

NORMAL STUDIES FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

THE YOUNG TEACHER:
AN ELEMENTARY HANDBOOK OF
SUNDAY SCHOOL INSTRUCTION.
BY
WILLIAM H. GROSER, B.Sc. (LOND)



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The young teacher

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BY

WILLIAM H. GROSER, B.Sc. (LOND.),

Hon. Literary Secretary, Sunday School Union,

AUTHOR OF "THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER'S MANUAL,"

"JOSHUA AND HIS SUCCESSORS," "THE TREES AND PLANTS OF THE BIBLE."

*PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR NORMAL STUDY.*

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THE YOUNG TEACHER.



CHAPTER I.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL, ITS SCOPE AND AIMS.

A Case supposed.—An English lad of the present day, just entering upon his teens, and beginning to exert his powers of reflection, might naturally feel some curiosity respecting the institutions by which he sees himself surrounded. Here are legal enactments, social customs, and domestic habits, which are generally recognized in their several spheres; which cannot be ignored or resisted without more or less of inconvenience; and to compliance with which the individual is prompted by a sense of mental or moral obligation. If the young thinker appealed to parents or friends for some explanation of this state of things, he would probably gain but scanty assistance in his quest. They, like himself, did not make these institutions, but found them what they still are; and yielded obedience to them as the most easy and proper course to pursue, without analyzing their principles or tracing their history.

Whence is the Sunday School?—In like manner, a Christian young man or woman, lately appointed to the charge of a class of children in a Sunday school—and it is to such that these pages are specially addressed—might

feel disposed to make some inquiries concerning the great religious and educational institution which is already claiming him or her as one of its active members.

The cases, indeed, are not very dissimilar. You have probably been under Sunday school influences as long as you can remember. There your religious life had its conscious beginnings, concurrently with the hymns learned, the Scripture repeated, and the prayers said, at a mother's knee. There, as a child, you realized something of spiritual companionship and a spiritual home. And there, as years went on, your interest in Divine truth was quickened into personal repentance and faith; issuing in personal decision for Christ, and a voluntary profession of faith in Him. As the fitting outcome of such profession, you have yielded to the invitation to work in a field which has been to yourself so fruitful in blessings. What is more natural, then, than to seek a fuller acquaintance with the nature and objects of an institution in which you have found your sphere of Christian service?

A Short Answer.—The Sunday school, as we find it, after a full hundred years of existence, is a vigorous, popular, and aggressive agency. We discern that it is in operation in almost every section of the Protestant Church; that it flourishes on an extensive scale in Great Britain, America, and the Colonies; and that it is steadily taking root in other countries of Europe and Asia, adapting itself with marvellous flexibility to the varied peculiarities and requirements of different nationalities. The Sunday school has hosts of friends and sympathizers (even if their sympathy be only a sentiment) in all ranks and classes of society; its severest critics are rarely its avowed opponents; while Christian men and women in general agree to recognize in it one of the noblest, most useful, and most encouraging products of modern religious life.

This, however, is a mere bird's-eye view of the Sunday school; a nearer inspection is desirable. In this country

the children and young persons who attend Sunday schools belong chiefly to the artisan class and to the middle and lower sections of the trading community; and since about eighty per cent. of the teachers are drawn from the ranks of the scholars, the like conditions apply, for the most part, to them also. Mission and ragged schools reach further downward in the social scale; while, on the other hand, there are suburban Sunday schools and young people's Bible meetings which affect the upper strata of the middle class; but in the main the above-named restriction prevails. In the United States, however, no such exclusiveness exists; and (strange as the comparison may appear) it is also absent from the Sunday schools established on the continent of Europe. It must, therefore, be due to some national peculiarity; but it demands serious notice, as having an obvious bearing, both directly and indirectly, on the religious interests of our English youth.

In institutions, as in individuals, origin and early surroundings frequently affect the whole after career; and this has been the case with the English Sunday school, to the serious injury both of its reputation and its efficiency. No blame, however, is attributable to its excellent founder or his coadjutors.

When the good printer of Gloucester unconsciously took up the commission which had well-nigh been forgotten by the Church through ages of conflict and vicissitude, he began, like his Divine Predecessor, by making known the gospel to the poor. The most needy—in other words, the most degraded specimens of the juvenile population—attracted his benevolent attention and awakened his practical sympathy. Raikes's first efforts were, therefore, to rescue and to reform: and in fact, though not in name, the "ragged school" preceded the "Sunday school." Not that he or his colleagues supposed that any merely outward amelioration would suffice to cleanse the springs of evil, whether in the child or the adult. But though they were

devout they were none the less practical. It was indispensable that the rescued boys and girls should be kept out of the lanes and alleys which had been their only sabbath seminary; and hence paid "masters" and "mistresses" were engaged to "look after," as well as instruct, the first Sunday scholars, in Gloucester city, and in other places as well. But Christian zeal and devotion demanded an ampler channel for their exercise; and with the formation of the Sunday School Union, at the beginning of the present century, voluntary service became the rule in Sunday school work.

A Common Mistake.—This, and similar religious efforts, gave a powerful impetus to secular education, the advance of which, down to the present day, has been one of the most gratifying features of our national progress. As the influence of the day school has broadened and deepened, the Sunday school has gradually divested itself of some of its earlier and subsidiary agencies, and has become more and more what it is best adapted to be—an essentially *religious* agency. But ignorance and prejudice die hard; and in many quarters the Sunday school is viewed from the old "charitable" and "philanthropic" standpoint of 1780. Either it is regarded as a temporary expedient for imparting religious and moral instruction to the children of vicious, ungodly, or indifferent parents (of the artisan and lower middle class, it is taken for granted), or as a sphere in which Christian "ladies and gentlemen" condescend to teach the offspring of their "poorer neighbours." Under either aspect the practical effects of the theory are most disastrous. In the former case it is argued, fairly enough, that, if designed for religiously neglected children, Sunday schools would attain their greatest success by becoming altogether superfluous; and in both, the Church withholds her riper culture and experience to an institution which appears to rest on so narrow and insecure a basis.

The True Theory of the Sunday School.—But the conception is radically false. The Sunday school is not a temporary expedient, or a charitable agency, or a scheme for the benefit of this or that class in society; and it will never realize its full capabilities, or attain its true spiritual vigour, until these cramped and misleading notions have given place to nobler conceptions of its scope and aim.

The same Divine authority which uttered the ancient law, "*These words which I command thee this day . . . thou shalt teach diligently to thy children,*" and re-enacted it under the new dispensation, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," also gave to His Church, through its first representatives, the kindred law, "*Feed My lambs*"—the lambs whom, under another figure, He had previously included among the subjects of His "kingdom." This twofold commission, to the *parent* on the one hand, and to the *Church* on the other, entrusting the *religious instruction* of the young not to *either*, but to *both*, has never been repealed. It is too often neglected by the former, it has been too often overlooked by the latter; but the duty remains unchanged. It rests on each, and no degree of fidelity on the part of the one can excuse the want of it on the side of the other.

Now, the SUNDAY SCHOOL is emphatically the Church's recognized method of fulfilling her mission to the young. It is not implied that there never was or never can be a fulfilment of that mission in other forms; it is sufficient to point to the fact that no other, comparable in simplicity, extent, or effectiveness, has been hitherto devised. The spiritual necessities of children and youth, which this institution aims to meet, are, it is almost needless to remark, as wide as humanity itself. All distinctions of social rank or mental culture melt away in presence of the searching truth, "Ye must be born again." No "temporary agencies" will meet a claim which cannot cease until the last unrepentant soul has been brought to the

foot of the Cross. Nor can Sunday schools well be superseded by any day-school system in existence. The best friends of the rising generation do not hesitate to declare, that the new machinery which the last twelve years have called into action in this country has rendered Sunday schools not less, but more important and useful, than before—more essential, as a Cabinet Minister has lately reminded us, to the religious life of England than ever.

It can hardly be otherwise. In whatever degree the understanding is informed and the mental powers developed by the schoolmaster, a corresponding demand is made upon the parent and the Church to train and develop, in like proportion, the moral and spiritual faculties; otherwise the result will be, not harmony, but deformity of character. And thankful as Christian teachers and parents may well be for whatever amount of moral and religious influence the day school may exert on the young, that influence is mostly incidental and subordinate, and its amount comparatively small. In reference to direct religious instruction and impression, the compromise which underlies our board school system must of necessity reduce them to a minimum. Narrative portions of the Bible, only read, and read as a part of school tasks, can scarcely be expected, even by the most sanguine, to be grasped in their deeper or more didactic bearings by the volatile minds of children, especially amidst the heterogeneous crowd of secular topics which enthusiastic specialists, more learned than practical, and more pertinacious than either, have gradually wedged into the weekly curriculum. Nor will any true educator hear with much surprise the statement recently made by a board school teacher: “I have forty boys under my care, and *not one of them would hesitate to tell a lie if it were at all to his apparent interest to do so.*” It is not to such institutions, however necessary and useful, that we must look for the moral and religious culture of the young. Cardinal Manning has most truly observed, when writing

on this question, "Christianity will be sustained, as it was first diffused, by teaching, and by teaching all that the Divine Author commanded us to believe and to do." And in that great truth the credentials of the Sunday school teacher may assuredly be found.

The Teacher's Calling.—"Ye see," then, young teachers, "your calling:" and a noble calling it is. No grander work can enlist the energies of a consecrated mind and heart. To teach is the noblest of earthly professions; to teach the revealed will of God, the highest sphere in which that profession can be pursued. Yours is a Divine evangelism, a spiritual ministry, a sacred pastorate, a "cure of souls." Wherefore let each true successor of apostles and prophets "take heed" to himself "and to the teaching."

The Teacher's Aims.—It may still be inquired, "If such be the scope and purpose of the work, as a whole, what are to be the specific aims of the individual teacher, and by what means are those aims to be pursued?" No more important question can be asked by a young Christian brought face to face with a group of children, whose opening minds await his utterances, and whose unformed characters lie plastic to his touch. A full answer would extend far beyond the limits of the present little handbook; but a few leading principles may be given in outline, by way of suggestion.

