



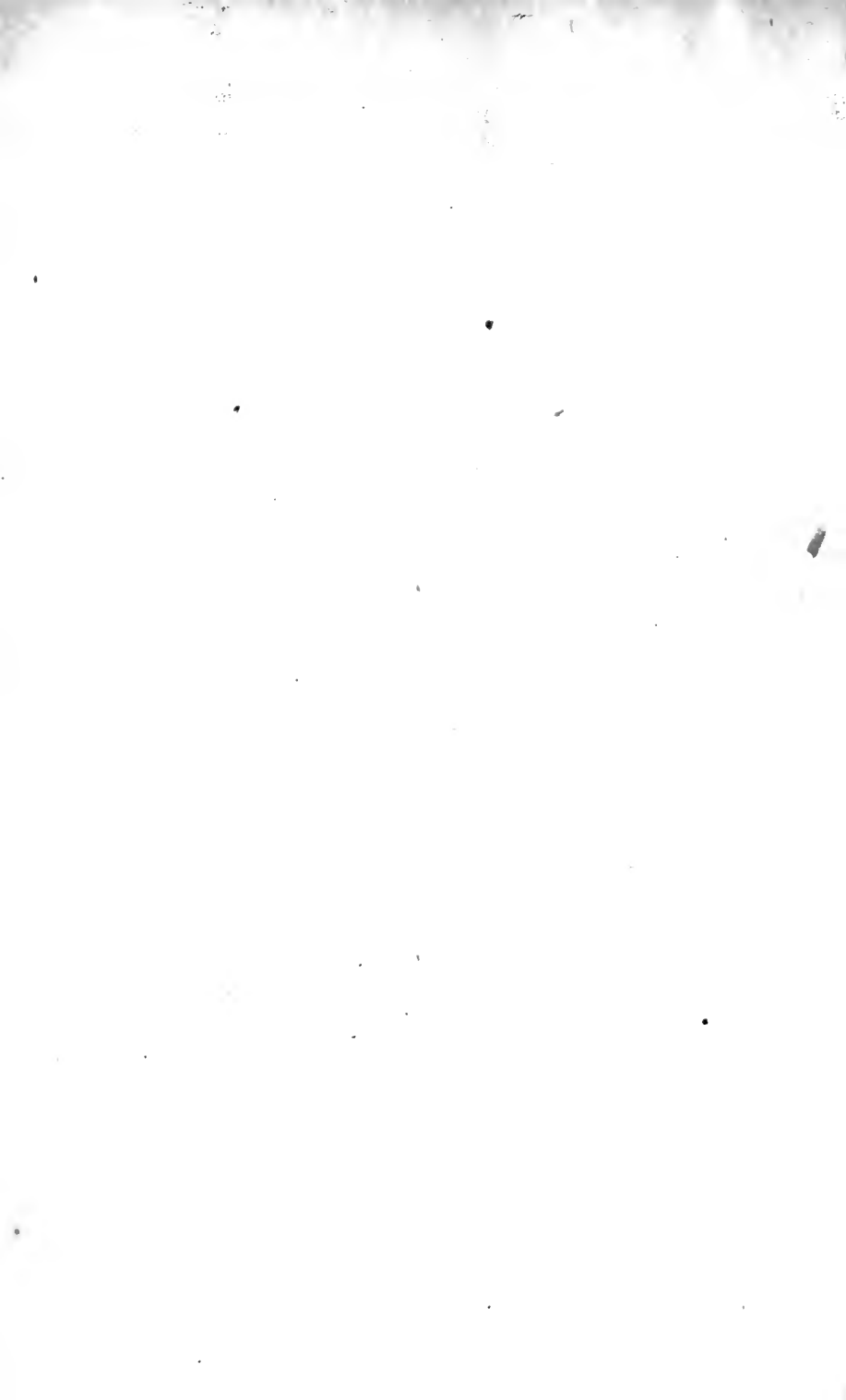
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THE  
AMERICAN  
SUNDAY-SCHOOL  
AND  
ITS ADJUNCTS.

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By JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D.D.

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PHILADELPHIA:

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

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## P R E F A C E.

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IF apology is needed for my coming forward upon a subject so grave, which has, moreover, tasked the pens of many able authors, it must be found in the following statement.

More than forty years ago it was my lot to sit on an humble form in one of the earliest Sunday-schools set up in America. In process of time I became a teacher in similar institutions; and ever since my entrance upon the gospel ministry I have accounted it an honour to work collaterally in the same cause. In attempting to promote the same ends, I have constructed and launched from the presses which now produce the present work more than thirty trifles, which, "for better for worse," have gone sailing out upon the ocean of print, some to be high and

dry on the strand of oblivion, and some to be still floating on the wave, protected, like the paper-*nautilus*, by their very frailty. It is most natural, however weak, that I should have a warm side towards Sunday-schools and their literature.

But, more than this, intimate acquaintance with this mode of beneficence and sober contemplation of its working, through many years of varied and often saddening experience in regard to the fortunes of the young, have only tended to augment my admiration for a plan which I verily believe to be of God. Notwithstanding some temptations to blind predilection which may be disclosed by the above remarks, the subject, it is believed, will be found to have been treated without hurtful bias. Sunday-schools, when here applauded, are discussed as belonging to a system far wider than any temporary human device. They have been placed in due subordination to the organism of the church, even as contemplated by far sterner churchmen than the present writer. Pains has been taken to show that no collision need ever ensue between church and school. Indeed,

a large part of what is contained in the following pages might be applied with rigour to those church or parochial schools which abjure every project of connection beyond their own ecclesiastical picket-fence. At the same time, an avowal will not escape notice of certain principles touching the union of different evangelical bodies in this work; principles which will appear lax to some whom I love and reverence, but which, nevertheless, have not been adopted hastily nor lost strength with increasing years. They are so stated and so guarded that even the most rigid must perceive that the power is left altogether in their own hands. Division of those who love the same Lord is not rendered necessary by sincere adherence even to points of difference. Good PHILIP HENRY, father of the Commentator, (both father and son being of the persuasion which I am bold to acknowledge,) used to repeat the saying of some wise men in the troubled times of his boyhood,—that “if all the Presbyterians had been like Mr. Stephen Marshall, and all the Independents like Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs, and all the Episcopal

men like Archbishop Usher, the breaches of the church would soon have been healed."

When the American Sunday-school Union shall publish error, or shall cease to publish saving truth, and shall persevere in the breach of covenant, I will join all faithful men in abandoning and denouncing the Society. At present she stands to be judged by her books; and, if complaint is to be made of these, it should not come from the friends of established evangelical doctrine; which leads me to say that an unusual space will be found devoted to the consideration of good and bad books. Plainness, if not severity, has been exercised towards some of the enormities of the contemporary press. It is time that teachers, preachers and parents should apply a rigid scrutiny to this abuse. Instead of running a muck against every fable or parable, from *Æsop* and *Bunyan* down to *Sherwood* and *Kennedy*, accounting all fiction malignant if it be in prose, and making good coin bear all the opprobrium of base-metal counterfeits, the friends of truth and purity should use all means to

push out corrupt literature by the introduction of that which is Christian.

The chapters which treat of Sunday-schools as belonging to an age of preparation, as scattering temporal blessings on every side of their direct march, and as claiming unwonted zeal on the part of teachers, cannot but find a hearty response from the sympathies of those who are actual workers. To these the little volume is commended, with humble prayer for God's blessing.

NEW YORK, *Nov.* 1, 1856.





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# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

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## CHAPTER I.

### GENERAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEMANDED BY THE ACTUAL CONDITION OF AMERICAN SOCIETY.

THE communication to the soul of divine truth, which is the appointed way of bringing rescue and happiness, has many ministries. All nature reflects a portion of this truth, which, however, no man is qualified to comprehend till he has found the key in the book of revelation. God speaks to us by the light of reason, by the conscience, by the Scriptures, by the ministry, by the sacraments, by providence, and by our fellow-men, especially in the sacred rela-

tions of parents, masters, guardians, friends and instructors. So, also, the great saving lessons come to different classes of mankind, from infancy to old age. But the nature of the process, herein following the nature of the human soul, demands that it should be continued long,—or, what is the same thing, that it should begin early. Here is the basis of popular education; and, as nations are made up of millions who yesterday were children, all legislators have seen the connection between juvenile training and the well-being of States.

By the two great means of Schools and Books, one inclusive of the other, mankind are civilized; by the same, under the ministry of gospel truth in the church, they are Christianized. Books may be without schools, and in extreme cases, where oral teaching is made compulsory, schools may be without books; but each infers the other. In both there are gradations, lying between the Arab school of half-naked little

Mussulmans under the lofty palm reading from square boards, to the universities of Oxford, Paris and Berlin; and from the hornbook of the Irish hedge-schoolmaster and our own infant library up to the Musée Français, Audubon and the cyclopædias. Within these limits what an expanse! And how unutterably important that such a world of forces should bear mightily on the human progress which God designs!

When in the sequel I endeavour to show the felicitous union of these two vast instrumentalities under the Sunday-school, I am only proceeding on the lesson which is nowhere more strongly expressed than in the adage of Solomon, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."\* Meditation on this, accompanied with suitable observation of the world, will insure the belief that the religious education of youth is the most

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\* Proverbs xxii. 6.

hopeful means of benefiting society. Contemplating the evils of mankind, we find that our power of opposing them, in their adult state, is small. It would be a delightful result if we could reform our whole population; but the only hope held out is in regard to the children, as being the accessible part, because the children of to-day will be the grown people of to-morrow,—a simple truth little recognised by statesmen and legislators. All which drives us to schools, and especially to religious schools, as the best method yet devised for seasoning the early mind of the nation with the truth which is most important. The great maxim of the wise man is, to have good men we must provide good children. And the proposition which I now reaffirm is, that THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF YOUTH IS THE MOST HOPEFUL MEANS OF BENEFITING SOCIETY.

I. The more widely and deeply we examine the population of our country, the more fixed must be the conclusion that

most of our ills arise from ignorance and irreligion. It cannot be said of any period of our history, with strictness of truth, that all the people were pure and enlightened. Yet there were portions of the early colonies which were as intelligent, orderly and pious as any entire body of men in any country or age. There are States in which religious knowledge and virtuous living were impressed on all the original settlers, and in which, notwithstanding the disastrous changes which time has wrought, we still discern the original impress. There are regions where even now there is a commanding prevalence of domestic virtue; where profane swearing is infamous; where the suffrage of the mass is favourable to temperance; where duels are unknown; and where the Sabbath is externally honoured. And these are the districts where also the education of the young has been most sedulously maintained. But it would be unfounded flattery to assert any thing

like this of our whole population. In addition to the universal depravity of our race and the consequent tendency of all that is good in humanity to deteriorate, many causes conspire to make us more and more corrupt; and hence the demand for a vehement opposition to this downward torrent.

The means of knowledge and of grace have not been kept abreast of the advancing column of population. The zeal for material prosperity and worldly success has not been accompanied with an equal zeal for light and religion. As emigration has spread itself over new tracts reclaimed from the wilderness, the progressive wave has flowed beyond the means of sound instruction. Industry has begotten wealth; wealth has engendered luxury and pride; these have weakened the principle of holiness; and the children of the church have grown up in conformity to the world, and have been followed by another generation, still



further off from the frugality, strictness and reflection of the fathers. Cities and towns have their peculiar evils; and frontier-settlements as truly, but under varied forms, have their's. In a state of things like this, unbounded liberty of opinion has led to latitudinary doctrines, or to the denial of all Christian doctrine. This would be true even if our nation comprised only the descendants of the original stock. But we have to add a new ingredient in the accession, by myriads of foreigners, sometimes infidel, sometimes Popish, and, in a majority of instances, less addicted to religious sentiment than even those to whom they come. It need cause no surprise, therefore, that sagacious observers augur gloomily for the future and believe that the moral tone of society at large is suffering a depression. We read this in the records of our police, our courts of justice and our prisons; in our journals, our public amusements and our streets; in our elections and our halls of

legislation, where men of uncivilized manners were once rare; in popular violence, open intemperance, suicide, political corruption and lust for war. These things reveal a tendency towards a sort of frontier-barbarism; and bad must grow worse in a fearfully-augmenting proportion unless some vigorous instrumentality be applied to arrest the plague. It is a serious question for the Christian and the patriot what means shall be employed in this direction.

II. In contemplating a host of evil influences so formidable, one of the first impressions forced upon us is that OUR POWER OF OPPOSITION IS VERY MUCH LIMITED. Even when we see the enemy and are eager to contend, our means of attack reach but a little way. Look, for example, at the dense and increasing body of human beings, fully grown and active, who are ignorant, misguided and variously depraved, and then inquire, What force can we bring to bear upon them? For, unless this be

done, there seems no salvation from evils worse than we have dreamed of in our darkest hours. We have the Bible; but who shall carry it, and who shall induce them to read? We have churches, but in no such proportion as to supply the wants; and to those which we have the persons in question do not and will not come. We have ministers,—many thousands of them; but, even on the charitable supposition that all these preach Christ's gospel, their number is not adequate to a hundredth part of the necessity. We have schools; but they come too late for those who have grown hard in their prejudice and unbelief. Even if Mr. Maurice's scheme for adult colleges and lectures for working-men should be proved to be more than a chimera, it has not begun to be tried in America, and it is inapplicable to those who need the first rudiments. It is obvious that our array of means does not reach the mass on which we desire to operate. It is true, we are

bound by every principle of love and duty to stretch forth our hands to these very persons, hardened and even hopeless as they seem, with the Bible and other vehicles of truth, especially the preaching of the word. And something of this the Christian is continually attempting; though never yet with that ardour and sacrifice which are due. Yet, after all, how little impression are we making upon the solid front of the host, while it is receiving incalculable reinforcements in its rear! The instances of our success scarcely as yet modify the unbroken line of unchristian or antichristian opposition. Is not this a disheartening prospect for those who shall succeed us? Take any one great city into your moral survey; (I address men who, like myself, have passed middle life :) first, recall the moral and religious changes of such city since you were in youth; next, examine what the tendency is at present; and then answer, if no new element be in-

troduced, what is likely to be the condition of churches and people in the year 1900?

III. It would be a blessed thing, we all agree, if we could reform the whole of OUR PROFLIGATE ADULT POPULATION. But those who have attempted it, even on a small scale and in favourable circumstances, have found the work difficult,—some would add, hopeless. And for this difficulty there are reasons lying deep in human nature and the nature of things. Figuratively expressed, the task proposed is that of taming the old lion; of writing on granite; of moulding rock in your fingers; of twining the gnarled boughs of the oak. We say no new or doubtful thing when we declare that, if moral force is to be applied, it will be applied at immense disadvantage to the adult subject. He who has become a man is already educated for good or for evil. Such are hundreds of thousands around us with whom we have to deal. Each has taken some form of settled distortion. His habits of

thought, feeling and action are to a certain degree fixed. Taking the grosser masses of such, we must affirm the dreadful truth that they are already ruined. Even when, here and there, by sovereign grace, one perhaps out of a thousand comes over to the side of truth and righteousness, it is with limbs rigid and knotted, with defects which we can never entirely supply and enormities which we can never effectually abate. How few are the instances among tens of thousands in our community, after the labours of hundreds of ministers and assisting brethren, of any thorough reformations from superstition and vice in those who have grown old as Papists, heretics, or infidels! The accessions to our churches—let it be owned with joy, yet with grief—are chiefly from the children of the church,—from those who have been kept long under the stated means of grace and trained up in the way they should go. The truth is, the multitude of irreligious adults are be-

yond our reach. The vast machinery of our religious efforts does not touch them. The doctrines of salvation which we possess are brought into no apposition with their minds. They live and die in a Christian land without direct influence from our ministry and our churches. Several of our religious denominations, at least, have, in a marked degree, lost their hold on many of the lower and even middle classes.

Of our citizen soldiers, our heroic fire-department, our mechanics and day-labourers, how small a proportion do we recognise in our religious assemblies! There are blessed exceptions; but the Protestant bodies have something to learn on this point from the zealous labour of Popery, at once expansive and penetrating, which reaches every Irishman on a railway in the mountains. Some of our Christian bodies—and, prominent among these, the Methodists—continue to beat up for recruits among the humblest portion of society; and in so doing they

walk closely in the steps of the Redeemer. In country places, also, the evil which we are considering is not so apparent: the "rich and the poor meet together" in God's house. But in cities and great towns, the advance of wealth, luxury and pride has wrought a segregation of the rich from the poor which practically leaves many of the latter (so far as we are concerned) to serve other gods. The truly Christian and humane lamentations of Dr. Muhlenberg on this point have a reference far wider than to the Episcopalian branch of Christendom. We need to be perpetually on the watch against neglect of the class who most need our instruction. In any great civic procession of the numerous trades and associations which marshal before us the bone and sinew of our productive population, is it not true that we must surmise, concerning most, that they stately attend no orthodox place of worship? And, such being the case, what are our chances for reforming



the profligate masses? The adult population not only is devoid of impression by our means, but cannot be brought under any immediate efforts. The children of such, left to themselves, must be even worse than the parents. If this is more strikingly true of cities, it holds in a due proportion with regard to all those throughout the land who are not trained to regular attendance on the means of grace.

IV. But while the adult masses, confirmed in evil principles, are scarcely within the circle of our endeavours, it is equally true that the CHILDREN ARE BOTH ACCESSIBLE AND SUSCEPTIBLE OF INFLUENCE. Go forth into our densely-peopled streets on any sunny afternoon of spring, and see the swarms of little ones,—the jocund but neglected offspring of the poor. It would be a novel and suggestive sight to many among us who confine their observation to the haunts of business and fashion. The spectacle is enlivening, and, if it were not

for the after-thought of what their manhood is to be, would be delightful and fraught with hope. For it is not solely concerning the youth of aristocratic Eton that the poet's words are true:—

“Alas, regardless of their doom,  
 The little victims play!  
 No sense have they of ills to come,  
 Nor care beyond to-day.  
 Yet see how all around them wait  
 The ministers of human fate  
 And black Misfortune's baleful train!  
 Ah, show them where in ambush stand,  
 To seize their prey, the murd'rous band!  
 Ah! tell them they are *men!*”

Now, from any one of these groups, by the exercise of a proper Christian effort, some may be brought under instruction. Experience has proved this. Even those who at the first solicitation have refused, turned contemptuously away, and even scoffed, have yielded to kind, gentle and winning language. There is hardly one

of our principal towns in which some endeavours have not been made to gather street-rovers into "Boys' Meetings," and to establish "Ragged Schools," resorts for news-boys, or something similar; and there is not one of these efforts which has been without encouragement. It is this pliability of childhood which makes it the proper subject for training; just as it is the same quality in the flexible vine which makes us choose it to be led along our arbours and trellises. What we cannot accomplish with full-grown, sturdy sinners, we may effect with their tender offspring. Whether in Christian or in heathen lands, our chief hope for the future diffusion and establishment of religion is in the enlightening and training of youth. The hope of the church, the hope of the world, is that portion of the race which is this day in the mothers' arms. If we cannot remove the inveterate malady of hoary transgressors, we may rescue the next generation by preparatory and pre-

ventive methods. "Satan," says the Rev. John Newton, "proposes to fill a bushel with tares; now, I thwart him if I can previously fill it with wheat." In the infant mind we have no formal errors to correct, no stubborn prejudices to eradicate, no compacted systems of falsehood to batter down. There is no stage of human existence in which we may indulge so much hope of lasting success. We all habitually underrate the momentous foundations which are laid in childhood. Taking the world at large, it is not too much to say that the direction in regard to morals and religion is taken with most before the age of ten years. Innumerable are the instances in which habits of falsehood, or duplicity, or concealment,—of impurity, idleness and dishonesty,—of anger, revenge and violence,—are settled in the nursery, or in those squalid scenes of neglect and vice which in the case of the irreligious poor take the place of the nursery. And on the other hand,

even if conversion do not immediately ensue, the happy child of a pious home or the pupil of a loving instructor receives those first lines of sacred truth, those feelings of reverence for God, those aspirations of prayer, those convictions of conscience, which prove, in the hands of the Spirit, the steps to future piety. These most familiar considerations urge us to spread wide our appliances of early culture in the period when the ductile mass is most fully within our moulding touch.

V. The plain consequence of what has been said is, that AS THE CHILDREN OF THE PRESENT DAY, SUCH WILL BE THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NEXT. Harvest is the infallible revealer of seed-time. What we sow that shall we also reap. If we abandon this immense juvenile population to the wanderings of ignorance, the propensities of vice, and the machinations of Satan, we may assure our descendants of a terrible retribution, which will fall not only on a

dwindling and languishing church, but on a state disordered, corrupted and divided, if not overwhelmed. To destroy a commonwealth like ours, which draws its vital support from intelligence and principle in the people, we have only to reduce the common mind to error and ungodliness. The catastrophe will show itself not only in decaying grace, but in risk and losses of property, civil disruption and intestine carnage. The ordinary operation of Christian churches affords a partial barrier against this incoming flood, but not as yet adequate to resist the rapids of false opinion. And if education be neglected, from what quarter is the church itself to receive supplies when its present members have closed their lives? To make sure and precipitate every national evil which we dread, nothing more is needed than inactivity and a supine determination to let the millions of existing youth grow up without care and discipline. There may, by the sovereign interposition

of Providence, be remarkable exceptions in individual cases, and here and there a raging Saul may be arrested in his maturity and made a servant of good; but, on the large scale, the character of the next age may be read in the character of those who are children now. God can work miracles; but where he has intrusted us with certain means, we may not count upon his reversal of every law which prevails in the world of mind and morals.

The other side of this picture of possibilities is too cheering to be altogether withheld. Train up, even in part, the juvenile host which is rising all over the land, and when they are old they shall be the stay and the glory of the next generation. From one end of the land to the other there will be men firm in truth, settled in principle and armed for such conflicts as Providence may ordain.

VI. THE FORCE OF THESE TRUTHS HAS NOT BEEN ENTIRELY UNFELT BY STATESMEN AND PO-

LITICIANS; and hence the schemes of public education which have been projected in many countries and established in various States of our own republic. When I say that these do not attain to the utmost of what we need, it is with no intention of disparaging these institutions. Free education for the people is a sublime conception and a really patriotic work. The structure in the State of which I am a citizen is more glorious than the pyramids. When foreigners and other strangers visit our cities, when they gaze at the architecture of our merchants,—more beautiful and costly every year,—when they survey our forests of shipping, our emporiums of trade, our repositories of industrial and tasteful art, they too often leave unsought an object of more just wonder and more attractive loveliness,—our PUBLIC SCHOOLS. And we cannot refrain from recording the delight with which we lately contemplated the newly-opened Female School in Twentieth Street, New York.



When we saw some six hundred girls listening to the word of God at the opening of the services,—when we observed this great and beautiful assembly, not in irregular variety of position, not showing disrespect by sitting in prayer, but all in a posture of devotion, all with downcast eyes, all uniting as with one voice,—when we could detect no averted face or eye, no smile or whisper, and all this under the bidding of a young and modest woman,—we thought how much we had yet to learn in Sunday-schools, and especially how much our common schools might be embellished and sanctified by that due admixture of religion which a Christian people have a right to demand. Each of those capacious edifices, filled with, not scores, but hundreds of children, under the tuition of capable teachers, is a hive of sweets for the coming winter of distress; and the hum of infant voices is a music that goes to the soul and preludes hopes for American prosperity. Whatever defects

may exist, we bless God for the institution and would wish it perpetuity. Far be it from us or ours, under any pretext of religion, to lay on it the ruthless hand of spoliation. Far be it from the Christians of America to withdraw from it that support and influence which, by God's blessing, may yet avail to modify what is erroneous and supply what is wanting. No tongue can express the benefit which is conferred on this extraordinary array of youthful minds. In some respects the school leaves its impress even more powerfully than the home. Witness this every day in a particular instance. Visit the humble dwelling of the foreigner lately an emigrant, and you will observe with surprise that, while the parents are almost totally ignorant of our language, the children read and speak English as well as their American playmates, and without a vestige of foreign accent. In less appreciable points the influence is equally great, and it should arouse us to consider the in-

calculable formative power of a well-ordered school. What might it not be if the system of teaching were not one-sided and mutilated? After these willing concessions, we are constrained to declare that our State schools, with all their power and all their secular advantages, fail of the object which we hold to be paramount, *because they lack the religious element*. If education is the training of the whole nature for usefulness and happiness, then is that an incomplete system which ignores our ruined state, our means of recovery and our evangelical duty. As the State, according to doctrines lately avowed, has no religion and can favour none, the schools which are its creatures refuse to teach that which is sectarian. And under this designation they are pleased to comprehend not only the creeds of the respective sects, but that holy document which is the avowed basis of all. In these nurseries of the next generation, beloved youth may be taught the rudiments

of literature and science, but not a word respecting God's revelation of redeeming love, the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the consolations of the gospel, the history of the church, or the means of escaping sin and misery. They may freely inculcate all that relates to the present brief mortality; but they must not breathe a syllable of devotion. As a general truth, the individual teacher, however sincerely a child of God, may not gather around him his interesting charge to unite in prayer to their God and Saviour. According to authoritative interpretation of the law, he must exclude God's word from being read or heard. The Mohammedan or the Hindoo child may enjoy the use of his religious books; but in a land where the majority are Christian and Protestant, the little one must pass through his years of training with a significant and portentous silence on that point which above all others is important. On this view of the system, we must cast out

that book which God has given as the rule of man's faith and conduct; that book which contains all that distinguishes us from heathen and unbelievers; that book which all religious denominations agree to receive as true and fundamental; that book which eminent jurists have held to be recognised in the common law; that book which we are striving to carry to every hamlet and home,—which is clasped to the bosom of the sufferer and pillows the head of the dying. Out with it! It is sectarian. Though inspired of God, though fraught with truth and wisdom, though necessary to the formation of character and the safety of the soul, though eminently fitted to the spring-tide of life,—out with it! On some plea of difference in its exposition, or of some microscopic diversities in translation, it is voted sectarian. Out with it! Let no verse of what God has spoken be uttered to tens of thousands of children from the week's beginning to its end. Now, I will

not pause to establish what I nevertheless believe,—that a clear majority of American Christian parents have a right to demand that this sun of the spiritual heaven should not be shut off from the minds of their offspring,—nor yet to show that, in a system of training, the studious suppression of a whole body of truth, and that the most important, may work wide-spread disaster, even if there be no inculcation of error; but I shall have general concurrence in the simple conclusion that *schools which exclude or omit all that is spiritual and evangelical are not the means which can train up the rising race in the way which we have found to be necessary.*

VII. BY WHAT MEANS, THEN, CAN WE SO TRAIN THEM UP? for this is the question which now forces itself upon our attention. Do you say that religious instruction is a household matter and must be left to the conscience and care of parents? This might be a suitable answer in the mouths of worldly legislators and committees; but

it cannot satisfy the heart of Christian philanthropy. The children of pious people are likely to do well; but, alas! the proportion of such is not great in the community. Do you say that religious instruction is the business of the church? We admit it, and should rejoice to see every congregation, of every creed, furnished with a school in which the Bible and the formularies of our faith might be taught and explained; but in neither of these methods do we reach that vast accumulation of want which confessedly lies without the limits of domestic and parochial faithfulness. What we require—what is indispensable to the thorough leavening of the corrupt mass—is a widely diffusive influence, which shall extend itself to the outcast children of the poor; to those who have no parents, or unnatural, ungodly parents; to those who have no churches and who care for none; to the abject of the city, the mountain, and the wilderness. The necessity is urgent; the

peril is at the door. We must have appliances which shall be further-reaching than the church, and thus preparatory to the church.

Let us not be misled by the fallacy that no good thing can be accomplished except in our church capacity. In a mixed and unevangelized population, there are a hundred means to be used in order to bring men within the influence of the church. And, in every sound, evangelical, and catholic sense, that is done by the church which is done by Christian men, though of different communions, united for the holy purpose of diffusing the knowledge of Christ. A great, a combined, a universal crusade must be proclaimed against ignorance and falsehood.

VIII. And this brings us, naturally and immediately, to the expedient of SUNDAY-SCHOOLS, which we confidently uphold as THE BEST MEANS AS YET DEvised FOR THE RAPID AND SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTION AND SAL-



VATION OF THE MULTITUDES WHO ARE PERISHING FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE. Not one syllable need be expended on the description or history of this institution: it is known and read of all men. We do not propound it as a substitute for family instruction: God forbid. If such were its tendency it would not be a blessing, but a curse. We do not hold it up as rendering unnecessary parochial day-schools in connection with churches. We pretend not that for general and secular ends it can compete with common schools; but we affirm, after long observation, that in a population like our own it affords the happiest, and in many cases the only, means of reaching that teeming multitude who, but for instant aid, must be abandoned to irreligion.

