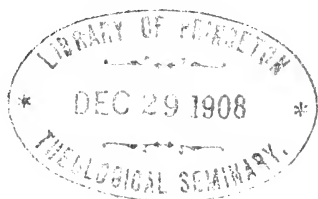


The Country Sunday School

Rev. Hight C. Moore



BV
1524
.M66
1906

12.23.08

Library of the Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

BV 1524 .M66 1906
Moore, Hight C., 1871-1957.
The country Sunday-school

The Country Sunday-School

BY ✓

REV. HIGHT C. MOORE

Sunday-school Missionary for North Carolina



Philadelphia
American Baptist Publication Society
1630 Chestnut Street

Copyright 1906 by the
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Published June, 1906

From the Society's own Press

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. A COUNTRY BOY IN SUNDAY-SCHOOL	5
II. A SUCCESSFUL SUNDAY-SCHOOL IN THE COUNTRY	13
III. WHAT CAN BE DONE IN A COUNTRY SUNDAY- SCHOOL	21

THE COUNTRY SUNDAY-SCHOOL

I

A COUNTRY BOY IN SUNDAY-SCHOOL

HE was only an ordinary boy; there were and are plenty of others far brighter and better than he. But he was a real boy, not an imaginary one. That he was a country boy, there could be no doubt; he was born in a lovely but remote valley among the mountains and the nearest railway station was twenty-six miles away. The community life centered in the little church of sixty-odd members tended monthly by the faithful pastor from the other side of the Blue Ridge. The Sunday-school had an attendance of perhaps half a hundred, but it wilted under the hottest summer day, and became entirely dormant as winter drew on. A genuine country boy he was in a genuine country Sunday-school; and what that Sunday-school did for that boy other Sunday-

schools with no better equipment can do for other boys and girls.

THE HOME BEFORE THE SCHOOL

Yes, the home before and beneath and about the Sunday-school to make it of most effect. This boy's father dragged his crippled body over every foot of that valley farm and made it blossom as the rose, yet never in his life did he make a public speech or lead in prayer. His mother, mistress of many homely arts from the cook-stove and wash-tub to nursing the sick and training children, never read a society essay or figured in a concert. But their lives were more eloquent than speech, more musical than song, and no one could live in their home, guest or child, without feeling the glow of their practical piety. Their Bible bore on its title-page the familiar verse: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." It was the first verse their first-born ever learned and the first of many lessons they taught him out of the word of God. Long the Sunday-school was presided over by his grandfather who, starting the school one summer, had said: "If only one person comes to Sunday-school and he is a Negro, I will teach him the word of the Lord." His grandmother had loaned him "Pilgrim's Progress" which he read with eager interest, the first book he

ever read entire. She also gave him a dime to read the Bible from the first to where the children of Israel were settled in Canaan. How big was that dime! It made him feel richer than Vanderbilt; but the real prize he had won was a taste for the Bible which led him on through those peerless pages. With such parents and grandparents, where else could that barefoot mountain lad think of going, or feel like going, on the day of the Lord than to the house of the Lord?

A SUMMER OF SCRIPTURE MEMORIZING

Meager was the mechanical and literary equipment of that little country Sunday-school: only one room, high and uncomfortable benches, a few Bibles and hymn-books—that comprised it. The exercises consisted mainly of singing and of reading the Bible, with a teacher who commented upon it. One summer it was decided to offer the children prizes for memorizing Scripture; a Bible for the one who could recite to his teacher the most verses during the summer; a New Testament for the one who should come next. This boy was one of the contestants. Rest hours from farm work, rainy days, and Sundays, were spent committing Scripture to memory. But when the last Sunday of the season came he found that he had missed that attractive Bible, and the beautiful red

leather Testament had gone to another; all he got was a paper sack of candy and peanuts! Yet, was that all? Ah, much of the Scripture he carried into manhood, food for his own soul and through him for others, was learned during that summer in that ill-equipped Sunday-school. Hardly more than a dozen Sundays, but for him surely they were not in vain.

JOINING THE CHURCH

And do you wonder that this lad went from the Sunday-school into the church? Spiritual parents, pious neighbors, the most careful religious instruction in day-school, the most earnest preaching every month—all these could not be without effect. A meeting was held one March and this twelve-year-old boy was one of several who stood up confessing Christ. On the way home that day, his father asked him about his decision and his mother further questioned him; both were satisfied, and so he was one of fourteen who were immersed in the crystal stream that swept through the valley. To that profession and hope he clung with increasing joy through the years.