First Principles.—You have probably heard much, from pulpit and platform, and have also read not a little in tracts, magazine articles, and perhaps in larger treatises, concerning "the objects of Sunday school teaching," and may have felt somewhat bewildered by the seeming differences of opinion. You have been told, for instance, that the teacher's object should be "to lead his scholars to Christ;" "to lead them into the way of peace;" "to persuade them to repent;" "to persuade them to believe;" "to secure their conversion;" "to secure their

salvation;" "to train them in the knowledge of God's Word;" "to train them in Christian life;" "to bring them into union with Christ;" "to touch their hearts with a Saviour's love;" "to bring them to decision;" "to form their religious characters;" "to seek for them the baptism of the Holy Spirit;" "to make them disciples;" "to put them into Christ's hands:" and so on, through almost endless varieties of phraseology, according to the mental or theological bias of the speaker or writer.

Carefully examined, these apparent divergences will be found to have a substantial unity, representing merely different aspects of the same great process in its successive stages. Putting aside technical peculiarities of theological belief and expression, the following truths appear to the writer to be plainly taught by Christ and His apostles:—

1. That man is by nature sinful, guilty, and alienated from God.
2. That God, in His infinite love, has provided a means of pardon and restoration through a Divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ.
3. That Jesus Christ, by His obedience to the Divine law, and by His atoning death, has procured the means of man's forgiveness, restoration to the Divine favour, and personal renewal.
4. That this renewal involves a vital change in man's moral and spiritual nature.

This change is presented in the New Testament under a great variety of figures (it being only by symbolic language that spiritual phenomena can be rendered intelligible); as, for example, a *new birth* ("regeneration"); a *turning round* ("conversion"); a *return to God*; a *coming to one's right mind*; an *adoption*; a *deliverance* or "*salvation*;" a *clothing anew*; a *laying hold of a hope*; a *rest*; a *transformation*; a *building in*; a *planting anew*; and many other striking and suggestive emblems.

5. The *Agent* by whom the change is effected is, in all cases, the Holy Spirit.
6. The ordinary *mode* by which the Holy Spirit effects the change is by revealing to the sinner his true condition; revealing Christ as the manifestation of God's love, and the Way of forgiveness and restoration; and so leading him to repentance and to the acceptance of the Divine offer of salvation.
7. The sinner accepts the Divine offer by *faith*; that is, *belief* in "the record which God has given of His Son," and *trust* in that Son, as a Saviour alike from the guilt and the power of sin.
8. The *effect* of the change is a godly life, maintained by the continued operations of the same Spirit, and manifested in personal holiness and Christian service, to be further developed and perfected in a future state of being.*

Place of Human Instrumentality.—Accepting the foregoing principles as substantially, however imperfectly, expressing the Scripture doctrine of man's salvation by Christ, it may be further asked, "What place has *human effort* in a work so manifestly Divine?"

The answer is not far to seek. The Holy Spirit, in effecting the change on which we have just been dwelling, does not act *directly* on the human soul, but *indirectly* through *objective* (*i.e.* outward or external) *truth*—the truth concerning God's plan of redemption, as embodied in the Scriptures. "The Spirit" acts through "the Word;" and this Word appeals to the heart and conscience through the understanding, and by means of human language. If this were all, it is obvious that the silent dissemination of the Scriptures everywhere would be the chief aggressive work of the Church; and evangelistic ministries, at home and abroad, would be

* It will be desirable for each reader personally to test the accuracy of the above statements by reference to the Word of God.

concentrated in one vast Bible Society. But it is *not* all. The wisdom of God has seen fit to ordain that His gospel should be made known to man *through* man, and that it should be communicated *by word of mouth*, and not simply in written language. It has pleased Him “by the foolishness of *preaching*,” in its varied forms, public and private, “to save them that believe;” or, as the same apostle presents it, under another figure, the heavenly “treasure” has been stored “in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God.” And with this human effort, if faithfully put forth, there is a Divine co-operation, without which it must be utterly ineffective; for the principle holds good now, in the humblest Christian labour, on which the first triumphs of the Cross were won: “The Lord *working with them*, and confirming the Word with signs following.”

Summary;—Objects and Means.—To sum up and apply what has been advanced, though without attempting to explain all the phrases which have been quoted concerning this work—

Firstly, the SUPREME OBJECT of the Sunday school teacher should be, to lead *to repentance and faith in Christ* such of his scholars as have not taken that solemn step, and to train in the *life of faith* those who have. (Probably, a larger proportion of the latter would be found in Sunday school classes if sought for.) In the former case, he seeks *conversion, decision, reconciliation with God, submission to Christ*; in the latter, *growth in grace, sanctification conformity to Christ’s example, obedience to His precepts, discipleship, service, formation of Christian character*.

Secondly, the MEANS to be adopted for the attainment of this object are, *Instruction* * and *Personal Influence*; or, in more familiar phrase, *teaching and training*.

* *Instruction* was well defined by the late Professor Payne, as “the orderly placing of knowledge in the mind;” and *education* as “the harmonious development of the faculties.” Instruction and train-

Primarily, the Sunday school is a place for *instruction*—the teaching of God's Word. But the force of instruction is increased tenfold by *example* and *personal influence*, by which the teacher is enabled to *train* as well as *direct*.

Personal Influence and Example. — Doubtless, there are many pious workers in the Sunday school field who, from circumstances beyond their control, see but little of their pupils, except for the short time of class-meeting on the sabbath; and such would appear to be capable of doing little or nothing in the way of *personal training*. Happily it is not quite thus. It is scarcely possible to come into contact with a band of young people, though it be but for one or two hours weekly, without growing interested in their everyday life and experiences, and so becoming desirous of being something more than a sabbath instructor. They quickly respond to this desire; and, gaining their affection and confidence, the teacher becomes, in a large proportion of instances, their "guide, philosopher, and friend." Acquaintance deepens interest, and interest leads to action; and so, around the primary work of the Sunday school, there springs up an ever-increasing throng of subsidiary agencies, designed for the benefit of the scholars, and strikingly exemplifying the ingenuity of Christian love and zeal. Some promote moral and intellectual culture; others, especially in poorer districts, afford direct or indirect pecuniary assistance; while others, again, take the form of purely recreative engagements.

Provided the main object is never lost sight of, these agencies are valuable helps to spiritual work. They brighten the everyday life of the young; they show that religion is the best friend of mental and social progress; and, above all, they augment the personal influence of the teacher by demonstrating his loving sympathy with them. Education is thus *means*, while education is the *end*. These definitions should be well pondered and clearly understood.

his pupils; and strengthen the ties which bind them to him and to the school and Church.

The faithful Sunday school labourer, then, must seek, not only to *speak*, but also to *live*, the truth. Let him be sure of this, that his tempers, habits, and general conduct, so far as they come within the observation of his scholars—whose scrutiny will be close, impartial, and generally accurate—will form an eloquent commentary, or a melancholy satire, on his sabbath instructions. It was not by accident that St. Paul bade his young disciple “take heed,” first, to *himself*. “His words,” says the proverb, “will thunder whose life lightens,” but where there is no living light, the words, however wise or appropriate, will be but as the mimic thunders of a stage.

REFERENCES TO THE FOREGOING TOPICS.

“The Sunday School Teacher’s Manual.” By W. H. Groser. 2s. 6d. (Chaps. i., vii.)

“The Sabbath School Teacher’s Handbook.” By Principal Morrison, LL.D. 2s. (Sunday School Union.)

“Teaching and Teachers.” By H. Clay Trumbull, D.D. 5s. (Hodder.)

* * * The above three Manuals deal comprehensively with Sunday School work in its various departments.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHIEF QUALIFICATIONS OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER.

SOME years since, the writer's attention was called to a little book of which he only remembers the title, "An Idea of a Christian." It is to be feared that there are many Christians whose conceptions of the religion which they profess are vague and shadowy indeed. And it is not less probable that there are many well-meaning persons, actually engaged in the work, whose "idea of a Sunday school teacher" is lamentably inadequate and ill defined. It is hoped that a thoughtful perusal of the previous chapter may serve to prepare the way for clearer and more accurate views of the teacher's qualifications, and to convince the reader, at starting, that here is no mere ephemeral expedient for remedying a temporary dislocation in the social fabric, but a spiritual ministry, whose foundations centre in the inspired Word of God.

Personal Piety.—We would enter upon this very serious theme with a friendly but earnest personal inquiry—*Have YOU, into whose hands these pages have fallen, been called to this great work, the religious instruction and training of the young? And since God calls only His own servants to do His work, there lies behind the above question a second one—Are you a true disciple of Christ? Are you yourself a learner in that Divine school into which you propose to lead others? We do not dare to*

affirm that God's truth, spoken by the undecided, or even by the irreligious, must needs fail of its effect, but we may safely assert that such is not the Divine method; and we can with equal confidence declare that a teacher who is not a disciple excludes himself and his efforts from the prospect and the promise of a blessing. If, therefore, we chance to be addressing any who are conscious that as yet they are not possessors of the first qualification for Sunday school teaching, we beseech them that, before proceeding a single step further, they—for their scholars' sakes, for their co-workers' sakes, for their own sakes—"be reconciled to God," by simple hearty faith in the redeeming work of His dear Son.

For what possible success can be anticipated in this or any other spiritual enterprise—and we hope that the preceding chapter has sufficiently defined the true nature of Sunday school teaching—without the indwelling of the Holy Ghost? If God was pleased to make inspiration a qualification for the chief artificers in the construction of His ancient tabernacle—if He "filled" Bezaleel and Aholiab "with the Spirit of God . . . to work in gold, and silver, and brass," in "cutting of stones" and "carving of wood," can any inferior endowment be adequate for those who toil to build a living temple, in which the Divine presence shall abide and be manifested with a constancy which Israel's sanctuary never knew? * We are helpless in the midst of our sabbath classes unless He "who spake by the prophets" speak also by us. It is not enough that, to quote a somewhat misleading phrase, we expect a "blessing to follow" our instructions; the Giver of that blessing must also abide in us as the Shekinah of our hearts, illuminating our understandings, quickening our perceptions of His Word, and clothing us with the true prophetic power. A Christian teacher must be not as a *catoptric* mirror, reflecting the Divine beams only

* Cf. Exod. xxxv. 30-33; 1 Cor. iii. 9, 10; Eph. ii. 20-22.

from the surface, but as a *dioptric* lens, itself permeated by the light which it transmits to others.

