until she realized that the child had drawn a connection between her grandmother, whom she called "Nana," and the banana.

And so researchers continue in their pursuit for a better understanding of the importance of language to the development of a child. But really this should come as no surprise to the Christian parent or to the Christian educator. He knows the words of the Scripture which read, "Train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." Or, in other words, speak often to a little child the vast mysteries of the goodness of God so that when he is old he will retain a child-like faith in his heavenly Father. Knowing that our words have such a real impact upon the language of children has impressed me with the duty we have to take the little ones of Christ upon our knees and tell them about the wonder of God – and someday they too will stand with the saints of God from every land and tongue, echoing words of praise to the One who created their lips.

PARENTS' CORNER

In our last issue we gave in this rubric the first part of Esther Kamps' "parable, whose subject is Christian parents teaching children." The story began, you will remember, with Nathaniel and Jerusha Faithful's being forced off the family farm by a dishonest, godless uncle. They taught their seven children in this instance by their willingness to suffer such a bitter blow with quiet submission to the will of God – even to the point of singing away their tears, in the words of a hymn like "I am a Stranger Here," as they passed the old familiar landmarks of that farm on their way to find a new home. They settled first near a town called Abatoir. They lived there in abject poverty, but were content nevertheless, till the town's only church apostatized to the point of no return. They therefore loaded their few possessions once more on the creaking, old cart and headed towards the mountains, hoping to find shelter in Bacca Valley, where, they had heard, there were still faithful people of God ("Beni") in these "Lastimes." After a long, grueling journey they arrived, in the providence of God, at the door of Isak and Harmony Fountain. There they found not only a place of shelter from the elements, but a spiritual home, in days when the

Mark of the Beast apparently already threatened the very survival of the "Beni." In Part II, Mrs. Kamps continues the story of the Faithful family and, in fact, carries the history of the Beni to the very end of the Lastimes.

And They Taught Their Children

Part II

Esther Kamps

Jerusha and Nathaniel Faithful and their growing family had found much more than physical refuge at the Stone House Farm. Harmony Fountain's brother, Isaiah Gladden, who had been one of the few to escape the persecution of '66 was one of the two Traveling Witnesses who made the circuit of Weeping Valley from farmhouse to farmhouse. Never since the old days had the Faithful family heard such preaching. Isaiah loved to preach from Hebrews of the Holy Book. How well they remembered that first Kirksprach, "Looking unto Jesus – the author and finisher of our Faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." When Isaiah Gladden spoke of the trials of the patriarchs, their hearts burned within them. How pertinent were the examples of those saints; how paltry their own recent wanderings seemed! How remorseful they felt for their weak prayers and their lack of faith. Most of all, how real their Savior's presence now seemed to them, and how glorious and certain the reward that He had set before them! In short, the Sprachword brought to them what they had long hungered for. It brought them the Comfort of the Gospel. As it always has.

As they spoke of these things earnestly with the older children, they were gratified to hear their insights. Even little Becky, in her forthright, impulsive way, showed that she was learning. Because of the preaching, the tribulations they had endured now had meaning.

It is tempting to close the story here. But, indeed, the last chapter of Time was but a short one. To follow it should be edifying.

The Faithfuls rebuilt for their family the gatehouse of Stone House Farm and were able to find a degree of comfort. The Faithful sons and daughters grew in knowledge and spirit. The years passed. Not without

sorrows. Jerusha's baby was stillborn. And Evensong Gladden, eldest daughter, whom they had always cherished, ran off with a visiting Peddler posing as a Preacher. It was a grief to all the Communion. Father Faithful's eyesight about this time began to fail, but his sons Matthiew and Caleb, stepped into the harness, ably instructed as they had been from the cradle. So it was that sorrows and joys came together.

Overbalancing all grief was the story of Tamara, with which we end this chapter. She came at evening prayers, as the Faithful family had come those years ago. She came with the look of lostsouls to her. She came with her three fatherless brothers and sisters, the youngest carried in a sling on her thin shoulders. She was thirteen and already possessing a haunting beauty. They were all gaunt, silent, and sad-eyed. She had no Lastname, for in Lastimes the Pretenders had long since abolished the institute of marriage. All were astonished at her coming, wondering how it was that she knew of them. Perhaps some wandering Peddler had told. Whatever the cause, they marveled, for rare indeed was it that the destitute did not go to the Haux-Havens provided by the Pretenders for their poor. Hers was a pathetic tale of abuse, drink, and finally desertion by their mother, a notable courtesan in her day. The father, or fathers, long gone. No matter, her need was great, and she had come the way of reproach rather than the way of the Beast. Doubtless it was the angels who led her, some Seedword randomly dropped, bearing fruit almost too late in time. No one questioned; they simply took her in. Harmony and Isak made room for her in the big house. From then on she and her little tribe were part of the Family.

