.

THIS verse comes in connection with an apostolic ruling regarding widows, verse 3. "Honor," take care of, employ and support, "widows," in the highest sense of that word, "widows indeed." But not *all*. No one is to transfer to the church his own burdens. The children or nephews of dependent widows should show "piety at home," *i. e.*, practical filial regard ("piety" in the sense of "*pius Eneas*"), and so repay to parents the care of other years. This is God's will: and many a man has been richer for such

"You and Your Children."

service, even when it implied self-denial.

The "widow indeed," worthy to be employed and supported, is "devoted," as distinguished from an indolent, pleasure-seeking woman, "dead while she liveth," (verse 7). There is need to be warned on the general subject that they, the Christians, may be blameless, for (verse 8) failure here would be practical repudiation of Christianity. The widows so supported and employed (verse 9) should not be under sixty. They would be aged, unable to sustain themselves. The "number" does not imply vows, or an order. "Let be taken into the number" is the rendering of one word, a verb, from which we get "catalogue," and means "put on the list." Not all, again, are to be put on the list, but regard must be had to *life, character, and influence.*

"You and Your Children."

Among the indications of fitness for service, and the grounds of a claim on the Church, this is one: "If she have brought up children," that is, rightly brought. It ought to be encouraging to some not able to do much *outside* work, that doing this is among the "good works" of which inspiration takes account. Much is said regarding "women's work." Its value in its organized forms, where it is wisely directed, can not be overestimated; but sure I am that if mothers were faithful here, the burdens on society and on the Christian, which require the organized labor, would be lighter than they are.

A call has been issued for remembrance of the Sabbath-schools to-day, and prayer for them, in the interests of the young. Many opportunities occur here of enforcing Sabbath-school obli-

"You and Your Children."

gations. They may be so put as to overburden the teacher with a sense of responsibility, and to relieve the parent. This error one would not willingly commit. It has been decided, therefore, to make the sermon to-day bear on parental obligation, as it is suggested by words here applied to mothers, but which we venture to generalize—"if they have brought up children," for it is the training that is here in point.

On Wednesday evening we saw that the permanent arrangements of Eden for our race were four-fold: Toil as the means of sustaining the body; law as the means of guiding conscience; marriage as satisfying the social affections; and the Sabbath as providing rest and elevation for the whole man. These provisions were comprehensive and far-reaching. Sin marred the efficiency of this four-fold

"You and Your Children."

adjustment—a quartette which else had produced harmony of life on earth, and with heaven.

Now the marriage, and the family it originates, implied the good work, the duty of the text, bringing up children.

This involves (a) *a sense of responsibility* on the part of parents. All parts of God's scheme are harmonious and related. Baptism acknowledges that obligation. M. Henry is right in saying, "If infant baptism were more improved, it would be less questioned." It is based on the closeness of relation between parent and child, a closeness which all human legislation respects. If your child breaks a neighbor's window, you are responsible. So in this Church parents make no unreal renunciation of their burdens. They make their own profession and renunciation of evil, and assume their own obliga-

"You and Your Children."

tions, of which only death can relieve them. Remember this, parents! One day you contracted with God to bring up the children He put into your hands for Him. Have you fulfilled the contract? Are you fulfilling it? Or must you be put down among the "covenant-breakers" of Rom. i. 31? Even the whisper "on 'Change" of as much failure to meet obligations as you admit in this, would ruin many a man! The first requisite here is acceptance of obligation.

(b) This implies the acquisition and cultivation of a *capacity for bringing up children*. Many a life and home have been shipwrecked for want of this. It was not thought of in the arrangements of life. The airy graces and showy accomplishments that glitter in the gaslight of "society," are often not only dull and commonplace

"You and Your Children."

in the daylight of sober life, but they are sometimes incompatible with the bringing up of children in any true and effective way. To their possessors, the children, after the excitement of novelty has passed, become an evil, an annoyance, a living care, for ordering which there is no preparation, and there is no inclination: and so the earliest moment is seized for their removal to the fostering care of others. Remember that to bring up children so that it shall be among "good works" implies the acquisition and cultivation of the capacity.