CHURCH WORK A BOY COULD DO

Not much to be sure, and no great field for it. But the field was large enough for the boy and

there were kind voices to indicate what he could do and to encourage him in it. First, to read a passage of Scripture or selection from a good book in the prayer-meeting following the school; later, to conduct the prayer-meeting, though he could do little more than announce hymns, read Scripture, call on some one else to lead in prayer, and declare the meeting open; then to have an occasional prayer-service with a handful of fellow-students among the laurels by the riverside; then to take an intermediate class in the Sunday-school and teach the best he could; sometimes to conduct morning prayers in the day-school when the teacher was sick or away; once or twice to be the junior delegate to the annual meeting of the Association. These and such things he was called upon to do; little things perhaps in the eyes of others, and unimportant in themselves most certainly, but to him they were neither little nor unimportant. Poorly he did them, with many a blush and stammer, but they prepared him for somewhat better in later years.

HOLDING A SUNDAY-SCHOOL HIMSELF

One Saturday his mother sent him across the mountain eastward to a neighboring valley in search of some cows that had strayed away. As he started she asked him to see if he could not

arrange for a Sunday-school at a schoolhouse in that vicinity. Inquiring here and there about the missing cows and the proposed Sunday-school, he returned home in the afternoon without the cows, but with an appointment for Sunday-school the next day. On the back of faithful "Duck," one of the farm mules, over the mountain he went next day, and at the schoolhouse in the shady hollow a little Sunday-school was organized. Simple was the service, not conducted in the best style perhaps, but it was a beginning for him and for the thirty or more people that assembled, the beginning of two seasons of very happy and resultful work. And when "Duck" carried the lad-superintendent back over the mountain homeward that afternoon—what do you think?—there were the cows, returned of their own accord and standing in the barnyard.

THE FIRST SERMON

Yes, somehow or other your country lad from his godly home and out of a backwoods Sunday-school often wriggles upward into the pulpit. He may reach there too soon or, maybe, though young, he enters it in the fulness of time. At any rate, this lad in the very month he was seventeen was granted license to preach. And the following summer, home on his first vacation from college, he was given opportunity to make proof

of his ministry. The people of the valley gathered that Sabbath to hear him. He would not ascend the high-built pulpit, but stood by the table in front of it. His voice was not steady when he announced his text: "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Not quite twenty minutes he spoke. Sympathetically his kinsmen and neighbors listened, and at the close of the service came to him with words of encouragement. And as he extended to each the hand of appreciation, his aged grandsire back in the "amen corner," with full heart said in firm tone: "Don't puff him!" The son of such parents was not likely to be an egotist, but these three words of that deeply interested father in Israel came back a thousand times over to that boy when elsewhere and before larger audiences it was his good fortune to receive words of praise.

WHAT OUR LESSON IS

And now let that country lad step back nameless out of sight. But let the country Sunday-school and church come afresh to the front. If the actual experience just related teaches anything, it ought to impress upon us these things regarding the country Sunday-school: With all its imperfections it is certainly worth something to a community, a church, and the cause of Christ.

It is situated so as to be of particular service in filling with Scripture material the receptive minds of the young.

It can so instruct and inspire the children especially that they may be early converted and enlisted in the service of Christ.

It may often send out some of its forces to organize and conduct Sunday-schools and prayer services in less favored neighborhoods.

It should so train its members that some of them may become ministers, many of them Sunday-school workers, and all of them efficient, active, faithful Christians.

And so may God bless the country Sunday-school!

II

A SUCCESSFUL SUNDAY-SCHOOL IN THE COUNTRY

STATE of North Carolina, county of Wake, vicinity of Apex, church of Olive's Chapel, W. S. Olive, pastor: here is the successful country Sunday-school of which I write—type of the best rural work, a test of methods in theory and practice, a triumph of simplicity in management and spirituality in achievement.