Some are alarmed at the principle of *union* in regard to this enterprise. Even if there were any thing questionable in this, let it be distinctly stated that, as to the practical details of any individual school,

there is no union except where the alternatives are a school in union or no school at all. In the schools of any large congregation, for example, there is no compromise whatever. We teach our pupils our catechisms and doctrines. But put the case of a school among the clearings of Nebraska. Here are fifty urchins from a circle of five miles' radius, half of no sect and the other half of five or six. Now the problem is fairly before us. Shall we wait till one denomination can bring over all the rest? shall we in the face of heaven set up five or six separate banners? or shall we band together and teach that common Christianity in which we are agreed? And if we may so band together, may not believers whom God has blessed unite all over the land in sending support to these struggling outposts, and in founding new ones? If you say yes, you stamp with your approbation the American Sunday-school Union.

The reason why this institution from time to time asks aid from the Christian public is, that it is a great missionary society, having for its field the infant world. Not content with those schools which cluster around existing religious societies, it would plant its healthful growths in the waste places of city and country where churches are as yet unknown. It throws forward a light infantry which can penetrate far beyond the advance of heavy columns. The groups which it gathers in the log-hut of the Western plain or forest receive the gospel even before the arrival of a minister; and, in cases beyond our reckoning, Sabbath-schools have been the germs of Christian congregations.

A guiding ray of hope breaks in upon our darkened prospect when we consider what the associated benevolence of our country might effect if it were only to concentrate its efforts on the religious training of the young. We seem to behold an in-

numerable army rising in its strength and unity to do battle against the man of sin and the infidel assaults of philosophy falsely so called; from very childhood knowing those Sunday-schools which Popery on one hand and scepticism on the other would wrench from the hand of education; imbued with those doctrines which save the soul; begirt with that harness whereby the man of God is thoroughly furnished unto all good works; instructed in the rules and trained in the habits of a pure Christian ethics; and in a multitude of blessed instances actually called of God and purified by the laver of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. There is no work of man which is more seasonable; for it lays hold on its material at the nick of time. There is none of which the fruits have already been so large. Already we begin to estimate results, and to discriminate in society a marked portion, as those who have come out of the discipline of

Sabbath-schools. Tell me not of a generation reared in the highest civil and secular culture; these might, nevertheless, be revolutionary traitors or atheistic enemies of Jesus. Give us a nation nurtured at the breasts which flow with the sincere milk of the word; or, if our faith reach not the stature of a wish which seems to presuppose millennial illumination, give us so large a portion of the heaving mass, deeply tinted with God's truth, as shall leave no region of our fearfully-extended territory without its young and strong and influential believers, sending the savour of evangelical godliness on every side. TRAINING THE YOUNG IS PREACHING THE GOSPEL. If great and sublime deeds are to be wrought by any race, shall it not be by that which has had expended on it especial care and faithfulness in the forming-period of childhood? Before the Lord come, he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,

lest he come and smite the earth with a curse. Ye that love the face of infant beauty,—ye that cherish your own beloved ones with unutterable yearnings,—ye that count all that is human near to your bosoms,—have mercy on the offspring of the poor, the deluded and the lost! And may God dispose and enable you to urge forward this work of Christian education with a fervency of co-operative zeal such as has had no precedent.

## CHAPTER II.

### CHILDREN INTRUSTED TO US TO BE TRAINED FOR GOD AND OUR COUNTRY.

WE have opened the way for the discussion which awaits us, by considering religious education as demanded by the actual condition of American society. The disaster consequent on irreligious ignorance stared us in the face, and we were disheartened to find how slender were our means of remedy. Our profligate population in town and country passed before our view in all their alarming potency for evil, but at the same time as drifting more and more away from the influence of the church. While this is painfully true of those who have grown to manhood, it is not absolutely subversive of our hopes; for

we can reach the mind of childhood and we can train it. On these grounds we maintained the necessity of an education other than that afforded by our common schools.

So much is undoubtedly true in the consideration of American children and youth as such. But there is a closer and more tender view of the same object; for we may look on them as our own children, and thus devise a new argument, in regard to a large and important portion of the race, from their relation to us as parents. Regard for children and children's children is proper to humanity and is strengthened by true religion; as when the Psalmist prays "that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."\* If all be right with our sons and daughters there need be

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\* Psalm cxliv. 12.



no fear for the United States. The greatest blessing we can confer on the commonwealth is to leave behind us a generation of right-minded youth. If it is trite, it is nevertheless important enough to bear a thousandfold repetition and inculcation, that well-trained youth are the hope not only of our nation, but of all nations. In this era of highways, commerce, telegraphs and the press, all nations are in certain great respects tending to be one. The rising race is the hope of the coming peoples of the earth. After hearing and saying this for years, we feel it more than ever, when, turning to our own children, we see in them the hope of mankind. I have always regarded these parental sensibilities as affording one of the readiest means of entrance to the affections of Christian people for the purpose of marshalling them in behalf of education and the country. The genuine citadel of Christian education is the heart of parents; and there is no parent

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who does not exercise incalculable power. He who has children, wards, or pupils, or any whom he may mould or shape, need never complain that his sphere of influence is small, or that he has no means of leaving his mark on the coming age. As well might a man lament that he had no share in the hydraulic power of a district who should sit on the top of a mountain to guide by his hand the spring that was presently to become the propelling river of a thousand manufactures.

The Scriptures rank it among the blackest sins to be *without natural affection*. It is one of the crimes which even the heathen and the infidel are ashamed of, and which is rebuked by the very beasts. But no words can at all express the profound anxieties of pious parents for their children. When one comes to experience these anxieties, he is surprised. Having been told a thousand times how it would be, he now for the first time

knows what it is to believe it. He has knowledge of it. He recalls the incredulity and wonder with which, when a boy, he regarded his parents in respect to this solicitude, and how repeatedly he put that unknown sensibility to the test. How often did he inflict immedicable wounds on those hearts, which, now that he has become a parent himself, he begins first to comprehend! His soul is now bound up in those whom God is giving him. Or, if we turn our eye to her who is pre-eminently the parent, if one can earn the title by intensity of pain and love, the mother has a tenderness towards her offspring which she has long since concluded to bury in silence, or utter only in prayers, since she well knows no language of her's can ever express it.

What a mercy it is that our God has been pleased to make much of religion consist in these very feelings and to open a channel for these unutterable emotions!

Do not wonder, therefore, that, with unusual confidence, I propose to the reader a modification of what was discussed before : — OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS ARE TO BE TRAINED FOR CHRIST AND FOR THE COUNTRY.

As for us who now write or read, we shall be here but a little while. The thought of this was plainly in the Psalmist's mind when he sang, "Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away."\* The last mark on our dial will soon be reached, and then comes night. But oh, parents, while it will be night with us, (and that how shortly!) here are those who shall be then just entering on their working-day. And can we be indifferent as to the manner in which they shall fulfil their task? Can we fail to offer prayers like those of the saint and king already cited? Can we venture to bring up our children without offering such

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\* Psalm cxliv. 4.

prayers in our families? Can we hazard the consequences of letting their whole childhood and youth pass without their even recognising us as professed followers of the Lord Jesus? Can we willingly deprive them of all that benefit which they might derive from beholding us at the Lord's table?—a benefit, perhaps, which we ourselves derived from the example of our own parents.

*We are under obligations, as believers, to educate our children for the Lord;* and in doing this we are to seize every opportunity, from their earliest years, to remind them that their names have been given to Christ, that they owe him allegiance, that they are enlisted in his army and are to fight under his colours. As they advance a little towards early youth, we are to renew and redouble these impressions, assuring them that they stand in a different relation to the church from other young persons; that they can never

destroy the providential connection except by rebellion or apostasy; and that every hour they live for the world they are robbing Christ of his own. This we should teach them; and, if we begin early and continue unremittingly, we shall certainly and fully escape that shyness in regard to religion which makes it harder for some parents to speak to their own children than to all persons beside. The great matter, however, which I urge, is the deliberate *intent* of the parent respecting the child's training. "This child is Christ's; and for Christ's warfare have I entered him and am now rearing him. God grant that *he* may grow up as a young tree planted in the courts of the Lord!—that *she* may shine as the brilliant corner-stone of the palace or the altar!"

A great story of ancient times can never lose its force. Let me, therefore, recall to your minds the familiar incident which we derive from Livy concerning the mighty

Napoleon of his day,—HANNIBAL. When his father was about to go into Spain, where the war against Rome was then waging, the child was about nine years of age; and, playing about his father's knees, as loving children do, he begged Hamilcar to take him along. The stern and vindictive old man, who was just engaged in sacrificing, conducted little Hannibal to the altar, caused him to lay his hand on the holy things, and made him *swear* that at the earliest possible moment, and as long as he lived, he would be the foe of Rome. Every reader knows the rest; and, though we condemn the idolatry, the revenge and the bloodshed, we gather the moral lesson:—If our sons are to quit themselves like men, we must early swear them at Christ's altar; we must remind them of their early prayers and resolves, and direct their eye to the great end of all their studies, labours and life,—the doing battle for Christ. There is no room for doubt: the

reason why so many children of the church grow up unconverted is that we, their parents, do not keep perpetually before our minds, in their education, this one object, to wit: *that they are to be trained for Christ.* Both parent and child should be made to remember it every day: such a remembrance will go far to form the character.

Having told a heathen story, let me tell a Christian one. It concerns PHILIP HENRY, the father of Matthew Henry, the good and brilliant commentator,—two of the most eminent divines of England. This wise and holy man was accustomed to teach his children the following form of words:—

“I take God to be my chiefest good and highest end. I take Christ to be my Prince and Saviour. I take the Holy Ghost to be my Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. I take the word of God to be my rule in all my actions, and the people of God to be my people in all conditions. I do likewise devote and dedicate unto the



Lord my whole self, all I am, all I have, and all I can do. And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely and forever.”

His son, who wrote his life, says, “This he taught his children; and they, each of them, solemnly repeated it every Lord’s day in the evening, after they were catechized,—he putting his AMEN to it, and sometimes adding, ‘So say and so do, and you are made forever!’” I have read of no family in which grace more remarkably reigned. It pleased God that “all his children were disposed of into circumstances very agreeable and comfortable, both for life and godliness.” In his last will and testament this is the prayer which (David-like) good Philip Henry puts up for his children:—“That the Lord would build them up in holiness and continue them still in brotherly love, as a bundle of arrows which cannot be broken.”

These children, be they more or fewer, whom God has given us, we are solemnly

bound to bring up for him. And, if more of us were engaged in so doing, we should see larger accessions to the ministry of reconciliation. In regard to this important point of dedicating our sons to the work of Christianity, there have been two extremes of error. 1. The *ancient* one was the error of bringing up sons for the ministry without regard to personal piety. Parents designated this or that boy for the ministry. When this designation was unaccompanied by sedulous care for the soul, the consequence naturally was the introduction of many cold and some profane persons into the sacred office. 2. The *modern* error is just the opposite: it is the extreme of neglecting to dedicate our sons at all,—suffering them to grow up without any particular care as to the bent of their mind, or any guidance in the choice of a profession. The tendency for a whole lifetime is often taken and fixed much

earlier than we suppose. The infant Hannibal burns with a passion which urges him till his dying day. The day was when it was thought so great an honour to proclaim the salvation of Christianity, that pious mothers wept and prayed over the subject, and gave the Master no rest until he had adopted their offspring into his family. It is possible that here we have, in part, the cause why the number of candidates for the ministry is so small.

Very far, however, is it from being true that it is only by being ministers that our children can serve Christ. By no means. Both our sons and daughters may be memorable through future ages for usefulness and happiness in that service of the church which belongs to private Christians. "Our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth." Is not this in the promise? "Thy children like olive-plants round about thy table. Behold, thus shall the man be

blessed that feareth the Lord." Observe what follows:—"The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life."\* Here, then, as in the text, public prosperity is distinctly connected with the offspring of the church. The figure employed in this passage sets forcibly before our minds the boy of promise. He grows up like a favoured and nurtured plant. Even in youth he attains some of that stature and ripeness which satisfies hope. He is instructed in sound knowledge. His mind is filled with truth. Like Timothy, he learns God's holy word from his very infancy. Even when still a boy, like youthful Josiah, he seeks the Lord; like youthful Jacob, he vows to him; like youthful David, he communes with him, sings to him and triumphs by him. Such a young man is lovely in the eyes of the church; and, when Jesus looks

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\* Psalm cxxviii.

on him, he loves him. Such a one should we desire each of our sons to be.

As the training hand of the gardener is necessary for the tender plant, so the perpetual influence of Christian training is requisite for the son of the church, that he may so grow up as to be a blessing to it and to the world. It is a training which must begin from the very earliest years; and its influence must not be omitted for a single day or hour. Let it be considered that, in educating our sons to be fruitful in the coming generation, we have very much such a task as if we were commanded to rear a delicate exotic plant in our harsh climate. Almost every thing external is against us. A large part of what we have to do concerns the formation of *habits*. Habits are slowly formed, but it is for life. They are deeply settled in early childhood. Some people seem to make it their maxim of education that the great thing is to give knowledge: a vastly more important thing is to give

habits. With good habits of mind, knowledge may be a matter of self-acquisition; but the converse is not always true. With good habits of the spirit, especially those which belong to the "new creature," all that is needed for usefulness and happiness will come in the train. The greatest favour we can ask of God for our sons is that they be converted. An early renewal of their minds should be the subject of our perpetual supplication.

Reverting to a verse which we quoted from the hundred and forty-fourth Psalm, we find that David does not overlook the gentler sex:—"that our *daughters* may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palæe." Here are solidity and ornament. The architecture which was in his mind was that of kings' houses, which is of the most massive and costly sort. The stones of the corner are the most honoured, the most conspicuous and the most useful: no part of the structure gains more atten-

tion, none deserves greater embellishment. The polish of these masses is in proportion to their solidity. Such is the similitude by which David would set forth the daughters of his house. They are useful; on them the structure reposes.

In these corners the families of men are joined together by alliance, as the sides of a great building. On these the instruments of decoration are laid with peculiar care, skill and affection. Christianity takes hold of all this and sanctifies it for the Master's use. There is no genuine accomplishment of the female mind, heart and manners, which may not be made tributary to the honour of religion. Whether in the maiden's spring-tide, the summer of matronly cares, or the autumn of venerable widowhood, we alike recognise her "whose price is above rubies." "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord,

she shall be praised." Nowhere is the benignant hand of Christianity more visible than on the female character. No longer the slave, she has become the companion, of man. She has risen to be the helper of Christ and of his people. The New Testament is full of her eulogy. Such are the daughters for whom the church may long; or, rather, disregarding these distinctions of sex, the church prays for children who may be her ornament and her defence. And she is prosperous when her youthful members are numerous and holy.

Here is a cause in which it would be strange if we could be cold. We can do nothing for mankind which is comparable with that which we may do through our children. HE leaves a precious legacy to his race who leaves a well-trained family.

If that citizen is thought to have made a valuable contribution to the strength of his country who gives her a group of healthy, stalwart, courageous sons for her armies,—



so that the civil law gave peculiar immunities to him who was the father of *three sons*,—how much more shall HE be reckoned a benefactor who leaves behind him a whole family of children trained to wisdom and exercised in godliness! Increase of population may be only the increase of idleness, ignorance, vice, pauperism and disease; but increase of *trained Christians*—of sons like young olive-trees, of daughters like palace-marbles—will be the security of good institutions. Hence, the very noblest field of every patriotic and Christian exertion is that which is nearest,—THE HOME-FIELD. Though you dwell in a cottage, a garret, or a cellar, yet, if you have around you sons and daughters, you have the materials for a structure which shall be going up when you shall have departed. You have the soldiers for that great battle which is yet to be fought. Never complain of inability to do good if you have children whom you may benefit. You perhaps too much limit your hopes as

to what may be their capacity of mind and heart. They may rise immensely above any thing you have yourself reached and all that your sanguine heart has dreamed. In old age, you may behold them able warriors for Christ, when your own right hand shall have almost lost its cunning. And what can be more cheering to Christian old age than to be sustained and comforted in the battles of the Lord by the more vigorous arms of sons and grandsons? I have somewhere read of an event in the old chronicles of England, which is full of romantic interest. One of the kings was passing through a city, on his way to the wars, when an aged knight came to meet him, accompanied with his *eight* sons, all of whom he consecrated to the military service of his prince. Happy are those fathers who, when seated at the table of Christ, can look around them and behold their sons ready to take their places! Happy are those *sons* who early and nobly stand by their parents, to

take from their trembling hands the standard which they have loved to bear! There is nothing we can give to Christ which is so precious as our children. It is a gift which he is ready to receive graciously. The hoary head of age is doubly a crown of honour when surrounded by pious descendants. Each reflects lustre on the other. Then it is that we feel the maxim, "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers."\* Unworthy as were some of the sons of Israel, we nevertheless feel the dignity of his patriarchal dying-bed when he cries, "Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel, your father."† The Psalmist himself no doubt remembered the solemn day when Samuel the seer came with the horn of oil to the house of his father Jesse, at Bethlehem, and when "he was anointed in

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\* Prov. xvii. 6.

† Gen. xlix. 1.

the presence of his brethren.”\* One Joseph, one David, in a family may bless a whole commonwealth and even succeeding generations. It is chiefly in this way that the church is propagated. In this way, certainly, it receives the most valuable part of its accessions, if that can be called an accession which is born and bred within its pale. Let the attentive reader ponder the undeniable statement, that, *if all the children of all evangelical Christians in America were converted to-day, our country would need nothing more to make it the happiest and most glorious nation that ever was on earth.* This would be like millennial light! What hope would at once break on all the land and on our prospective population! There is, therefore, no blessing for our country which may be more reasonably prayed for than the Christian health and proficiency of our sons and daughters. And for so vast a

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\* 1 Sam. xvi. 13.

blessing the means are very much put into our own hands. The covenant-blessings are noted by the families of every successive generation. I call to mind a household many members of which are well known to me. The parents feared God, and the father was for many years a prominent church officer. Twelve children reached adult age, and each became the head of a family. At a certain point known to me, when the descendants numbered more than fourscore and when all the twelve were yet living, each of the sons was an officer in one church, and every adult descendant was a communicant in the same.

Again, I say, "Children's children are the crown of old men." There are numerous instances of households in which, so far as record goes, the lineage of piety has never ceased. Certain families have been peculiarly favoured. The descendants of Knox are still preaching the gospel. It is said of a certain family in the Free Church

of Scotland, that, ever since the Reformation, one or more of the name has been constantly in the ministry. The family of *Buxtorf* was represented by a series of pious and learned theologians for at least two centuries, in regular succession, in Germany and Switzerland. The same may be said of the Turretins of Geneva. It is my privilege to know five ministers, the sons of one father, himself a minister. It would be easy to verify the declaration that, by a uniform law of grace, religion tends to descend in the line of families. A large proportion of those among us who believe rejoice to ascribe our serious sentiments to the holy teaching and example of our parents, which should greatly encourage us to do whatever is possible towards securing the instruction and salvation of those whom God has given us.

This brings itself home to the hearts of Christian parents, as they sit, silent but deeply moved, amidst the circle which is

dearest to them. No earthly blessedness is comparable to that of being surrounded by such a group. But amidst these pious pleasures there mingles a pensive thought concerning the days which are to come. The eye of the father and mother penetrates somewhat into the future, and follows the path of their offspring as it winds into the obscurities of an untried state. Their increasing and unutterable wish is, that when they are at rest their children may be carrying forward the work which they loved. As grace ripens, and the full corn is in the ear, and the ancient disciple sees his day approaching, he grows in the longing that some may come into his place and do Christ service. *Our* term of labour, let me say once more, is soon to end. We have done the most of the good or evil which the world is ever to have from us. We shall learn few new lessons, acquire few new habits and accomplish few new deeds. *Our* fruit, be it less or more, is mostly

gathered up; our account is awaiting us at the bar of God. Thus the old plant, when it has attained its growth, and bloomed, and borne fruit, and scattered its seed, dies down to the ground and gives place to a younger growth. How earnestly should we be desiring that those who are to come after us should be better than we! Most of all, how should we cry to God on behalf of our own offspring!—not simply for their sake, but for the sake of mankind. Parents live anew and prolong their life of service in the lives of their children. He who plants a tree is a benefactor: what shall we say of him who trains a son or daughter for Christ?

What has now been said gives a great value to our *household instructions*. So momentous an interest should not be left to chance. It should be regarded as one of the chief concerns of life. No sloth, no occupation, no weariness, should ever be allowed to interfere with the domestic in-



struction. Every Christian home is a little school for Christ. Here the pious mother is upon her gentle throne. Here impressions are formed and habits are nurtured which are to last for life. The subsequent teaching of other years is much less effective. Be in earnest, for the time is short. A little longer, and the opportunity of gaining these infant hearts will be gone forever.

Amidst the numerous and most reasonable exhortations which are addressed to mothers, there is some fear lest fathers should forget their share of responsibility. The mother's task comes first, and her influence never ceases to be reinforced by associations of gentleness and love. The father, in most instances, is separated from his youthful charge some hours of every day. In the remarkable compensations of Providence, we often see the poor man enjoying the unbought pleasure of gathering his little ones about his knee when his rich neighbour is denied all such blandishments.

Absurd customs, favoured by luxury and imitation of less happy lands, tend to disjoin the nursery from the drawing-room. Even in our mercantile circles, where assumption of hereditary style and princely usage would be out of place, we see the "haste to be rich" producing a like result. Men of business snatch the morning meal and hurry down town, sometimes from a prayerless board. At the hour of their evening return the little ones have been sent to bed. Of some it is almost strictly true that their entire acquaintance with their children is on Sundays and holidays. The tie between father and child is therefore relaxed to an unnatural degree. Where this particular cause is absent, the observation is general, that even religious fathers remit their sons and daughters to the mother for religious training. This is greatly to be deplored in the case of the boy, who, under the false and hurtful maxims of the "Young America," grows soon restiff in his

leading-strings, vindicates his preposterous claim to manhood, turns with sullenness or sneer upon her who bore him and who should be to him as a blessed guardian-angel, and for all these reasons needs the masculine hand and authority of a father. It is an evil hour when the father lets slip this opportunity of influencing the son. Such a father has his lesson from the mild observant, COWPER :—

“ His heart, now passive, yields to thy command :  
Secure it thine ; its key is in thy hand.  
If thou desert thy charge and throw it wide,  
Nor heed what guests there enter and abide,  
Complain not if attachments lewd and base  
Supplant thee in it and usurp thy place.  
But if thou guard its sacred chambers sure  
From vicious inmates and delights impure,  
Either his gratitude shall hold him fast  
And keep him warm and filial to the last,  
Or, if he prove unkind, (as who can say  
But, being man, and therefore frail, he may?)  
One comfort yet shall cheer thy aged heart :  
Howe'er he slight thee, thou hast done thy part.”\*

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\* *Tirocinium*, p. 171.

Yet it must be owned that no fatherly tones can ever attain to the magic of a mother's voice, which may prove strong when all other means seem to have lost their efficacy, when waywardness and hardness of heart have taken the place of youthful docility. The case of ST. AUGUSTINE, so often quoted at second-hand, is too valuable not to be given in his own language. It relates to the period in which he had grown to man's estate but was far gone in depraved indulgence, to the unspeakable grief of his mother MONICA, who did not cease to besiege the throne of grace in his behalf. She applied to a learned and pious minister of Christ, and represented to him the case of her wandering and heretic son, and received from him some general encouragements, which, however, did not reach her sorrow. "When he had uttered these things," says Augustine, "and my mother refused to be comforted by them, but urged him more and more, beseeching and weeping pro-

fusely that he would see me and expostulate with me, her counsellor, as if worn out with her importunity, said, 'Depart! it cannot be that the son of those tears can perish!' Which words, as she often said to me, she received as almost a response from Heaven."

Let me beseech parents to join prayer to all their other labours. This is an engine which may be used even when in the absence of your beloved charge.

Above all, add to your precepts example. At no period of life is there such peculiar power in this mode of influence. The child is governed almost entirely by example. It is not what he hears you say that forms him, but what he sees you do. The life of childhood is almost wholly a tissue of imitations, a delighted mimicry of adult pursuits. Do what you will, even in your most careless hours you are setting examples. There is no keenness of vision like that of childhood; and there is no closeness of imitation

like that which proceeds from love. The boy or girl whom you scarcely notice perceives how you spend your Sabbaths, how you treat the Scriptures, how you live in regard to religious retirement and prayer; nay, soon comes to penetrate to your secret springs of action, to love what you love and despise what you despise. Knowing that in many things your affectionate child will be the mirror of yourself, see to it that yours be such a character as that you could die and leave it for imitation.

All our reflections only seem to bring us back to the subject of CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. Those who are engaged in the work of education have a charge which is full of responsibility and promise. To them, more than to others, is consigned the forming of the future generation; nor can they overrate their responsibilities. I am aware that from inattention, and from unphilosophic views, public opinion fails to regard their labours with the gratitude and reverence

which are due. Let them not doubt, however, that they are honoured with a special opportunity to train the mind, to found right habits, to conduct the soul upward, to reveal the things of God to those who may have no such lessons at home, to point to the cross, and to scatter broadcast over the infant community seeds which shall germinate in after-years.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL PORTRAYED.

IN ancient times the diffusion of knowledge was by word of mouth. What we accomplish on a great scale by the press, they attained in their measure by oral delivery. This gave an importance to the conversation of the learned, and to their public discourses, which we cannot well appreciate unless we should go to the East, where, for the same reasons, the same customs prevail. The man who desired instruction would travel far to get it from the mouth of some sage or rabbi. Hence, where we should speak of a *book* they speak of a *discourse*; and where we speak of *reading* they speak of *hearing*. Thus, the phrase "master and scholar" is, literally, in Hebrew,



“he that asketh, and he that answereth.” Thus, Solomon says, “Bow thine *ear*; hear the instruction of the wise;” and Paul declares “that faith cometh by *hearing*.” So, also, the “*lips* of him that hath understanding;” “the *lips* of the righteous feed many;” “a divine sentence is in the *lips* of the king;” and yet again, “The *lips* of the wise *disperse knowledge*.”

While, however, this Oriental idiom might be taken as expressing any mode of communicating truth, it has a primary and striking reference to the method of oral communication, and represents true wisdom as dispersing the gifts of knowledge at every opening of the lips.

It is religious wisdom which is intended, here and everywhere, in the book of Proverbs. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” He only is wise who is wise for the better part,—wise for eternity, wise unto God. Of such wisdom—the true heavenly philosophy—there are many cha-

racteristics given by the proverbial poet, Solomon; and, among them, this:—it “disperses knowledge” from its lips. The impersonation of Holy Wisdom is presented in the same character, as a fair, lovely and majestic woman, lofty in her inspiration but condescending in her welcome; standing and uttering oracles in the most populous resorts, and giving large invitation to the ignorant and the poor. There is no more beautiful image in the inspired poetry. “Wisdom crieth without;” that is, she makes her proclamation in the open air; “she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse,”—the market-place, square, agora, or forum, of the ancients; “in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?” “Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?” Here is the same amiable and divine personage making her invitation. “She standeth in the top of high places,”

such as the crag or the monument, "by the way in the places of the paths; she crieth at the *gates*," (a term which in the East was like our market or Exchange,) "at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. . . . O ye simple, understand wisdom." Elsewhere she is presented to us as having erected a palace, prepared a banquet and sent messengers to bring in guests. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars; she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither." It is therefore the obvious characteristic of scriptural wisdom that it is accessible, condescending and benevolent; and, wherever it enters into any human soul, this is transformed into the same image. True Christian wisdom is *communicative*, and that which it communicates is *knowledge*; and, when this is

done *orally*, it may most emphatically be said, "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge." The water of life which is given to us is not to be *kept* merely, as in a *cistern*, but to *flow abroad*, as from a *fountain*. "The wellspring of wisdom is as a flowing brook."

This tendency is exhibited in all the teachings of Christianity, which from the beginning have been engaged in this dispersion of knowledge; still more specially in every attempt to enlighten the more degraded and ignorant; but most signally, as I think, in this particular endeavour which it is my pleasing task to advocate. Over the pediment of the Sunday-school temple would we inscribe as a motto, "THE LIPS OF THE WISE DISPERSE KNOWLEDGE."

It is an institution which many of us love and honour; and our reasons it may not be amiss to give, though it must be only in part.

I. We love and honour this school for the sake of its PUPILS. It disperses know-

ledge to those who need it most, to infancy and youth, and, especially, to the children of the poor. Its proclamation is, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding." "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." The Sunday-school gathers with its arm the outcast children. In this it follows the Lord, who took them in his arms and blessed them, and obeys the Lord, who said, "Lovest thou me?—feed my lambs!" These pupils are at the loveliest age and the age that is most hopeful. We delight to see the unshapen, unhardened clay brought under the impressive seal. To mould a nation, as we have seen before, we must mould its children. Give me the mind and heart of infancy, and I will answer for all the rest. The myriads who, on any Lord's day, have been marshalled under their several teachers,

are, in a great degree, the hope of the church and of America. Their songs are sweet in the ear of God. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise!" And these lambs, lovely as they are, would have fallen a prey to ravening wolves. But on this point much has already been offered.