This capacity respects *the ideas with which they are imbued*. Many a pampered child is ruined in the nursery, and set out in the world with the fixed idea that self-pleasing and self-indulgence are to be the ends of life. Many a boy and girl does one

"You and Your Children."

find demoralized in the earliest years of life—saturated with the idea that to get on, make a figure, be rich, is the chief end of being. Schools are chosen not for education, but for association. Ignorance, stupidity, or superficial attainments will secure pupils, if only social gains can be held out as an attraction.

Many a young person is ruined in youth through the notion that smartness is the perfection of human character. We have gone on glorifying this popular excellence as against steadiness and principle, until the idols it gilded tumble down in degradation and ruin.

Try, parents, to set out your children with true and just ideas of life. "Man's chief end is to glorify God."

Try, also, to cultivate in your children *simple and inexpensive tastes*. The opposite of these, no matter what your

"You and Your Children."

means, may be a snare to them. How fickle is "fortune" in the modern sense of that word! The rich of this generation are represented by the poor of the next. Expensive tastes are often the snare in which the feet of the man are entangled. Luxuries become necessities: and necessity seems to have no law; and questionable means of providing the luxuries are employed: then detection: and then ruin!

Out of the early necessities of the country which long required borrowed money for the development of its resources, a condition of things has grown up which we should make haste to get rid of. I mean the condition of perpetual indebtedness. The country is in debt; so are the States, the cities, the towns, the villages, the farms, the churches, the corporations, the individuals. If it be true that the borrower

"You and Your Children."

is servant to the lender, our boasted freedom is often qualified. There is no reason why this habit should continue. We have ample resources. There is every reason for getting rid of it. Borrowed money rarely goes so far as earned money, and it is a wise training for the young that habituates them to spend only what is honorably their own.

I would venture an advice to all who can yet do it, to bring up the young ones without dependence on tobacco and wines. "A small matter," you may say of one of these. Well, suppose it is. Life is an aggregate of small matters, and why add arbitrarily and unnecessarily to the number of our wants and burdens? And as to the other, it is not a small matter, as all men know who open their eyes and see the havoc and desolation wrought by intemperance in lives, in homes, and in

"You and Your Children."

the community—terrible ends from small and needless beginnings.

The right bringing up of the children implies guidance *in their companionships*. One often sees the guidance of a child taken by companions out of parents' hands, sometimes, I admit, for the better; but it is not the right state of things. Dependence on outside companions is itself an evil. Home ought to satisfy the young more than it does. Its employments should be sufficient ordinarily to engage and occupy. The children that must be kept on the highly-seasoned nutriment of frequent entertainments, more or less public, are ill-adapted for the battle of life in business or in the household. In many a sad instance purity of taste and of morals is sacrificed to social considerations. Wealth covers more sins than charity; and the rich

"You and Your Children."

and vicious are not shunned, but tolerated, with the worst results, because they are rich.

"The companion of fools shall be destroyed." To throw our young people among those who despise ordinary industries, who make pleasure the end of life, who deem the hard-working and honest an inferior race, and themselves a privileged caste, and then to expect them to grow up with solid and useful characters is as wise as to send them to sea in an infected ship and expect them to be safe and healthy.

And this leads me to emphasize another element in the training of children, namely, *the acquisition of the power by them to do something definite.* For (a) the idle, however rich or secured, are especially in danger. The idea of a "gentleman" (in the old world sense) as a man who does not need to

"You and Your Children."

do anything, and does nothing, is one we should deprecate in this land. Such persons are easy victims and effective tempters. They are often drones in the social hive. (*b*) Every now and then I have brought to me strong commendatory letters of young men who were not brought up to anything—"can do anything"—who practically can do nothing, and to whom it is the very hardest thing possible to render any true aid. (*c*) The Hebrew rule of giving every boy a trade, or a profession, is a good one in a community like ours, where change is written on everything. Among the incidentals of the depression through which we have been passing, one good thing I have sometimes rejoiced in—that boys who had been indulging the dream of an idle life, are compelled to turn in to work and keep step in the

"*You and Your Children.*"

march of organized and healthy society.