PASTOR AND PEOPLE

It was never truer than in this case that the pastor has much to do with the success of the teaching work in his churches. Spend a Saturday night in June with him and get a guest's glimpse of this household of faith—the head a Wake Forest graduate, his wife with an Oxford diploma, and their two bright little daughters maturing in an atmosphere of culture and devotion. Of course there are evidences of thrift on every hand: corn in the crib, cattle in the meadow, chickens in the yard, vegetables in the garden, a miniature grocery in the cellar, cold water in the rock-penetrating

well. There are one hundred and fifty broad acres around him with fertile fields and heavy woodlands, the spot of his nativity and the arena of his activities. Croquet for diversion; the hollows resonant with the evening chorus of whippoorwills; the great, round moon coming up as our cheerful unsleeping sentinel throughout the night. You feel that here is a man of God who loves his people and is as heartily loved by them; visits them in their homes; responds day or night, in heat or cold, to the call for his presence and counsel; a vigorous mind, a sturdy common sense, the leader's hand, the shepherd's heart, the consecrated life has this shepherd of a rural flock.

And what a noble church has rallied around him for this fortnight of years! The very stamina of our citizenship, three hundred and fifty strong according to the church register, but many hundreds more under its direct influence. Draw around the church a circle eight or ten miles in diameter and you have its well-nigh undisputed local field—an area embracing rich cotton and tobacco lands and containing, at a random estimate, a population of fifteen hundred. It is the country of Yates, the illustrious missionary, and of Olive, the home-land hero, for whom the church was named. Preaching the first and third Saturdays and Sundays in each month; the freest and fairest of discipline;

contributions to all the benevolent objects of the denomination; the care of the poor, as, for example, old "Aunt Mary" (colored), still a member of the church, and now said to be a decade beyond a round century in the flesh!

Under such a pastor, among such a people, and in such a church, what else would you expect but a successful Sunday-school?

THE CHURCH AMONG THE OAKS

Over, then, to the church soon after 9 o'clock Sunday morning to attend Sunday-school. Many others have gone already—some in buggies and carriages, some in wagons and carts, some on horseback, some afoot. There stands the church building on a commanding knoll; seating capacity eight hundred; white painted, with green trimmings; the tower enclosing a bell. The church premises include seven full acres; a little clearing for the graveyard; spacious and well-shaded grounds around the sanctuary; a lot for the school building hard-by; and the balance woodland. Here is the center of a great community's educational, social, and spiritual life.

HOW THE HOUR IS SPENT

Promptly at 9.45 A. M. the superintendent calls the school to order, announces two songs, reads

Scripture, offers prayer, and turns over the classes to their teachers. After allowing a full thirty minutes for the teaching period, he calls the school together again, asks a brother to lead in prayer, offers some remarks applying the lesson, calls for the secretary's report, makes room for a quartet, and then closes the school, saying: "The school is dismissed till next Sunday morning, fifteen minutes to 10 o'clock."

A very simple order of service, and yet note about it these things: (1) Began on time. (2) The Scripture read was a side-light on the day's lesson. (3) A full half-hour was allowed for teaching. (4) The teaching period was immediately preceded and followed by prayer. (5) The lesson was applied in a few apt remarks by the superintendent. (6) Special music was introduced. (7) The very minute for the next session was announced, thus promoting punctuality.

THE CLASSES AT WORK

The pupils are arranged in nine classes: two of them adult, men in one and women in the other; three advanced, young men and women in each; two intermediate, composed of boys and girls; and two primary, the larger one made up of the beginners and the other of those a little above them in age or attainment. The latter classes meet in

the school building where they can have separate rooms, little desks, blackboard and other teaching appliances; the other classes meet in the church auditorium, T-shaped, and for a one-room structure unusually well-adapted for Sunday-school work. The class roll is called and then laid aside; if a member comes in late he gets no credit on the record for being present. The collection always goes to benevolence, since the expenses of the school are defrayed out of the general church expense fund; thus the entire contributions for one quarter will go to foreign missions; for another to home missions; for a third to State missions; and for the last to the Orphanage. Coming to the teaching work and speaking for one class, namely the class of men, just forty present, and all heads of families, the method of teaching was quite effective: instead of questioning closely as to facts or himself lecturing the class, the teacher simply asked several members successively: "What did you get out of the study of this lesson?" The responses were generally prompt, thoughtful, and suggestive. A glance around the auditorium and into the primary rooms revealed the fact that all the classes were very attentive and evidently being well taught. Good, faithful teaching of the Scriptures—that is the center and substance of the Sunday-school.