II. We love and honour this school for the sake of its TEACHERS. It is my deliberate judgment that the best part of our American church is that which is in the ranks of Sunday-school teaching, or which has been there. They are, in great part, young Christians. The very term imports ardour, zeal and strength,—the spring, bloom and promise of the church. They are the advance-guard of our host; leading the van, breaking through the frontiers of indolence, adventuring into the enemy's territory; our blessed "army of occupation." It is one of the good points of the scheme that it affords employment for such, and that,

whenever an intelligent young disciple feels himself stimulated by an irrepressible desire to labour for the salvation of souls, he always has a field open for him, and need not delay even a moment. Hence, the pastor naturally turns, in an emergency, to his Sabbath-school teachers; and hence, also, some of the most able and successful ministers and missionaries have issued from these nurseries. The exercises enjoined on teachers cultivate their graces and keep their benevolence always in working-order. Taking pupils and scholars together, they comprise the better portion of our churches.

III. We love and honour this school for the sake of its LESSONS. While this topic is reserved for separate treatment, I cannot omit it in this connection. The entrance of God's word "giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple"—and to the simple among the youthful and the poor. It opens before them the richest of all treasures—the book of God. Other schools teach

other things; but this teaches the one thing needful. All its teachers and all its pupils are engaged all the year round in learning this single volume. There are no lessons which are not derived hence. And what a privilege is here! Denied to multitudes, even in Christendom, unknown to most on earth, but given to us and to our children! What can we do better for our race than to bring them at the earliest age to the word of God? And how enlivening the thought that, this very day, the children and youth in our own land who are enjoying this blessing are numbered by hundreds of thousands! What an auxiliary to the Bible Society and to the pulpit! What a fountain of life for the whole nation! We love the school, then, for its text-book, which is from the hand of God.

IV. We love and honour this school for the sake of the DAY on which it convenes. It is a *Sabbath*-school: it meets on the Lord's day. All the associations of this



holy time are sweet; and it is fitting, at such a time, to take our little ones by the hand and lead them to the house of God. The poorer one is, the more is the Sabbath a blessing to him. Some of my readers scarcely know what is meant by the word *rest*; for he cannot be said to *rest* who never *labours*. But the first day of the week dawns with a gentle radiance on many a cottage of toil, and brings with it cleanliness, decent ornament, quietude, domestic greetings and sacred worship. Often has the poor man *felt*, though he could not *sing*, with “holy Herbert,”—

“O day most sweet, most calm, most bright!  
 The *fruit* of this, the next world’s *bud*;  
 Th’ endorsement of supreme delight,  
 Writ by a Friend, and with his blood;  
 The couch of time, care’s calm and bay!  
 The week were dark but for thy light;  
 Thy torch doth show the way.”

These associations are lost on no one of the three classes of teachers, children

and parents. The very proximity of the church, the nearness of divine service, the sight of the great congregation, and diversified Sabbath relations, so affect the little ones in particular that we need not marvel that they sometimes learn more on the first day of the week than on all the other six. Therefore, in estimating the Sunday-school, let us never forget the *day*.

V. We love and honour this school for the sake of its END. It has no lower object than the *salvation of the soul*. Happy is the teacher, and happy are the scholars, where this is felt and acted on! There are many incidental advantages which arise from such education as is here afforded. It fits a child for life, and is to many a little fortune. It gives to the offspring of poverty more accomplishment than was possessed by many a mail-clad, iron-handed count and king of Middle-Age chivalry. It gives clearer knowledge of philosophy than ever beamed on Socrates or Cicero. But its great aim

is to save the soul. The humble Sabbath-teacher kneels in the morning and says, "This day, O Lord, when I meet my class of little ones, so enable me to teach them that they may be saved in the day of Christ Jesus." It is something for a child to have the prayers of an affectionate Christian; and there are teachers who duly remember each pupil by name, every day, at the throne of grace. The lips that so disperse knowledge as to win the youthful mind to Christ are doubly blessed.

What can we do, so full of promise, for the hundreds of thousands of popish emigrants who are coming to our shores, as to lead their children to the pure gospel of Jesus Christ? Instead of that material, outward cross—the implement of superstition—let us lead them to the true, the scriptural, the evangelical cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We must not doubt for an instant that God is able to save the souls even of little ones. It has

graciously happened again and again. If we would effectually uproot the devices of man in religion and destroy the growth of antichristian imposture, we must begin with the youngest. We must strike at the root. We must apply our means to the rill, which, if left a few years, will become a wide, deep, irresistible torrent. Look at the wild and squalid and prematurely-haggard creatures who prowl about our Sabbath streets, and behold the material upon which Bible truth is to operate, and which no means at present within our power can reach, except the Sunday-school. Christian benevolence will glory in the sacrifice and the toil, and scatter the seed with lively hope.

VI. We love and honour this school because of its FRUITS. It has been long enough planted and in bearing for us to judge of it by this infallible criterion:—"For the tree is known by its fruits." It has been dispersing wisdom as a widely-spreading

tree disperses its fruit. This heavenly wisdom is a richer treasure than the golden apples of the Hesperides. "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her." Not till eternity can we know all the blessed conservative influences of the Sunday-school; how many she has saved from the example of impious parents, from the jail, the gallows, or the damnation of the drunkard; how many she has brought to the house of prayer and instructed in sound doctrine; how many she has provided with Christian friends, to be a safeguard and a pleasure through life; how many she has trained into a taste for reading, without which the best tracts and books would have been thrown away on them; how many she has so taught as that they have been awakened, convinced, humbled and converted; how many she has introduced into the place of teachers, to repay in this manner a little of the mighty debt; how many she has trained to be ministers and missionaries, to

“disperse knowledge” in the ends of the earth; and how many she has convoyed to heaven, from which they look down this day with interest on the work we prosecute. The fruits of Sunday-schools may be read and known of all men: they are on every side of us, great and undeniable. And I find no better place than this for adding that the libraries of religious books which are furnished for children and youth by the Sunday-school are worthy of special consideration. They disperse knowledge far and wide, even where the living messenger cannot go. They have been marked not only by negative qualities or the absence of false doctrine, but by positive enunciation of strong evangelical doctrine, to an extent which many among us may not have known. It is no sickly or puny theology which is nurtured on such matter as the “Holy War,” or the “Way of Life,” or the “Great Question.” One of the modes of doing good in remote regions, afforded by

this arrangement, is that any benevolent Christian, for a small sum, may send a Sunday-school library to the most distant ramification of travel or commerce. Of this, and of the whole Sunday-school effort, I may say that it is admirably suited to the wants and dangers of our American territory and population. We are a young people, growing and spreading in an unexampled manner, and outstripping all the ordinary means of grace. But where we cannot plant a church we may set up a school; and where we have no teacher we can send a library. Our State schools, it seems to be well determined, will not furnish any thing for the soul. With some the Bible is sectarian; and it certainly does contain very strong tenets of a "sect which was everywhere spoken against" in old times, and which is still eminently distasteful to all the varieties of antichristian craft and infidel looseness. In the absence of Christian day-schools, we must labour all the more ear-

nestly to give instruction to as many as possible on the Sabbath.

And here I feel it to be impossible to speak my mind concerning this subject without a tribute of respect and affection to the American Sunday-school Union. For more than thirty years\* it has been pursuing its noiseless way, a stream of refreshment and fertility to millions. Every step of its progress is marked by verdure and flowers and fruit. But, just as, in the case of a natural river, we should judge but imperfectly of its benefits if we confined our view to its immediate banks, however green and wealthy, so we do injustice to this truly national society when we regard only its proximate results on the children whom it purifies, the region over which it pours its flood of knowledge, or even the existing generation which it fills with blessing. Its manner of influence is such that the present

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\* It was established, May, 1824.



age will not behold the complete work. It is our fault that it has not carried Christian education to every corner of the land. It is, as an engine, capable of this, being, next to the preaching of the word, the most available instrument for evangelizing the country. It is cheap; it is simple; it is energetic; it is flexible: what more can be said of an instrument? It adapts itself to all states of society, and, by a singular good providence, it adapts itself especially to such a state as our's. Is it summoned to labour in populous towns? It gathers the vilest and the most ignorant, places its fulcrum on the faith and self-denial of the church, and plies its mighty lever so as to elevate a class which no other means can reach. Is it sent as a pioneer into the wide tract of the newly-settled West? It penetrates where the preacher has not yet come, opens through the forest a path for the Bible and the tract, and establishes its outposts in the utmost verge of civilization.

And this it does (let it be marked) in its distinctive character as a *catholic union of Christians*. It is the true *Evangelical Alliance*, and has for years been befriending the cause of Protestant union, not by theoretical protocols, not by platform amenities which never reach beyond the stage of their utterance, not by anniversary conferences and trumpeting of fraternity, but by fact, by labour, by love, by actual exhibition of Christians working in concert, and by the patient inculcation of the blessed truths which we hold in common.

It is a strange error to suppose that the American Sunday-school Union is injurious even to *sectarian* interests. There is not one of the sects which has not been built up by it. There is not one of them, even the most exclusive, which has not received from its fostering arms infant churches which would never have seen the light, or, seeing it, would have speedily perished, but for this nursing mother. The cases are

innumerable in which, in thinly-settled districts in the new countries, emigrants have worn such a diversity of religious badges that their uniting on a preacher would have been out of the question for a number of years. Suppose, for example, fifty families within an area of nine square miles, and these of six different persuasions. The case is by no means imaginary. They cannot join as yet in a church. And, while they are waiting for increase of numbers and strength, a new generation has sprung up and acquired habits which may unfit them forever for the good work. In such circumstances the American Sunday-school Union comes like an angel from heaven. It gathers its little circle in the log-cabin, perhaps around a single teacher. But the place is BETHEL. The voice of infant prayer goes up sweetly among the woods and glades, "to still the enemy and the avenger." The praises of Christ are already heard for the first time where savage paganism had rioted. Though

not by the minister, yet by the humble missionary teacher, the word of life is proclaimed to children and parents. The little cluster increases. It becomes a religious assembly, and the best possible harbinger of the church, the best possible station for the itinerant missionary. The transition is easy from this state of things to that of established congregations connected with such evangelical bodies as may be indicated by the predilections or convictions of the people. Some of the happiest churches have had this very origin. The effort would have been devoid of half its success if the principle of union had not come in. This sort of church-extension might be going on without limit if we were only helping as we ought to carry forward the great work of the American Sunday-school Union.

The habit of looking for fields of benevolent labour chiefly to our new countries of the West has somewhat diverted our attention from the seats of ignorance and

misery in cities and towns. From causes quite opposite, the two localities often exhibit the same sort of evils, forms of rudeness and irreligion. Of the chapter now before the reader's eye, part was written in a crowded part of our greatest city, and part among the spurs of the Alleghany, where the wild deer may be seen every day. Neither the reputed civilization of the metropolis, nor the rustic innocency of the mountains, has availed to prevent human blindness. In either instance, we find numbers who care not for God's word and who cannot read it. If the census be taken, the ignorance of the civic population will startle us most in regard of numbers. Great towns show their thousands who are utterly unlettered. New York, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Boston, have their spots of deep soil and rank growth, where the progeny of filth and misery spring up too fast for ordinary and established means, and where the spirit of Robert Raikes might

come again to sigh over Sabbath profanation. The over-peopled tenements disgorge hordes on the Lord's day, but comparatively few to schools and churches. The tattered, squalid urchins—often already men and women in perverse acuteness—disperse themselves in streets and alleys, continue noisy sports, hang about wharves, ferries, markets, and open lots, or stroll to green fields, river-banks, and beer-gardens. Vast is the increasing levy made for these legions of citizens, who are, for the most part, ignorant and superstitious, if not profane and vicious. It is the fashion to ascribe all this evil surplus to Germany and Ireland: justice would force us to acknowledge that no more noxious importation has been made from any country than from England. If any one will consult Mr. Mayhew's "London Labour and London Poor," or Mr. Vanderkist's "Dens of London," he will learn how many thousands grow up almost as unchristian as Hottentots, within

the sound of Bow Bells and under the great shadow of Saint Paul's. The police well know how many of this class add to our city and jail populations. The children of these are corrupt themselves, and corrupters of others. *As are the children of the present period, such will be the men and women of the next.* Unless blossoms of poison can mature into wholesome fruit, there is before us a time of new dangers and corruptions. These are the people who brawl about the hustings; who stand out for high wages in strikes and trades-unions during warm seasons, in order to make themselves the paupers of the following winter; who foment bad blood between nation and nation, between religion and religion, between region and region, between class and class:—the people, in a word, who endanger the peace and the very union of our commonwealth. If we can, let us figure to ourselves what may be expected ten years hence from the lad who is now the nocturnal runner to fires, or the

prowler about the theatre and circus, or the precocious haunter of drinking-places, or the beguiled Sunday-news-boy. Let us seriously ask, what sort of citizens and Christians those myriads will ripen into, who attend no religious worship. These are they who are shortly to make our laws, choose our governors, and, perhaps, (which may God avert!) swell majorities for rapacious wars or seditious and fratricidal disunion. Already, in certain quarters, zeal for "saving the Union" has become a matter of vulgar sneer; and Robespierres in the pulpit and the editor's chair may readily find *sans-culottes* and revolutionary fishwives in the untutored mob. It is my solemn belief that in the absence of day-schools which shall teach the way of salvation—and for our purpose it matters not whether national or ecclesiastical—there is no way to reach these masses but the SUNDAY-SCHOOL. By its twofold machinery of ORAL LESSONS and BOOKS, this institution



goes so deeply to work that for its triumph it needs only the thorough carrying out of its principles.

In the immediate vicinity of the localities of darkness and degradation already alluded to, God has providentially gathered Christian churches, the members of which have abundance of leisure, intelligence and wealth. In these churches are young men and young women, professing faith and "apt to teach." Does not the truth flash with conviction on every such person, as he reads these lines, *I am the very labourer on whom God calls.\**

If any apology is needed for thus bringing the discussion to the point of an almost personal exhortation, the reader will recognise it in the urgency of the wants and dangers at which I have hinted. The time

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\* On this branch of the subject it is gratifying to refer to so able an argument as that of the Rev. Dr. Potts, of New York, in his Annual Sermon preached at the request of the American Sunday-school Union, May, 1853.

has come when all the available resources of our churches should be drawn forth, as are the resources of an empire in time of invasion. There is a tendency in Sunday-schools, as there is in churches, to gravitate and settle into a fixed and respectable indolence, instead of breaking forth, according to the analogy of our fresh and budding country, on the right hand and on the left, with a holy propagandism.

Let me be pardoned for repeating so obvious a thought, but it ought to be repeated until it is acted on. Many excellent persons go upon the principle that all is well so long as the existing Sunday-school classes are manned; and when, on surveying the schools, they find a sufficiency of teachers, they feel satisfied that there is no claim on their services. But the true method is for the benevolent and glowing Christian to go into the highways and hedges and beat up recruits; *to gather a class for himself*; and with this to enter the school, thus bring-

ing into it a clear gain of class as well as teacher.

Let not my reader despair of seeing just such a movement in the midst of his own community. It will make a new demand on the generosity of the well-doing for the increased expenses; but if there is any mode of charity more frugal than this it is unknown to me. And, if the Sunday-school spirit were thus to rise among us, its effect would instantly be manifest in every department of our religious life. There is something in the work of religious instruction which proves good for the sacred affections, and something in the united action of harmonious teachers which diffuses joy and animation. Who can tell what a revival of our graces and comforts might be expected if every little Sabbath-school corps in town and country were to be doubled without delay? And doubled each might be before the week is over. It is no time to be kept back from the work by petty

scruples when so many are lying in darkness and perishing in sin: as well might we be kept back from rescuing a drowning child because of some inconvenience to our apparel. True charity will be absorbed in the view of the evil, and will fly to relieve it with all possible speed. Earnestly then would I call upon those among us who have not yet enlisted in this work to endue themselves with the armour. The simple mode of beginning is to *sally forth and discover four or five children who are willing to be instructed.*

To those who are already engaged in this service I extend my warm congratulations. It is a good work, and a good preparation for almost every other. It brings one at once into immediate connection with the vast body of God's labouring or militant people. Let me use the familiar but warmer mode of personal address to my fellow-teachers. There are persons, even of those whom we esteem believers, who,

from necessity or choice, are in no way mingling with the active, advancing portion of Christ's forces. You, on the contrary, have entered on duties which make you feel an identity of interest and a community of toil and pleasure with all who, in the pastoral office or in foreign lands, are striving for the salvation of men. It is good and healthful so to feel. Resolve, beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord, that, with God's aid, you will never lie still so long as there is ignorance untaught or vice unrebuked. Your promise is to "disperse knowledge:" be sure that you have it to disperse. And, for this end, be much in the study of the Holy Scriptures. Make this study part of your daily employment. Go to your scholars with minds fully imbued with the momentous truth which you are called to communicate. In the sequel it will be our delightful employment to consider the whole body of Sunday-school teachers all over the world as

so many BIBLE-STUDENTS. This, if they are faithful, is their true character. Endeavour to pursue these studies with reference to the spiritual good of your charge as the immediate object. Look upon your own class as a sacred deposit in your hands for which you will give account when the Lord shall come. Look upon them one by one, and successively single out each one as the subject of your particular prayers and the object of your particular admonition and persuasion. Be not satisfied unless you can learn something of the thoughts and exercises of each in respect to divine things. Many have been the instances of hopeful conversion granted as a crowning reward to the faithful words of the teacher. And set before your minds, as your deliberate aim, not merely the general, vague improvement of your class, but the individual salvation of each member in particular; and let no day pass without a remembrance of this at the throne of grace.

Besides your indispensable aid to your own church-efforts, remember your loyalty to the general cause. THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION IS A GREAT MISSIONARY SOCIETY. It can go where there are neither churches nor ministers, while it prepares the way for both. There is no Christian effort towards the reformation of rural ignorance and metropolitan vice which is doing so much as the Sunday-school. All our churches are built up by it, and new churches are formed. We can use this cheap agency long before we can send a missionary or gather a congregation. We can reach the children of infidels and Papists, whose parents would not come to our regular services, but who, in many well-known instances, are drawn in to learn the right ways of the Lord. Let us therefore enable the general society to spread this gospel-net more widely than ever. In very deed, what is it but giving to our own necessities? As I propose hereafter

to show, we shall thus be preparing the way of the Lord. We shall be casting salt into the poisoned fountains. We shall be rescuing precious youth from the toils of error and the fetters of destructive habit. We shall be training up a new race of intelligent Christians for the emergencies of coming perilous times. While Rome is flooding us with schools of insidious pretension and secret power, let us be on the alert, inculcating the pure, unadulterated word of God, which is able to save the soul. The time is short! May God grant us strength and disposition to work while the day lasts!



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BIBLE-SCHOOL.

THE subject now to be treated has been indicated in the preceding chapter. It has often occurred to me that the true name of the Sunday-school would be the Bible-school. There is nothing in its instructions which might not as well be communicated on any other day of the week, or all the week long, if people only had leisure; but that which is its untransferrable characteristic is that IT TEACHES THE BIBLE. And it is the only seminary in the world of which the great and universal text-book is the Bible. Our public schools are, in a worldly sense, the glory of our States. Those palaces where thousands are taught, let it be repeated, merit the visits and admiration of strangers more than any or all the luxurious

mansions of the proud. But the Bible is not that which these are instituted to teach. Other schools exist, sustained by private enterprise, in some of which the word of God has a measure of respect; but none of these are set up expressly to explain and inculcate it. There are valuable colleges, many of which were founded to provide ministers of the gospel. In the most of them there is some Bible-study on Sundays, and in a number of them some lessons once a week on the Greek Testament; but in none of them, nor in any college or university in the world, is the sacred volume the grand paramount object of investigation; whereas, in the Sunday-school the Bible is the thing taught, and other things are taught in order to explain it. The auxiliary books and lessons are expedients to lift the feeble up to the text. The alphabet and primer are such. The historical manual is a gathering together of the historical truths of the Bible. The Geography is an

epitome of the geographical truths in the Bible. The Antiquities is a summary of the archæological truths of the Bible. And the Doctrinal Catechism is a syllabus of the doctrinal truths of the Bible. Every properly-conducted Sunday-school is therefore a *Bible-school*; and it is this above all which makes me love the institution, and inspires hope for the future of our country, in which it has taken such deep root.

It is true, that Sunday-schools are not always what they profess to be; and, in my opinion, they cease to be so in proportion as they lose their Sunday-school character. When they were first set up in England, it was usual to teach in them not only reading, but writing and arithmetic, and this by paid teachers. Within our memory, the methods in America were unformed and the helps for Bible-study were few. The case is widely different now; and even a minister might be quite respectably provided by means of the apparatus furnished

for Sunday-school teachers. Schools and teachers vary from one another as to the degree in which the word of God is made the commanding subject of instruction; but those schools and those teachers best accomplish the end and most bring out the force of the engine who keep before them, as the one point, the Bible! the Bible! the Bible!

The Sunday-school *library* is a good thing; but it is infinitely below this, our compendious, portable, inspired library. Even those works—and they are the best on its shelves—which recommend, elucidate and apply the Scriptures, are unspeakably less important than the Scriptures themselves. The oral instructions which are uttered by faithful teachers are of great use; but, among them all, none are so likely to leave a blessing as those which make the inspired text plain to every infant mind. Teachers who have themselves learned the advantage of having in their remembrance large portions of Scripture will never fail to impress

on children the necessity of committing to memory with exactness at least the entire lesson of the week, with the parallel places which explain it. Having been, in one or another capacity, busied about Sunday-schools for forty years, I venture my judgment, that if a pupil must forego one or the other—the explanation of the meaning by question and answer, or the possession of the text in his memory verbatim—he had better let go the former. With those attainments which such knowledge insures or infers, there is no part of household and juvenile learning so valuable as what, in good old idiomatic mother-English, is called *getting verses by heart*.

Beloved children, having almost worn out my eyes by reading and study, let me testify to you, of all I ever learned I most prize what is level to you all,—*i. e.* the *knowledge of the English Bible*; and for one verse that I know by heart I wish I knew a hundred.

To accomplish the ends sought, Sunday-

schools must be so conducted as to make the Bible stand forth, high and prominent, as that without which the institution were superfluous and nugatory. This must be made apparent to the veriest child. In order to this, the teacher must not be ignorant; and, that he may not be ignorant, he must not be slothful. Intelligent children keenly pry into the weaknesses of their instructors. While there is nothing in the work that demands extraordinary genius or talents, there is every thing to require sedulous study. And that teacher must be superficial and unprovided, and will presently retire from the ranks, who postpones his preparations till the latter part of the week.

It is one of the happiest signs of the times that so many thousands of teachers are every week laboriously studying the Scriptures in order to teach others. The effect of this is becoming visible in our literature and our pulpits. Never was the demand so great for books explaining the Bible in

its language, style, antiquities, geography and philosophy; never was there a more rapid return to expository preaching. This reflex influence of the Sunday-school has not been sufficiently recognised. If ministers of the gospel would not fall behind many of their young parishioners, they must bestir themselves to acquire an intimate knowledge of the Bible.

These remarks fall properly to the share of all who are teachers, even though it be in that oldest and best of all schools, the *family*. When your class is around you, and when with eager eyes and intent countenances they show their openness to all you have to offer, what can you pour into the waiting mould so costly as God's own words? What can you impart so needful as the direct exposition of the sacred text? This is even more indispensable than all the exhortations and entreaties which most properly and profitably you append to it. And, if I might speak my mind, I would

frankly own that Sunday-school classes have suffered greatly from *loquacious teachers*, who, from intemperate zeal or a fondness for mere talk, have occupied a large part of their short hour in harangues and narratives. For the same reason, we have cause to be jealous of a class of volunteer and itinerant exhorters, who, especially in towns, occupy large portions of that time which regular teachers, under their responsible superintendent, could better dispose of in prayer, praise and study of the word. Indeed, the time is so brief which is allotted to Sunday-school learning that it is hard to perceive how any truly-awakened and carefully-instructed teacher can have any spare moments left upon his hands.

If our eyes could be opened to discern the Sunday-school and family-school system—and for the purposes here in view they are one and the same—if we could take in the extent and strength and estimate the propagative energy and law of



increase which it contains, we should hail it as the most impregnable fortification against infidel and Popish aggression. And this it is, just because it is a *Bible-school*. This is the standard lifted when our old enemy "cometh in like a flood." "Thou hast given a *banner* to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of thy truth."\* The strength of reformed Christianity has been in a *free Bible universally read*. Sunday-schools and family-schools come powerfully in to promote the freedom and the universality of the Scriptures. If from bishops and archbishops we come at length to have American cardinals and pope, any child may prophesy we shall have no Sunday-schools. Instead of an instance here and there, when some infuriate priest, too fresh from Maynooth, forgets his longitude, and tears or burns a single Bible, (we all know why,) we shall

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\* Psalm lx. 3.

have Bibles searched for at the point of the bayonet, and sleek armies of shaven Inquisitors ridding the whole land of the hated volume. Blessed be God, every Sunday-school child is a meek missionary against the Pope! Think you that the hundreds of thousands of pure American girls now in schools with Bibles in their hands are likely to resort each to the privacy of an unwedded ecclesiastic, to unbosom secret thoughts at his bidding and at the pleasure of his interrogatories? I trow not! It is this *Bible-school* which is countermining all the works of the adversary. Increase Sunday-schools by the ten thousand, and you levy an invincible reformation-army. When Chillingworth uttered that immortal doctrine, "The Bible, the Bible is the religion of Protestants," he declared not only a maxim of theological truth for all time, but pronounced a fact the history of the evangelic church. It is the criterion of the true church that it *honours the word of God*. Re-

formed Christianity has dug the Bible out of its heaps of Romish rubbish ; has translated it ; has placed it in churches to be read and heard ; has made it the theme of preaching and comment ; has sent it among the nations ; has bestowed it upon the child. History will take you by the hand, and, leading you through all pure Protestant Christendom, will show you that no church or church-member has taken one step without this torch to lead the way. Wiclif and Luther, Calvin and Cranmer, are equally marked by this characteristic. While Popery denies the book even to the adult, save under certain restrictions, Protestantism bestows it *on the child*. And the more we carry out this principle,—that *the Bible is the text-book of Christian education*,—the more shall our Protestantism be genuine and operative. No tongue can tell, because no mind can measure, how much we owe to the persistency and zeal with which our forefathers clung to the word of God.

They were not satisfied unless it were largely read and statedly expounded in the house of the Lord. Most of the discourses of Luther, Calvin, Knox, Melvill, Rollock and Bruce, (and some of them preached almost daily,) were expositions of Scripture. From the dawn of the first Reformation till this hour it has been the custom in Scotland for the minister to make the Sabbath-morning exercise a lecture on some continued portion of Scripture in regular course. Ever since Bibles were accessible it has been the practice for the same Scripture-loving people to carry their Bibles to church and to turn up every passage read or cited. The same was universal among the Puritan Independents and other non-conformists of New England. The usage remains in undiminished prevalence in Scotland, while it has fallen into general desuetude in England and America. It tended with incalculable power to make the masses of the people from child

hood familiar with the text of inspiration, and to cherish a fondness for textual research. Thousands have Bibles who know little of their contents. Make trial, and you will observe that they do not know the order of sacred books, and stagger even at the mechanical business of looking out a verse. Something is gained when a child is trained to facility in finding places in Scripture. He learns to delight in it, and knowledge grows apace. In the fascinating biography of Mrs. Sherwood we learn at once the origin of her Biblical story-books and the method of her family instruction. The children were encouraged and trained, from their earliest years, not merely to read the Bible, but to turn it over from beginning to end in laborious quest of particular doctrines or facts. Thus they acquired for life the invaluable habit of searching, as well as perusing, the Scriptures. That is a happy teacher, in nursery or school, who inspires

every learner with a love for Holy Writ, a disposition to fly to it with every doubtful question, and an ardour in searching the Bible for special purposes. And that is a happy child who has been early trained to turn over the blessed pages for proofs of doctrine, for warnings, for rules of life, and for precious promises. In the observance of such principles, the Sunday-school teacher will be led to numerous details of method suited to particular cases.

In ascribing such value to the influence of Sunday-schools in diffusing scriptural knowledge, it is not our intention to throw into the shade the greater influence, within their own sphere, of those more ancient and permanent institutions, the Family and the Church. And the opportunity thus afforded is favourable for giving a quietus to an objection which is sometimes made against our scheme, as though it trenched upon the rights or thrust itself into the duties of both family and church. The objectors

assume the protection of these venerable social organizations, and talk as if the Sunday-school was usurping the place of parents and ministers. Were this true, it would be fatal to our cause; but it is not true, and the reasoning is shallow. The Sunday-school teaches religion; but this is the business of parents; "hence," argue they, "the Sunday-school is a mischievous busybody in other men's matters." But the same reasoning would do away with common schools also. In both cases, the work of the school is supplementary or subsidiary to that of the parent. *The Sunday-school releases no parent from the obligation to train his offspring in the Scriptures.* In instances beyond enumeration it stimulates and guides and helps the parental effort. If, in some strange instance, ignorant and careless parents feel absolved from the domestic duty by this auxiliary of modern times, there are contrary instances, tenfold more numerous, of parents and families who, from the con-

nection of their children with Sunday-schools, have first become awake to the duty of instructing them and first learned the methods of performing it. In the reasonings which are common on this subject there is one extraordinary assumption, to wit: that every child who goes to a Sunday-school is thereby abstracted from a domestic circle in which his parents stand ready to give him this instruction in a more scriptural manner. But this is so far from being true, that the majority of those whom we draw into Sunday-schools enjoy no religious culture whatever at home. It is this, or nothing. Do you rejoin, "Parents ought to be taught to teach their offspring"? We say so too; and this is one among several ways of so teaching parents. If our blessed institution were put upon its trial in regard to the single point of family instruction, family training and family religion, it would be found to have done enough in this very particular to perpetuate its claims for sup-



port if it had done nothing else. In those cases where the parents are faithful Christian teachers and trainers, they will assuredly not be the less zealously such because their little ones spend an hour or two of the Sabbath under auxiliary instruction. So far as my observation goes, they will be *more* so. As well might parents plead exemption from domestic inculcation of divine things because their children go to hear the gospel preached. The Sunday-school, therefore, is not justly charged with lessening the powers of family education.