Adaptation.—But not all who are disciples are called to teach, much less to teach the young. Diversities of gifts prevail in religious equally as in secular agencies; and it is well to remember that there are both *natural* and *acquired* “gifts” of teaching. Let our readers allow us to bring them to the test of some of these qualifications. We will mention *three*, that appear to be of primary importance, and will do so in the form of familiar questions:—

1. *Are you in sympathy with the young?* Some pious people like children very well—“in their place;” but it is implied that the children’s “place” is at a respectable distance. This is the feeling which consigns Sunday scholars to hot, stuffy, unwholesome galleries in churches and chapels; where participation in Divine worship is impossible, but where an intense dislike to the sanctuary and its services is vigorously fostered. It is not every Christian man or woman who feels “at home” in the society of young people. There is a sort of instinctive incompatibility which keeps them apart when left to their own free will. And there are many who seem quite unable to touch any sympathetic chord in young minds and hearts: they would be glad if they could do so, but do not know how.

Such persons, however pious and benevolent, are as clearly unfit for the charge of a Sunday school class as a deaf man to be a professor of music, or a dumb man a teacher of elocution. Their vocation may, perhaps, be found beside the sick-bed, or at the mothers’ meeting; distributing pure literature, or writing in defence of the faith; but it is obviously a mistake, and an injury to all concerned, to allot them a place in a Sunday school. If any of our readers are conscious of this initial defect, it will be safer and more candid to avow it at once, and

withdraw from a sphere which they cannot but feel was not designed for them.

2. *Are you in sympathy with teaching?* In other words, Are you fond of *telling* to others whatever you yourself have learned? There is such a thing as "a passion for communicating;" and probably it exists in all our best teachers, whatever their special departments of effort, as a distinct characteristic. If you do not share this tendency at all, if communicating is rather a drudgery than a delight, there are doubtless paths of Christian usefulness open to you, but they do not lead, we venture with some confidence to affirm, to the Sunday school class. Unless "Tell me the old, old story," as a request from youthful lips, awakens in you a glad and eager response, you can hardly conclude that the Master has called you to "feed His lambs" with heavenly pasturage.

3. *Are you in sympathy with the Sunday school enterprise?* It is not enough that you approve of it, or even admire it as an institution; most persons do that. Do you *love* it sincerely? Have you thorough *faith* in it, as a Divine agency for the diffusion of Christ's gospel among the youth of all nations and ranks and positions, and their nurture in the inspired "words of faith and of good doctrine"? Do you recognize on it the stamp of God's approval, through a hundred years and more of practical trial? For your own sake, for the children's sake, and for the sake of your fellow-labourers, forbear to put your hand to a work to which you cannot yield your fullest sympathy of mind and heart. We can neither *know*, nor *perform*, as we ought, any work that we do not *love*.

The lack of any or all of the above-named requisites should, in the writer's judgment, be regarded as an effectual bar to undertaking the superintendence of a class of Sunday scholars, or indeed to engaging in any school work whatever. Assuming, however, that our readers'

sympathies are fully enlisted in the direction we have indicated, we may now proceed to consider other qualifications scarcely less important. These may be conveniently divided into the *necessary* and the *desirable*, premising that these terms are to be understood in their ordinary sense. Some teachers have succeeded in the absence of one or more of these qualifications which we deem “*necessary* ;” while, again, any of those which we class as “*desirable*” may become, in certain circumstances, all but indispensable to efficiency.

NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS.

Of these the **Moral** stand first in value and importance, and among them we place at the head—

Patience, which is the cardinal virtue of the educator, whatever his special department.—Christian patience is the fruit of **Self-control**, which can best be learned in the school of Christ. The subjection of the tempers and passions to the Divine law is a task which every disciple must set before him, though many a struggle be needed to insure success. It is doubly important in an instructor of youth, since every phase of his character is closely watched by his pupils, and unconsciously moulds their own. The teacher who fiercely boxes the ears of an impertinent scholar, or excitedly engages in a hand-to-hand struggle with a refractory one, can hardly be surprised if he neutralizes, by the looks and gestures of a few moments, the wise and painstaking instructions of weeks and months. The youthful heart is a “city” which can only be “taken” by him who has learned to “rule his spirit.”

Patience, one of the fruits, as we have said, of this grace of Self-control, is both *passive* and *active*, nor can it be asserted that either is the more needful.

Passive Patience is love *enduring*. Not mere moral *inertia*, but the charity “that beareth all things,” expressing itself in meekness and forbearance amidst the ofttimes

trying faults and failings of a class of children or young people. Inattention, indifference, perhaps obstinacy, sullenness, ingratitude, instability, and the long train of juvenile sins and shortcomings—these should be, and, happily, often are, endured with calmness and loving patience by those who teach for Christ. And the thought of His compassionate forbearance with *His* wayward and faithless disciples supplies the highest motive to the cultivation of this highest of educational virtues.

Active Patience is love *toiling*. We call it Perseverance, but the apostle defined it more forcibly as “patient continuance in well-doing.” It is not mere blind tenacity, but trustful plodding on in a path which the convictions pronounce to be the path of duty. It is the transference to moral and spiritual spheres of that which inspired Palissy and Brindley and Stephenson in the ways of material progress.

“O'er wayward childhood wouldst thou hold firm rule,
And sun thee in the light of happy faces,
Love, Hope, and Patience—these must be thy graces,
And in thy own heart let them first keep school.”

Of this “Love” and “Patience” we have spoken; “Hope” should be manifested in **Cheerfulness** of disposition and manner, which is all-important in intercourse with the young. By the law of association, a sombre Christian is judged to be so *because* of his piety; while “heaviness” in teaching Bible lessons is mentally attached by the child to the contents of the Book; and the feelings of repulsion so awakened in the sunny minds of youth are more easily produced than eradicated.

Prayerfulness.—By this we mean, not the *practice* so much as the *spirit* and *attitude* of prayer—that dependance on Divine help which stimulates, instead of superseding, human effort, and is indeed the strongest incentive to patient industry. If prayer be

“The Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air,”

it is not less the teacher’s talisman—the secret of his strength and his success. His private studies, his inward meditations, his class instructions, his correspondence and personal intercourse with his scholars,—all these, as well as his individual piety, need to be permeated and sustained by that devout recognition of the Divine element in all spiritual work which finds its fit outcome in the exercise of prayer;—

“I can only spread my sail,
Thou, Thou must breathe th’ auspicious gale!”

Turning now to the **Intellectual** Qualifications demanded for the efficient discharge of the teacher’s duty, it will be convenient to divide these also into **PASSIVE** and **ACTIVE**, or *Knowledge* and *Ability*.

As to the former, they may be comprised under two familiar heads, **A Fair English Education**, and **A Competent Knowledge of Holy Scripture**.

Education.—An acquaintance with those departments of everyday learning which are included in the phrase “A fair English education,” may be regarded by some as far from indispensable in “spiritual work” like that of the Sunday school. They will point to many illiterate yet successful teachers, and affirm that in spiritual things “human learning” is rather a hindrance than a help.

Such reasoning is fallacious, in more directions than one. Of course we do not presume to assert that there can be *no* success without this limited amount of secular knowledge for which we plead. We have read of Saunderson, the professor of mathematics, who taught optical science at Cambridge though he had been totally blind from infancy; and Beethoven, one of the first of modern musicians, was afflicted with severe deafness. Yet surely one

may include eyesight and hearing as "necessary qualifications" for teaching optics and music respectively?

Nor are we demanding that Sunday school instructors should be "learned" in any sense which can fairly be imposed upon that term—in any sense even remotely approaching that in which the great pupil of Gamaliel deprecated reliance on "the wisdom of this world." All we demand is so much of scholastic knowledge as shall place the teacher *at least on a par with his pupils*. National education, defective though it is and must be, is yet slowly but surely raising the intellectual level, and the literary and scientific attainments (humble as both undoubtedly are), of the youth of this country; and it is undesirable in the last degree that those who impart religious knowledge should exhibit ignorance of the elementary subjects of board school tuition. A Sunday school teacher, whose blunders in his facts or his grammar excite the mirth of his scholars, may forfeit neither their *affection* nor their *esteem*, but can scarcely fail to be lowered in their *respect*. They may love him as truly, regarded as a friend; they will certainly look up to him with somewhat less of confidence, regarded as an instructor and a guide.

We are not now referring, of course, to an occasional error, whether in statements of fact or modes of expression, for to such all are liable; but to that habitual illiteracy which is a constant advertisement of infirmity, and at the present day must prove an ever-increasing hindrance in Sunday school work. Obstacles are numerous enough in the path of the competent; it is surely a pity to add to them by neglecting the most ordinary degree of mental culture. That which is every year becoming a more serious disability even in the young mechanic or artisan, can hardly fail to operate yet more unfavourably upon any one who essays to be a teacher.

But the fallacy we are trying to combat may be still further exposed. It is not correct to say that Sunday

school teaching is a "spiritual" work, in the sense of being exclusively a process of spirit acting on spirit, or even one of imparting truth of a purely immaterial nature. It is spirit acting through *human language*—*human grammar*; and it is spiritual truth embodied in a *Book* of human history, dealing with the various outward objects of human thought. More than this, the Text-book of the Sunday school is a "Divine Library," which connects itself with all history, science, and literature, and to the right understanding of which all these contribute. Hence it results that secular knowledge, so far from being a useless appendage to religious teaching, may be rendered a most valuable auxiliary thereto.

We would therefore plead earnestly with every young friend who seeks assistance from these pages, to spare no pains to attain this reasonable qualification for teaching a sabbath class with comfort and self-respect. Helps are so cheap and abundant, that the most exceptional circumstances can hardly be urged as an excuse for illiteracy. How early disadvantages may and have been conquered by resolute purpose and unflinching industry, the annals of modern biography afford ample and striking proofs. Knowledge is the ammunition of the mind, not its baggage; it affords the materials of power, though powerless in itself, till, as Bacon says, it is "referred to use and action." Power in a teacher means influence over his pupils; and there is scarcely a department of secular knowledge by means of which a skilful teacher may not augment his influence for good.