The facts just mentioned are worth a glance deeper. Notice classification: the books usually advise mixed classes of little children and of adults, but separate classes for boys and girls. Here that rule is disregarded—and evidently good work is done—for all classes are mixed except the adults. Again, in utilizing rooms in the school building for the primary classes there is a suggestion for others. The matter of the school's support by the church-membership as a whole and the donation of the school's offerings direct to the various benevolences is also a point worthy of note. And a capital idea is involved in the adult teacher's felicitous appeal to the judgment of his pupils rather than a rigid inquisitiveness on the one hand or a condescending sermonette on the other.

ATTENDANCE AND LEADERS

A good average of more than two hundred, and this is largely the key to the situation: the men and women come, the children are not sent, but brought; for there are twenty or more full families, every member of which is in the habit of attending Sunday-school. There are few old people in the community, but several of them are here every Sunday with children and grandchildren studying the word of God.

Of the officers, the pastor is a regularly enrolled

member of the men's class, and he takes his seat as a student therein every Sunday he is at home. The superintendent, after opening the school, drops into the same class for most of the teaching period. The assistant supplies teachers, greets visitors, and occasionally teaches a class. The secretary is accurate and faithful in his record. The treasurer turns over the collections periodically to the church treasurer through whose hands all church funds must pass.

The teachers are usually present; but in case of foreseen absence each one is expected to provide for his class a substitute, notified in ample time to have made specific preparation for teaching the class. If for some reason this is overlooked, the duty of supplying the class with a teacher devolves, as just stated, on the assistant superintendent.

TRAITS THAT TELL

Among many characteristics that might be named, three are manifest and predominant:

1. **Simplicity.** No complicated machinery; no doubtful expedients; yet an aggressive conservatism; and everything as clear as noonday to the entire school.

2. **Sociability.** You feel it before you enter the church door; as the school assembles it is

manifest in every seat and aisle; as the classes go to their places it reappears without a ripple of confusion; and when school is over, there is the neighborly interchange of greeting, inquiry, and fellowship. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

3. Spirituality. Place here the accent of the school's life and activities. The school is not for social contact or mental culture, much less for entertainment or gossip, but through the diffusion of Scripture knowledge to secure and deepen the spiritual life of the people. Plenty of good cheer and vivacity, to be sure, but not a needle's point of room for frivolity or flippancy; the service throughout breathes the spirit of devotion; these workers are earnest Christians, and their meeting-house is their sanctuary, house of prayer, gate of heaven. The meeting for teaching is clearly and correctly a meeting for worship.

Such, in brief sketch, is one successful Sunday-school in the country; there are others; and may there be many, many more!

III

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN A COUNTRY SUNDAY-SCHOOL

TO begin with, you can have a live, wide-awake Sunday-school; for a Sunday-school is possible wherever a church is possible and at many points besides. If you haven't a corps of competent officers and teachers, take the best you have and make the most of them. If you haven't a man who can lead the work, enlist a good consecrated woman. If no local member is available, call on a neighboring sister church to supply workers. And if this is not practicable, at least the pastor can on his visits conduct a specimen school. The attendants may be few, unorganized, illiterate; the supplies may be limited to Bible and hymn-book; the meeting-place may be school-house, mill-shack, or brush-arbor; yet if you will you can, and if you can you should, have the liveliest and best Sunday-school possible in your church and community.

You can keep the school *open all the year*. Many hundreds are still in the habit of going into

“winter quarters,” but in keeping the school ever-green, as in most things else, “where there’s a will, there’s a way.”

You can *begin on time*. One superintendent closes his school in this way: “You are dismissed till next Sunday morning fifteen minutes to ten.” When that minute arrives he opens school; and the folks are there to meet him. And, what is almost as important, he *closes on time*.

Your *church building* has possibly only one room and you feel that separate apartments are needed, especially for the younger classes. Several schools have built onto the rear of the pulpit one or two primary rooms at small expense. One uses for the smaller children a schoolhouse standing on the church grounds. Another curtains off on movable frames each corner of the church, thus changing one room into five.