Slowly, oh so slowly, the haunted hungry look faded from the children's eyes. What grew instead was their appetite for the Holy Words. They devoured it much as they had the good soup and black bread Harmony placed before them when they first had come. Indeed they were a lesson to the whole family of children who dwelt at the Stone House Farm. This, of course, could only be explained as the work of the angels who had led them there.

Tamara was a special joy to Harmony, whose own daughter had lusted after perishable food, and left them. Both the mothers loved her with a special love. They taught her patiently the skills and habits her natural mother had neglected. For Tamara, it was a time of struggle. Abused or not, one yearns for one's mother. All she had learned from her had been the arts of seduction, and they were abomination here. Tamara was tormented by griefs and doubts almost too much for her frail little body. Then one day Harmony found her sobbing inconsolab-

ly in the weaving room where she had been secretly trying to learn by herself what the other daughters seemed past masters at. It was not the weaving however which had undone her, but her whole life, seemingly as unraveled as the fabric which had defeated her.

With the loving patience of a lifetime of mothering, Harmony heard her out, comforting her overburdened and remorseful heart with quiet words of the Good Shepherd and His rejoicing over the lost sheep. It was Tamara's day of Relinquishment and conversion. Satan had been tormenting her with doubts – if God is so good, why did He give you such cruel parents, and leave you with such burdens? Now Harmony showed her with the simple example of the loom, how God's threads were woven into His pictures at His good pleasure to produce the tapestry of the Ages, in which the colors of blue and gold filtered with scarlet shone glorious against the background of black. Incomprehensible as it would have been a year ago, Tamara now was able to understand. Later in Kirkhall, she was formally given the Lastname of all the Faithful, "Abraham."

The Parentschool of Stone House Farm was busy those years. Every person with whatever skill or wisdom was pressed into the teaching of the young. The daily example of Devotions, Song, and Thankswalk, of course, underlay all else. Father Faithful, whose failing eyesight hindered his active outdoors work, taught his youthful helpers the way with animals and growing things, as well as his way of fervent prayer. Isak Fountain taught skills of hand and craft so needed for the Beni to survive in this Final chapter of Lastdays, when buying and selling were forbidden. He also shared with them his gift of prophecy, showing them how to delve and search the Holy Book. This also did Isaiah Gladden and Mark BeauxPieds who instructed the children in Doctrine and Sacred History as they made their circuit between the Beni settlements in Bacca Valley.

Thus it was that Lastimes was swift drawing to a close. There were two weddings. Ruth Faithful wed Isak the Fountain's youngest brother Worth. And Caleb Faithful, Nathaniel Faithful's eldest son, so like his father in nature – not eloquent, but ardently devout – married Tamara "Abraham." He had watched the sorrowing Tamara grow from an empty-eyed lost child to pious and generous-hearted womanhood. He had seen her patience with the children and her quick willingness to help the older women, learning their many tasks with eagerness. Tamara had loved Caleb almost from the first day she saw him. She saw in him not only the beauty and strength of young manhood as he labored with the oxen or pitched the hay in the harvests. She saw

beyond that manliness the strength of heart and a godliness it seemed she had hungered for all her life. He was a refuge from the Wastelands from whence she had come. So theirs was a real love match.

We come now to the last months of Time. It was indeed terrible. But it was also wondrous. Whereas in previous years, the Pretender governments had stamped out the Beni by default, simply turning a deaf ear to the rampages of the Marauders; now a new ruler had come into power, with all the cunning of computer and telecommunication at his disposal. Omnipotent and omnipresent he almost seemed. His method was twofold: Deceit coupled with Brutal Force. He offered such blandishments of food and shelter, medical aid, and entertainment in his Haux-Havens as to lure the wearying Psalmen Soldats into an easy Compromise. This was bad enough, but his arm of enforcement was also terrible. He launched a Marque Campaign (or Marque Muster, as his music called it). Not only did he offer tempting rewards for taking the BeastMark, publishing these in every quarter and especially in the fallen Kirkhalls; but also plans were put into action, to ensnare the unwilling Beni holdouts. The penalty for those caught was starvation.

That this was a time of intensive and constant warning to the children on the part of the Beni parents stands without saying. The Great Pretender was writhing with such paroxysmal force now that any and all caught by his far-reaching tentacles – even the very Beni themselves – would, humanly speaking, perish. The Storm Isak had warned of had broken upon them at last, and it seemed that none could remain standing under its pounding force. Every day, word of another Stone House fallen would reach their ears. In this dark time, the Benis' faces took on an inward glow, their eyes having that Horizon Look. The Book was ever at hand. Now there was no need to warn one another to Watch. Every child awoke each morning wondering if this would be Lastday. Every child had learned to pray such prayers as made the angels rejoice.