Probably it is quite unnecessary, but we add one cautionary remark. It is no detriment to a teacher's position or influence that he should be ignorant of certain specific matters which one or other of his scholars may know. A city teacher will not lose the respect of a boy or girl from the country because he is unversed in agriculture, or is acquainted with the names of but few garden

or field flowers. It is only in those common subjects which form a part of an ordinary education, that ignorance or blundering imperils an instructor's influence and reputation; and it is against these defects that the foregoing arguments have been directed.

Bible Learning.—But if a “fair English education” may be urged as an essential requisite for a modern Sunday school teacher, with tenfold force may it be demanded that he or she shall have attained something more than a “fair” knowledge of Holy Scripture.

We have just remarked that Sunday school teaching is Bible teaching—the explanation and exposition of a Book, which, though *one* in Authorship and purpose, is *manifold* in its subject matter as well as in age, style, and composition, so that it is not only a Volume, but a Literature in itself.

It would appear almost an impertinence to argue that the duty of setting forth the contents of such a Book, week after week, demands a close and comprehensive acquaintance with those contents, and not that mere superficial knowledge which seems to satisfy the majority of Christian people. And, indeed, no such arguments would find a place in these pages, were there not reason to fear that the Bible is treated by not a few of its expositors, both in the Sunday school class and elsewhere, as no other text-book, literary or scientific, is treated by professor, lecturer, or schoolmaster. And the reason for the difference is, unfortunately, far from creditable to the religious teacher. In secular instruction such imperfect and fragmentary knowledge would mean loss of credit, position, and income; in Sunday school teaching it means *only* loss of teaching power, loss of personal influence, and, too often, loss of pupils! In the one case, the failure is pecuniary and temporal, and it is strenuously avoided; in the other, the failure is moral and spiritual: ought it to be willingly endured, when like industry and earnestness would transform it into success?

We entreat, then, of every intending Sunday school worker, not to court the bitterness of failure and disappointment by an ignorance and shallowness in relation to the Bible, which, amidst the multitudinous helps at once cheap and accurate provided for his use, can hardly be otherwise than inexcusable. St. Augustine was wont to remark of the Scripture, that one might have “first draughts, second draughts, and third draughts” of the water of life. It may be too much to expect of so busy a class as the teachers in modern Sunday schools, that they will be able to drink so deeply at that Divine Fountain as to know what the “third draughts” really are. Yet surely they ought not to be satisfied with the mere “first draughts” which many, perhaps most Christians, are content with,—that and no more than is embodied in the lines—

“I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.”

Piety not Sufficient.—You cannot, indeed, lead others to a Christ to whom you have not yourself come, and to whom you have not paid your vows of allegiance. But you need to go beyond this if you aspire to be a Bible teacher. You must know more of that Book than suffices to enable you to find pardon at the foot of the cross. Be not deceived by a fallacy which is often uttered with the best intentions. Your duty is *not* simply “to tell little children that Christ loves them,” or simply to assure them that He died in their stead. Had this been the Divine method a very small tract would have sufficed to be the Bible of mankind. But “the foolishness of God is wiser than men”—even than many good Christian men. A collection of books, ancient, oriental, varied, elaborate, unique, constitute the Volume of revealed truth, and a large portion of this Volume has to be explained,

expounded, and enforced in the Sunday school class. To revert to Augustine's metaphor, the teacher should at least know something by experience of "second draughts" of the Bible spring.

A Common Difficulty.—Perhaps the reader is disposed to reply, "I admit all that is thus urged in reference to Scripture study. I am conscious of my own deficiencies, and would gladly continue a learner for the present, rather than become a teacher. But our school is in need of agents, and pressure is being put upon me, so that I feel constrained to render what little assistance I can."

Suggestion to Intending Teachers.—We admit the force of a plea which is only too familiar to our ears. Nor can we take upon ourselves to decide a question of personal duty between the soul and God, between the Divine Master and the human servant. We only know that insufficient Bible knowledge in the teacher is destructive of comfort and efficiency, and a formidable obstacle to success. And we honestly believe that three or six months devoted to the acquisition of such knowledge, *before entering upon actual work*, would be a vast gain, in all respects, to thousands of Christian young men and women, whom worried and perplexed superintendents are only too ready to thrust into vacant places in the teachers' ranks. Such a prayerful and studious, though brief, retirement, rightly used, would prove to them what the Midianite pasture-lands were to Moses, the Judæan wilderness to the Baptist, and the solitudes of Arabia to St. Paul—the training-school for grand and noble efforts, not the less grand or noble because the world, and perhaps the Church, would hear little about them.

Claims of Sunday School Lessons.—It must also be remembered that, when once entered upon, the charge of a Sunday school class brings with it, among other claims on time, thought, and effort, the necessity for preparing

one, and often two, lessons every week, upon specific portions of Scripture. Now, while it is true that these portions, if thoroughly studied, will supply, in the course of time, much information of the kind we are commending, yet they will not secure competent Biblical knowledge for a teacher. For these lessons, though prepared in the form of series, and rightly so, must, from the nature of the case, be selective rather than consecutive. There are portions of the New Testament, and much larger portions of the Old, which are quite unsuited for any but adult scholars in Sunday schools; and when, as in the "International" and other "uniform" systems of lessons, the same topic is taught simultaneously throughout the school (except perhaps in the senior department) it is manifest that such a plan, with its many and obvious advantages, involves the sacrifice of consecutive lesson-subjects.

Mode of Bible Study.—Having regard, therefore, to the scanty leisure of the average teacher, we might suggest, as a practicable method of attaining this most important object, that, after making himself acquainted with the general scope and connection of the inspired writings, and the history of the formation of the Canon, systematic study might be pursued along the lines indicated by the current Sunday lessons, with a view of gaining a thorough acquaintance with the particular book from which those lessons have been selected, instead of merely "skipping" from one to another of the latter.

To offer specific hints on this branch of study does not fall within our present limits; but some information as to the nature and accessibility of the helps now provided for those who desire an ampler grasp of the Holy Scriptures in their several parts and connections, will be given in a subsequent chapter of this little handbook.

But, by whatever means—whether by special self-preparation for a given period, or by a diligent economy of spare minutes; by early rising in the morning, or by the

consecration of a quiet and solitary hour at night ; or even by the sacrifice of lawful amusements and indulgences ; let a vigorous, earnest, and prayerful effort be made by every young Christian teacher to acquire such a knowledge of his Text-book as shall enable him without timidity or embarrassment to “speak” of God’s testimonies—if not, like David, “before kings,” yet before critics as keen and observant as their elders, and perhaps less charitable in regard to errors and deficiencies.

A New Movement.—There has lately been inaugurated in Russia a movement which is exciting considerable attention. A number of Christian people have agreed together to devote an hour daily to the perusal of the Bible ; and the moral and spiritual results already observable are becoming matters of public comment and interest. One would hope that in Protestant England such a practice would be too widespread to awaken special notice ; yet there is too much reason for thinking that the example of these “Stundists,” as they are called, is by no means generally followed, even among recognized disciples of Him who is the central theme of revealed truth. Might we not, then, inaugurate a timely adoption of the Stundist principle, in the more congenial soil of the British Sunday school ?

Why should not our *intending* teachers, and our *actual* teachers—the young Christians for whom the present normal series of handbooks is designed, as well as those who have already begun to instruct others—unite in one vast band of “HALF-HOUR STUDENTS” ? The following might be the basis of association : A promise to devote *one* HALF-HOUR *daily* to Bible study ; and *four* HALF-HOURS *per week*, in addition, to the reading of other books adapted to assist in the work of Sunday school teaching. The benefits which a fellowship so hallowed and so practical would confer alike on teachers and taught could hardly be estimated, while it would seem only the fitting sequel to

the "International Bible Reading Union" for scholars, lately organized by the Sunday School Union, and now (Jan., 1884) numbering above forty thousand children and young people among its members.

We trust, however, that we have said enough to induce our readers to put forth earnest and persevering efforts for the attainment of so fundamental a condition of clear, efficient, and unembarrassed teaching.

Active Qualifications.—Thus much may be comprised under the head of passive intellectual qualifications—the knowledge which must be possessed before it can be put in exercise. We come now to a very brief mention of certain **Active Qualifications**, which seem to the writer to be of primary importance.

It may be convenient to enumerate these under three heads:—**Power to Acquire**; **Power to Communicate**; **Power to Control**.

Power to Acquire.

How to Learn.—The actual knowledge possessed by a teacher at any one period is of less importance than what may be termed his *intellectual attitude* in relation to knowledge in general. In other words, he may forego a reputation for being learned, if only he is constantly learning. The well-known remark of Dr. Arnold—that he studied, not because he would otherwise be unable to teach his pupils, but because he "preferred that they should come to a running stream instead of a stagnant pool"—may well be laid to heart by every instructor of the young. It is not desirable that he should "seek and intermeddle with all wisdom;" but it is essential to the freshness and impressiveness of his class-teaching that he should keep all the avenues of knowledge continually open for the ingress of new facts and ideas. There is abundant evidence to show that this mental attitude has often led to the most remarkable acquisitions of learning and to the most useful inven-

tions and discoveries. We have only to turn to Dr. Smiles's volumes on "Self-Help" to find striking examples of the manner in which, combined with perseverance, it has overcome the most formidable obstacles, and raised the obscure and untaught to fame and fortune.

Like Hunter, the great surgeon and anatomist, a Sunday school teacher should go about in the world with the question perpetually in his mind, if not on his lips, "What can I learn, *now*, and *here*, which will tend to assist me in my chosen sphere of action?" Not only the printed book and periodical, but the grander book of creation, and the endless phases of that human life of which the newspaper is a partial reflection, will supply continual accessions of helpful knowledge—either *directly* adding to his present information on specific topics, or indirectly supplying *illustrations* of moral and religious truths. How such information may be conveniently *stored* for Sunday school purposes, we shall attempt to show hereafter.