Of course you can and will freely *utilize your pastor*. Several pastors have said that they would not serve a church where a Sunday-school could not be maintained; and, on the other hand, no church should have a pastor who opposes, ignores, or even declines to countenance or assist in the Sunday-school. One pastor of four churches has

his name enrolled in each of his Sunday-schools and is ready on time every time to be instructed or instruct and encourage the Sunday-school in every way within his power.

You can have your school *well classified*. No hair-splitting, whether pedagogical or psychological, is necessary; as many another school has been, so yours may be, arranged on broad, safe, and simple lines.

You can have special *class organization* if you want it. A country school near Raleigh has forty-seven young men in its Baraca Class. In another there is a flourishing Philathea Class.

Faithful attendance can be fostered in various ways. For instance: in one small school a Bible was offered to each pupil who would be present every Sunday during the year. One Sabbath a furious snowstorm was just abating, but the blind superintendent rode three miles to church that his own attendance might be unbroken and he found a boy there who had come three miles from another direction. The boy got his Bible.

As to *record*, you can and should have a good record book, register the name of every scholar,

note the facts accurately from Sabbath to Sabbath, report regularly (at least once a year) to the church in conference, and send complete statistics to your district Association.

As to *music*, it is a matter of common observation that some of the very best is to be heard in country schools. Plenty of the right sort of books and a good leader are needed.

You can introduce *Bible drills* before or after teaching the regular lesson. In the mountains, miles from the railroad, there is a live worker who has in his school a chart of the Bible books and has drilled his pupils on it so thoroughly that they not only know the names of the books but certain facts about and in each book.

You can give special emphasis to *memorizing Scripture*. One superintendent asks each pupil to get a verse on a given subject for the following Sunday so that on roll-call each may respond with a suitable verse. Another makes room in the school hour for memory-drill in concert on such passages as the Twenty-third Psalm, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Others have offered prizes for memorizing the most verses within a given period: for example, in North

Carolina during this year (1905) one young lady memorized fifteen hundred verses in one week and another memorized within three months twelve thousand two hundred and twenty-six verses!

You can *develop the missionary spirit*. A little school of about forty members keeps in regular touch with a foreign missionary and frequently letters from him are read before the school.

You can *cultivate the spirit of giving* by presenting objects that appeal particularly to the children. For example, about four hundred schools (many of them rural) in North Carolina are in the habit of giving one collection each month to the Baptist Orphanage at Thomasville. We have one country school which gives it offerings every Sunday to missions and other benevolences, the church having arranged at the beginning of the year for all the necessary expenses of the school.

You can have *a rally* to arouse interest in Sunday-school work. In your own school it may work charmingly, if you have it at the right time (preferably in the spring), and let the folks know of it in time to get there. The union of the several schools of a county or section in a special, well-planned rally has also proven of value.

At your own church or in reach, you can have the benefit of *an occasional Sunday-school institute* especially designed for the training of workers. Thus in North Carolina, a rural commonwealth, we (the Baptists) are seeking to have one or more Sunday-school institutes a year in the bounds of each of our sixty Associations; the contact with and culture of ten thousand workers is a great task, but strategic and worth while most assuredly.

You can, as a school, *buy a few books* for the use of your officers and teachers. More schools than one have this year bought a suggested half-dozen of the best books on the Sunday-school for the officers and teachers to read by turns and the whole school has been thereby greatly benefited.

You can follow up the school with *an extra service* on Sundays when you do not have preaching. In one small school the superintendent used to read a sermon by Spurgeon on each of the three Sundays a month when the church was without preaching.

It may be that you can have one or more *branch schools*. In one church with a large membership pretty widely scattered, there are four branch schools. A hill-country church has an afternoon

Sunday-school at a schoolhouse three miles away; it has ninety enrolled, is now for the first time braving the winter, and is superintended by a boy fourteen years old!

Chief of all, you can make your school increasingly an *evangelistic force*. The great majority of conversions—eighty-five per cent. or more, we are told—are from our Sunday-school ranks. See if this does not correspond, in the main, with your experience. Here, then, is your supreme work, the ripest and the richest field for Christian effort to-day. Enter it more fully, fervently, faithfully, and may you gather much golden grain!





GAYLORD BROS.

MAKERS

SYRACUSE, - N. Y.

PAT. JAN. 21, 1906

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01040 4509