It was November when Tamara, expecting her first child, became suddenly very ill. Harmony, skilled in herb knowledge and possessing years of wise midwifery, took one look at Tamara's flushed face and swallowed hard. It was a dangerous complication of pregnancy, curable only by surgery, the sooner the better. She ran her hand gently over Tamara's brow, trying not to convey her own fear for the young woman. There were hushed conversations in the hall. Such cases usually worsened with alarming speed. Something must be done.

Everyone, save Harmony and Tamara, assembled in the Kirkhall for

prayer. All the children heard and understood. If Tamara were taken to the hospital, the Marque Muster might discover that she had no Mark and dire consequences could follow. Bacca Valley might be invaded. The Stone House, the last known to be standing, could fall.

At that point, all heard Tamara beginning to scream in agony. What they did then was the only thing they could do.

I will not burden you with the details of that last journey, the aid of a passing Peddler being employed at great cost, or the horrific labor agony of Tamara in her journey. Nor can I expect you even to imagine what Caleb suffered as he watched his beloved wife wheeled from him down those cold, sterile halls while he stood, hat in hand under the aegis of the staff and serpent, giving name, medical histories, address, while a gum-chewing woman typed it into a vast computer system. (Having denounced the Omniscient One, the Pretender Kingdom had attempted to imitate Omniscience by means of their Machines.) Caleb waited while the young woman punched keys and transcript pages flipped sibilantly into the box on her orderly desk.

An ignorant observer might have thought Caleb was in a state of culture shock. Seeing this Techniworld for the first time, there he stood, a tall, plain-dressed anachronism, seemingly numbed by, swallowed up by the rolling tide of events. But this was not so. Dismayed by what he saw, his mind was racing.

"Take this transcript down the grey hallway to room 666. Your 'wife' (the woman smirked, at the quaint term) is there. You sign here (she indicated an X), and your wife signs here."

Tamara was waiting. Together they read the document. It was a Marque Form. A simple Marque Form. Tamara shuddered, reading it. A spasm of pain ripped through her body, rising to almost the intolerable intensity. The woman at the desk interrupted impatiently, "Will you sign the paper now? I have to process it; then you can go on up to surgery."

Here was relief from agony. Easy. Immediate. Caleb groaned in his spirit, hesitating, nearly undone by pity. Tamara took a deep breath as the stabbing pain receded. Then in a voice strong with conviction, "Caleb, take me from this place. Now, while we still have the strength!" She reached up, her eyes so full of trust that Caleb could not but pick her up. He carried her away from the abyss of Aesculapius, escaping with his beloved from this most deadly temptation, bouyed up by angels. As the Beni always are in their hour of need. Even as the Fathers have always taught.

Down the narrow trail through Bacca Valley in the rude Peddler's

Cart they returned. The pain came and went and with it Tamara's strength. Tamara's child was born at dawn. Caleb had stopped the wagon to give what aid he could. Premature, tiny, perfectly formed, the little boy, was the child of Lastdawn.

This child was the last Beni ever to be born in Time. This was also the Firstdawn. Tamara lay a-dying, cradled in Caleb's arms, the babe clasped to her breast. Her eyes were hollow and dark with the battle she was now fighting with her last Enemy. Caleb was singing to her, one of the Oldsongs from before Lastimes.

This is where they were when Time came to an End. Giving thanks while the world ended, their child in their arms, praying for deliverance. They watched as He Who made all things came to gather His sheep, the Son of Man. This was one story of a handful of His many children.

I bid you take heed.

VIEWPOINTS

It used to be that most parents did not begin thinking about formal training for their child till he neared his fifth September, when it would be time to start kindergarten. Nowadays, with preschool having become a common phenomenon, many parents wonder, when a child reaches the ripe old age of 4, whether they would be doing him a disservice to deprive him of the opportunity for some kind of schooling before he starts regular school. Were they to ask for advice in the matter, they'd almost surely hear as many and as apparently cogent arguments for it as against it. Part of the reason for that, probably, is that what is good for one child might be a waste of time for another. In the end, therefore, it's the parents themselves who must decide what is best for their particular child. We thought, however, that a presentation of the more general pro's and con's might be of some assistance in deciding what's best in individual situations. We asked Marilyn Schipper and Elaine Faber therefore to share their views with us in this space. Mrs. Faber, second grade teacher at Heritage in Hudsonville, contends that a limited preschool experience can indeed make for a smoother and happier transition from home to school. Mrs. Schipper, who teaches kindergarten at Hope School in Grand Rapids, argues that, rather than hurrying our children off to school at the earliest possible age,