Reflection.—In these educational days it is perhaps scarcely necessary to remind the reader that all knowledge requires to be made our own by *reflection*. A fact or idea is not truly ours when we have merely seen or heard it, or even when we can remember it. It must be *built into* the mind—laid side by side, as it were, with kindred truths, as a block of stone is fitted into its appointed place in a material building; not "shot," like rubbish, upon an existing heap, without order or unity. This "reflection" does not imply prolonged meditation in the retirement of a "study," or in lengthened and solitary walks through lane and field, or beside old ocean's pebbly marge; else it would hardly be recommended here. We merely wish to enforce the importance of *looking at* facts and circumstances as they present themselves—"handling" them, so to speak, with invisible fingers, or, to vary the figure, *tasting* them with our inward palate. Thus we form a

judgment of their truth and value, and allot them a place, if we deem them worthy of preservation, in our mental storehouse.

Association of Ideas.—That such “reflection” is indispensable may be inferred from the familiar truth, that, of the vast multitude of things which we see and hear, only a very small proportion are securely retained in the mind; the majority are at least so far lost to us as to be beyond the power of voluntary recall.* One reason for the difference may be found in what is termed the principle of *Association*. Our thoughts, and our feelings also, exist in the mind, not as isolated experiences, but linked together in what is expressively, though familiarly, termed “*chains*” of ideas and emotions. We have only to watch the current of these mental movements to perceive that, without any effort of the will, endless series of thoughts and of feelings pass in succession within us, each leading forth the next by some invisible connection. Nor are these two chains separate and distinct, but interwoven together; thought calling up feeling, and feeling thought. These phenomena are too familiar to need illustration here, and it is equally needless to remind the reader how such associations contribute to our inward pleasure and pain. Some commonplace object or casual circumstance, noticed or remembered, will stir our whole nature to its inmost depths:—

“You wonder that my tears should flow,
 In listening to that simple strain;
 That those unskilful sounds should fill
 My soul with joy and pain.
 How can you tell what thoughts it stirs
 Within my heart again?”

* It is needful to make this qualification, because there is reason to think that *no* impression is ever wholly effaced from memory. It is quite certain, however, that no effort of our own can recall such impressions, except to a very limited extent.

“ You marvel that I turn away
From all those flowers so fair and bright,
And gaze at this poor herb, till tears
Arise and dim my sight.
You cannot tell how every leaf
Breathes of a past delight.”

This principle of association, while it is invaluable, as we shall hereafter see, to the teacher of others, is equally so to those who are seeking to acquire knowledge for themselves. By reflecting on what we hear, or see, or read, we are enabled to connect each item of our information with kindred facts already known, so *welding* the new links to the old, and not merely placing them side by side.

Power to Communicate.

Ability to transfer our knowledge is quite distinct from the power to acquire it. A prodigy of learning may be utterly incapable as a teacher. The most accomplished scholars are often excelled by far inferior men as preachers, professors, and lecturers. In some minds knowledge appears to lie so deep, that the bringing of it to the surface is a tedious and difficult process. This may be due to a want of *readiness* in the memory—facts being but slowly recalled, so imposing a heavy tax on the listener's patience. But more commonly it arises either from (1) an inability to marshal truths in a manner adapted to the comprehension of a learner; or (2) an inability to translate them into language sufficiently simple for the purpose.

Danger in Religious Talk.—Either of these defects is, of course, a serious obstacle to a Sunday school teacher, yet all may be overcome by *practice*. Probably few of those into whose hands this work will fall suffer from excess of learning; while most of those who have enjoyed the privileges of a home where children have formed part of the household have acquired, almost unconsciously, the art of using simple language in the affairs of daily life.

Yet it should be borne in mind that many who can speak with "sweet simplicity" on common subjects, drift away into a ponderous theological dialect as soon as they are called upon to talk on Bible themes. We have known youths and young men whose ordinary conversation was rational and intelligible, not to say commonplace, but who appeared to be transformed into divinity professors as soon as they sat down in the presence of their unfortunate classes.

Simple Language.—The above-named tendency should be firmly resisted, since two things are certain, viz. that not even inspired truths can affect the heart until they have been apprehended by the understanding; and that grandeur of style in a teacher of the young is an utter "weariness of the flesh" to his pupils. Simplicity of language is, therefore, an absolutely indispensable condition of efficient instruction in the Sunday school—a simplicity proportioned, of course, to the ages and attainments of the scholars. If you do not know how to talk simply to young folks on Scripture subjects, you must set yourself to learn. Read Dr. Todd's or Dr. S. G. Green's "Addresses," or Rev. B. Waugh's "Talks with my Children"; or among newer works, "Jesus the Carpenter" and "Joseph the Dreamer," by Bird; Milligan's "Golden Nails"; "Sermons for Children," by Mark Guy Pearse. These will help you to speak on grand themes in simple words.

Order and Disorder of Ideas.—The other defect we have mentioned is the most common of all—a want of *orderly arrangement* of truths, so that they are not intelligently grasped by the learner. Every one knows how differently a skilful and an unskilful advocate will put the same case: the one marshalling his facts and arguments so as to carry conviction to the mind; the other handling the same facts, yet leaving his hearers unconvinced. It matters not only *what* you say, but *in what order* you say it. A well-arranged speech, or sermon, or Sunday school

lesson flies like a well-aimed arrow to its mark; while one promiscuously spoken may be compared to an ill-balanced kite, which, after careering wildly in mid-air, pitches ignominiously to the ground. Lord Bacon's well-known axiom, that "writing makes an exact man," may be suggestive here. Want of that mental discipline which true education imparts, is one cause why young teachers are weak in power of communicating. Their lessons have no proper beginning, middle, or end, because they have not learned to think, in an orderly manner, on a definite subject. Such will need resolute effort and some persevering industry to conquer this defect; but success is quite attainable, and will abundantly reward exertion.

There are many ways of promoting orderly thinking. Young men may join a debating society (if one which they can conscientiously approve be available), and accustom themselves to watch and to analyze the arguments of the best speakers. Or they may with great advantage read carefully such a book as "Whately's Logic," or Archbishop Thomson's "Outlines of the Laws of Thought." But, to come to helps more generally accessible, a careful listening to *Sermons* of average ability and excellence, taking written notes of the divisions and arrangement (not in a carping supercilious temper, but with a desire to invigorate the mind, while gaining spiritual benefits), will soon produce a more orderly condition of the mental furniture. Above all, every Sunday lesson should be *sketched in writing*, as the best means of showing where improvement is called for, and how it may be attained. Examples of such notes will be given in a later section. Enough, it is hoped, has been advanced, to indicate that an acquaintance with "the art of teaching" is no unimportant or even subordinate qualification for the work of a Sunday school class. Happily, any young Christian of ordinary intelligence and earnest purpose may expect to attain it.

Power to Control.

Class Rule.—We have spoken of self-control as among the indispensable qualifications of a religious teacher, and a condition of being able to govern others. For government is as needful as instruction in a Sunday school class; which is a little community in itself, and should be a little empire; having one absolute ruler, whose sway should be based on a combination of firmness and love. The *former* is necessary, that there be no anarchy in the class, with its inevitable disturbance of educational work, to say nothing of religious influence; the *latter* is equally important, that those who render obedience may do so without a sense of constraint. The state of things described in the Book of Judges, where “every man did that which was right in his own eyes,” is not more inimical to national progress than a like absence of authority is to the well-being of a class of children. An insubordinate class is a continual source of irritation to the teacher, of discomfort to the scholars, and of annoyance to the school officers as well as the members of surrounding classes. Moreover, spiritual impression is impossible where inattention and disorder prevail; and a teacher’s words fall with little effect where his authority is disputed. There, as in a family, it is a mistaken kindness to allow unlimited freedom of action to young people, but a salutary policy to train them to obey those who are set over them. And this is especially needful at the present time, when a tendency to resist lawful restraint is lamentably characteristic of our rising youth.

The power to control and govern others is due, primarily, to **Strength of Will**; and such strength exists in different persons in widely different degrees. Those who possess it in more than average vigour become leaders of others in their several spheres of action; as we may observe in the family or the school, as well as in more public posi-

tions; while those in whom it is comparatively weak, are content to follow and obey. Of course the will-force may be directed to good or to evil ends.

The will, like other faculties, may be strengthened by effort and exercise. When we speak of "forming a resolution," or "coming to a determination," we are indicating a mode of strengthening this inward power. Clear and definite *convictions* exert a like influence: if we are convinced that a course is right or wise, we gain thereby a measure of strength to resolve on corresponding action. So also, if we *feel deeply* in reference to such a course, the will is stimulated to form purposes accordingly.

Let every young teacher, therefore, be assured that the power to control a class is indispensable to comfort, efficiency, and usefulness; that it may be attained, when it is not already possessed, and improved when it is; and, consequently, that no effort should be spared until it is secured.

DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS.

Thus far our attention has been confined to those qualifications of a Sunday school teacher which appear to the writer to occupy the first rank—to be indispensable, more or less entirely, to efficiency and success. We have now to mention a few others, which, though not absolutely necessary, may be fitly commended as highly desirable, and conducive, in a greater or less degree, to the "thorough furnishing" of a Christian man or woman for this "good work."

Following the previous order, we name first such as may be classed as *Passive* QUALIFICATIONS.

1. **General Knowledge.**—It is desirable, then, that a Sunday school teacher should possess *a fair amount of General Knowledge*, so 'as to be above the level of his or her pupils in all ordinary matters. Two advantages will result from such superiority: The scholars will be en-

couraged to look up to their sabbath instructor as one able to help them on other points of information besides that which may be called "official" knowledge, and so will feel the greater respect and confidence. The teacher's instruction, on the other hand, will be marked by a wider range, and an increased variety of fact and illustration, if his reading and observation have been considerable. It is a further advantage, though a subsidiary one, if such general knowledge can be made manifest on the Sunday school platform, in the popular lecture, the paper read at the Mutual Improvement Society, or perhaps the week-evening class for the study of some branch of science or literature. And while we are far from recommending our young fellow-workers to be readers of anything and everything which comes in their way, we would confidently affirm that there is scarcely any department of knowledge which may not, somehow and somewhere, be made available in the service of the Sunday school.