In this connection it is proper to say that discrimination is to be used by parents in the training of the children. Emerson somewhere says that the various qualities of the progenitors are potted in several jars, so to speak, separately in the children. Sometimes one appears to be the recipient of the unmixed, unmitigated vice of all the progenitors, to the relief of the rest, so far. How much care is required to judge justly, to counsel wisely, and to avert the dangers which inherited evil may bring!

And this again suggests the exercise of *authority* on the part of parents. It was a point in the divine commendation of Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice

"You and Your Children."

and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him," Gen. xviii. 19. Begin by treating the children as animated playthings; give them their own way; let them be tyrants over nurses, and find their pleasant vices unnoticed or laughed at; drop from your hands the reins of parental power; and you will find it no easy task to regain them. The quick, young natures will soon assert themselves against you, themselves to become unhappy, capricious tyrants where they ought to be happy in cheerful obedience. Parents, when you indulge your children, abandon authority, and give them their way, your self-indulgences and follies are bills, given by you, payable at ten or twenty years, at compound interest, and which will be presented on maturity, and payments compelled though it cost you tears and heart-agonies.

"You and Your Children."

One more counsel may be ventured in this connection. By repressing the selfishness of children you prepare them for that which, indeed, ought to be a distinct lesson to them, *cleaving together in life*. Can anything be more melancholy than the sons and daughters that grew up "around one parent knee" going off at maturity on their several ways without care for one another, or mutual sympathy, or fellowship? Death and inevitable changes soon enough make separations. They should never be anticipated by heartlessness. "Without natural affection" is one of the traits of character of an apostate race in 2 Tim. iii. 3. My poor countrymen of the Celtic blood are not without their vices, but this good thing is to be credited to them and their race, that the ties of kinship are recognized in so wonderful a degree, and often at

"You and Your Children."

much cost of self-denial. Sin always divides and disunites. It is no common lesson that history reads to the race that Cain and Abel, brothers in blood, should express the outcome of evil in the one being the murderer of the other. Teach the sons and daughters of your family, in the homely language of our life, to "stick together" in all mutual helpfulness, and to perpetuate the family feeling.

Now is it needful for me to add that the basis and cement of all good character is *the fear of the Lord*—the mental habit of one who knows God in Christ, and yields obedience for His sake? First and last, and all through, seek this for your children, more than money, position, or advancement.

Let your *example* be in its favor always and everywhere. Let no habit, not even a light word, of yours com-

"You and Your Children."

mend vice, or carelessness, or discourage virtue. Noah can not wonder at Ham's irreverence. He tempts him, and provokes him to sin by his own intemperance—like many a parent since. David can not wonder at the vices and crimes of his household, with all the attendant shame and misery. He led the way—sowed the seeds of bitterness. Eli had domestic woe and public disgrace. He restrained not his sons, and—for it is hard to learn the lesson of responsibility—even the prophet who warned him does not seem to have been successful in impressing his own character on his sons. Set the right example, and trust to God's blessing on its influence—perhaps when you are gone. Aim at inspiring your children with true Christian principle. It will give tone and character to all that is done. In this instrument behind me

"You and Your Children."

it is the one breath that is forced into it, and which is moulded and modulated into all varieties of high and low, soft and loud, through all the notes of the scale. And so in a Christian man. It is the one living spirit of reverence, of gratitude, of love, of obedience, that is in all the life, whatever the occasion by which this spirit is drawn out, and through which it finds expression.

Aim at implanting this in your children. God's promises are with you; God's providences are with you; God's good-will is with you. Believe His word, act on it throughout; not on policy, or ambition, or selfishness. Commit your way, and your children's way, to Him, and He will honor the confidence, and make the natural bond a spiritual link, uniting parent and child here and forever.