As falsely is it accused of thrusting itself into the functions of the church. This objection is sometimes made so vaguely that it is difficult to meet its precise edge and point as we are prompt to do. There are certain notions abroad, of the church and of churchmanship, which we remand to their proper homes in Rome and Oxford. Those who are likely to read these pages

do not recognise a church as made up wholly of clergy; nor do they consider only those as church-acts which are performed in consecrated buildings, or during sanctuary service. *Religious education is a function of the church*; but how she shall discharge it, as to instruments and details, is left to her Christian discretion, under acknowledged principles of ecclesiastical order and freedom. She may conduct Scripture instruction by the written word, translated, copied, printed and dispersed; by expositions and sermons, preached through pulpit and press; by ministerial inculcation of divine knowledge to the children of the church, singly and in classes; by parochial and other schools, in which the salvation of the soul is regarded in every day's lessons; and, above all, by the voice of the mother and the father at the nursery and fireside. All these are but so many various cases under the one commission to the CHURCH AS A TEACHER. In

one and all the Bible is the matter of the instruction.

That part of the church's work which consists in teaching and training the ignorant, and especially the young, has been from early Greek times known as *catechizing*; not merely questioning and answering, but the whole round of instruction in Bible truth, salvation by Christ, belief and duty. In no age of the church has this been regarded as less incumbent on her than the preaching of the gospel in its narrow sense. It precedes that preaching. Where labourers are few, it is performed by the preachers themselves. When numbers increase, and there arises division of labour, this Bible-teaching is committed in part, and under church-superintendency, to persons detailed for that purpose. In the early church these persons were called *catechists*; and it was never supposed that they invaded the authority of either parents or clergy. *Sunday-school teachers are catechists*, and, so far as

they do this work under warrant of the church, are church catechists. The church, if she is wise, instead of looking askance at them and jealously opposing them, will subsidize them. They are a part of the church, trained in her bosom, doing her work, seeking her welfare and amenable to her jurisdiction. If they teach error, or transcend limits, let church-authorities see to it; schoolmasters and professors and parents may do the like. But let no high-church whimseys of ours represent that as extraneous to the church, or as militating against it, which is in very deed part of its structure and mightily conducive to its increase. If Sunday-schools encroach on ministers, it is the minister's fault. Let me say, as a pastor not without some experience in the work, so far from cherishing any alarms at the growth of Sunday-school teachers, or jealousy lest they should overshadow my professional influence, I lament only that I do not behold around me ten for

one. And, while they continue to teach the Bible in the manner hereinbefore laid down, I bid them God speed. Though Eldad and Medad should prophesy, the pastor who knows where his strength lies will still reply, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"\* Our hope for the church, our hope for the commonwealth, is in God's blessing upon his holy word. Of what avail is it to teach science, letters and art to the multitudes, unless we teach them the Bible? The case is so plain that the difficulty is to state it so as not to utter flat commonplaces. Yet simple, straightforward truth is mighty; and let it be uttered:—If we can only imbue our whole juvenile population with the truths of Scripture, we shall rear an insurmountable bulwark against the assaults of heresy, fanaticism, skepticism,

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\* Numb. x. 29.

atheism and Romanism. The teaching of this one compendious volume itself confers an education. Here is simplicity for the babe; here are depths for the philosopher. He who, without other books, enters into the riches of this book, possessing its venerable histories in his memory and picturing them in imagination, holding its doctrines methodized in his understanding, regaling the soul upon its covenant grace in Christ Jesus, soaring on the pinions of its glorious psalmody and musing with comprehensive gaze in its symbolic chambers of prophetic poesy,—he, though poor and simple, is an accomplished man. We have known such—men of the plough and the loom—who yet deserved to be reckoned men of learning, because they were learned in God's book. I contemn and repudiate the apologetic language of the patronizing worldling who admits that the Bible is fit to be honoured because it makes the masses *good*. It does so. But it does more; and let the

arrogant worldling know it:—it makes those who study it *great*. It is at once a cyclopædia and a discipline. And if to thousands of Christian professors this sounds as an exaggeration, it is because they know so little of Scripture in its more recondite parts. Wherever we set up a Sunday-school we go a certain length towards removing this ignorance. What a priceless favour is conferred upon a young professor, when he is led to some real personal acquaintance with the riches that lie within his plain, familiar English Bible. Ah! he rejoices—it is the Scripture's figure—"as one that findeth great spoil." Such an awakening Christian begins to see that he need not go far beyond his own house for exquisite enjoyment. The craving appetite for novelty in religious books is one of the snares of the age; it is best avoided by acquiring a sincere taste for the delightful truths and beauties and sanctities of the Scripture. Those schools where the Bible is in its pro-

per place cultivate this spirit. Those families where, as is our Christian usage, the Bible is read at the family devotions every morning and every evening, are themselves so many Bible-schools. Those preachers who make the text of Scripture the grand material of their discourses, bringing out from this treasury things new and old, rather than seeking to electrify corpse-like assemblies by startling themes from politics and the times—in other words, who so preach as to send their hearers home to the Bible with renewed zest—will perhaps be less conspicuous themselves, but will elevate the standard of the gospel. And those churches in which the zealous social study of the word becomes a characteristic and fostered employment will grow in grace and withstand the seducing influences which are drawing numbers away to new or revived absurdities in religion. In a word, our warmth in favour of these schools arises from our persuasion that they are Bible-



schools. Let them be multiplied. Instead of mean little fears and carnal jealousies as to certain minor evils or possible ill-tendencies—often, it may be, incidental and not essential to the system—let us send these Bible-teachers all over the world. Let them anticipate the preacher, the sacraments, and even the church, in those wilds where the first green token of genuine civilization is that grove, or spring-side, or spreading tree, where forest or prairie-children meet together, to learn of Jesus, long, long before these late solitudes have been wakened by the sound of “the church-going-bell.” Let us, above all things else, send the book and the lesson which make wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. This is the reading and teaching for the masses: *it saves the soul*. How ungracious, how unfounded, is the sneer which I have lately met in a Christian book, where the writer seems to lament that, in modern days, additions to the communion are reported as

being chiefly "from the Sunday-schools," and not, as in a better day, from the family! We have seen something of such additions, blessing the God of grace for them; and we know, first, that the cases are largely from school and family at once; and, secondly, that where this is not the case it is chiefly because the Sunday-school has really overleaped the limits of existing congregations, and become a missionary to hundreds of thousands who owned no Christian parentage. And have we lived to hear this as a reproach? Shall our bigoted selfishness keep us forever croaking and grumbling and dwindling within the narrow walls which our fathers reared, when the broad land is before us, every acre of which is to be occupied by Christ's friends or Christ's foes? No! let the name of the Lord be praised, we long to welcome not only those who have had, even in Christendom, no Christian parents, but very Gentiles—the Chinaman, the Hindoo, and the Kaffir. If

Sunday-schools be not unfaithful to their high commission, we shall more and more see the "son of the stranger" hastening to our Sabbaths and our covenant, and hear God saying of such, "Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters."\*

Priesthood naturally hates Sunday-schools. So long as other means which we know of are not convenient for the suppression of all such schools, Romanism borrows the name, and sets up Sunday-schools; but—you will mark—they are not *Bible*-schools. To make effectual a machinery of which Scripture is the motive-power,—the very water and steam that turns every wheel,—we must have teachers who know something about the Bible. It will be a monstrous spectacle, if, when the text-book of Sunday-schools shall be placed in the hands of a professing

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\* Isa. lvi. 5.

Christian, well read in other literature, it should convey to him no real meaning and be utterly closed; or if, when presented to a teacher in humbler walks of learning, he should profess his inability to explain it. "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."\* Search the Scriptures, live in the atmosphere of their truth and holiness; commune with God in his own uttered wisdom; sit among prophets, psalmists, evangelists and apostles; for in this is eternal life.†

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\* Isa. xxix. 11 12.

† John v. 39.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE BY BOOKS.

WHEN the matter first comes before the mind, it may not be altogether manifest how religious education by Sunday-schools connects itself with books, or why Sunday-school associations, almost everywhere, have sooner or later become producers of books. This, however, is not peculiar to our methods of training young and otherwise undisciplined persons; as we may see by the cases of the British and Foreign School Society, the National School Society of Ireland, &c.

In all these instances the same causes have been at work. First, the very processes of instruction demand some compositions, and peculiar processes demand pe-

culiar compositions. The methods, for example, of Jacotot, of Hamilton, and of Ollendorff, have each required and occasioned manuals of a particular kind. Then, the taste and talent developed by any course of mental regimen in schools seek for pabulum. When we have awakened an appetite for reading, we must provide books to satisfy it. Hence our familiarity with libraries as connected with schools; and hence the wisdom—I might say the necessity—of a house of publication, in order to make the Sunday-school organization widely effective.

Nevertheless, we must go a little further back to comprehend in its true bearing the printed volume as allied to religious education. *SCHOOLS AND BOOKS* will strike us as coupled together by a providential arrangement and a real principle, when we submit to examination this more general topic of the *increase of knowledge by books*. It will contribute towards a fuller understanding

of a matter which increases in interest day by day, if we premise some inquiries about Language, about Books, and about Printing. We must add to this some survey (which must be exceedingly rapid) of the course of Providence in regard to modern improvements in the arts, and the commerce of man with man and country with country, including the unexampled spread of our own English tongue over the globe. These things, in connection with the principle of *combination* or associate action in behalf of philanthropic ends, can hardly fail, however cursorily viewed, to stimulate us in the endeavour to make and disperse good books in connection with Sunday-schools.

The great instrument of human progress is *Language*,—the means of communication between man and man. Without it man would have remained forever savage and almost brutal, and there could have been

no invention nor progress. For which reason we reject the opinion of those who, like Dr. Blair and other misleaders of our youth, pretend that man invented language: the very invention presupposes a civilization and convention which only language can effect. Revelation shows us that the first man was endowed with speech; and all our speculations on the subject tend to the same result.

By means of language we look into one another's souls and augment the stock of general knowledge; we learn the will of God, and transmit it to others; we indulge the social affections and give utterance to the best wishes of the heart towards God as well as man.

The human race might exist a long time without written language. The invention has by some been attributed to Moses. But there is every reason to believe that it is of far earlier date. In the long ages before the flood, when we know that other



arts sprung up, and when the length of human life afforded room for long experience, we may reasonably conjecture that the use of letters did not lie concealed. Whensoever revealed, or by whomsoever invented, it is one of God's richest gifts to the race, and marks one of the most important epochs in history. From this moment man can converse with the absent, the distant, and even the unborn; he can record his acts, words and feelings, and those of his fellows, his communications from heaven and his returns of praise in psalms and prayers. Writing affords a method not only of communicating, but of perpetuating, thought: it is not merely visible speech, but enduring speech. The lofty idea of a Moses or a Homer, which, by mere words, would have scattered to the winds, is crystallized and petrified, and laid up for thousands of years.

Writing may have been employed very long in domestic life, in trade, and even on

monuments, before it became very common in books. Familiar as the idea of a book is to us, it involves and requires a mass of invention and a progress of art which few persons have weighed, and which we come to appreciate only by measuring the tardy march of centuries from the early marks on rocks and bones up to the present hour, when the products of the press rank among the noblest specimens of the Fine Arts. The ancient book differed as much from the modern book as the hollowed canoe of the Gauls from the lordliest ocean-steamer. A wonderful providence is seen to have watched over the steps of this invention, as if keeping due pace with the gradual diffusion of the gospel. The materials of books in ancient times were very different. Our English word BOOK (*Boc*) means originally the *beech*-tree, of which the smooth bark was used for early writing. In the East Indies the natives write on leaves at this day; and this was one of the ancient

ways of writing. Wood itself has been much used. Such was the writing-table on which the name of John was written by his father. The Romans covered these tablets with wax, on which they wrote with a stylus. I remember to have seen one of these at Geneva. The skins of beasts were employed, as they still are in law-writings and in the rolls of Jewish synagogues. Parchment and vellum were finer preparations of this kind. Linen and cotton, and even silken, books, are preserved by the curious. But the most famous ancient material was the papyrus, from which we derive our word paper. This was made of a sort of flag or bulrush which used to grow along the Nile. This was exported to various countries,—especially to Italy. It went out of use in the seventh century, when the Saracens subdued Egypt and thus broke up the paper-trade. Books of papyrus, in the shape of rolls, are daily

found in the mummy-cases of Egypt. The ancient books were generally *rolls*, (volumes,) which will explain many allusions in the Scriptures.

The grand peculiarity, however, of all ancient books, and one which kept back the knowledge, arts, commerce, civilization and piety of the world as long as it lasted, has not yet been mentioned:—each book was made singly and by hand. Every letter and point of every volume on earth was traced by the distinct, deliberate act of an individual. What was the consequence? Plainly, that books were slowly made, few in number and high in cost. This is a most important consideration in the chain of providential events. Let any of my young readers think of the labour of copying out the whole Bible with his own hand! Yet it has been done thousands and thousands of times. Copying was a regular trade, just as printing is now: and there were men who spent their whole lives in

copying, and who could write with a beauty and regularity unknown at the present day. Monks in the monasteries spent long lives in this. In the abbey of Marmontier,—the most ancient that now remains in France,—the monks lived in separate cells: no art or business was permitted among them save that of writing. The same method still prevails among the Mohammedans, who do not favour printing. The cost of what was produced so slowly could not but be great. An incident is related to show this. In the fourth century, a monk named Hilarion went by ship from Libya to Sicily. When he arrived at his port he offered to pay his passage and that of his companion with a copy of the *Gospels*, which he had written in his youth. The captain, seeing they had nothing else, allowed them to go free. In 609, Alfred, King of Northumberland, gave eight hundred acres of land for the *History of the World*. In the tenth century, books were so scarce in Spain

that the same volume used to serve for several monasteries. In 1424, a mass-book sold for five marks, (nearly fifteen dollars.) When printing was invented, nothing used to surprise the people more than that a Bible could be bought for forty crowns. After the cessation of papyrus, it is to be observed that all these books were written on skins, until the *invention of paper*. Do not wonder that I introduce the name of this familiar article: it bears too near a relation to God's wonderful dealings in respect to human knowledge to be neglected. We need not hesitate to say that the invention of printing, of which we justly speak so much, would have been of little use if it had not been preceded by the invention of so cheap and manageable a fabric as *paper*.

Paper of silk has been known in China for ages; but China was a country scarcely discovered. In the middle of the seventh century, a manufactory of such paper was

established at Samarcand; and fifty-eight years afterwards, in 706, an Arabian of Mecca discovered the art of making it from cotton. Linen paper is still more recent. The oldest in France is a letter from Joinville to St. Louis, about 1269. It was long before this art was so widely diffused in Europe as to cheapen the article;—not, indeed, until the new mode of producing books gave stimulus to the sluggish manufacture. Since this book was commenced, there have been statements made which go to awaken fears lest the ordinary materials for paper should fall short; and prizes have been held out for the discovery of some fibre or the invention of some process to supply the deficiency.

The greatest stride was made by the *invention of printing*, which changed the whole method of bookmaking, put a new face on human society and introduced an era in the world's history. It is now generally admitted by the best authorities that it

was *Gutenberg*, a patrician of Mentz, who, about the years 1438-50, first comprehended the largeness of the subject, and, gathering the several approximative arts which had existed for some years, applied them to the making of books. But it is the Christian view of this invention with which we are concerned. It was as if God had suddenly changed the single right hand of the poor transcriber into a thousand, and thrown the door of knowledge open to the poor. Nor can we properly estimate the march of Providence in this matter unless we consider the improvements in our own day, especially in the stereotype process, the application of steam and the concurrent invention of machine-paper, which have wrought a change almost as great between us and early printing as of that over manuscript. You have only to visit the printing-rooms of our large publishing societies, and behold the silent but resistless motion of those ponderous arms and iron fingers, and



the sudden, oft-repeated, perpetual emerging of broad pages at once, day by day and year by year, to be convinced that, when God has a great work to be performed on earth, he will never fail to provide the most extraordinary and unlikely means for its fulfilment. Let us trust in him for greater marvels still, while we compare this multiplication of books by thousands with the slow, life-exhausting labours of the old-time gray-haired scribe in his cell.

Our view of what Providence is planning towards the spread of divine knowledge among men must be, moreover, enlarged so as to take in the rapid and most unexpected improvements in all the arts, especially in those which tend to the mutual intercourse of mankind. Our own age is, in this respect, an age of wonders, and the last twenty years are equal in this scale to centuries before. Steam and electricity have, in the hands of the Almighty, brought lands

together that were far apart. We are already perfectly familiar with weekly arrivals from Europe. All civilized countries are traversed by the iron highways. Many run to and fro. The lightning carries our messages over land, and will soon carry them over sea: "and knowledge is increased." The terrors of the Southern Cape are almost removed, and different continents are, for all practical purposes, nearer together than were Rome and Athens. We shall presently have telegraphic communion with Asia and Europe; and already our commerce drives its mighty shuttle across the Pacific. Every step in the arts tends to new communication between different countries; and all this affords facilities for the spread of knowledge. Thus are the paths preparing for Christ's coming to reign.

Among the providential arrangements for intercourse among men and for the increase of knowledge, it would be wrong to omit the wonderful and increasing spread of the

language which we speak. Why do we wish the English tongue to be widely diffused? Because it is the language of freedom, of truth, of humanity, of science, and of evangelical Protestantism; the language of those among whom Christ has the greatest number of sincere followers, and of those who have done more than all the rest of the world put together to send abroad the gospel; the language in which the Bible Society, the Tract Society, the Missionary Society, have wrought their chief conquests. To desire its great diffusion is therefore to desire the advancement of almost every good cause on earth. Yet how unlikely might this have seemed, when, nineteen hundred years ago, Cæsar landed on that island of barbarians in the German Ocean! What hath God wrought! English is spoken all over North America, in some of the West Indies, Sandwich Isles, South Sea Isles, New Zealand, Australia and Van Dieman's Land, Cape of Good Hope,

Malta, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and large portions of the East Indies, and is a matter of study in every civilized country in the world.\*

This is our own language, and hence we are naturally interested; it is also the language of predominant influence on earth, and hence every Christian heart ought to long for it to be sanctified. But AMERICA has other causes to be awake in regard to the spread of the truth. In the provisions made by God for the progress of knowledge in the earth, there is not one more remarkable than the discovery, settlement, peopling and growth of *America*. The very discovery set the Old World on fire, nerved the commerce of nations and infused life into the veins of ancient empires. The Protestant pioneers of North America were fostered by Providence through many dangers, as if to prepare them for some great action. Then

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\* See Trenchard's "English, Past and Present."

came the struggle for political rights which really divides the political history of the world into two parts,—the Old and the New. Next we have to consider the settling of new lands, the acquisition of new territory, the influx of foreign population and the enlargement and strengthening of the whole,—until now our commonwealth stretches from the Lakes to the Gulf and from ocean to ocean. The inhabitants of this wide domain speak the English language, and, for the most part, profess the Protestant religion. They have the arts and commerce, and a youthful spirit of enterprise. Their influence is beginning to be felt in the European States. Shall any man be found to deny that God has given to the people of the United States a large portion of that power which is to be felt in spreading truth among men?

A glance may be allowed at another prominent characteristic of the age. I mean the principle of *combination*, or associate

action, as applied to benevolent objects. It marks our era. God has wonderfully kept this power on the side of true religion; but it is gigantic, and would seem to be kept in reserve for *some yet unrevealed aggression on the masses of ignorance and sin*. The great charitable institutions of Great Britain and America are founded on this principle of combination. It must be acknowledged that the friends of religious truth have been too slow in taking advantage of maxims long admitted in secular things. The power of association had been for ages acknowledged in regard to the conveniences and utilities of life and the cruel art of war. But even in temporals there has been a mighty impulse given to these applications in our own day. Never before have men so largely and powerfully associated for great objects. The history of all the joint-stock companies of Europe and America may be taken as exemplifying this assertion. No sooner is any great project pro-

posed, than the first practical step is that of combination and organization. By this means, operations which are hereulean, gigantic, and, indeed, otherwise impossible, are conducted to successful issue with ease and rapidity. Turn ten thousand men loose, without this bond of association, on any great work,—such as the construction of a highway for hundreds of miles,—and they shall effect nothing of any account. Their blind strength will result in mutual interference and certain defeat. But let the same men come under the law of associate and regulated action, and the consequences are such as we daily behold working revolutions in the whole economic frame of society. It is this principle which has been adopted and subsidized by religion. It is the life and soul of all our great charities. And in nothing is its influence more remarkable than in the dissemination of knowledge by books. In every age since books were numerous there have been a

few benevolent men who have, in a small way, employed this method of illuminating their fellows. Thus, the little treatises of Wiclif and his followers made their way and carried reformation, not only in England, but in Germany, Bohemia and Hungary. And after the invention of printing this benevolent endeavour was fruitful in still higher degrees. But individual effort, however benevolent, is blind, uncertain and circumscribed. And it was not until the mighty combinations of modern societies that religious publications began to go forth by thousands, by tens of thousands, by millions, and to roll in a stream, broad, uniform and majestic, over whole countries. This gives a dignity to the modern methods of diffusing knowledge which was altogether wanting in every previous age.

There is, moreover, a special summons to Protestants to engage in this work by such combination, from the posture which they hold against the corrupt Romish hierarchy.



The spread of Popery is to be opposed by the spread of truth. It is our only legitimate weapon. We leave to them the power of an ignorant devotion and the power of the sword. Protestantism has won all its victories by means of knowledge. It translated the Scriptures and sent them abroad. It emancipated the laity and taught them their rights. It seized on the art of printing, and employed it in language after language. But in our contest with Popery we labour under disadvantages from the external unity of the Romish power. In her polity she stands forth as absolutely one. A single principle animates and governs her colossal mass in all parts of the earth. And in her arrogance she sneers at us, as divided into many varying and even contending sects. Now, though this charge is unjust, and though evangelical Protestants are really united in the great essentials of Christianity, in which Papists are not united at all, it is nevertheless true that we labour

under a disadvantage in our contest, and in our work of aggressive beneficence, from our nominal divisions. Nor is there any way in which we can so successfully remove this reproach and disability as by combining together, with a broad fraternal front, in deeds of Christian charity.

In surveying the path which has thus far been pursued by the evangelical churches of England and America, there is one thought which is too cheering to be omitted. It is that *the removal of successive obstacles to the spread of knowledge gives us earnest of the eventual removal of whatsoever is in the way*. Some of these obstacles have had our attention: there are others which demand a word or two of explanation.

A great and comprehensive cause of our difficulty has been the separation of the human race in different continents, nations, governments and languages,—an evil resulting partly from the configuration of the earth and partly from the confusion of Ba-

oel. Now, there is no more marked characteristic of modern times than the disposition of different parts of the earth to come nearer together and to intermingle. Commerce is joining countries which were the most remote. Oceans, which were the great separators, are now the great uniters; and science and art have made us nearer to Europe than some countries are which have no seas between. Kingdoms which were once closed and doubly barred against our ingress are now wide open. The tendency to emigration has become all but a passion or a fury, and whole territories of the Old World are seen emptying their human contents on America, Australia and New Zealand. Though we cannot evangelize the wild inhabitants of Ireland, God is bringing them over to our gospel land by hundreds of thousands. It would be vain for us to send missionaries to Germany; but God is sending the Germans to us. White men are deterred from carrying the gospel

to Africa; but a perpetually-augmented current of emancipated and Christianized slaves is setting towards the Liberian coast, once horrid with the barracoons of the slaver. China is no longer sealed against the printed Scriptures, and thirty thousand Chinese are within the limits of our republic. Thus it is that many run to and fro, and one grand obstacle is lessened, if not wholly removed.

The difficulty caused by the different languages of men is vast, and has stood in the way of successful Christian effort. But there are various ways in which this great mountain may become a plain; and some of these already make themselves visible. The study of language was never so extensively pursued as at the present time. It may be called the ruling passion of the learned in our day. Christianity has availed itself of this, and is rapidly putting the Scriptures and other vehicles of saving knowledge into all the tongues spoken by

men. In this view we must comprehend also the fact—already mentioned in another connection—that the language which we speak, and which contains more gospel treasures than all others, is precisely the one which is passing with unexampled expansion over all the fields of emigration and colonization. The intent of Providence in this cannot well be mistaken. While we may and must employ translations into other tongues, we may, in our own mother-tongue, send the books and tracts which tell of Christ to a large part of the human race. There are other evils, especially oppression and war, which we believe, on the pledge of the prophetic word, that the King of kings and Lord of hosts will remove out of the way in his own time. If we sweep the whole horizon with our glass, we behold on every side the proofs that *God is so ordering his providential dispensations as to give gradual increase to the provisions for spreading knowledge.* The practical deduction, in regard to

our own duty, is that we are bound to employ these increased facilities to the utmost. Divine truth is among us as a blessed fountain; but what we wish to accomplish is to give it an immense diffusion, to send its diverging and fertilizing streams down every side of the mountain of humanity. Prophecy conveys the idea of a wide-journeying of the truth in every direction:—  
“Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;” as if the increase of knowledge were not merely an incidental consequence of this running to and fro, but the very effect intended; as if the very progress meant were that of benevolent men carrying the torch of truth into the dark places of the earth. As if the holy writer had said, “The day is coming, in the revolution of the ages, when good men shall not be content to stay at home and revel in the truth which abounds at their own fire-sides, but when they shall carry it abroad and run with zealous love to convey divine

knowledge to the ignorant." In part, that time may be said already to have come. Our piety may not be more pure—I am sure it is not more deep—than that of a former period; but it is certainly more diffusive. It seeks to fly from the centre to the extremities. And why this, unless in accordance with a law of God's providential plan, that, as the latter days draw near, his people shall be unwilling each to eat his morsel alone, and shall be eager to multiply the means of converting sinners to God? The fathers who honoured Christianity a few centuries ago were possessed of the same truth which we possess. They had the same Bible. Good books stood on their shelves, sometimes in tall folio copies, on large paper, and very costly. They read, they prized, they enjoyed them; but they had not learned the luxury there is in abridging, cheapening and popularizing them. Owen, Baxter, Howe, Bates, Flavel and Boston were possessed by compara-

tively few. It was reserved for our times to take the writings of these very men and make them accessible to the mountaineer in his log-cabin, the emigrant in his attic, the sailor in his fore-castle, and even the prisoner in his cell. This has been the work of associations. Let us aid in this enterprise of beneficent diffusion. Let us feel that confidence in divine truth which shall make us hopeful when we communicate it, even in the smallest portions.

My purpose in this chapter is to enlist my readers in the holy work of increasing knowledge in the earth,—not a science which maintains a merely temporal welfare, but the truth that maketh wise unto salvation. Can I offer a more awakening motive than this,—that, by giving circulation to good books and tracts, after having trained a generation to read them, you may rescue many souls from everlasting destruction? From various causes, perhaps, you have known little of this blessedness. Peradventure,



my Christian reader, you have never yet been the instrument of saving a soul from death and covering a multitude of sins. For reasons best known to yourself, you have never pursued the sinner into his hiding-place, nor alarmed him with denunciation of his sins, nor entreated him to believe in the Lord Jesus, nor prayed and wept and rejoiced with him. In person you have been unable, or thought yourself unable, to go into the highways and hedges, or the lanes and alleys, and carry the truth of the gospel to the vicious and forsaken. You have lived thus long without any acquaintance with a work which wins so many trophies to Christ. Now, in all this you may find an argument why you should aid the cause which I am now pleading. That which you cannot do in person you may do by the hands of others. You may enter the chambers of illness and the dens of infamy. You may preach the gospel. You may be, to many a learner, the Baxter,

the Hodge, the Boardman, of his dwelling. You may multiply yourself a thousand-fold, and continue to labour long after you are dead. These paradoxes will be fulfilled in you by a simple embracing of the means offered by the American Sunday-School Union.