2. Biblical Knowledge.—It is desirable that a teacher should give particular attention to those topics which are *most closely related to Holy Scripture*. While *all* knowledge may be of *some* use, these are of especial value, because they throw light upon the Bible itself. We refer to such subjects as the Geography of Palestine and the surrounding countries; their Natural Features; their Products, animal and vegetable, and the Manners and Customs of their inhabitants. Critics of Sunday school work—and there are a sufficient number, whose confidence in assertion is generally proportioned to their practical ignorance—have rounded off many a paragraph by reminding the teacher that "the geography of Palestine has no direct relation to the betterment of character; and the costume of an Oriental, or even of a high priest, is in itself no more religious than the costume of a Scotch Highlander." Our own experience and observation lead us to think that the teachers who substitute such matters for direct reli-

gious instruction are to be found in the imaginations of newspaper writers much more frequently than within the four walls of a Sunday school. The writer just quoted admits that these side-lights "may add not a little to the vividness of the teaching," and the concession is amply sufficient to justify all that is recommended for a teacher's adoption. For surely it is no small matter to impart "vividness" to that which we desire to engrave on the memory and conscience, from which ordinary impressions are so soon and so easily effaced? But there is a deeper reason than this, which is readily overlooked, viz. how much of spiritual truth is embodied in metaphors and parables, for the right understanding of which the very knowledge which is depreciated as all but useless, is absolutely necessary! How is the child or the adult to appreciate the twenty-third psalm, or the Sermon on the Mount, or the trinity of parables in Luke xv., without some acquaintance with Eastern lands and Eastern life? And where, if not in the Sunday class, should that knowledge be imparted? In teachers of more advanced classes it is also needed both to meet the difficulties of youthful thinkers, and to rebut those quibbles which a certain class of sceptics are never weary of repeating, not to speak of the indirect evidence which Eastern lands and modern Oriental life afford to the truthfulness and accuracy of the sacred writers. There is no excuse nowadays for a Sunday school teacher to imitate a certain Oxford tutor quoted in Rev. T. Mozley's "Reminiscences," and who, "lecturing" on the second chapter of St. John's Gospel, enlightened his pupils with the comment, that from the phrase "*Draw out now*," it would appear that the Jews used "*spigots*"! A "*spigot*" in an Eastern water-jar would certainly be a curiosity!

3. Personal Intercourse.—It is desirable, *most* desirable, that a Sunday school teacher should be *acquainted with the home life of the members of his class*. The mere

contact with boys or girls for an hour or two on the Lord's day will scarcely yield, even to an acute and observant teacher, anything like a full or just comprehension of their individual characters. Yet, without these, his sabbath bow is indeed "drawn at a venture." Much has been said in commendation of a "house-going minister;" but the importance and the benefits of personal intercourse with those whom we instruct are just as real in the case of the teacher of youth as in that of the teacher of adults. We may talk, and talk wisely and practically, to a congregation or to a class, *as a whole*, without knowing more of them than this—that they are partakers of ordinary human experiences and dispositions; but we can never consciously strike home to the individual heart with a "Thou art the man," unless we know something of the inner thoughts and feelings of the hearer. It is this which imparts such unspeakable value to the visitation of scholars at their homes—a duty and a privilege which nothing but absolute inability should permit us to neglect. A chance remark, or even a silent look, in the course of a ten minutes' unconstrained chat, has often supplied a key to unlock the dormant interest, or the concealed desires and aspirations, of a young nature wholly unappreciated, perhaps entirely misunderstood, before.

A writer in the *American Sunday School Times* has most truly observed—"A teacher's study of his every scholar is quite as important as his study of the lesson; and it ought, in fact, to precede it; for until you know whom you are to teach, how can you judge what is to be taught? It has been said that 'a sick soul needs not a lecture on medicine, but a prescription.' If you are to prescribe for a moral patient, you need to get down alongside of that patient, and to feel his pulse, and to look at his tongue, in order to know what is his precise condition, and what are his present requirements. With the highest attainable medical skill, and with a well-supplied apothecary,

cary's shop at his service, no physician could ever administer a prescription intelligently unless he knew who was his patient, and what was the nature and stage of his disorder. Nor is a teacher more potent in his sphere than a physician in his. The best teacher in the world is not prepared to teach a Sunday school class until he knows the members of that class. He must know whom he is to cause to know a truth, before he can fairly begin to cause that truth to be known."

Personal Culture.—Turning now to qualities of a more *Active* kind, we may perhaps condense a few remaining suggestions on the qualifications to be desired in a Sunday school teacher, under the head of Personal Culture.

A brief reference was made at the close of the preceding chapter to the influence of the life and character of the Christian teacher upon those whom he is called to instruct, and in the earlier pages of the present chapter we have spoken of some of the chief elements included in such character. It has also been urged that the information which the teacher of the young possesses should be constantly increasing; that he should "grow in knowledge," especially such as pertains closely to his chosen work, and cultivate the powers of his intellectual nature. The like counsel is now affectionately offered in relation to the moral and religious nature. He must "grow in *grace*" as well as in *knowledge*, become *better* as well as *wiser*, as days and years roll on, if he would become a true educator of his youthful charge. For the end of all education is character, and the end of *our* department of education is moral and spiritual character. Now, we educate more powerfully by what we are than by what we say; and we are most mighty when our life supplies a commentary on our words.

Character and Manners.—But the question is well worth asking, What do the members of an average Sunday school class know of the moral and religious life, the

“walk and conversation,” as the old and expressive phrase has it, of their teacher? They rarely see him in his home, and then only under somewhat restricted conditions, while his business habits and conduct are, in nearly every case, quite beyond their limit of observation. The like rule applies, in an almost equal degree, to the other sex. How, then, can these boys and girls be consciously or unconsciously affected by the lives and characters of those whom they so imperfectly know? How, but through the *outward manners and bearing*, which, to the keen and seldom-mistaken eye of youth, are the true index of the spirit and temper within? The ancient proverb, “Manners makyth man,” was based on no narrow philosophy, and it is a pity that so many religious people, in and out of the Sunday school, neglect the cultivation of these external means of commending the faith which they profess. We are not speaking of mere superficial polish—the “deportment” which used to be taught in boarding-schools—a thin vincer of shallow politeness; but that outward bearing, that mode of speaking and acting, which is the fitting expression of kindred thoughts and feelings within. It is a miserable blunder, as well as a serious fault, to hide a noble and kindly spirit by a harsh, rude, or coarse mannerism. True Christian courtesy and politeness are the exponents of Christ-like love and sympathy. We are bound, as indeed we profess, to be imitators of Him whom the old English poet quaintly, but not irreverently, styles—

“The first true Gentleman that ever breathed;”

and all our self-culture ought to be undertaken with Him as our perfect Pattern. Then let us also assiduously cultivate the expression of that likeness in so far as we attain to it. Let the inward *grace* be shown in outward *gracefulness*. Every Sunday school teacher who is a true Christian, ought to be also a true gentleman or gentle-

woman, reflecting the "gentleness of Christ," first in the *spirit* and then in the *manners*; and this gentleness, courtesy, and refinement will be a mighty power for good over the minds and hearts of the young.

Sincerity and Purity.—So also the teacher must cultivate *purity, reverence, truthfulness*, and all the "fruits of the Spirit;" but let the *expression* of these in word and conduct be also a matter of cultivation. Let the "words of the lips," and even the outward aspects of the bodily frame, correspond with the character within. Let the teacher willingly sacrifice for Christ any habit or indulgence which will tend to make him less agreeable to his youthful charge, and therefore diminish his influence on them. Let even such external matters as dress be regulated by Christian principle; and let breath redolent of alcohol or clothes perfumed with tobacco have no place in the Sunday class.

A half-friendly writer has remarked, "There are many [Sunday] schools where the teachers and scholars vie with each other in dress, vanity, and flirtation. . . . A professor of religion may be a coxcomb or a coquette." No doubt a "*professor*" may; but a sincere follower of the Redeemer—? Not often, we think; certainly not often in the ranks of an English Sunday school. Yet there is some ground for the criticism in the silly rivalry of "gay clothing" (mostly in very bad taste) which here and there finds an illustration among Sunday school teachers. Let such censure provoke our readers each to say, with the old Greek, "*I will live so that none shall believe it.*"

Our Standard.—We have thus, briefly and very imperfectly, reviewed some of those qualifications which appear to the writer more or less necessary and important for the efficient discharge of the duties of a Sunday school teacher. It would, of course, have been perfectly relevant to our subject to have enumerated as "necessary" the

whole round of religious and moral excellences, and as "desirable" the entire circle of intellectual accomplishments. For teaching is the highest of all professions, and religious teaching is its highest form. But such a catalogue would have only served to discourage the majority of young men and women for whose use this little work is designed; whereas our object is to afford both encouragement and help to beginners in Christian life and Christian work.

Our Example.—If, however, we have still seemed to set up a standard too lofty for attainment, we can only plead our Divine Master's authority. For our individual imitation as disciples He has set before us a pattern absolutely perfect, saying, "Follow Me;" and for our work in His name among the young we can but call to mind His own commission, "Lovest thou Me *more than these?* Feed My lambs." A low spiritual life will never lift us to His side as "good shepherds" and co-labourers with Him. If we would save the children, we must seek to be something more than to be merely saved or "converted" ourselves.

We could also plead that no worthy results can ever be obtained without earnest work and patient plodding. Nay, it involves what is expressly termed *drudgery*, and drudgery involves sacrifice. But "part of the very nobility of the devotion of the true workman to his work consists in the fact that a man is not daunted by finding that drudgery must be done." And if we can find abundant instances of such nobility among those who work from lower and self-interested motives, should the spirit of sacrifice be wanting where "the love of Christ constraineth"?