If the entire subject of books and reading were before us, there are some qualifications and cautions which it would be proper to throw in just at this place. Extensive as have been the good results of increased publication, all the results have not been good. Evil may be written and printed as well as good. While the church sows wheat, Satan sows tares. The knowledge which is the pride of the age and of America may be shallow in the very ratio of its diffusion. Hundreds of thousands, by means of public education, attain a certain point of culture: it remains to be seen how far this wide-spread but necessarily imperfect illumination will prove safe or benefi-

cial in the absence of distinct evangelical knowledge and habits of Christian morality. Another generation, at least, must live and die before we can calculate the evils wrought by bad literature. On this head I have somewhat to urge in the next chapter; and, therefore, it is enough to say that every suspicion of danger from idle or corrupt writings should impel us to those very labours of prevention which are attempted by Sunday-schools and other Christian seminaries:—namely, to seek out and gather and teach the children as already proposed, to produce and cultivate a taste for sound reading, to furnish copies of the Holy Scriptures and of good human compositions which inculcate saving truth, and to shower these over the land, to be as rain on the thirsty earth. By schools and books, under God's favour, we hope to counterwork the adversary.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MULTITUDE OF BOOKS, AND THE RESULTING DANGERS AND DUTIES.

THE dying poet Collins is reported to have said, "I have but one book; but that is the best." And Sir Walter Scott, himself so prolific a contributor to the fund of modern literature, gave a similar testimony in his last hours. How the great and cultivated but often misguided mind of Sir Walter Scott returned to the Scriptures in his dying hours is known to many of our readers. "He expressed a wish," says his son-in-law, Lockhart, "that I should read to him; and when I asked from what book, he said, 'Need you ask? THERE IS BUT ONE.' I chose the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel; he listened with mild

devotion, and said, when I had done, 'Well, this is a great comfort. I have followed you distinctly, and I feel as if I were to be myself again.' But this hope was not realized. During his days of decline he was sometimes heard murmuring over snatches from Isaiah and the book of Job, and occasionally a Psalm, in the old Scottish version."

We shall best estimate the value of the *one Book* when we have looked at the many, and when we have seen how hard it is to live amidst such a wilderness of sweets, often poisonous as luscious, without serious harm.

Some foregoing remarks have sufficiently revealed the principle of the Sunday-school institution in respect to these vehicles of thought. The BIBLE, as the *one Sunday-book*, is the great Sunday-school book. But we practise no such fanatical proscription as that which is ascribed to the caliph Omar at the burning of the Alexandrian

Library. There are thousands of uninspired volumes which deserve to be read. Every generation of writers adds something to replace such as become obsolete. Among these, religion has its duties and its rights; and Christian education, for reasons already alleged, prepares and utters its lessons in this kind. As Christian teachers and scholars, the question which concerns us just here is this:—WHAT VIEW SHALL THE PATRIOT AND THE PHILANTHROPIST TAKE OF THE MULTIPLICATION OF BOOKS IN OUR DAY? Before we reply, a passage from Solomon occurs to every mind:—“Of making many books there is no end.”\* In the times of this Hebrew king, wisdom, learning and experience were conveyed, as we saw before, by word of mouth, rather than by pen and ink. Scholars travelled over all lands to hear the words of their masters, instead of having these words brought from all

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\* Eccles. xii. 12.

lands on paper to them. The construction of books was a very laborious business, when copy after copy was produced by a toil as slavish and as slow as the engrossing of our modern chanceries. Yet, such is the charm of composition for the author himself, and such is the advantage of the written treatise to society, that even then, two thousand eight hundred years ago, in secluded Palestine, books had begun to be inconveniently numerous. The penitent philosopher—or, as he chooses to call himself, ECCLESIASTES, the preacher—introduces the sentence among the concluding lessons and settled results of his whole life, and speaks both of writing and of reading books. Having himself been a laborious collector,—having “sought out and set in order many proverbs,” which were “upright, even words of truth,” to stimulate dull minds by their antithetic sententiousness, “as goads,” and abide in memory by sharp apothegmatic wit and

wisdom, “as nails,”—he, nevertheless, grew faint from the toil,—for none is more wasting than that of the student,—and, as he laid aside the reed and parchment, was glad to look higher than all instrumentality. The ultimate discovery of his life-long researches is in the last verses of that book.\* On surveying the almost unlimited augmentation of printed books in our days, we are forcibly induced to such reflections as these:—

I. EVERY MAN READS SOMETHING. It may be asserted, as an undeniable truth, of all such as peruse these remarks or are likely to heed them. There have been states of society in which books, like gems, were found in any number only among the wealthy; but now the humble artisan often has a better library than was owned by Charlemagne. Reading is scarcely to be numbered among the luxuries—it is

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\* Eccles. xii. 13, 14.



rather one of the necessities—of life; so that we are tempted to smile when we alight on one of those sober old-time homilies in which young people are informed of the “advantages of reading.” For who, in our time and country, lives without books? Certainly not the porter at the gate or the coachman upon his box. Literature in some shape and measure belongs to the inheritance of all Americans; and the increasing extent and efficiency of our gigantic school-system render the craving for this indulgence more and more insatiable. Young persons who establish themselves in a dwelling demand a show of volumes as much as an array of kitchen-utensils. To find great numbers of adults who cannot read, we must look to the tribes who come to us from the forming hand of Popery, in which ignorance is the mother of devotion. It may be stated as the general fact,—we are aware of the exceptions,—that among American Protestants there

are no families, above the level of deplorable want, in which reading of some kind does not enter into the occupations of every day. We are, beyond any nation that is or ever was on earth, a reading people. A peculiarity so marked as this cannot but act upon public character, for good or evil, in very striking degrees; and no one, previously to the experiment, can certainly declare what the result will be. In this as in many other respects, we of this new era and especially of this new world, are pressing our army into a field of discovery and experience where none have gone before us, and where the reconnoissance must be all our own. Thus it remains to be seen what sort of a generation that will turn out which will have been trained up from the mothers' arms in daily converse with letters. As matters now are, every man, woman and child among us has somewhat that he reads.

II. Now, it is equally plain that NO MAN

CAN READ EVERY THING. This were beyond the omnivorous powers even of the veriest *helluo librorum*, or book-glutton. Those who browse at will in great libraries and turn over the volumes of the ware-room, however rapidly, superficially and constantly they read, cannot peruse all the productions of the press. Omitting all mention of other countries, especially Germany, France and England, the tide of publications from our own press is such as to awaken astonishment. According to the best information I can procure, the number of works published in the United States during the year 1854 cannot be less than one thousand. I need not say how great is the multiplication of copies.

Who is he that can keep reckoning of such fecundity? The day was when every work above a primer or an almanac was imported from Europe. Even within our recollection, the trade was so circumscribed

that no great study would have been required to go round the complete circle of North American impressions. At present the very catalogue of works is burdensome; and he who visits the houses of our princely booksellers, or attends the trade-sales, finds himself bewildered, needs a guide in the labyrinth, and is disheartened at the immensity of literary material. To this is to be added the periodical publications of the time, which mark out our age as distinctly and as mightily as cotton, steam, or electro-magnetism. Such is the superfetation, that, as has been said, the very paper has fallen short, and the lamenting cry is for some new fabric, since the rags of the earth no longer suffice to make its books. If in the days of Solomon—from which no books but the Scriptures have come down to us, and in which every uncial letter was separately and laboriously traced by manual labour upon the parchment—books were yet so numerous as to occasion Solomon's words,

what shall we say of days like these, when the power-press can throw off fifteen or twenty thousand sheets in an hour, and when ten thousand fresh volumes emerge into publicity in a single morning? It needs scarcely be repeated that no man can read every thing.

III. And therefore WISE SELECTION IS NEEDFUL IN REGARD TO THE BOOKS WHICH SHALL BE READ. Selection of some sort every man employs who does not read by dictation or purchase his library by the cubic foot. Yet in many instances it is very much such selection as when one shakes a laden tree and picks up what happens to fall, be it ripe or rotten. There is no rejection; there is neither scrutiny nor discrimination; for these presuppose both knowledge and wisdom. There are few things in which men are more apt to feel secure in their own competency than judgment of books; there is nothing in which they are more egregiously gulled and

duped. Sometimes they are carried away with the butterfly-hues of a brilliant ephemeral nothing; and sometimes, like the fabled fowl, they leave untouched the diamond upon its heap of rubbish. Where thousands are competing for notice, it is necessary to use discernment. The number must be sternly reduced by repeated siftings before there can be any practical study. And to do this requires some antecedent information. The more books multiply around us, the more imperative does it become that we should use reserve. The Arab in his desert, who seldom sees a stranger, is safe in welcoming every passer-by to the shadow and refreshment of his tent; but, where one dwells among populations like London or New York, he learns to choose and to refuse. So, in days when the question was, "Who reads an American book?" our fathers read every thing that came damp from the press; but now their name is legion. Necessity is therefore laid

upon us to exercise a salutary caution as to what books shall be perused.

IV. Yet THE DIFFICULTY OF DISCREET SELECTION IS GREAT beyond all that at first appears.

1. The vast number already noted is the measure of this difficulty, though not its sole cause, as we shall see. There is the entire world of past authorship coming up before us, along with that which is contemporary. The rusty, mouldering and worm-eaten tomes of the library come into rivalry with the bright, uncut pages of the publication-morning. One must settle the outstanding quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. Each host appears by myriads. Choice is ready to be confounded where "of making many books there is no end."

2. To the number from which to select must be added the ignorance of those who make the selection. Laying aside persons of high education, the mass of mankind,

particularly in youth, are unprepared to sit in judgment upon the multifarious productions of a fertile period. Here, if any where, wise counsel of those who may be denominated *experts* is invaluable. The person who would not trust his own unaided judgment in regard to the purchase of a farm, or even a yoke of oxen, is often quite cool in determining the studies of a whole life; though this latter point is much more remote from his ordinary pursuits. The criticisms of books which appear in public journals are seldom to be taken without caution; being sometimes malicious, sometimes venal, and very often ignorant and hasty. Some advance is indeed made towards determinations of this kind in the case of those who have received a good general education; for in this must always be included some survey of leading works on great subjects, and some rules which may be applied to future selection. But it must be confessed that the majority of



readers are very little able to cater advantageously for their own daily supplies.

3. Due selection is hindered also by the fact that so MANY PERSONS MAKE MERE ENTERTAINMENT THE CRITERION OF THEIR CHOICE. In times when a great book was a matter to be recovered at law, or to be willed away in testaments, or bequeathed for the soul's good to prelate, college, or cloister, the study of the same was a serious function of life, for which men prepared with deliberation. But now, when every day brings its new temptations, with every ingenious trick of tinsel and flavour and every provocative to passion or laughter, who can expect a youth of gayety and cleverness to select that only which shall be profitable? As well might we expect our babes to lay in a stock of useful medicines. With most readers who have passed their school-days, reading is a matter of sheer amusement, as much as chess, driving out, or promenading; though, like each of these,

it may become a thing of pride, emulation and display. But, amidst the multitude of books, few are they who choose their literary material with an eye to solid improvement; and hence the process of selection is very unfairly disturbed.

4. Moreover, all impartial and sober discrimination among "books without end" is precluded by the bias of popular vogue and transient fashion, which work as powerfully here as in furniture or dress. Look back, in old collections and catalogues, and see hundreds of works once famous and sought and read with a sort of frenzy,—as the *Calprenède*, the *Grand Cyrus*, the *Arcadia*, the poems of Charles II.'s court,—now entirely contemned among the dust and cobwebs of garrets. Let us not persuade ourselves that our own day is exempt from such follies. The lists and counters of the trade will to-morrow morning show scores of such perishable things, and the undisciplined and unadvised will go on to fill

and cloy themselves with luscious but contemptible stuff, of which they shall by-and-by be heartily sick. In poetry, in romance, in philosophy—alas! in religion—there is a temporary éclat which has *this* lamentable ingredient in its folly, that it injures the mind and shuts out what might give it strength.

For these and the like reasons, it is not easy to carry fully out our plans of selection. And this should lead every one who is solicitous for his own mental and moral culture, and that of his dependants, to seek the best counsel in regard to this momentous affair of reading and study. For we may reconstruct the maxim concerning companions, and say, with equal truth, “Tell me your *books*, and I will tell you what you are.” The question, then, to which all the preceding considerations should urge us is, *What shall I read?* In other words, What principle shall govern my selection of books? And, in what re-

mains, we may profitably occupy our time in considering what to refuse and what to choose.

V. Here there can be no hesitation in laying down the rule, BOOKS SHOULD BE REJECTED WHICH ARE BAD OR USELESS OR EVEN BELOW MEDIOCRITY.

1. *Bad books* are abundant. They “go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs.” Of making bad books there is in our time no end; never was there such a propagandism of evil reading. Omitting those which invite the criticism of the police, we have books of error, of heresy, of scepticism, of infidelity, of scoffing, of blasphemy and of atheism. The old English and French deists are reproduced with new forces of vastly greater danger and seduction from Young England and Young Germany. Those are not the most

fatal which are the grossest. For Tom Paine, we must grope into the filthiest dens of transatlantic radicals, newly arrived and bringing dirty and cheap copies from Holywell Street, from English factories and from bridewells. If you wish to poison an enemy you will not first suffocate him with stench like this; wily malice will ply him with "poppy and mandragora and all the drowsy syrups of the world." And such are the infidel books which come to us in the guise of popular fiction or poetry. For example, the ignorant creatures who innocently try to comprehend the involved and intricate strophes of Percy Bysshe Shelley scarcely know, even while the volume is in their hands and they are lulled with his soft music, that as an atheist he is worse than Paine; that in that very volume he scouts the idea of a God, raves against the institution of marriage, laughs to scorn chastity as a virtue, blasphemes the miraculous con-

ception of our Lord in language which we dare not quote, and traces the misery of mankind to what he calls "the accursed book of God." I charitably believe that those young misses whose saloons are graced by costly copies of Shelley and Don Juan have contented themselves (no unusual practice) with the cover and gilding of the volume.

Bad books are unfortunately of wider range than these, which inculcate infidelity or paint voluptuous sin. The cheap, frail pamphlet-editions of idle romance, notable more for its dead-level mediocrity,—a literature peculiar to our day, in which great and famous but unprincipled publishers and booksellers purvey to the least intellectual and most illiterate portion of the reading world,—are recognised by their very integument, and the yellow or tawny cover is seen lurking under pillows, on work-tables, or wherever consciousness of ill-spent hours leads to concealment. The world is so full of injurious and corrupting works that a

decision should early be formed to shun them all as you would shun a scorpion.

2. *Useless books* are innumerable. It is not enough to shun those which are shameful and flagitious. Our life in this world is but a brief period, abridged at either end; when longest, greatly interrupted, and often abruptly cut off. Why, among tens of thousands, should a man select those which can do him no good? This does not breathe a syllable against seasonable entertainment, recreation, nay, even amusement. That book is not useless which smooths the knitted brow and tempts back the smile of natural health to the saturnine visage; and, when wise reserve and careful limitation are observed, such books do good. But the adult who reads always for amusement makes himself a child, and might as well return to kites and marbles.

Those who would malignantly degrade the women of America into pretty toys, to be caressed while the early varnish is on

them and the costly music not silenced by wedlock, and then contemned when they are found to have no solid qualities, cannot effect their purpose more certainly than by reducing the daily reading of the sex to volumes, or rather pamphlets, of vapid story-telling and banter. And all readers, male and female, old and young, should be aware that their character and destiny may be inferred from these silent companions; and that books which bring no profit are leaving a mark upon the ductile wax of mind, sentiment and habit, for life, and perhaps for eternity.

3. *Inferior books* are to be rejected, in an age and time when we are courted by whole libraries, and when no man's life is long enough to compass even those which are good and great and famous. Why should we bow down at puddles when we can approach freely to the crystal springheads of science and letters? Half the reading of most people is snatched up at random.



Many stupefy themselves over the dulness of authors who ought never to have escaped oblivion. The invention of paper and printing—especially the production of both by a new motive-power—may be said to have overdone the matter and made it too easy to be born into the world of authorship. The race would be benefited by some new invention for strangling nine out of ten that sue for publicity. If steam and magnetism could lengthen life to an antediluvian term, or urge the mind into new energies, so that it should effect in one hour what our fathers effected in ten, we might afford to nod over indifferent, second-rate, seventh-rate productions. But time is no longer and mind is no mightier; yet men who, in a shop, orchard, or market, pique themselves on choosing the best, are content in the matter of reading to take what is flat, insipid and empty, if not refuse. No man can do his friend or child a more real service than to snatch out of his hand

the book that relaxes and effeminates him, lest he destroy his solids and make his fibre flaccid by the slops and hashes of a catch-penny press. But especially is he a benefactor who instils the principle that no composition should be deliberately sought which is not good, beneficial and above mediocrity.

VI. And we cannot leave this part of our subject without inquiring somewhat into that strange phenomenon of modern times known as *periodical literature*, which must be included among *books* of making which "there is no end." The Hebrew realm, at its "most high and palmy state," had not attained to this. The wisest of kings had not devised that mental luxury which in our day is afforded to the child. He had "forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen;"\* but he could not name a single magazine, review,

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\* 1 Kings iv. 26.

or gazette. "There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom;"\* but his sage sentences did not come to so many in all his reign as are reached by the "Times" or the "Moniteur" every morning. "When the queen of Sheba heard of the wisdom of Solomon, . . . she came to prove him with hard questions;"† but in our day kings and queens puzzle one another through the press, and the leading-article of some haggard night-watching writer is conned in the palaces of St. Cloud, Windsor, and St. Petersburg. The world, for better for worse, has made progress in this direction at least; and, if one of the year 1000 B.C. could visit New York, he would find no one spot more amazing, and perhaps incomprehensible, than the reading-room of the Mercantile Library, where the young clerk may inspect two

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\* 1 Kings iv. 34.

† 1 Kings x. 1.

hundred and thirty-three periodicals. This influence of what has been with suggestive wit called the "Fourth Estate" is incalculable; and, where every one daily peruses some portion of their productions, it becomes a serious inquiry *what* he shall peruse. Is it not true that there are men in our cities whose whole literature is the newspaper? Is there not a larger class who add only the magazine and the review? Do we not know persons whose Sabbath hours are given chiefly to the religious journal? Then is there no part of the whole theme which is more momentous. And, in regard to the species of periodical work last named, I beg leave to utter some candid testimony. *Religious newspapers* which merit the name, and which convey the news of Christ's kingdom, are unspeakably useful; they are welcome as a living friend would be who should come in and tell us what the Lord is doing on

the earth; and such a visitant does not profane holy time, unless he supplant God's own word or some acts of worship and mercy. But, I fear, more visitants than one come in at this open Sabbath-door. I fear the politician, the worldly-newsman, the amusing traveller, the fiery partisan under the sheep's clothing of philanthropy, the angry polemic, the seditious disunionist, —I fear all these sometimes approach the bower of the first day of the week, and absorb the time of communion with God under the name of religious journalism. And I own myself jealous of any reading which shall stately and periodically take the place of the spiritual volume and book of devotion.

But, whether secular or religious, our serial publications are already a power in the state. The literature of our most ambitious and popular magazines has been occasionally tinctured with an un-

mistakable dash of infidel sneer. And each of us should take good counsel before he rears his sons and daughters on much that flaunts on drawing-room tables.

## CHAPTER VII.

### READING HABITS.

EVERY considerate person will have certain books on which to bestow a more than ordinary attention. Others may rank as casual acquaintances, but these will be companions, and, in some cases, bosom-friends. If, as has been said, our reading, as truly as our society, forms our character, there will be some influences which we must wish to be frequent, if not constant. There are friends whom we would gladly welcome every day, and a chosen few with whom we would even dwell. It is not denied that among the multitudinous volumes in the world there are some at which a single look is enough; for are there not living acquaintances whom we pardon for making their interviews brief and rare? Writings

which only amuse the vacant hour, or which dilute the strength of more elaborate productions, belong to this class. But there are others of which we never weary, and to which we resort as to a spring or a tree which we have known from childhood. Hence the loss is great of those hurrying and desultory readers who, deluded by the excessive variety of inviting literature and yielding herein to the spirit of an impatient age, rove from book to book, skim the surface of many productions and live in the ambiguous satisfaction of alternate expectation and disappointment, but who know not the enduring, healthful delight of converse with an old book. There are works so solid that it is only after years we learn their full value, and which never please more than upon a tenth perusal. All great masterpieces, in every department, are of this character. But it is the misfortune of many that they grow weary of masterpieces. Novelty with them is weightier



than merit; and the quality which they seek in books is like that which they look for in perishable fruits, the lusciousness of a momentary pleasure. To cling to a great and lovely work, as one clings to a beloved friend, is altogether beyond their experience. Yet, if I could have the ear of my young friends, I would say that such closeness of acquaintanceship is necessary to high attainment, and has been exemplified in all persons who have enriched their minds by true learning. They have returned again and again to a few favourite authors. On these they have perpetually whetted the edge of their wits. Indeed, it is wonderful how much acumen and how much strength may be acquired by the faithful and repeated use of a very small collection. Since books are without end, there is the more self-command needed to secure due attention to a few; and the cases are rare of that concentration which gave origin to the Latin proverb, *Beware of the*

*man of one book.\** Without so extreme a narrowing of the field of diligence, we may avoid the fault of unbounded ramble; and a sober, deliberate consulting and pondering of one well-chosen shelf of authors will beget a strong, affectionate partiality, which will sweeten toil and result in harvests of acquisition. But this trait belongs rather to an age gone by than to our own.

All the foregoing observations have a direct reference to RELIGIOUS BOOKS AND RELIGIOUS READING. And here the subject begins more fully to declare its connection with the high concerns of our great topic. If, as we seemed to own, every man in our day reads something, then every man who reverences Christianity reads something religious. This is as certain a truth as that the reading of every one betrays his liking, his choices and the tendency of his heart. You will therefore

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\* Cave ab homine unius libri.

scarcely suspect that person to have more than a nominal, titular, or complimentary religion, a sort of honorary Christianity, who finds all his reading in mere science or mere letters, the secularities of the passing, deceitful world. You will argue justly—and the very children of a family will argue—that he or she who never or rarely takes up a volume of evangelical warmth is but a cold disciple, if a disciple at all. And here again we have the obvious application of the maxim that no man can peruse universal literature, and that the immensity of the field makes necessary a rigid adherence to some fixed path. From the distaste of the natural mind for the things of the Spirit, inquiring persons of some cultivation are in imminent peril of being drawn away from the plain and nutritious works of doctrinal and practical godliness, to the ten thousand winning and caressing glories of worldly genius and talent. We need not wonder, therefore, that, in no age since

Christianity was promulged, have so many professing Christians held themselves aloof from sound and edifying books on religion. This repugnance to the very aliment in which our evangelical forefathers delighted, this disposition to consider truly religious writings as tedious and uninteresting, if not abhorrent to taste, has led to a perfectly new species of literature, the growth exclusively of modern society and the modern church; in a word, to that which may be denominated LIGHT RELIGIOUS READING.

Not to revert to the religious newspaper, so great in its use and its abuse, we are already familiar with a class of productions which occupy a debatable land between the church and the world, and which, while they thus "ride the marches" on the frontier, push forward their light troops to harass sometimes one party and sometimes the other. The day of ponderous treatises and systematic sermons has closed, and perhaps will not dawn again soon. Those

who live by catching up the watchwords of the hour and breathing the spirit of the age will unanimously vote all doctrinal discourses heavy and soporific. The strong meat which suited the tastes and digestion of strong men, whose faculties were exercised by reason of use to discern good and evil, must be divided and triturerated and mingled with milk for babes. The wine of pure reformation-doctrine must be mixed with water. Since the public will not turn aside from the attractions of a diversified and parti-coloured literature, to pore over dissertations concerning original sin, or imputed righteousness, the condemnation of man, and the glory of Immanuel, the gospel must be made easy; the edge of the cup must be sweetened; the pill must be coated; the prosaic doctrine must be set to music; what would not go down in the shape of treatise or homily must be adroitly fetched in in the shape of dialogue or story-book. And thus we are

gradually building up a pyramid of floral beauties and sugared confections on the very table which once groaned with masses of truth.

Now, so earnestly desirous are we to have the children of our unsteady and drunken age brought to the reception of the precious words of Christ; so deeply persuaded are we that without these they must perish; so fully do we know the sweet potency of these words to be such that even in the minutest measure, under grace, they can make the dying live; and so clearly do we see the multitude passing by and caring for none of these things; that we would fain have even *these* means dealt with leniently, and would agree to any and every innocent vehicle of truth, so only that the poor wretched creatures should hear and learn of Jesus. "What then?" said Paul, (and he said nothing more nobly;) "notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, CHRIST IS PREACHED; and I therein

do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”\* Nevertheless, we are bound to add that when the question is how the most healthful, robust and active Christians shall be formed, we must plead for a severer regimen.

Since the world began, there never were so many inviting religious books as at the present time. In the same proportion, the difficulty of proper selection is increasing. Such as are elders remember the days of their childhood, when a single armful of volumes was the entire religious library of the young, and when, of course, it did not take long to choose. It was no part of the parent's anxiety then to keep out scores of doubtful productions bearing a Christian name. But the evil is not now confined to juvenile literature. As the lives of professors have become more and more like those of the adversaries; as amusements and indulgences, disallowed by spiritual and self-

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\* Phil. i. 18.

denying people ever since there was such a thing as a church, have become common in the practice of leading persons ; and as the tenets of disciples have worn away at the edges, shaded off into compromise and blended on every side with errors and infidelities subversive of gospel purity, so a literature has grown up precisely mirroring forth this new condition of religious fashion ; and the favourite writings of the time are such as offend no sect and are true to no standard. We say—with sadness and earnest apprehension we say—to those who counsel for the faith of the coming age, Take heed what books your souls live on ! It is impossible to be too cautious in the selection of religious reading for the family and the closet.

No duty is plainer than that of standing out firmly for the encouragement of a MASCULINE LITERATURE, EMBODYING AND DEFENDING THE PRECIOUS TRUTHS OF THE REFORMATION. We want MEN ; and they must



be trained in hardy methods. The three years which, as military authorities declare, are required for transforming the raw recruit into the disciplined soldier, are not spent in light or easy exercises. Mighty Christian muscle will not be produced by catching up and devouring whatsoever floats by on the surface of the current authorship. Let us run all the risk of being judged censorious, we nevertheless affirm that the predominant trait of the now popular religious press is lightness. In proportion as fancy has been amused, the understanding has been famished; every addition to imagery has tended to defraud the heart. Sermons and volumes have been constrained to become picture-galleries of illustration and series of metaphor and similitude gay as the slides of the magic-lantern. Even this were tolerable if truth and reason had held their place; we could love and embrace divine truth even in a suit of

motley: but distinct vision of gospel verity has been impaired. The system of lenses has become more entertaining but less achromatic. Readers and hearers grow less and less able to define with exactness the doctrines of grace. *Doctrine* itself—the very name of what disciples covet—has become with certain schools a term of disparagement. Let us be fully understood: the books which we need are not vague, compromising, latitudinarian, all-comprehensive rhapsodies or strains of sentimentality, however tinted with the rainbow, but undeniable statements of *Reformation Truth*. Of making many books there may be no end; but there will be a speedy end of all sound theology unless we can make some which shall utter a bold, intelligible language in regard to the points for which Huss died and Luther laboured. Many are so lulled into sweet slumbers by the siren voice of mock-charity as not to know that there is any controversy. And

no marvel; "for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle?"\* From more than one quarter the landmarks of Protestant faith are invaded by the literature of the day, especially from the sides of ritualistic hierarchy and philosophic rationalism. Even among those unpretending forms of service where nothing is prescribed, where no rubrics check the spirit of worship and no canons thunder against the removal of jot or tittle, there is growing up a party which sighs for loftier pomp, liturgic stateliness, vestimental sanctity, orchestral music and the religion of cathedrals. This is the fruit of increasing refinement, increasing wealth, and not of increasing piety. Such persons are already posting, by way of Oxford, to Rome. In the opposite quarter we discover a large array of books, in varying degrees of falsehood and of effrontery, but

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\* 1 Cor. xiv. 8.

all agreeing in this, that they dislike the marked tenets of Calvinistic theology. At the extreme we have the apostates, such as Francis Newman, who are scarcely recognised as Christian; then the deniers of all proper inspiration, such as Scherer and Morell; then the dreamy sophists who remove all meaning from the terms Atonement, Justification, Eternity, such as Maurice; then, nearer home, thousands who reject original sin, eternal retribution, vicarious atonement and justification by faith. The very mention of these terms jars on the ear of many who have already been drawn off, by hearing and reading erroneous books, to doubt the truth. Now, as against the evils indicated, we need a class of works which shall exercise and gratify the reasoning powers and the holy affections; both of which have been left to weakness by the rapid and indefinite sentiments of our period. We will not force on our contemporaries the study of old books; every

age should have its own. And, though we hold that any one treatise of John Owen or Jonathan Edwards has solid bullion enough to be beaten out into the gold-leaf of a hundred thin and glittering essays or stories, we leave these great discourses for their few but fit audience, and shall be content if the love of systematic Bible-truth shall revive in any shape in our day.