It is, indeed, in the highest degree probable that most, if not all, of the qualifications above enumerated are already possessed, in some degree, by each reader of these pages. The great need, therefore, is progress, the noble dis-

satisfaction with present attainments; and the desire to go on unto perfection. But however that may be, let this hope nerve our arms and cheer our hearts—he who works *for* God works *with* God. His Spirit is with us in the humblest and feeblest effort which we put forth for His cause and kingdom. We look within and around us, and ask, almost despairingly, “Who is sufficient for these things?” We look above, and with grateful courage respond, “Our sufficiency is of God!”

“Mighty Spirit, dwell with me!
I myself would mighty be;
Mighty, so as to prevail
Where, unaided, man must fail;
Ever with a mighty hope
Pressing on and bearing up.”

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CHAPTER III.

PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTION, AND THEIR RELATION TO BIBLE
TEACHING.

THE young readers who have given us their attention thus far will have learned what are the main objects of Sunday school instruction, what instrumentalities are to be employed, and what knowledge and personal qualifications are needed by those who engage in this Christian enterprise. They will now be prepared to consider, in this and the succeeding chapter, those general PRINCIPLES upon which *all* right teaching must be based, and the METHODS which naturally arise out of them; and then to *apply* both principles and methods to the special work of *religious teaching* in a Sunday school class.

“**Principles**” and “**Methods.**”—To prevent, however, the possibility of misunderstanding the few technical terms which it is convenient to use, let us illustrate what is meant by “principles” and “methods” of instruction,* and show, at the same time, why we are inviting attention to so “scholastic” a topic in an elementary handbook for young Bible-teachers.

An Illustration.—Three persons are suffering from an attack of the same disorder. The first calls on a physician, to whom he details his symptoms, and who, after

* For definitions of “instruction” and “education” the reader is again referred to the footnote on page 10.

due examination of the case, writes out a prescription and gives it to his patient. The second goes to a neighbouring chemist and asks for a "bottle of stuff" for his malady. The chemist consults his book, and finding that certain drugs are often efficacious in the removal of like symptoms, makes up a mixture, and hands it to the applicant. The third "does not wish to be bothered with doctors," and remembering that he has somewhere a box of pills from which he derived benefit on a former occasion, searches them out and takes a dose as before. All three patients recover, and it turns out that the medicines were essentially the same, though somewhat differently compounded. Thus the results were identical, yet how different the steps which led to them! The physician understood the nature of the disease, the properties of the drugs, their mode of action on the affected organs, and their adaptation to restore the system to a healthy condition. He therefore intelligently selected means suited to given ends. In the second case, the apothecary knew little of the disease or even of the kinds of action of the drugs; but he had learned that the latter were often administered under such circumstances, and therefore concluded that they might be safely given again. In the third case, the patient simply remembered that he had had a similar attack before, and judged that what answered his purpose once might be expected to do so again; but he knew nothing of the disease, the remedy, or the relation of the one to the other.

The Illustration applied.—In not a few Sunday schools, teachers may be found corresponding to each of the above class of "doctors." Here and there (would that their number were multiplied a hundredfold!) are those who have studied the foundation principles of teaching—the relation of truth to the mind—as the physician studies the relation of medicine to the body; and the ways in which truth may be most skilfully applied, just as drugs

are combined in due measure, strength, and frequency. Hence they not only can teach, but can assign a reason for teaching in this or that manner under given conditions. Others have learned that it is a good plan to *use questions*, to *illustrate* Bible truth, to *recapitulate* a lesson, and so forth ; but they do not know *why* such plans are "good." They find that such a "prescription" is recommended by the educational "faculty," and so they adopt it. While others, again (we fear there are many), teach in this or that method simply because they have "found it answer pretty well" themselves, or because Mr. A. or Miss B. does the same with apparent success.

It is needless to point out the moral of the foregoing illustration. Children are taught, and, what is far better, they are brought to the Divine Healer, by those who know nothing of the principles and methods of teaching, though they unconsciously use and apply them ; but surely we cannot doubt into whose hands the young "patient" can be most safely committed.

Principles of Instruction.—*Principles*, then, are to the mind what the "laws of health" are to the body. If we act in accordance with them, whether we know it or not, we are likely to succeed in our object ; if we act contrary to them we are on the road to failure. They never alter, because they are founded on the constitution of things. The laws of health are the same for a modern doctor of medicine as they were for Galen or Hippocrates ; and the principles of teaching on which Socrates, and a Greater than Socrates, carried on their conversations and discourses with their disciples, hold good for every Christian worker in every modern Sunday school.

Methods.—*Methods*, however, are liable to variation. They are *modes of applying* principles—*sets of rules* which arise out of them, and hence differ under different circumstances. One physician, from a study of the laws of health, will prescribe for a patient a course of tepid baths ;

another will administer, in a precisely similar case, daily doses of quinine. So in teaching,—one will adopt a lecturing style, another will question; one will adopt simultaneous reading; another will make large use of objects and pictures, and so on. This liberty is of great convenience, and adds to the ease and comfort of the work of instruction; nor, if the *principles* be well understood, is the free use of different *methods* in danger of being abused.

Following the order, though not adopting the precise language of the author's larger work,* **eight Principles of Teaching** may now be briefly explained and illustrated. They will be found easy to remember and as easy to comprehend. In fact, there is nothing unfamiliar about them but the names.

First Principle—Co-operation.

By this we mean that *teacher and scholar must work together*. Unless the learner's mind is active, there can be no *teaching*, however much there may be of *telling* or *talking*. If a scholar's mind is in a purely passive condition, he may see and hear, and even answer questions, "after a fashion," but he is acquiring little, and will remember little of what is being said. There is no more common error among young teachers than the supposition that what they have *given out* must of necessity have been *taken in*, by their scholars; whereas, the ablest instructor knows well that a considerable part of every discourse—be it lecture, sermon, Bible lesson, or individual conversation—fails to find a lodgment in the memory of the hearers. Our object should be to lead our pupils along the paths of sacred knowledge, so that they may, with our assistance, pluck the flowers and fruits of Bible truth for themselves. There is far too much of mere *telling*

* "The Sunday School Teacher's Manual." Sunday School Union. Price 2s. 6d.

in Sunday school classes, and too little interchange of thought.

This co-operation is the more needful, because, unless the body or the mind is really fatigued, children and young people seldom choose to be in a passive condition. True, a too hearty dinner, or an ill-ventilated schoolroom, will often induce drowsiness, both in scholar and teacher; but, as a rule, the latter is more frequently annoyed by misdirected mental activity, than by none at all. The pupils' thoughts are active enough, and their tongues also; but, unfortunately, it is towards anything but the lesson of the day; except, perhaps, that dull, heavy-eyed boy or girl in the corner, whose countenance is scarcely ever lit up by interest, or rippled over by a wave of emotion!

Do you ask, "How is this passiveness to be overcome, and the activity of young minds guided in a desired direction?" The answer is to be found in a simple and oft-quoted rule: *Give each scholar something to do.* Question vigorously. Strive to prompt conversation about the lesson. Give them the larger share of the talking. To read a verse, to hunt up a fact, to find a reference—even to relate some recent occurrence in the family or neighbourhood,—anything which can be turned to account (as most things may by a little tact and ingenuity), will engage the attention, and counteract misapplied energy on the part of the children.

Second Principle—Sympathy.

We use this word for want of a better, but do not employ it in that restricted sense in which we are wont to sing—

"He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief;"

but in that "oneness" of thought and feeling on a given subject which is always so agreeable and interesting to

those who share it. Take a familiar example. Two persons, strangers to each other, meet by accident and fall into conversation. A few remarks are interchanged concerning the weather and other indifferent subjects; presently a chance remark discloses the fact that they spent their childhood in the same country town, attended the same school, have pursued the same branch of scientific research, or are engaged in the same philanthropic enterprise. Instantly all is changed; they have ceased to be strangers, conversation no longer flags, and they part with cordial good will, and perhaps mutual invitations for a future meeting. Why is this? Simply because they have found a *common ground of thought and feeling*, and therefore a *common interest*. This is the sympathy we are writing of.

Examples.—In the recently published memoir of the writer's lamented friend, the late Sir Charles Reed, it is truly remarked, as one cause of his singular acceptableness and influence as a public speaker, that "he seemed instinctively to *find common ground with his audience*, and seized on the humour of the moment in a way that quickly put him on the best of terms with them." For an opposite example, we may quote from another recent memoir, that of the late pious and accomplished Archdeacon Hare. His work as rector of a Sussex village was felt, it is said, "to be the least successful portion of his life's task," because, though "he loved his people, and they loved him, yet they never got thoroughly to know and understand each other. His thoughts and theirs ran in different grooves. He would sit by them, almost weeping in his sympathy, and yet found it hard to say the words they wanted, to talk to them about their ailments, to meet their religious difficulties." Many earnest friends of the young have this true sympathy of *feeling*, but lack the *mental* Sympathy on which we are insisting. Yet it is essential to success in every department of religious teaching, and in every Bible lesson that is given. In order to secure interest in the

subject of instruction, there must be something in common to serve as a starting-point. This sympathy ought to be twofold. If the scholars are personally attached to their teacher there will be sympathy of *feeling* between them and him, and this will *dispose* them to sympathize with the subject-matter of his instructions; but it will not suffice of itself. They need an interest to be created in the particular lesson. Even pious scholars, who of course have a prior sympathy with religious truth, will require a stimulus to attract them to at least *some* of the subjects which occur from time to time in our lesson series; while mere children—not to speak of scholars who are careless and godless—must be drawn to almost all sacred themes by skilful adoption of this principle of sympathy.

There are very few Scripture subjects occurring in the course of a year's lessons, drawn from the "International" or any other carefully prepared series, which do not furnish points of interest from which teacher and scholar may, as it were, start together in each Sabbath's conversations. These lessons are chiefly of a personal or historical nature, and so human and many-sided are Bible narratives that it needs but a little thoughtful scrutiny to find some incident, or place, or character which may serve as a meeting-point of interest for the class.

Third Principle—Gradation.

"Step by step" we all acquire knowledge, and hence we must teach on the same principle. We must bear in mind the poet's lines in relation to the intellectual stores amassed by the "great," and apply it in seeking to add to the stores of the "little"—

"The mighty pyramids of stone,
That, wedgelike, cleave the desert airs,
When clearer seen and better known,
Are but gigantic *flights of stairs.*"

“The heights by great men reached and kept,
 Were not attained by sudden flight ;
 But they, while their companions slept,
 Were toiling upward in the night.”