Lastly: The multitude of human compositions will naturally lead a sanctified mind to that which is divine, namely, THE SCRIPTURES OF TRUTH. I am aware that this will seem to many readers one of the commonplaces of the religious press. They read, and they approve, but are ready to reply, "Who doubts the excellence of the word of God?" Yet, when we come to look into the fact, these same persons *do not read it*. Perhaps, from habit not yet broken, from compliance with a mother's request, from some remaining twinge of conscience, they effect the perusal of a

given portion every day. It is well. A man's case is not desperate so long as he has not ceased to pray and read the Bible. But, as to taking any pleasure in this perusal, they will not pretend to it. Indeed, many of those whose case we are considering seriously discredit all our professions that we read the Scriptures for any satisfaction they afford. We fear there are those within the pale of the church whose whole familiarity with the sacred volume is an affair of task and routine, and who never in their lives spent a delighted hour over the word. It would be a point gained with such persons, if they could be thoroughly convinced of the fact that there are Christians who read the Scriptures for pleasure, and with an avidity never awakened by any other book. Such is the unquestionable truth in regard, we love to believe, of thousands now living. In this book we have our Christian encyclopædia, our religious library. No book so

rewards application. Its difficulties yield before study, and its transcendent beauties and glories rise and grow upon us, like the widening prospects of alpine countries, the longer we toil and the higher we climb. The literary charms of Scripture have been often and justly extolled; but we set these aside for the present in order to place the study of God's word on its true basis: it is GOD'S WORD. It is the record of infinite wisdom and infinite love. Men may weary of the Bible who come to it as they would to Homer or Herodotus; but it is ever fresh to one who comes to it as to the Urim and Thummim—light and perfection—the oracle of a redeeming God. The life-boat may have a tasteful curvature and beautiful decoration; but these are not the qualities for which I prize it; it was my salvation from the howling sea! So the interest which a regenerate soul takes in the Bible is founded on a personal application of heart to the saving truth which it

contains. If there is no taste for this truth there can be no relish for the Scriptures. We do not wonder that to carnal minds it is a dull and even a repulsive book. They have no eyes to discern its beauties; just as they have no eyes to discern the beauties of its chief theme, the Lord Jesus Christ. Totally destitute of any relish for spiritual objects, they naturally turn aside from that which is all spiritual. The nearer any preaching approaches the Scriptural tone and strain, the more dull is it in their apprehension. Having never risen high enough to catch a glimpse of the sublime and soul-ravishing realities of the spiritual domain, they are utterly unexercised in that whole class of operations which proceed from the higher reason, and, in their paltry imaginings, they deem these discussions not intellectual enough for their wonderful capacities; as if *they* had ever attained a title to pronounce on a question of intellect! But, stupidly blind as to their



own condition and the remedy of the gospel, they regard evangelical preaching as vapid and uninteresting for the very qualities which repel them in the Bible, but which to the enlightened are full of charms. St. Augustine, after roving for fourteen years among all the sweets of Greek and Roman letters, had his eyes suddenly opened to see the loveliness of the Word; and he straightway preferred it to all the multitude of classic productions.

No reader can come too soon to the discovery that it is a want of interest in God and Christ which prevents his interest in the Scriptures! Let that film fall from the eye, and what a new world shall he live in! Let the Lord Jesus Christ become to you, as he is to his saints, the exemplar and impersonation of all that is fair and noble and ravishing, the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely, and you will come away from the common herd of books to this gospel as you come from the crowd of

the boisterous, dusty streets, to the private chamber where you gaze on the countenance which you value above all on earth. Other books may gratify shallower tastes, scientific, literary, artistic; but *this* shall wake up profounder harmonies and call echoes from the resounding caverns of intimate nature; this shall strike the chords which are to survive and be vocal in eternity; this shall open the springs of sacred passion which are to flow for evermore; this shall bring you, a rapt soul, into the holiest shrine, where seraphs watch and worship, there to hearken for the whisper of God and feel the pulses of your Saviour's bosom. Ah, no! this is as yet all unknown to you; and hence you must abide amidst the lower pleasures of the outer court, till a heavenly, controlling voice shall say, *Come up higher!*

Would to God, reader, you had eyes to see and ears to hear the spiritual things which are in the Scriptures! Like the merchant in the parable, you would sell

all to buy this field and secure this goodly pearl. You would come away from other branches of learning, to hear God giving utterance to his own subduing words. Believe, believe me, O careless one, if there are delights in the works of gifted earthly writers, there are none which can be compared for a moment to the delight which a renewed mind takes in Holy Scripture. It is this which has led so many of the first intellects in every age to bestow on it their maturest, profoundest, and latest application. These clusters do not yield their choicest juices on a first gentle pressure. These chief harmonies of the word are never educed by those who drowsily read a chapter now and then. Days may be spent with ever-growing interest over the word of God, comparing Scripture with Scripture; tracing, taking up and carrying forward the thread of apostolic argument; listening to the lyric burst of prophetic song; anticipating the sanctities of paradise; and cling-

ing by faith and love to every revealed trait of the face of Jesus, which veils itself from the careless but shines with radiant love on those who press in to gaze more closely. How do we treat the letter of a friend? We open it with trembling eagerness; we read it again and again. Which of us thus reads a letter of Paul or of John? Yet they *may* be so read; and they *must* be so read if we would be sincerely interested and fully profited. We have, perhaps, yet to learn what it is to hang over the hallowed pages as we find a Luther, an Owen, and, in later days, a Martyn and a Judson, to have done.

My persuasion is firm that to the experienced reader I shall not seem to have written too strongly or in any respect unreasonably concerning books and the book of books. The wheels of the age are running, more rapidly than cursory observers are aware, towards a catastrophe which will owe its origin to our abuse of a great blessing, namely, our multiplied books. If there

was a day when Satan tried to subvert the press, that day is now passed; and his game is to subsidize it. This has been his uniform policy. It will be strange if he should forego his darling method in respect to education. Our endeavour, and it is one in which all the powers of life might well be spent, is to form and purify and strengthen the infant and juvenile mind by schools and books. There is not a parent, a pastor, a Sunday-school superintendent, teacher, or librarian, there is not a Christian author, editor, or bookseller, who has not a serious responsibility as to the affair we have been considering. Its relation to Sunday-schools is clearly this: that they prepare the readers; and the institution, as now conducted, to a certain length, prepares the books. Could healthful opinions on this subject be infused, to-day, into the minds of the two hundred thousand Sunday-school teachers of America, the instant result would be an elevation of the national

taste in reading. Or could even a fifth part of the two millions of scholars in the land be imbued with a genuine taste for gospel nutriment, the effect would be recognised in every evangelical church on this continent. Those who have the care of children and youth, and especially those who have the care of juvenile libraries, should be satisfied with nothing less than this. We teach little if we teach not *how* to read. Alas! many teachers have never learned this for themselves. The weekly reading of some young people who, on the Sabbath, pretend to give spiritual instruction, would, if revealed, put them to shame by reason of its utter emptiness and frivolity.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SUNDAY-SCHOOLS CONSIDERED AS BELONGING TO AN AGE OF PREPARATION.

IT is a general law of divine dispensations that they are prepared for. This we observe to be true of the redemption as a whole, and true of each single part of the series. The ancient church contained the modern church within its folds, and so made ready for it; and the entire Old Testament was a preparation for the New. The history of all nations, up to this hour, is a preparation for the mighty future; and the terrestrial state is a preparation for heaven.

Or, if we choose to look at some of the parts singly, Egypt and the Desert prepared for Canaan, and the judges for the kings. The captivity and the subjugation prepared

for the first personal advent. The spread of Roman power prepared for the dispersion of Christianity, and the irruption of the Northern tribes for the evangelizing of Europe. As the revival of letters preceded the Reformation, so the discovery of America opened an outlet for the swarming hive of the Old Continent. The growth of towns and manufactures, the decay of feudalism, the rise of a middle class, the ecclesiastical and municipal revolutions of a convulsive period, prepared for the assertion of civil and religious liberty, for the application of new sciences to new arts, for the commerce of nations, and—dark as the human omens are this day—for the eventual reign of peace. The present state of the world, in all its parts, will be seen, when more is seen and more clearly, to be the swelling bud of a glory which only inspiration indicates, and that in the coloured symbols of prophecy. If we may forecast fruit from the blossom on the tree, and harvests from the



green corn in the waving blade, and manly strength from the promise of the cradle, then may we augur future blessings from Christian infancy and thousands of catechumens.

A great deal is said in the Bible about preparing the way of the Lord. One very beautiful and striking place is in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, which I remember to have read almost thirty years ago, upon a lofty crag of a mountain in my native State. And, by-the-by, such application of the Bible to Nature and of Nature to the Bible is often the most excellent commentary. "O Zion, that bringest good tidings,"—such is the trumpet-voice,—“get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, BEHOLD YOUR GOD!” It is a note of preparation. “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, PREPARE YE THE WAY OF JEHOVAH, make straight in the desert a high-

way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the GLORY OF JEHOVAH shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it."

Now, if any one of my readers should happen to be expounding this passage to a class of very young children, who are always literalists, he might find it needful to admonish them that the coming of Messiah was not to be preceded by a levelling process in the material earth, such as should reduce all its surface to the condition of a smooth, unbroken sphere, like an artificial school-globe. The teacher would make the pupil comprehend that, as long as human minds conceive of unseen things under the figure of things that are seen, so long human minds will be addressed in the language of metaphor, and this by God himself. The coming of the King to bless his

church is after preparations. Monarchs send pioneers and harbingers before them to cry in the highways, to remove obstructions, to fill up chasms, and in every way to facilitate the royal approach. The hinderances to our Lord's advent are not the Alps, the Andes, or the Himalaya, nor yet the basins of mighty valleys or the oceanbeds, but immaterial heights and depths. The triumphant advance shall be on a highway without a depression or a hillock; and, when God comes, he will come by a series of preparatory steps which shall leave nothing unprovided for.

So far as our planet is concerned, the great end of all God's providential arrangements is the salvation of a multitude of our race, including their conversion, sanctification and eternal bliss. All these ends are reached, under the manifold working of the Spirit, by the means of truth. The preparation which the world waits for, and which heaven is providing, is the opening of a

clear way for truth, the instrument in the Almighty hand, excavating and extending the channels of knowledge, building reservoirs and laying conduits, spreading over the whole earth a network of lines, carrying the waters of life, and fixing at fit centres those propelling engines which shall drive the flood of instruction to the extremities, as the heart fills the arteries in living bodies.

As laid down on any map, historical, political, or prophetic, this New World of ours must occupy a notable space. Can we persuade ourselves that it is not to be the stage for great action, or that it is left out in God's scheme of preparation? And in regard to the august future, what part of the population of our hemisphere is so likely to be subjected to a preparatory process as children and youth? Childhood and youth are themselves but the preparation for manhood. However it may have become a watchword of national vaunting, it is fear-

fully true that the growing States of our commonwealth are unlike all other States, and that their influence is to be felt on other portions of the globe. Demagogues and party hacks may run away with this great truth, and defile it on the ground, and seemingly rend it to tatters; but it abides a great truth still.

Leaving for the time other reasons, let us consider the accession of foreigners which marks this age of emigration; and what is here affirmed of the United States is true in varying degrees of the British Provinces, of Australia, of Southern and Western Africa, of New Zealand, and will soon be true of the Pacific Isles and of the basins of the Amazon, the Orinoco and the La Plata. By a remarkable law of nature and Providence, the stream of emigration is towards some land of promise: it is towards fertile soils and veins of gold; it is towards Australia and California and the West, and not towards Belgium or China. In other

words, the tide of men is towards lands not yet peopled. It is an emptying process. And the quality of the portion so emptied is worthy of note. The emigration of the earth comprises those who are awake, those who are discontented, those who are ripe for experiment, those who are enterprising and lusting for the largest liberty. Especially is this true of the secondary emigration, or those who go from us towards the setting sun. For some time yet to come, the title "Californian" will carry much of the meaning which in the days of Queen Elizabeth belonged to the title "Virginian." Our population, which once lay in the old thirteen provinces as a few calm lakes lie in the bosom of the State where I live, has risen with a preternatural tide, and now swells over the mountain-barriers, not like a stream, but an inundation. I pen these lines in a summer-retreat among the gorges of the Alleghany, once the rim of the basin. The hunter still claims this region, and the

crack of the rifle salutes our ears every hour. But this barrier is already as nothing, and the wave surges onward. This very day the wild deer of the hills is scared away by the detonation of rocks riven for the great Western railway. If calculators tell us that "figures cannot lie," let them go on to tell us further what shall be the power of a commonwealth of a hundred millions; or let them show us how any forces now at our command can govern the swell of this heaving flood so that its motions may be harmless, not to say beneficent. Every lesson of physical geography shows us that no artificial or conventional influences can much vary the national problem; and that if temporary causes give a precedence to the Atlantic slope and the strip of country on the Pacific, nevertheless, the vast nucleus of population must forever abide in the basin drained by the Missouri and Mississippi and their tributaries. If God intend good for us, and for our race by us,

we cannot doubt that he will throw abroad, even in our day, an influence which shall be largely and simultaneously preparative. If the Lord means to save America and to make our descendants happy, he will suggest and sustain the preliminary work of seedtime, and will shed broadcast knowledge over these opening furrows. This we may expect as certainly as that a princely husbandman, intending to enrich vast tracts with copious harvests, will provide for the same by clearing, enclosing and sowing his ample fields. We never more clearly strike in with the plans of sovereign Providence than when we project schemes of preparation for propagating divine knowledge in regions far apart, and thus, in a manner, conferring ubiquity on truth.

And here we must beware how we suffer predilections for any favourite method to make us narrowly partial in our judgment, as if all the good which the world or our land needs is to come from Sunday-schools.



It is truth, and not any one means of conveying it, which is mighty in the hand of God's Spirit. The ministry of the word, communicated under the moving of the Holy Ghost, will ever stand first among all human agencies; and Sunday-schools have successfully laboured to inculcate this lesson, and have Sabbath after Sabbath transferred their little bands to the more important services of the sanctuary. Public education, church schools, family teaching and training, cheap printing, awakened authorship, the distribution of books and tracts, and, in a word, all that we mean by missions, tend powerfully towards the same result, and all go to prepare the way of the Lord, all under his guidance lead towards the setting up of a spiritual rule among our posterity. Not one of these means, or of such as these, should for a moment be regarded as unimportant. It is the common fault of narrow, one-sided minds to cherish attachment for one or a few means of use-

fulness, and to reject or undervalue all others. For what are all these but so many branches of one river? But, among all the instrumentalities, not one bears more directly on the preparatory work of God than that which we have been considering. The religious education of youth levels the highway for our King.

SUNDAY-SCHOOLS ARE MEANS OF PREPARATION FOR GOD'S GRACIOUS ADVENT TO AMERICA. We have elsewhere seen the relation of such schools to God's unalterable ordinances, the Family and the Church; to both which our institution is not a rival, but an humble handmaid. The very obviousness of the method suggests a ground of defence. The Sunday-school is one of the simplest things in the world. But it is often God's pleasure to work out grand results by small means. It is only the teaching of religion to children on the Lord's day. A single school is but a single spring; but the combined associated schools of the

land are the system of waters, in fountain, lake and river, over a whole continent.

From the very outset of these essays, two co-ordinate modes of teaching have been held forth before the reader's view, as equally adopted by the Sunday-school as existing in America:—the mode of ORAL LESSONS and the mode of BOOKS. It is the desire and purpose of good men to expand the operation of these means indefinitely in the land. Of this Sunday-school system we are to speak as a preparation.

I. The Sunday-school is preparative, in an eminent sense, because IT PROPOSES TO TEACH THAT KNOWLEDGE WHICH IS FUNDAMENTAL. It begins at the right place. All other teaching in other schools and colleges begins at some point in the circumference or the radiating lines, and at best scatters itself about several disconnected portions; this begins at the centre. It agrees with the Christian family-school, of which it is but an enlargement, in taking things at the

source. It starts from the mountain head-spring, ready to flow down and widen on every side. It gives the *principle* from which all goes forth as from a real cause. It tells the veriest babe concerning God, and in the very words of God. We have already seen that from a thousand textbooks it chooses the text of God. This is in a high degree preparatory of God's work, because the book, so far from becoming obsolete, will be better for the next generation than for the present, since it will be better understood and by more persons, and will be nearer to the accomplishment of its own plans and predictions. No agency is so illuminating: it kindles the soul of the infant and the slave. "The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." Surely, if any book can prepare a generation for the great things which God is about to bring upon the earth, it is the book which reveals those very things, which opens, fold after fold,

the embroidered web of Providence, and foretells more and more clearly the course which coming changes shall take. Inspired prophecy was never more interesting and was never more searched into than at this day. For every great change among men God has made preparation by the Bible, in whole or in part:—for the Captivity, for the Return, for the Incarnation, for the calling of the Gentiles, for the age of apostolic diffusion and the age of martyrdom, for the Reformation, for the consolidation of evangelical churches under sound creeds, for the renewed work of missions; and now, in our own day, for the uniting together of nations and the dawn of national peace. And the Bible will still be, in the hands of our children's children, a book of preparation for those as yet unwhispered revolutions which are hereafter to be wrought. The mighty powers which were lately hovering about Sebastopol and casting the eye of ambitious cupidity upon Constantinople

know not the smallest elements of the problem they are working out: they consider not that the end of warfare shall be Christ's glory, neither doth their heart think so; but the day is coming when the child shall read it all in the book of the wars of the Lord. Let infidelity or superstition pluck away, if it choose, this sacred treasure from our common schools: we will by so much the more arm ourselves to enshrine it by religious schools, weekly and daily, in the citadel of every man's mountain-home, the camp of every migration, and the crowded mart of every commercial race. Its progress is like that of the "greater light," whose going forth is "from the end of the heaven and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." In our laborious and expectant work, let us never doubt that the Scriptures in youthful hands prepare the way for Him "that shall come."

II. The Sunday-school, as a mode of Christian education, in carrying forward its

preparatory work, GIVES ITS INSTRUCTIONS AT THE RIGHT TIME. In some other relations, we have above considered the wisdom of dealing with children rather than men: we now contemplate the same in its bearing on the great preparation of the age. While we drive our furrow through fresh prairie-soil, and drop our golden seed-corn in lands of promise, we are doing that which we know not, but which God knows and has determined to bless. And when, instead of waiting for the mass to harden, we lay our forming hand upon the moist, ductile clay, we are moulding the Young America to make it the CHRISTIAN AMERICA. Worldly-wise men may scoff at our results; and they are less than we desire and mean; but no man can scoff at the method. All it needs is a larger surface on which to print its character. Only give us Sunday-school teachers, Christian educators and toilsome parents—only give us room and let us alone—and, with God's blessing on what he has bidden

us perform, we will inscribe the name of JESUS on the plastic form of every future citizen. Only give us the means of reaching the whole juvenile nation, and—of earthly aids—we ask no more.

Throughout this discussion I have not concealed the truth that in a Christian land, which in its very laws recognises God, and the Sabbath, and the act of worship called an oath, and liberty of belief and religious practice—this last inferring liberty to teach—it is the right of the people to have CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS. And while I refrain from the attempt to commit any others, even the association which utters these essays, to any such opinion, I am equally firm in my belief that parish day-schools are an important means of propagating and maintaining truth. Yet, with others better qualified to pronounce, I fear we can never see our wishes fully accomplished in these directions. And therefore, while we shall not cease to labour for this end, we rejoice



to carry forward what is consistent with the other, the preparatory service of Sunday-schools. One day in seven seems little; but it has sufficed, under God, to carry saving knowledge to thousands. Give us more materials for our experiment. We desire to overtake the westward multitude, to arrest those little ones who are to be the great ones of an impending day, and to shape a million of infant minds before they are warped and scorched in the world's fiery furnace. Not to speak of other regions, we wish to set up, in that West which we familiarly call GREAT in utter ignorance of its portentous greatness, churches and schools in every settlement; so doing, we shall at every such point have erected an engine which will be in full play when we are asleep, influencing portions of new society which, but for this, would be flinging abroad the lawless, gigantic arms of frontier-license and ferocious disbelief. Let the forecasting merchant, the father amid his

patrimonial acres, and the prosperous mechanic or manufacturing capitalist, as he reads this page in his quiet home, cast the eye forward on the possible future of his sons and of the country. And let him arise and give us help to bring in children to be prepared for that future. It is the children—the CHILDREN—that we demand; for are not these the stuff that States are made of? Give us more such subjects, and how blessed a preparation will it be for the Lord, and how full of hosannas the throng which meets and accompanies the feet of our advancing King! For such culture as ours there is no lack of untilled soil. According to the census of 1850, there are in the United States between five and six millions of free children between five and fifteen years of age, of whom not more than four millions are at school at any time during the year. Between one and two millions of children are without the means of instruction, and more than a million of free

adults are unable to read or write! Probably four millions of children and youth of suitable age to attend are not connected with Sunday-schools. Give us a million of these in schools. Will it not be a preparation? Will not a chasm have been filled? Will not a mountain have been brought low? Daily should we pray for God's blessing on his own seminary—the *family-school*—and on the common schools of the States; nevertheless, we need instantly, as an immediate discipline, looking to future trials, a gratuitous Sabbath-training of the poor, and this with an object which is now to be stated.

III. The most important part of the preparation which the Sunday-school attempts is TO BRING THE YOUNG, UNDER DIVINE GRACE EFFICACIOUSLY SUPERINTENDING, TO JESUS CHRIST, AND SALVATION BY HIM. On platforms and in miscellaneous journals we are all tempted to take something lower than vantage-ground, and to argue for

Bible-education from certain temporal and collateral benefits; and many such there are. But let us frankly profess our aim: we look for the conversion of the child to God. And we know of no greater promise for the time that is coming than a multitude of converted children. Unbelief objects many things: we know what wretched worldlings and carnal professors are wont to urge. But children may be converted; have been converted; are actually converted, day by day. All the preaching, praying, writing, training, toiling of the church has for its sole object the salvation of men. The nation cannot be converted too early. By God's blessing on faithful labour, thousands may be brought home in youth; which involves a real addition of tens of thousands of years of actual service to Christ and the country, and of more than even this in quality and character. It is not necessary to do more than allude to Baxter's famous aphorism,

that if Christian parents and teachers did their duty, conversion in adult life would be the exception and not the rule. If some heavenly wand could wave above us and instantaneously confer true religion on every child in the land, what a result! What a preparation for the future glory! What can we crave higher or fuller of promise? Since those who are to sway the rule of our nation—nay, to be themselves the nation—are now in their mothers' arms, it becomes an awakening question whether any good proportion of these shall be Christian. No well-conducted Sunday-school has been reported to us in which the salvation of some pupils has not been credibly affirmed. This is believed to be true of the feeblest schools, set up far in advance of complete church-organization. The latter are, undoubtedly, the great means; but the former often make the reconnaissance, open the country, take possession of the ground, occupy posts and

establish the base of subsequent operations; moreover, doing all this, as has been sufficiently intimated, with precisely such subordination to the church as the church chooses to assume. To set up Sunday-schools as in contrast with the church is to treat vedettes and advanced-posts as rivals of the army. Particular churches cannot much outnumber ministers of the gospel; and the array of these, it is proverbially repeated, is far too small. Is there nothing which can be done while we await the growth of more ministers? Above all, shall nothing be done when there is not a private Christian who, directly or indirectly, might not work in the behalf of education? See how the nebulous matter of new and thin populations gathers itself around the nucleus of a school; how the uniting and reviving influence goes abroad; how the rally ends in new churches of every Christian name. The blessing of grace accompanies the self-

denying toil, and the psalmody of the forest or the waste celebrates the tender mercies of our God. Does my reader rank the affair among trifles because these are *children*? Nay, think again. It is *because* they are children, because they are docile and tender, because they are the America that is to be, because accordingly as they are good or evil our America is to be a blessing or a curse among the nations, that we esteem their conversion to Christ a fit preparative for the coming of Him who said, "Beware how ye despise one of these little ones; for verily I say unto you, their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

We may now, with justice, return to examine some of those incidental and collateral advantages of Sunday-schools, which, as we admitted, fall short of the great eternal good. Christian education trains the national mind, intellectually and morally. The many thousands who are annually

passing from our public State-schools into society, have been the subjects of a training which has studiously ignored the two great facts of man's history,—the FALL and the REDEMPTION. If six days are ingeniously silent about the existence of a sun in the heavens, the seventh may be allowed to disclose the great and dangerous secret, especially to a people not yet either popish or infidel. The Sunday-school teaches to read. It opens the Bible. It creates a new literature. It produces a taste for knowledge of truth. It prints and circulates thousands of books, concentrates them in libraries, scatters them among families, and increases its stores with a rapidity which befits the wonderful haste and impatient ardour of our day and people. Never were such efforts more needed, because, as we have said in its proper place, never did men read so much. There is not a watering-place in the land where the visitors might not be thankful for access to a good collection of Sun-



day-school books. In very weariness of tableaux, balls and cards, we have seen the poor jaded creatures turn for relief even to a religious book. For is not reading for amusement the national pastime? But teach a youth reading, and what results? Knowledge is power. His power is increased. You have put into his hands an edged tool; but who shall say whether to slay his enemy or to slay himself? Carry a child through a secular school; you do well: but is this all you have to do? What is it but to lead him to a tree of knowledge of good and evil? You increase capacity; no more. That capacity may be filled with the sublime and gracious ideas of God in Christ, reconciling sinners by the blood of his cross, and of perfect holiness embodied in Immanuel and copied in his chosen ones here and hereafter; but it may otherwise be filled with the weakening inanities of romance and play-books, the yet worse slops of what may be called fun-literature, the

viler provocatives to licentiousness which stare at us from public windows and are thrust upon us by the infant solicitors of vice about our quays and great hotels, or by the infidel and atheistical sophistries of malignant scoffers. Again must it be urged, in this new connection, that, as readers have increased, and as the mechanical powers have become cheaper, the supply of bad matter—nauseous, pestilent and damning beyond all I dare hint at—has with equal pace increased, till there is not a putrid depth of infamy which has not its presses, nor a mephitic sewer into which some guide may not be found for gain, in the shape of a conscience-seared publisher. Which of us has not wondered whether great booksellers administer to their own wives and daughters the pabulum which they announce at the trade-sales? It is beyond contradiction that in the great cities, and above all in New York, our sons and daughters can scarcely be intrusted with

certain daily prints, or even peruse the advertising columns, without the risk of a precocious acquaintance with that which, a century ago, would have been hurried off with burning cheeks to the nearest fire. Floods of passionate fiction, from sons of Belial, come to our very doors. So far as can be observed, the nuisance increases. Many operatives, female as well as male, in large manufactories, though often in a certain sense educated, alternately inflame and hebetate themselves by the adulterate literature of pamphlet novels. Youth must be trebly armed and clad in harness of proof to go through school or college, or the associations of some commercial and most fashionable circles, without losing somewhat of the ingenuous blush of virginal innocence. Our very children are endangered by a corrupt literature. Let us observe, all this is an education; all this draws forth and trains the mind; it is a culture which may countervail all the more formal

teachings of the academy By concentric and ever-widening circles of influence, this agency goes more and more to create public sentiment. We may not see the plague-spots to-day; the contagion may be latent for a little: but we shall see them to-morrow; and—horrible thought!—the virus is insinuated into forming minds.

Gentle reader, whose Christianity too seldom breaks the charm of easy slumber, if the tithes of what has been said is true, who is to stand between the living and the dead, to stay the plague, to save our progeny, if not the virtuous and courageous laity of the church? And about whom shall they throw their arms of love and protection, if not about the invaluable youth who as yet are pure from such extremes of vice and unbelief? A counter-influence, a preventive teaching, an early inculcation of gospel truth in all its saving fulness, are indispensable if we would prepare Christ's way. We must not wait to cast out the evil; we

must pour "the sincere milk of the word" where Satan's emissaries are holding forth phials of gall and poison. We must begin soon and persevere long,—“line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,”—with distinctness, with affection, with wisdom, with vehemence, with prayer; following up the boy and girl, the young man and maiden, with an Argus-vigilance and a maternal faithfulness and a Christ-like benignity; never letting go the child, the pupil, or the ward, till we know him or her to be settled and grounded in the deepest principles of faith. Every young disciple may do something, and all together may do wonders, for God in this work of preparation. Able pens must write, and power-presses must despatch the holy messages from centre to circumference. From the penny card, broad sheet and tract—instruments undervalued by many high-minded but ignorant professors—to the learned vo-

lume of high argument, must printed truth be poured through all the channels of trade and travel, and borne to the distant clearing and the solitary log-cabin of the border; for after all we shall find that the black wing of the demon flies swiftly, and that his mutterings of seduction and unbelief are heard in secret chambers before our tardy Christianity can reach the spot. If there is a hope for our land, if public virtue is not to be a wreck, if meddling fanaticism and barbarian lawlessness are not to profane our constitution and annul our union, if the hosts of youthful souls are to be guarded against debauching error, if wicked ballads, books and journals are not to have free course, and if Christianity is ever to prevail, then many of us there are whose prime duty it is to get up from our lounges of refined, self-pleasing and fashionable religion, and gird ourselves for hard work. And if something of the sort does not appear among our wealthy and titular Chris-

tendom, we may expect that God will turn the tide of our prosperity and curse our blessings.\* The means are in our hands. The very books are made or are making. The existing mechanism can now carry a true religious influence through all the great trunks of trade and all the ramifying pipes of knowledge. What need we but concerted universal application of the strength now latent in the laity, in order to set the current in motion? I am pleading the cause of the Bible Society, and of book and tract societies, and of missionary societies, as much as of our own particular work; for every one of these is promoted by the Sunday-school. Faithful attempts to circulate and perpetuate holy books—first the Bible and then such as explain, illustrate, enforce and apply the Bible—will prepare the way of the Lord. Educate the common mind; educate it in infancy and youth. Urge your efforts under a due sense

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\* Malachi ii. 2.

of the delicate susceptibilities of a young soul: no chaste flower was ever more sensitive; not a touch of evil but leaves its blighted spot. Laying aside our common depravity, which we admit as incontestable, the souls of children are blanks in respect to doctrinal truth; blanks to be filled by Satan or by you. Stupidly ignorant, or diabolically cruel, is that parent who would keep her babe from the very earliest acquaintance with elementary religious truth. The children of millions of ungodly and incompetent parents, the children whom no church owns and who can read no book, look to us to be filled with saving knowledge. This is the time, these are the subjects, and *you*, my reader, you are the invited labourer. Come forward, out of that genteel formalism and that Sunday ease of church-luxury; come and help to rescue a coming generation from the pressure of falsehood and crime. The highway is preparing; and by this generation. I pray



you, by every known means, to ply the benignant task; but, above all, by means which look directly towards the nursery and the school.

While our attention has been detained about the various sides of this important field, we have sometimes found objects coming within the range of vision which seemed almost secular. Now, although in treating of religion we ought to be always jealous of any thing which keeps us long away from the cardinal point, namely, the Lord Jesus, dying, interceding and reigning, there are, nevertheless, many secondary views which pertain to the grand prospect. Thus, there were details in temple-work subsidiary to the chief affair of slaying and offering the victim. There were duties preparatory: hewing of wood and drawing of water; services not to be omitted, from the investiture of the high-priest down to the task of the Nethinim, musicians and collectors of alms for the

chests of the treasury. In making ready for a king's approach there are required many toils, much structure, much levelling; but all this is forgotten when the august and beloved form appears upon the nearer hills. So shall we, or ours who remain, be absorbed, "when He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe IN THAT DAY." The church from her watch-tower descries her approaching King; "far off his coming shines." God calls her, calls us, to tell all around what is approaching; just as men climb to heights to see and report the advance of a glorious procession. "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up; . . . . say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" O church of the first-born, set the trumpet to the mouth, sound the note of welcome. Let your loins be girt about, Christian

readers, and let your hands be employed, that, when the Master cometh to judge the earth and deliver his people, you may be in the highway of his approach, strewing the palm-branch and casting your garments in his path. O ye children, now in the embrace of Christian nurture, out of the mouths of such as you will He perfect praise; learn early to say, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE COLLATERAL INFLUENCE OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS UPON THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE POOR.

IN the discussion which has preceded, it has very clearly been impossible to avoid frequent reference to the social influences of Sunday-schools; but before these labours close we desire to give this part of the subject a distinct consideration.

Godliness, being profitable unto all things, and having the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come, can never fail to exert a power on human society. While it fits men for heaven, it makes them happier on earth; in building the church it enriches the State. All our argument for Sunday-schools as promotive of social welfare will necessarily be

a reducing of this general truth to its species and particulars. Sunday-schools are means of applying Christian principles in certain ways. They constitute an instrument by which the church—in the catholic sense of that august term which we have heretofore adopted—applies itself to the help of distressed humanity in pursuance of the second table of the Law. Under what we shall never cease to consider a higher purpose of the church, she is placed in society with an express design to diffuse over it a healthful influence. Her progress is centrifugal, first from a grand centre and then from subordinate radiant points; acting as light, as salt, as leaven. Here Wilberforce's observation would be pertinent, that Christianity works wonders in nations beyond the circle of those who are truly converted; but her great formative influence is in those who obey the gospel. History cannot furnish evidence of any thing if it does not establish that wherever Chris-

tianity has entered into a nation its effect has been to civilize. And under this wide statement we may affirm that it has continually impressed itself upon the social forms. It might be triumphantly proved by the miracles of transformation wrought by early Methodism on some of the most antisocial and brutalized portions of British society, portions abandoned by a national church, assuming to be that of the poor, to an ignorance and degradation which the inhabitants of a new country happily cannot comprehend. To effect such benefits the church has many arms stretched forth; but all her efforts are summed up in that dispensation of the Truth by which the Holy Spirit enlightens, renews and saves the soul. All the virtues of home and society are enjoined by Christianity, which carries along with it into every mass, even of gentilism, the Scriptures, the sanctuary, the sacraments, holy alms, wedlock, the training and worship of households, and

that which is the golden cestus enclosing all, the SABBATH.

In these manifold attempts of religion to improve the societies in which she is established, there is always an intention to accomplish these following objects. First, the advantages conferred are not to cease and determine with the present age, but must be transmitted to coming generations. Secondly, the tremendous evils under which society now groans, and which in their actual condition of mature inveteracy are attacked at great disadvantage, must, in regard to posterity, be effectually prevented, for prevention is better than cure. Thirdly, the only conceivable mode of preventing social evils among our descendants is to teach and train the children of ourselves and our contemporaries. Thus are we, by a simple process, led to conclusions which fully justify the Christian education of all ages, and the special claims of the Sunday-school as a prominent class of influences

under the general scheme. We would fain hope that the wide scope of our argument might win to our great principle some from even those timid and scrupulous minds who cannot smile on the Sunday-school because it has no precedent in the ages of mediæval faith or the engagements of the Solemn League and Covenant. It is a mode of education. Even should Sunday-schools run their race, and cease, amid the meridian lustre of a completed national regeneration, we gain something if we can win for them the general assent and co-operation of good men in our own day of social ferments. It is not necessary to repeat what we have already hazarded to write concerning the place which the institution holds in Christian CATECHESIS. Our present task is to exhibit in cursory remark the means which the Sunday-school, as hereinbefore described, with its co-ordinate appliances, possesses for discovering, remedying and even preventing many of the direst evils of modern



society, especially in the unnatural aggregation of towns and cities. It will be obvious that of these influences some are direct and some are indirect; this being true of Christianity itself. Around the illuminated region which is fully reached and occupied by truth, there is a selvedge of influence, a *limbus*, (if we may use a figure consecrated by Romanism,) in which the force is diluted but not lost. Some of these modes of benefit suggest themselves at once to every reader. But the controlling reason why so much time has been given to this part of a subject altogether overlooked by legislators and statesmen is, that just in proportion as we practically carry out the theory of Sunday-schools do we benefit society even in those respects which interest the political economist. So that if those able and often benevolent schemers who treat of national welfare were not shut up by the bigotry of their class to a one-sided view of the case as merely secular, they would at once re-

cognise in the schools of religious truth an element which enters with momentum into every calculation.

The wealth of nations, wisely considered, is more than their riches. Agreeably to the Anglo-Saxon etymology, the term imports welfare, or the common weal. The science which has this for its object soars much higher than questions of land, labour, currency, productive power and commerce. Government, as well as national economy, contemplates a thousand questions which savour of morality. The evils of society have a moral origin : bred in the individual, they corrupt the mass. And the readers of this volume will acknowledge that of such evils the only effectual corrective is the religion of Jesus Christ. We can say this without conceding any thing to those patronizing philosophers and politicians who think they compliment religion when they notice it among the auxiliaries of government, just as apothecaries enroll music

amid the drugs of the *Materia Medica*. No: the benefits which religion confers in this life are only blessings which she scatters on her march to immortality.\* Yet the grace of God cannot bloom in any community of men without diffusing on every side a celestial aroma. And these sacred influences, conveyed by education, flow in upon social evils at the only stage where there is good hope of success. The Sunday-school, all over certain countries, is applying itself to the diseases of the body social and politic, in the season of childhood. In our previous investigations we have learned how incalculable is the advantage of giving our instructions early; the end in view being individual improvement of mind and heart. We shall find the same true in regard to the cure or the prevention of social evils. All those former benefits derived best in childhood we here assume and carry along with

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\* Robert Hall.

us, while we promise similar good in regard to the organic difficulties of mankind. But that which is our chief attempt is to show THE COLLATERAL INFLUENCE OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS UPON THE SOCIAL CONDITION AND HABITS OF THE DEGRADED POOR. There are poor who are not degraded, and whom we delight to except from all our moral strictures.

Ever since the revolution in society which ensued upon the decay of feudalism, the rise of a middle class and the increase of individual independence among the people, there has been arising a set of new problems for the philanthropist. Cases which, in an awkward but effectual manner, were provided for by the feudal lord or the master, have lapsed into the hands of everybody and fallen into neglect between the old method and the new. Under those often oppressive systems there was no man, however degraded, who might not look up to some protector and provider in a last

resort. In the slow growth of ecclesiastical corporations, that care of the poor which belonged to the secular lord fell at length in part to some church or abbey. It suited the views of the priesthood to encourage a system which more than all things else enabled them to control the gifts and bequests of the superstitious. When Roman Catholic writers vaunt the alms of great houses and the dole to beggars at cloister-gates, they fail to tell us what proportion this bore to the immense property which had been seized by the church. They likewise fail to bring proof that, during the popish times, beggary was so cared for by religious houses as that no burden lay on the community at large. So far is the reverse true, that grave disorders are known to have arisen, long before the Reformation, from the clamours of pauperism. An interesting testimony to this point is given by Lewis, in his "History of Bible Translation:"—"Before I proceed," says he, "to

give an account of the next edition of the English Bible, it may not be wholly unacceptable to the reader to observe to him an historical passage in the Preface of Coverdale to the Bible just now spoken of, relating to the increase of the poor here in England; and that the rather, because of the pompous boasts made by the Romanists of their charity, and the hard reflections made on us by them for the want of it, as if the great number of beggars were owing to the Reformation, and particularly to the dissolution of the religious houses, as the monasteries were falsely called, at whose gates, a professed Protestant tells us, all the poor of the nation were supported. But now Coverdale here appeals to the senses of his reader, and bids him 'lift up his eyes and see how great a multitude of poor people runne thorowe every towne;' and this, too, at a time when these religious houses were at the

very height of their prosperity.”\* Nevertheless, modern society has not been yet able to devise a method of managing this evil. Hence the public science of all nations is largely occupied with questions caused by the helpless and the criminal classes.

In every country there is as much inequality in means of support as in moral character; in every country there are multitudes who do not support themselves. Poverty is not pauperism; and we leave out of view those numerous cases in which even great necessity is coupled with a good life. Wherever population is most dense the curse of want is most apparent. Misery of this sort seeks the crowd, and hence is most rife in cities and great towns. The older the country or the community, the more inveterate the disease. There are

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\* Quoted in Works of Dugald Stewart, ed. of Sir William Hamilton, 1856, vol. ix. p. 260.

spots in London which have been running sores of pauperism and vice probably ever since Magna Charta. Inhabitants of rural districts in our own wide and fruitful land, where no one need starve unless he choose, can scarcely understand the morbid condition of certain parishes in England, where the poor-rates devour their very strength and the care of beggars is almost like the administration of a kingdom. Whatever means we may take to account for it, the complaint in all settled societies is of suffering from idleness, or want of work, or want of due remuneration. Society, in these old countries and in the older portions of our own, is largely made up of members who not only confer no strength, but drain away life-blood like so many issues or leeches. Such are those who have no fixed trades or callings, living from hand to mouth, strollers, prowlers, idlers, mendicants, from whose ranks the levy is made for thieves, burglars, coiners and still baser



sorts. In the older cities even of America there sometimes comes up a monitory murmur from these subterranean depths. Nothing is wanting but organization to make these classes truly formidable. At certain feverish periods we hear the sullen complainings of poor against rich, and of toil against investment; inklings of a profound alienation and class-hatred, which breeds revolutions. Such wounds ask for a religious healing. The most solid governments of Europe were, in 1848, shaken to their bases by the heaving of these very masses. For, as the evil spreads, higher classes become involved, and the honest workman takes the part of the proletaire. Is not a large part of the statesmanship of Europe employed in quieting the dangerous classes? Is not even war sometimes invoked as a lesser evil than the uprising of Chartists or Red Republicans?

Now, the religious aspect of this subject, connecting it with what was dear to our be-

nignant Redeemer, cannot escape the observant mind. A condition of the populace presenting many of these points existed during our Lord's ministry in Palestine. His teachings, as well as those of his forerunner, were directed to harmonize these discordant elements.\* These very teachings are what we require for the bleeding wounds of modern society. But, unfortunately, one of the immediate consequences of the malady itself is indisposition towards the cure. All ignorance and irreligion run to barbarism, and this by their dissociative tendency. They cause rents in the fabric. They destroy the cohesion and resolve the structure of society. The poor and the rich, the evil and the good, come to live apart, and to dream that their interests are separate and contrary. Worst of all, the classes who most need the loving care of the church are

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\* Let the reader carefully consult Luke iii. 10-14; Matt. v. 41, xvii. 24-27, xxii. 15-22.

those which have most lapsed from under its influence. Not only the degraded poor, but thousands who build our palaces, drive our beasts, frame our decorations, and sail our ships, have no longer any community with us in our Sabbaths and our churches. Whole classes have drifted away from under church-influence. Although this is not the place for enlarging on it, I must record the judgment forced upon me by long residence in a great city, that wealthy Christians, amidst all their benefactions, have yet neglected one grand means of lessening civic evils and portentous heartburnings;—I mean the opening of large and comely edifices for the lowest and poorest, where they may hear God's word for nothing, and from the ablest lips. We are behind the Roman Catholics in providing church-room for all classes. And we are losing our influence on thousands whom we might gain over to religion. This is the complaint not of one country, or of one denomination, but of all. Say not that we

introduce matter not religious: it *is* religious, for it concerns the bringing fellow-creatures near to the words of Him, concerning whom it is said, "The common people heard him gladly."\* Go down a little lower in society, and inquire what our luxurious and palatial exhibition of the gospel is doing for thousands of beggars, thieves, drunkards, publicans and harlots. Sallies are indeed occasionally made from our well-appointed fortresses in these directions, but Christianity among us is only in theory the religion of the poor. The aggressive and evangelistic character of Christianity ceases in "this weak piping time of peace." No radical or impracticable project is latent in these remarks. We do not complain that the poor are excluded from particular houses of worship; this were a small evil if others were open to them. But we complain that thousands are left

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\* Mark xii. 37.

without any approach of the gospel towards them, and this from generation to generation. In the case of England, we observe that the wealthiest established church in the world, which has persisted in levying for sustentation even upon dissenters, on this pretext of being the Church of the Poor, has allowed a population to grow up, even in her metropolis, which, for ignorance of religion, is unsurpassed in Christendom.\* These social ills are monstrous enough in the Old Continent to appal us of the New and put us on our guard.

*These evils admit of no radical cure which is not religious.* To all the apostles of Theophilanthropism, Godwinism, St. Simonianism, Fourierism, Icarianism, Owenism, and Mormonism, they cry, "Miserable comforters are ye all!" These evils, even when

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\* Our authority in regard to London is the statement in Mayhew's "London Labour and London Poor."

physical, have moral causes. Take the most comprehensive of the formulas which express them—POVERTY—and seek its cause. There are, indeed, exempt cases, as when a shipwrecked mariner crawls naked on a foreign shore, or where years of disease have eaten up all one's honest savings; but, as all the world knows, poverty arises from ignorance and vice. It was want of prudence, it was neglect of organic laws, it was unthrift, idleness, gluttony, vanity of apparel, drunkenness, gambling, incontinence, lust of pleasure and amusement, covetousness, or fraud, which caused this starvation. What two lands on earth have had fewest paupers? Scotland and New England. What have they in common to account for this? Their religious schools.

— It is the blessedness of America that, except in certain Alsatias of our commercial cities, these things are matters well-nigh fabulous. The Southern States have their own troubles: but they have not this; they

have not a masterless pauperism festering at their gate. Mendicity and poor-laws ought to be regarded among us as not less monstrous than the Sphinx or the Minotaur. They belong to another system, another stadium of history, another hemisphere. Indeed, most of our specimens are brought over ready-prepared from the *hortus siccus* of Europe. Yet the vitality of their seeds is portentous; and as almost every weed of agriculture, not excepting the familiar dandelion, has been imported with our seed-corn from abroad, so, unless we beware in time, the social ills of the Old World will sprout and blossom and poison in the New. Commissions from legislatures already make visits to some menagerie of the Five Points or Laurens or Baker Streets, or some normal case of crowded lofts, bad air, bad food, bad hours, filth, tobacco, whisky, cutaneous horrors, unlettered and irreligious youth, railing, violence and general helplessness. Every such spot is a nursery of

beggary, cholera and crime. "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

Vice and misery act and react on one another. Every form of sin is a social poison. Those who wander through our population on missions of mercy are accustomed to find nestling together in the same foul tangle, ignorance, dirt, disease, tatters, obscenity, sloth, intemperance, starvation and impiety. The temptations of misery are pressing: so thought the son of Jakeh, when he prayed against poverty for this reason:—"Lest I be poor and steal and take the name of the Lord in vain."\* Herd the degraded poor together, especially for a few generations, and they reach peculiar depths of degradation. The son of the tippler becomes a tippler; the son of the beggar becomes a beggar; the son of the

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\* Prov. xxx. 9.



thief becomes a thief. The neighbourhood is as well known to its own class and to the police as is Wall Street or the Bourse to the moneyed man, or Paternoster Row to the Trade. Such districts have a news, a common parlance and a public opinion of their own. Evil not only lives but breeds. The morals of such groups are bad. Low rivalries, envies, spites, grudgings, even of sufferer against sufferer, are familiar to all visitants in such quarters. Low finesse, simulated sorrow, mumping applications for aid in several directions at once, hatred of labour, drinking, play, false witness, fraud, are forms of evil which in their turn act the part sometimes of cause and sometimes of effect. Every mode of insincerity, obliquity in purpose, pretence or dishonesty, tends to dissociate well-doing from labour. Whatever tends to this is a curse, and unless checked insures an idle and profligate class. Society at large is responsible for the unutterable miseries of the dangerous

classes, which operate as a perpetual irritant of the evil nature. Yet the worst sign is the apathy of the well-doing, who know not that these things are undermining the stately house in which they dwell.

There is something of almost tragic interest in the strong contrasts of luxury and woe in the same streets: it is the old proximity of Dives and Lazarus. For the greatest refinement and display, and for the greatest beggary and loathsomeness, you may equally go to great capitals, London, Paris, Berlin. The uniformity of the effect in cases where the religious element is left out strikes us in all countries and ages, and indicates causes deeper than race, climate, form of government, or legislation. Human misery lays many of its burdens, indeed, at the door of governments, who, by absurd preferences, grinding restrictions, class-legislation, stupidity or perverseness concerning schools, bounties on vice, and, above all, war, have made the poor poorer and

the vile viler. But a worse defect of the social fabric is in the material: the very stones of the builder are unsound. The individual character of whole classes has been degraded. No architectonic skill which leaves out religious reformation can correct these evils. And since public reformers and political philanthropists often concede this, and bestir themselves in schools, lyceums, newspapers, museums and other parts of intellectual apparatus—to each and all of which we bid God speed—it becomes necessary to add that it is utterly vain to look for relief to *any system of mere secularities*. If any one chemical constituent of the human body, suppose lime, is wanting, we expend strength vainly on building up all the rest. The element which has dropped out of the body politic is RELIGION. Government and common schools may rear the bony structure and lay on flesh and skin; but they produce a great, rickety, unstable monster if they

exclude religion. The putrescence of society needs the salt of the kingdom. The gospel of Jesus Christ, and nothing else, will staunch social wounds and be for the healing of the nations. And it is because religious education exhibits this antidote and prophylactic in the best way, that we plead for it so urgently on national grounds.

It is greatly to be lamented that statesmen and legislators, who are sometimes philanthropists, do not oftener condescend to look into the working of certain humble schemes, which they, from a distant and erroneous view, discard as methodistical or enthusiastic, or even fanatic. The operation of religion in abating social nuisances is best studied on a small scale; as, for instance, in a single neighbourhood. We should be willing to stake the question upon a fair examination of what has been wrought by the Wesleyans in certain well-known districts in England, or by the Irish missions in Connemara. So far as the ex-

periment has gone, the same may be shown in regard to seamen by labours under the Bethel Flag and to slaves on the plantations. But the whole history of Sunday-school progress is an argument to this very point. A single family—there are ten thousand such—regenerated by God's blessing on the word which it received from the Sunday-school would suffice to demonstrate this socializing tendency. Society is made up of such families. Once introduced, religion percolates into every cell of the domestic structure, and comes to tinge every act, whether inward or outward. Let the number of such families only be multiplied to a degree not too great to be supposed, and we should already have turned the helm of State away from one of our most dangerous social reefs.

Our hopes are raised when we contemplate tens of thousands of children awaiting the hand of Christian education. To present to the mind at a glance the social effect

of such training, conceive twin-brothers, born in poverty and squalor, to be separately brought up, one in his native nest or rookery and the other under the formative lessons of divine truth. We propose to repeat this thousands of times, for the sake of its influence on society. The ductile current of American youth may be poured into the right mould, even though adult evil be incorrigible. If we have in the slightest degree succeeded in all the foregoing pages, we need scarcely repeat that Sunday-schools address themselves to this very task of Christianizing the juvenile America.

The operation must be traced in its details. No general statements can lodge its realities in the reader's mind. It may be viewed in progress, on a large scale, wherever a populous town or suburb exhibits a flourishing Sunday-school comprising several hundred children: there are many such. Take apart this school and the population

which feeds it, by a partition according to classes, language, ages and families: follow each home; keep up the observation for several years. For the solution of sundry pressing social problems, we suppose there could not be a more interesting or a more fruitful study. There will be failures and disappointments, chiefly from the stubbornness of habits already established and the counteracting lessons of adjacent vice; yet the average is always the same. Society is reformed just so far as the process is carried on. Those incidental advantages which have been often mentioned in these pages arise in their due order. The interest of the child becomes the interest of the parent. The child's book is read at home. If the affair be rightly ordered, the worship of the child becomes the worship of the parent. It is no longer the individual, but the family, that is refreshed. The social operation has begun. The child of one family influences the child of another family; and so, like

circles in the water, benefit is diffused. This is not invention ; it is what the writer has been privileged to see with his own eyes under the labours of his brethren. There is a providential compensation in the law that the gregarious nature of mankind, which propagates evil, can also propagate good. Hence, the Sunday-school, appealing at once and powerfully to every principle of fellowship and sympathy, has shown its great triumphs amid those throngs of population where vice also spreads like a contagion. Always understanding by the Sunday-school that entire complex of books, visits, prayers, charities and Sabbath mercies without which it is barren, we hold it to be a divine gift bestowed on our age with particular reference to the cankers of the social state. These are matters which statistics cannot tabulate and report ; but could we summon as witnesses the experienced veteran teachers of Great Britain and America, by their hundreds of thousands,



the response of concurrent testimony would be overwhelming to disbelief. It would, indeed, be the resultant of many confluent drops; but such are the Mississippi and the Amazon. From what we might learn in a single school, we should need to go to the immense network of schools now reaching over all evangelical Christendom and possessing a capacity for indefinite expansion. What Dr. Chalmers has called the "power of littles" would thus be seen brought to bear on the ancient abuses of the social body.

When we claim for the Sunday-school a specific fitness to reach evils known to rankle among the degraded, we do so not only because it is suited to convey religion, but because it has its peculiar and happy method of bringing religion into contact with these masses. There are bays and inlets of humanity into which our ships-of-the-line cannot enter. There are dens of dark irreligion into which the other stated

means of grace do not penetrate. And if these proper effects are less numerous and striking than we might expect, the reason is that Sunday-schools are, after all, both fewer and weaker than they ought to be.

If, as our readers are not likely to deny, the church includes more than its clergy, and if the charities of the church in all the amplitude of that term are to be dispensed by the body of Christians, every congregation carrying its entire force to bear upon the evils which are around it, then the Sunday-school corps comes properly within this scope. No single organization exists, so widely diffused, embodying such numbers and such diversity of talent. In all we utter on this point we imply—as in its proper place we have asserted—that such endeavours are approved, guided and controlled by the admitted authorities of the respective religious societies. There is, therefore, nothing in the proposal at which the most fastidious churchmanship need take offence.

Even the Roman Catholic hierarchy has in our day admitted a variety of the Sunday-school among its means. Our fear is not that the institution will become too powerful, but that from false estimate of its dignity its working will in many cases be abandoned to the younger and less important members of churches, instead of commanding, as well it might, the talents and piety of the most distinguished.

Let the Sunday-school engine be fairly brought to bear on any one city district,—we name the city as the more difficult field,—and the social effects will be soon apparent. Even now, under imperfect methods and with insufficient force, the results are greater than we had a right to expect where all surrounding influences are adverse.

When we speak of probable successes, however, we presuppose a method and thoroughness in attacking the enemy such as have not been generally exhibited. Let us consider some of those things which

seem to be indispensable to the complete organization of Sunday-school labour in a city district. And here we freely acknowledge that, in the existing mutual relations of religious bodies, we do not perceive how every particular of the plan can be realized. It will be so much clear gain if by any Christian compromise the scheme shall become practical even by approximation.

1. It is above all things necessary that the field should be comprehensively and exactly surveyed. The district to be worked should have its precise topographical demarcation by metes and bounds, with no vague margin of debatable land.

2. The field thus ascertained and limited should be divided and subdivided into portions small enough to be easily manageable.

3. Besides the general oversight and the oversight of larger divisions, it is expedient to have an oversight of each smaller division. Such division should be allotted to some individual visitor or teacher. Every

part of this very limited canton should be under his charge and inspection.

Confining ourselves to the smallest section, for the multiplication of this unit produces the whole, we observe this series of houses to be regularly and frequently visited, at least once a week. These visits, so far as courtesy and kindness allow, should extend not only to every tenement, but to every family or solitary resident. Such minute division and such frequent visitation we hold to be the great peculiarities of the simple scheme which is substantially carried out already in many places.

4. Thus far we shall have provided for giving that local and territorial character to the work on which Dr. Chalmers lays such just stress. The routine visits to this restricted canton or "beat" reveal the material to be wrought. Here lies the ore to be extracted. These are the children to be rescued. The very circumscription of the labour renders it feasible, as in a section of

railway embankment or excavation. This domiciliary inquest discloses the evil which exists and suggests the good which may ensue. The process must be carried to absolute exhaustion; that is, nothing must be left unquestioned. Many will refuse, and some will resist; but the persistency of inquiring love will go to the root of the matter and determinately comprehend its own field

5. Nor is this perambulation of the ground to cease after one or a few circuits. To the complete working of Sunday-schools in this their missionary function it is necessary that Christian visits at stated periods should be constantly kept up as a regular part of the system. Half our gains are eventually lost from not being looked after. Many a household would have been saved from ruin if it had been sought out and gently cherished once a week. Nothing more surely maintains the good-will of those who feel themselves to

be poor and sometimes suspect themselves to be despised. "There is one lesson," says our greatest authority on this subject, Chalmers, "that we need not teach, for experience has already taught it; and that is, the kindly influence which the mere presence of a human being has upon his fellows. Let the attention bestowed upon another be the genuine emanation of goodwill, and there is only one thing more to make it irresistible. The readiest way of finding access to a man's heart is to go into his house, and there to perform the deed of kindness, or to acquit ourselves of the wonted and looked-for acknowledgment. By putting ourselves under the roof of a poor neighbour, we in a manner put ourselves under his protection, we render him for the time our superior, we throw our reception on his generosity; and we may be assured that it is a confidence which will almost never fail us. If Christianity be the errand on which the move-

ment is made, it will open the door of every family; and even the profane and profligate will come to recognise the worth of that principle which prompts the unwearied assiduity of such services.”\*

6. That this minute, laborious and frequent visitation of a vicinage, in town or country, may turn to the best advantage and disclose its ripest fruits, it must extend itself much beyond any particular class of boys or girls which occupies a form in the school. A good shepherd cares also for lambs which are out of the fold. The eye of benignant forecast must fix itself on those urchins who are yet too small, or whose parents are yet unpersuaded. Charity must have respect to such as persistently reject its advances. Constant dropping wears away rock. “A soft answer breaketh the bone.” “Continual coming” wearies out

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\* *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns.* By Dr. Chalmers, vol. i. p. 29: Glasgow.



perverseness itself. The twentieth visit may secure him who has been stubborn under the nineteen. Love is power. Bad boys, whom it has been a duty to exclude from the schools, are by no means excluded from watch, care, generous treatment and the evangelism of the wayside and home. And, what is equally important, the former pupils, now fledged and flown out of the nest, may, under such a subdivision of labour and by a little sacrifice of time and feeling, be kept under an unceasing surveillance. The loving teacher will need no special admonitions to make him look for fruit on the tree which he has planted.

7. The visit of a judicious and affectionate Sunday-school teacher, every few days, to a well-known district, will command for him the confidence of its inhabitants and open doors for many good side-influences. Hordes of Arab youth go to no day-schools. Sunday-school visitors are the friends of general education, and constantly replenish their

places of instruction. Where there are church-schools, they do the like. They fall in with the whole enterprise of distributing Bibles and other Christian books; and in many varieties of inculcation they act as public educators. Gentle lessons to parents and elder brothers or sisters, at such times, when prejudice is disarmed, go deep, like the rain and snow that water the earth; and such emollients are healing to social wounds.

8. Relief of temporal want, especially in the case of the sick poor, has come to be connected with every Sunday-school arrangement. It is no task of ours to discuss the relations of this difficult subject with either Church or State. The misery exists, and is revealed to visitors such as ours. To say that they sometimes relieve it is only to say that they are not inhuman. But some obvious benefits flow from such visits, in respect to any and all eleemosynary efforts, whether public or private. The evil itself

is made known, and in circumstances favourable to exact knowledge. So much is done towards a regular and even tabular survey of the disease, sloth, pauperism and mendicity of a particular district. Until a thoroughpaced census of filth and crime be instituted by Government, all municipal disbursement for the poor must be at immense public loss. The unpaid labours of Sunday-school missionaries and visitors, groping their way through these habitations of cruelty and woe, are pioneering the road for the heavier forces of State prevention and supply. The aggregate of alms dispersed through Sunday-schools would reach an amount that probably no one has conjectured.

9. For the sake of connection, it must be repeated here that the method of frequent visitation, in one and the same small canton, tends directly to remedy one of the rankest maladies of our time, *the neglect of public worship by the poor*. Our rural neighbour-

hoods are comparatively uninfected, but city diseases in time reach the country. Would that observant Christians in America might learn wisdom from the ills of England and Germany! All over the Protestant world the complaint is that the house of God is losing the respect of the masses. America has not reached this point, except in its large towns. But America should be on her guard. We trust the picture given of themselves by some reporters in Germany is overdrawn. "In the country about Hamburg," one of them says, for example, "which is very populous, the churches, especially in towns, are pretty much empty on Sundays, and the people of Jutland, as is notorious, go to church neither in their own land nor when they are abroad. The Frisians, on the west of Sleswig, make an honourable exception. The people of Holstein go little to church."—"And," it is added, "the want of church interest in Jutland, with the ancient and

powerful superstition which reigns among this people, render more explicable the bold advances of Mormonism among the Jutes.”\* Tens of thousands in London never enter a house of worship. Existing churches in Philadelphia and New York would not suffice to hold the people. A class is rising and gaining consolidation who never think of the sanctuary. This tendency to settle in godless stupor must be violently broken up. The regular preaching in our rich structures has no immediate bearing on the case. Domiciliary benevolence, such as shall bring the entire mass into the warm circulation of Christianity and restore the interrupted equilibrium and interchange, offers more promise than any means yet proposed. The neglecter of the church has been neglected by the church. He must be seen in his den, taken by the hand and led to the place of prayer. It is a process

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\* Augsb. Allg. Ztg., *ap.* Reuter's Repertorium, Feb. 1856

which we know to be beautifully exemplified in numerous churches around us. And it is encouraging to meet such cordial reinforcement as is afforded by the following testimony of Chalmers:—"It requires a much harder struggle than most are aware of, to prevail on grown-up people, who never have attended church, to become the members either of a day or an evening congregation. But the compliance which cannot be won in manhood for attendance on a church we win in boyhood for attendance on a school, and when the boy becomes the man a second effort is not necessary. It were, in fact, a far more congenial transition for him to pass from the evening-school to the evening-church, than if he never had attended school at all; and far more congenial for the member of an evening to become the member of a day congregation, than if, brought up in the utter want of congregational habits, he never had attended either

the one or the other."\* It is in such terms that this liberal and truly great man predicts a result which at the time of his writing could have had small exemplification compared with what strikes the eye of every Sunday-school visitor in our day.

10. On a retrospect of these particulars, which, as competent readers will have observed, are not compacted out of imagination but copied from reality, we are prepared to say that the Sunday-school hands over to us a system of means already fitted for reaching the labyrinthine recesses of ignorance and irreligion among the people. Let such things as these take place with a frequency proportioned to the resources of evangelical Christendom, and the coming age will receive the very framework of society altered and amended. If any charge us with a fond attachment to Sunday-schools as the only means, we repudiate any such

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\* Civic Economy, vol. i. p. 123.

bias and predilection. Reasons have indeed been given for looking to this as one of the most remarkable instruments ever put into the hand of any people. But on no single mode of transmitting truth would we exclusively lean. It is, after all, religion—the religion of Jesus Christ—which is to reform the world; or, if you choose to take the words in a sound and catholic sense, it is the church. Within the general comprehensive pale of *juvenile training in religion*, we can afford to concede the widest liberty of detail.

The Christian church, going forth on an exploration of mercy into streets and lanes of the city and highways and hedges of the country, enlightening the mind and soothing the body, binding man to man and closing the open wounds of humanity, winning the rich to meekness and lifting the poor to dignity, thus diffusing a brotherhood otherwise unknown on earth, is only realizing her great ideal and acting out



the life of her great Exemplar. She remembers the poor, which James, Cephas and John enjoined on their brother apostle, and which Paul "also was forward to do." She remembers the words of the Lord Jesus, unwritten by evangelists, but saved for us by the same Paul:—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." She walks among the abuses of society with a remedy which reformers have sought in vain; for by conferring the greater gift she confers the less, and by saving the soul she blesses the body. Let the church, as the body of Christ, informed by his Spirit, go forth thus among the nations, and it is as though Jesus were again treading our desolate earth. For just so "he went about doing good;" breathing pardons on condemned souls while he gently hushed the anguish of crushed bodies; helping the fisherman, teaching the throng, calling the children to his blessed arms, explaining the Bible-lesson, setting the pattern of prayer; doing acts of mercy on the

Sabbath, promoting the hosannas of babes and sucklings, in both cases offending Scribes and Pharisees; crossing the threshold of fever, paralysis and lunacy; stopping with kindly force the bier of the widow's son; exhorting and inviting while he healed, and, as he gave truth, giving life, health and salvation. Ye know the story. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." And ye know how, at humble, at infinite distance, the SUNDAY-SCHOOL—as a mode of Christian education and mercy—walks in the same steps and breathes the same spirit.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE TEACHER'S INCITEMENT.

THERE hangs before me a photograph of the Arch of Titus, famous and venerable as presenting among the processional spoils our only probable portraiture of the Golden Candlestick. It reminds me of a saying of this Roman emperor which has become proverbial. On a certain evening, when he looked back over the hours, he remembered no good action, and exclaimed, "I HAVE LOST A DAY!" or more briefly in Latin, *perdidi diem*. According to some reports, it was the absence of any *beneficent* action that he regretted; and thus the saying has been understood by most.

This was certainly a beautiful trait in a heathen, a Roman emperor, and one whom

we have to compare with bloody tyrants, such as preceded and followed him. But perhaps too much has been made of the benevolence of Titus; and perhaps we have allowed a sentence, happily worded and proceeding from one in imperial purple, to eclipse the greater and more diffused excellencies which the Christian religion has introduced.

It was something, indeed, for a sovereign of absolute power, innumerable subjects and boundless means, to pass twelve hours without one act of beneficence. We naturally inquire why he might not have made ten thousand persons happy: it would have taken less than a day. On the other hand, one act of clemency, charity, or compassion, has its glory, even though the only one in the aforesaid term. A day thus signalized is brighter than certain days of Nero and Domitian. And in this view Titus Vespasianus justly lamented the day as lost which could not show this single bright

redeeming spot. It was not a day, *cretâ notandus*, to be "marked with a white stone."

In the dominions of the emperor there was, at that very time, a class of people not clad in purple or fine linen, and often confounded with the despised Jews. They were widely spread, and had rules touching this very point. They have not yet ceased to exist nor to practise according to these rules. They used to exhort one another thus:—"To do good and to communicate, forget not." They were, indeed, a peculiar people, "zealous of good works." They went so far as to adopt the maxim, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Let us do justice to Titus, the "delight of human kind."\* He was mild and comparatively forbearing in Judea, and seemed to use harshness with reluctance. He offered

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\* "Amor et deliciæ humani generis." Suetonius, Titus, ch. i.

terms to the resisting Jews rather than pollute their temple, and looked with admiration and pity on the holy pile when it was stormed by his batteries and burning up. He allowed Josephus to save the sacred books from that conflagration. Hence it is that we look at the Arch of Titus, at Rome, with a measure of complacency. But we are not willing to take the clement Titus for our model as to spending a day.

To pass a whole day without an endeavour to make any one happier, is indeed to lose a day; it is dreadful, it is heathenish; and a heathen emperor may rebuke us. Yet the Christian standard is higher than this; and it were a meagre account of a Christian day to reckon its acts of beneficence at a unit. God has given a wider rule, and providence opens more numerous opportunities. If good acts were confined to what in the world's esteem are great acts, only a few could do them, and only once in a while. But the business which

Mrs. Hannah More was said to take for her life's task—*faire des heureux*, to make others happy—is a business at which every man, woman and child may work, in every place, every day, and every hour of the day. A stonecutter or a joiner might say with truth of a given day, "I have lost it, for I have let it go without one stroke of my chisel;" but we would not frame a rule conversely, and ordain one stroke of the chisel as a noticeable affair.

We err by omitting cheap acts of beneficence in our daily walk and among our hourly companionship. The web of a merciful life is made up of these slender threads. This is a secret oftener learnt by woman than by man.

The husband is used to a wholesale business. By the utterance of a few syllables on 'Change he finds himself richer by thousands. He writes ten letters on a slip of paper, and goes home heavier by a complete fortune. He has done a day's work. He

can make a long interval. So in his charities; he takes a tithe of the tithe of half his nett income and builds an orphan-house. His soul is refreshed; he has done a great work.

The wife sits at home. She is employed in a series of continually-repeated acts, any one of which is almost inappreciable. Her steps are many, up and down flights of stairs. Her sphere of housewifery comprises multiform particulars. She layeth her hand to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. Who can keep the tally of all those quick passes of her nimble needle? Her aggregate of human activity is the sum of small increments. She acquires a habit of thinking that innumerable littles will in time amount to something great. She generalizes her law and gives it a moral turn, holding that a thousand very minute kindnesses go for something in the sum total of benefaction. If she cannot rear an asylum, she can wipe away a tear. If her lord



comes home to dinner, weary and pettish, after some exhausting deed of love, she can bear his glance with a meek and quiet spirit, which he will remember by-and-by. "In her tongue is the law of kindness." Great men may learn philosophy from good women. Our days would be sad, indeed, if every one was lost which did not contain some great signal action, fit to be written down in chronicles, or honoured by a presentation of plate with letters and dinner-speeches. It is a remarkable point in the awards of the judgment-day, that those who are to enter into the joy of their Lord seem never to have kept any diary of their good works, or digested any statistical table of their visits, or held any anniversaries whereon to enumerate their words of mercy. "Lord, *when* saw we thee an hungered or athirst?" Yet they had not lost their days. God remembers what they forget, even to the minutest good deed.

“’Tis a little thing  
To give a cup of water; yet its draught  
Of cool refreshment, drain’d by fever’d lips,  
May give a shock of pleasure to the frame  
More exquisite than when nectarean juice  
Renews the life of joy in happiest hours.  
It is a little thing to speak a phrase  
Of common comfort which by daily use  
Has almost lost its sense; yet on the ear  
Of him who thought to die unmourn’d ’twill fall  
Like choicest music.”

Though external beneficence, or what is called charity, is not the whole duty of man,—a truth to be maintained with constancy in our busy, boastful, external age,—it is still true that our Christianity must be continually transpiring in deeds, words, and, what is often more precious, looks of love, as the aroma of the flower-bed fills the air at all hours. And sincere Christianity is perpetually showing its inward virtue in this breathing out of love. A child of grace cannot lie on a bed of illness, in the most retired chamber of the house, without sending forth a secret efficacy towards the real

happiness of fellow-creatures. Humble, patient, self-distrusting sufferer! Thy day is not lost! Those wishes which lack outward instruments break forth with wings of prayer, fly up heavenward and command showers of blessing. Those touching looks of sympathy and pity send a thrill of electric influence, invisible to thee, but often mighty through God to lessen grief, and, what is better, to increase piety. Thy day is not lost if it is pervaded with holy love.

But what if the day be the chief of days, the day of the Lord? And what if your cares are upon the lambs of the Lord's pasture? Do you not find in this a new motive for throwing off weariness and devoting yourself hopefully to the toil? There is such weakness in human nature that our most delightful duties become a burden, except so far as we receive continual supplies of grace to quicken and refresh us. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." Exhortations like this are

used by the Holy Spirit to prevent our sinking. They operate in the same manner as the cry of the master to his flagging workmen, or the inspiring voice of the commander to his fainting soldiers. We need to be perpetually reminded of the eye that superintends our labour, and the prize which is hung out at the end of the course; and blessed is that servant who does not every day of his life find cause to stir himself up to new self-denials and exertions. If all the Christian host had been fully engaged from the beginning, the conquest of the world would have been achieved before this time; but many of us have been weak and pusillanimous soldiers, and all of us require to hearken for the stimulus of the Captain's voice. He greatly errs who enters the Christian course as a career of ease, or expects a bed of roses. From beginning to end it is against the stream. It is against the *world*. It is against the *devil*. It is against *ourselves*. It is a life of labour within and without,

and of warfare with terrible foes. Situations may vary, and thus induce variety of duties; but there is no Christian who has not something to do for Christ, the doing of which will task his powers, try his temper, drain his natural fund wellnigh to exhaustion, and make the fainting nature plead for rest. Hence, it is all-important to be saying to ourselves every day that this is not our rest, that the rest *remaineth* for us, and that "there will be rest enough in heaven."

Half our troubles and half our faults arise from our forgetting that we are called to a life against nature. We naturally gravitate towards quietude and inaction. There is something sweet in lying still, especially after some little pretence of labour. We have been from our infancy forming a habit of doing just what suited us. This habit has grown mighty, if not inveterate. The first prompting always is to *please ourselves*. Even though in the end we shake this off,

the first suggestion is, Take thine ease. In many cases it is enough to keep us back from a duty that it is hard, or that it is vexatious, or that it brings annoyances or dangers; we turn our eyes from it and leave it to others. Particularly, if we have wrought a little and feel an incipient fatigue, we are easily persuaded to give over, and thus sometimes our best years of service show only a series of violent, spasmodic efforts, with long intervals of rest. The law of carnal nature is to *please ourselves*. We see that our children consider it a paradise to do *as they like*. Many persons choose religion itself altogether for the quiet and ease which it gives. And many professors devote themselves only to that class of duties which they find agreeable. But this is diametrically opposed to the example of our Divine Redeemer. Hear the argument of the apostle, (Rom. xv. 1-3,) "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." If our adorable Head so far rejected his own pleasure as to submit willingly to reproach and insult, and if his whole life was one bearing of the cross, surely we ought to make it the law of our existence here to bear the yoke which he lays upon us. Nature will faint, it is true; but nature is not to be our rule. The flesh will grow weary; but we are not servants of the flesh. The question, every morning, ought to be, *not* "How can I have most pleasure this day?" but "How can I accomplish most for Christ?" Who knows but the way of doing that may be a way of painstaking and trial? Mountains are not ascended, even in the natural world, without many a panting effort and many a moment of weakness; but no earthly mountains are so difficult as those we have to tra-

verse in our spiritual march. I am deeply persuaded—I wish I could say it with proper emphasis—that this single passion for ease, this disgust at the cross, is one chief cause of our small success. We are so ready to ground our arms at the first summons, to go into panic at the first sight of an enemy, or to lie down and sleep when we should be marching and contending, that at length we come to be satisfied with a Christianity so nerveless and effeminate that early disciples would never have recognised it. But let me not speak of those only who make *no* endeavours and never enter the lists. There are some who *begin*, but do not continue; and some who are even *now working*, but are growing feeble, and are half persuaded to desist. To all such the call is, Watch. Stand to your arms. Be instant, in season, out of season. Put on the whole armour. Give no place to the devil. Look not back from the plough. Remember Lot's wife! You are labouring:



you do well ; but be assured Satan will stop that labour if he can. He will persuade you that it is time for repose, that personal comfort should be taken more into calculation, that other things besides religious service demand your attention, and that perhaps you have already pressed the weary sinew to extremity. Hearken to no such sirens, as they beset your voyage. Close the ear. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." The work in which your Christian powers are laid out is denominated *well-doing*. It is a struggle and a cross-bearing to which your life, with all its powers, might well be given. It is nothing less than *pleasing God*, living for him, making sacrifice of all to his service. Shrink not

when thus called. Faint not. Though a thousand times tempted to loosen the tense fibre and offer rest to the overtaken muscle, oh, relax not! In *well-doing* there must always be glory and reward. It is union of heart and work with all saints and all holy angels; it is union with God and Christ.

There is much in the work to produce weariness; but God forbids it, and the hopefulness of the effort forbids it. Your other labours, for daily bread or for accumulation, weary you many a time, and give you evenings of exhaustion, and days of paleness and decay; and all for what? Often for absolute disappointment and downfall; always for a sense of unsatisfactoriness and earthliness; sounding those words in your shops and offices, your laboratories and ships, "Wherefore do ye spend . . . your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

*Weariness*, perpetual *weariness*, and yet the mammon-slave still bows to his master and still pays his sweat and life for a disappoint-

ment! He is now grown gray and wrinkled. No diligence of artful dress can hide the loathsome secret; no affected alertness can hold up long. Life is a weariness. Though every vessel he touched should be gold, though the delicacies of all climes were at his table, wherein is he better than the beggar at his gate? And, after all, how tremendous the revelation, when he shall hear the voice, where repentance comes too late, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Your worldly labours of the week, however unblamable, can carry no fruit into heaven. Not one penny of your gains can you ferry over the stream of death. Whereas, your labours in the cause of Christ are all to reappear in that day. The only rewards you can carry along with you are these. The souls you may convert from the error of their ways and save from death shall be with you in heaven and to

all eternity. This is good against weariness and fainting; prospect of certain reaping in due time; and it is good and seasonable with regard to the particular service which engages our present attention. I have admitted that it has much in it to make one weary. It involves labour of some intensity and continued for many years. It lacks those excitements which both stimulate and sustain in many other fields of duty. It has no conspicuous dignities or eclat. And its rewards are not immediate, but "in due time." Yet faint not; but look boldly at the duty enjoined on us all in reference to this department of Christian activity. Let none exempt himself. We all have a responsibility in regard *to the Christian training of the existing race of children.* It is to make my little endeavour to stir up all to this, that I have now asked your attention. The general topic has been set before you again and again. It is to *educate the children of America.*

It is to do as much as in us lies to make them true Christians. It is to pronounce our benediction on the seed-time of our land. It is to Christianize America in the bud; to get the start of error, infidelity, socialism, anti-marriage, anti-property, anti-legal fanaticism, anti-Sabbath and anti-Christ. It is to preach the gospel, by a blessed anticipation, to infancy and youth, and (God helping us) to secure for the next generation, in city and country, true Christian knowledge and holy principle. All this, and more than I know how to express in this, we mean by religious education. To labour in this, even to weariness, even to pain, even to old age, even to death, is just what one might expect of *Christianity in earnest*. But ah! what puny soldiers do we prove ourselves! How ready to give out before half a campaign! What lions do we see in the way! What faintings do we feel within! What weariness causes our knees to quake and our hands to hang down!

What numbers go back after a little trial of the service, till the returning column of Sunday-school teachers and labourers is almost as numerous as the advancing army!

Let us look at the duty which invites us. The duty is that of *educating the existing youth* in Christianity. (1) It lies obviously on *parents*; and this is only mentioned here because (all-important though it be) it has been, and must again be, separately urged. No Sunday-school arrangements ever should, or ever did, keep any well-disposed Christian parent from training his own children. (2) The duty lies on *professional teachers*. They are bound to use their place and influence to teach for Christ; to do all that is possible, that every pupil may learn the way of salvation, may be acquainted with the Scriptures and may escape the wrath to come. Next to ministers of the gospel, and in close proximity to them, are the instructors of youth. The almost unbounded

influence which they possess, in shaping the course, forming the habits and colouring the opinions of the children under their care, has made them instrumental of more good and more evil—of more sound conversions and more skepticism and scoffing—of more courage in upholding justice and holiness, and more licentious obstinacy and vice, than any laymen on earth. In many instances their faithful endeavours for a course of years have given them a claim to every thing belonging to the ministry, except the title and investiture. Let us earnestly pray for Christian teachers; and let us see to it, in the sight of God, that our children have such! 3. The duty lies on the *young of both sexes* in every community, and particularly in every congregation. Primarily on those who entertain the confidence that they are members of Christ, but likewise on those who have been instructed in the ways of God, and have been consecrated by Christian love and faithfulness to

the service of Christ. Sunday-schools afford an opportunity for every variety of talent and for exercising the gifts of every one, male and female, who is instructed and is willing to instruct others. If it were the point in hand, I could largely show the advantage of such employment to the young persons so engaged; but we are now considering the *duty*. There ought to be no lack of Sunday-school teachers in a large congregation. It is a stigma on our Christianity that there ever should be. Even if all existing schools were supplied, we have persons enough in our communions for as many more; and there is no reason (but our own sloth, selfishness, and disposition to wait forever for others to begin) why as many more should not be founded. It is a duty especially laid upon *young church-members*. They have lately praised God for their salvation: who ought to be more full of eagerness to work in his cause? and what work can be named at once so promising, so simple and so ac-



cessible? I have carefully observed Sunday-schools for more than thirty years: I never knew any one class of persons of whom so many became true Christians as Sunday-school teachers. I never knew any great ingathering to the churches in which a striking proportion was not of Sunday-school teachers. I seldom knew any persons consent to act long and faithfully in this capacity, without manifesting, sooner or later, a saving interest in the truth. The young professor who begins early, works earnestly and continues long, effects, upon the successive classes that come under his or her care, changes which are of incalculable benefit to the land and the church and are like those of the minister of Christ. The young Christian who gathers a new class of poor children, and keeps them together for years, and labours for their souls, does more to hold up the hands of his pastor and elders than by any and all other means which occur to me. And the company of

young disciples who, after conference and prayer, fix on a new locality, and there, in some destitute vicinage, institute a new Sunday-school, give a refreshment and encouragement to their pastor, and a propelling force to their church, and a means of salvation to their city, far, far beyond the bare contribution of thousands. Our consciences must be left to determine how far these several obligations come upon us respectively.

If now, from looking at the classes of persons on whom the duty is incumbent, we turn to contemplate the field on which to operate, we can hardly refrain from wonder and alarm. 1. Here are our own children. With all our parental yearnings open and naked to God, what is it that (in his presence) we chiefly desire for them? What is it we are labouring to secure for them? What is it, on their behalf, towards which you would most freely make sacrifices? If you have not ruined them already and

sacrificed their souls to wealth or accomplishment, I charge you, in the name of God, teach them daily, pray with them, leave no means unemployed which may tend to their salvation! Charge your consciences with the solemn duty of gathering those you love around you for the daily worship of the household. And be not weary in these services, because your life is uncertain, and at such an hour as ye think not these children may come under the hands of others. 2. We owe a duty to those who have no Christian nurture at home. If their parents cannot or will not, *we* (with their permission) ought to take them under training; or, if they are orphans, we ought in this respect to become their parents for Christ's sake. Any single city furnishes thousands of such. Many of these are not absolutely paupers; some of them are even children of opulence. But they are all alike needy in respect to the true riches of youth; while a myriad

of literal and undeniable POOR crave our bounty and seem to cry aloud for our mercy. These are the persons who become soldiers, citizens, electors, magistrates and jurymen; these are they who decree changes and work revolutions, who give character to the country, create both judges and laws and found new republics. These are the *America that is to be*. Would you behold them? Go out, this hour, to our public squares and parks, our wharves and piers, our avenues, thoroughfares and suburban commons, our steamboats and ferries. Listen to their voices by sunrise, as they profane the Lord's day, through the encouragement of a heaven-daring and abetting people, by loud, indecent proclamation of their Sunday-wares. Follow them up (their name is legion) to every resort but those of religion, and seriously ask yourselves what is to be the result of such an education in the streets in all our cities for another half-century. How much of

that scriptural knowledge with which the Puritan youth of a century ago grew up, think you, is to be found in these masses, who, nevertheless, are to have an amazing, unreckoned weight in the political scale of the time that is coming? And may we not expect the time (which God forefend!) when the Lord's day shall be as free to the tradesman and artisan as it now is to the steamer and railway, and when a whole community, like that of France, shall defy God by taking his day for their national election? When some American Sir Benjamin Hall shall mock the God of the Sabbath to the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and some American Boz make sport of the sabbatarian precision and exhibit a lying burlesque of the pietism he would have to be rabbled and destroyed? To reach this increasing, and increasingly lawless, generation, no method of prevention can be named but *Christian education*. And of

Christian education, the cheapest and hope-fullest mode is the *Sunday-school*. 3. I feel called upon to make our field of observation yet more narrow, and to consider, not the ignorant poor in general, but those of *your own particular city or town, and your own part of it*. As has been repeatedly urged, we owe a duty to the territory in which we live. There is no power, it is true, in the material structure of a house of worship, from which any virtue can be supposed to emanate to sanctify and sweeten the surrounding mass; but it ought never to be thought of as a possibility, that a church of Jesus Christ should stand for years in any locality without doing something towards giving the gospel forth around it. To effect aught of this, however, an influence must go forth from the members of the body; and there is no mode of exerting such influence so potent as the *Sunday-school*. We see around us, and shall see around us every day, more and more, the crowded popula-

tion of labour, if not of want. We see, at least for temporary sojourn, thousands of emigrants from the Old World. The demand for Christian teaching and training that comes up from such a company of fellow-immortals is importunate; and the nearest way to supply their necessities is by *new Sunday-schools*. Glad am I to hear of one honoured church after another breaking forth over their own limits and gathering large mission-schools in new localities. They give the best proof that they have a true church-attachment, and such healthful interest in their own communion as is usually accompanied by other tokens of vigour, happiness and growth. These are the supports which a pastor feels in his inmost soul; they are precisely those things which he has neither strength nor time to accomplish, and which fall peculiarly *within the sphere of the Christian laity*. That so large a work of this kind is now in progress in some of our cities should be mat-

ter of congratulation, perchance of *rebuke*. Half the stir, half the invention, half the conference, which we bestow, any week, on a *secularity* which touches our interests or tastes, would give inception to spiritual labours that might bless our children's children. 4. But this is not America; and perhaps the new States and Territories are, after all, the appropriate field for the highest Sunday-school triumphs. The subject is a little worn: yet none of us have felt its importance. I have no belief that our duty is discharged when we have cared for our own residence. The rapidly-filling regions of the South and West demand the gospel. Without it the next generation perishes. Churches cannot be founded with sufficient speed; ministers are not to be had: but *churches are every day growing out of Sunday-schools*. Where we cannot send the fine flour of our mills, let us at least send the handful of seed-corn. Let us send the school; let us send the library.



Truth is truth, potent in all its divinely-appointed qualities, and gospel is gospel, even when not resounding in lordly, gilded, frescoed cathedrals, but whispered in the prairie-cabin, or under the spreading oak or tulip-tree. And oh, I doubt not, the mingled hum of thousands of ruddy boys and maidens, going up on the blessed morning from these scattered schools, constitutes a harmony which is sweet in the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth! To these also we have a duty. And though the aiding of them, in our humble measure, may involve some additional effort, yet be not weary, be not weary in well-doing! The field, then, on which to operate, at home and abroad, is sufficiently clear and engaging.

My dear Christian friends who are engaged in actual teaching, I have scarcely allowed myself room to say what was intended. Of your attention, interest and acquiescence I have had no doubt. *You*

have given the best proof of your faith by your works. Some of you have been long and steadily in the service, and you are, of all persons, the most ready to own its importance. You will listen with forbearance to a few advices which my subject authorizes to those who occupy the post of Sunday-school teachers. My brethren, we have intrusted to you these souls. Other teaching looks chiefly at mind and manners; but you look at the salvation of these lambs, and of all whom you can reach. See that you have the truth yourselves. Avoid the horrid evil of sowing poison-seed and inculcating error. Believe and practise that which you teach. Beware of taking up the time of your pupils with any matters which are too high for them, with unimportant or less important things, with doubtful disputations, with theological whimseys of your own. See to it that you supply the pure milk of the word; that which is able to save your souls through faith. Consider,

I beseech you, the need of great diligence both in preparation and instruction. It is not by intermitted labours that this kind of service becomes effectual. Week by week the force must be applied in the same place. Set an example of early attendance and rigorous punctuality; evince to your pupils that you regard your Sabbath work as not less attractive or important than your place of weekly duty, your office, bank or counting-room. Endeavour to seek out your little charge in their own homes, to add to their number and to benefit their parents. Make them subjects of your daily devotions. Embrace every occasion of mingling your studies, counsels and prayers with those of your fellow-teachers, and rejoice in every new bond which draws brother towards brother or sister towards sister in Christ. Leave it to the hypocrite in religion and the upstart in society to treat with any sneer or neglect those who are CHRIST'S but are not the world's; who are

less wealthy or of lower rank in your eyes. Perhaps going back a little in pedigree will dissolve the noble bearing of many among us. In Christ's service remember it is you who are honoured; we are asking your service for him, not your patronage. Sink into nothing at his feet, and live entirely on his strength and in view of his appearing.

THE END.













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