We have spoken of the common ground of “sympathy” from which teacher and learner should start in every lesson, whether secular or religious. It is equally important that they should proceed step by step together; and here, as in actual walking or climbing, the teacher should make his steps conform to those of his pupil, taking short and easy stages, “leading on softly,” like the shepherd patriarch, “according as the children be able to endure.”

There is, perhaps, no law which intelligent and well-informed instructors more frequently infringe, quite unconsciously to themselves, than this making sure that each scholar is accompanying them as they proceed. Their own lengthy strides deceive them, as the old makers of school-forms were wont to construct them with legs tall enough for the use of adults. We have heard of a professor who, in the midst of some figuring which he was carrying on with the help of a blackboard, turned round to one of the students and inquired, pointedly, “Are you following me, Mr.—?” “Well, yes, sir,” dryly responded the pupil, “*but it’s a very long way off.*” Let those who have to lead younger minds endeavour to prevent them from falling so far into the rear!

Thoroughness.—It is far wiser and better to *teach* half the lesson than to *skim* the whole of it; to carry your pupils through a passage of six or eight verses, or a single Bible incident, and make sure they understand it, than to read a chapter and leave the readers’ minds in a state of chaos as to its contents. The annual examinations of Sunday scholars offer only too frequent proofs of the need to adopt the maxim, “Slow and sure,” in imparting Bible knowledge to the young. The wildest ideas exist in the minds of boys and girls on such topics, for instance, as

the position, size, and general features of Palestine, the nationalities of its inhabitants in Old and New Testament times, and the languages in which the Bible was written. Young teachers should resolutely probe their pupils on these matters; digging down, so to speak, till they reach the solid ground of actual knowledge, through whatever accumulations of ignorance and misconception they have to pierce. It is best to get at the real facts of the case, however astonishing or disheartening they may appear; for only thus can we reach a sure foundation on which to build.

Fourth Principle—Association.

Link each new truth with what is already known. The mind holds its knowledge, not in isolated fragments, but linked together by the Law of Association, which has been explained in a former page. If we would have new facts retained we must *fasten them on* securely to others which are already in the memory. Hence the wisdom of adopting courses of Bible lessons, connected together in order of time or by some other obvious bond of union. It is scarcely prudent for young teachers to select their own lessons; the temptation is so great to move in a narrow round of favourite topics—Moses in the Bulrushes, the Call of Samuel, David and Goliath, the parables of the Lost Sheep and Prodigal Son, and a few others, which every one thinks he can teach “easily.” Lesson subjects should be connected either chronologically, doctrinally, or by some slighter but not less obvious principle of conjunction, and this will be found the case with most printed series. Not only each lesson of a course, but each part of a lesson, should be united by association; so that the remembrance of one section may suggest the others. There should be a few clear and natural divisions, or “heads;” and though it is not always necessary to announce these, sermon-wise, to the hearers, yet they should be thoroughly grasped by the teacher’s own mind, and form one harmonious whole. If

the several parts of a lesson are "all sixes and sevens" to the instructor, what possible chance can there be of implanting them in a logical and orderly manner in the understandings of the pupils? Yet instruction, *to be* instruction, must consist in "the *orderly* placing of knowledge" in the scholar's mind.

It is obvious that this principle and the foregoing are very intimately connected together; they are both just as closely united to the one which is next to be mentioned.

Fifth Principle—Analogy.

Teach the unknown by comparing it with that which is known. This is only recommending, for class-teaching, a plan which we are all accustomed to adopt in ordinary conversation, whether with children or adults. If we desire to give some idea of an absent stranger, or unfamiliar locality, or singular object, we instinctively say that he, or it, is "like" some one or something already known to our hearer. All that is now urged is simply to apply this principle to Bible teaching. It is *necessary*, for there is no other method of explaining "things unseen and eternal;" and it is *judicious*, for the mind always finds a pleasure in recognizing resemblances, especially when "all the world is new" to the learner. The attractiveness of figures of speech, parables, and allegories is due to this principle; and of course the use of *illustrations*, in speaking or writing, whether in order to elucidate, or to enliven, the subject-matter, rests on the same basis. And the very terms in which we describe moral and spiritual, as well as mental phenomena, are derived from outward things which have some resemblance to these inward existences. Let the reader turn to the Book of the Revelation, chap. xxi., and note the manner in which the apostle attempts to depict the glories of the heavenly state, and it will be seen how dependent even an inspired writer is upon *comparisons* for the materials of his description.

Sixth Principle—Repetition.

Repeat! Recapitulate! Review! Tell the same truths again and again. Truth, especially moral and spiritual truth, is not laid hold of by the mind, much less incorporated with the character or exemplified in the life, by being once heard; and the leading truths of the gospel need to be reiterated again and again.

In proportion to the youthfulness of the learner is repetition needful, and even pleasurable.

But there is a limit to this principle. We may weary by repetition. When, and why? When we repeat the same facts or doctrines in the same form, so that they suggest no new ideas, and thus have lost all the charm of novelty. But if the theme be one which appeals to the *sympathies* of the pupil, you may safely reproduce it again and again, up to the point where the mind grows fatigued and weary; *then* all effort to listen or learn is distasteful, and no judicious teacher will continue his instructions.

Reviewing.—It is a good plan in Sunday school teaching to recapitulate the previous divisions of each lesson, as the exercise proceeds; and to recall the last Sunday's lessons before commencing those of the day. The principles of *Gradation* and *Association* suggest this course; and it is desirable, if only to show how much (or how little!) has been thoroughly learned, understood, and retained.

The companion principle to Repetition is next to be mentioned:—

Seventh Principle—Variety.

Give sufficient variety in matter and style. The safest way to avoid prosiness and wearisomeness in Bible instruction is to study variety. Clothe the same truths in different garbs, and add new truths to the old ones. Don't relate the same anecdotes over and over again—they will

be recognized as old, and despised accordingly. If you repeat a lesson, study it afresh, and arrange it differently. Don't use your old notes if your pupils are to be the same; and if they are not, it will be better for your own mind and heart to search again in the divine "treasury" for "things new" as well as "old."

This is an additional argument for paying attention to the *methods* of presenting Scripture truth; because, without deviating from sound principles, we may vary our methods of teaching to almost any extent. To use a familiar comparison, we may build any style of house upon the same foundation, and according to the same laws of architecture. And if a scholar knows that there will be this variety, and not a constant repetition of the same matter in the same form, it will afford an element of attraction which may often outweigh inducements to be an absentee.

We have but one other principle of instruction to mention, but it is all-important:—

Eighth Principle—Adaptation.

The teaching must be adapted, in quantity and quality, to each of the pupils. Easy to recommend—true beyond all contradiction; but the question is, how shall it be secured? Of course there are two principal requisites—to *know the scholars*, individually as well as collectively; and to be *able to present different aspects of sound truth*, suited to their several requirements. A few remarks and suggestions may be offered on each of these points.

First, what is it to *know our scholars*?

Child Character.—There are, of course, certain characteristics which they have in common with all young people.* Their knowledge is but very limited; their

* It will, of course, be understood that we are not now speaking of *senior* or of *adult* classes in Sunday schools.

minds are more or less active; both body and mind are restless, and need frequent change; they are quick to receive impressions, but these are apt to be transient, and need repeating; they are curious, and struck with novelties; they are lively, and like liveliness in those who teach them; they like pictures, both *visible* and *verbal*, the former preferred, especially in early childhood; they need control; their moral and spiritual convictions are genuine but not deep, and the conscience needs to be educated and enlightened.

Such are a few of the *general* characteristics of an ordinary Sunday school class, and it is of no small importance that they should be understood and remembered by a teacher.

Mental Stages of Growth.—There are also *stages of growth* through which the child passes, as the mental and moral nature develops, from infancy up to youth. Without entering upon a systematic account of the process, we may note one or two leading features, referring our readers to more advanced manuals for a fuller account of this interesting department of a teacher's studies.

Age of Perception.—Those who have the care of an infant class are accustomed to use pictures or black-board figures in the instruction of the little ones. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that, in early childhood, the *eye* is a more prominent channel of knowledge than the *ear*; *things* rather than *words*, are the instruments of instruction. This is termed the *Age of Perception*. At this period of life, it is needful to appeal to the *feelings* rather than to the reason. The teacher *expresses* certain feelings, and the children catch the influence by *sympathy*. Hence, "the Age of Perception" is also called "the Age of Sympathy."

Age of Imagination.—A year or two later, and the *Imagination* becomes active, the child likes to "fancy" and "make believe;" and he dearly loves a fairy tale.

He is, therefore, less dependent on visible pictures and objects for gaining knowledge; and a wise teacher will therefore make less use of them. At the same stage of progress, the *Desire of Praise* becomes a prominent motive of action, and must be employed by the teacher as an incentive to right action.

Ages of Reason and Reflection.—Later still, the *Age of Reason* and the *Age of Reflection* are reached. The mind becomes stronger, and the judgment more active. The boy or girl thinks, reasons, argues, reflects; and we learn, by manifest signs of mental vigour, that childhood is for ever past.

Similarly, *Conscience* becomes a director and a guide, while it continues to approve or condemn; the lad or lass shows signs of independence and responsibility; and pays less deference to the opinions of others. This is the stage at which the tie which binds the scholar to the Sunday school is too often strained and broken—all too soon for his moral and spiritual well-being; but the subject does not demand discussion here.

Individual Character.—Leaving, however, these collective peculiarities, important as they undoubtedly are, we hasten to indicate others not less vital in the work of education.

A teacher needs to be acquainted with his own scholars *individually*. However skilfully the school may have been divided by the superintendent and secretary, there *will* be differences in every class, both intellectual and moral, besides those which are distinctively religious. A teacher, therefore, needs to know each scholar's capacity and attainments, natural temper and disposition, tastes and habits, and spiritual condition; and these can only be ascertained by personal communication. An American writer quotes a telling anecdote to enforce this point. He says: "Nor is it only in the measure of his knowledge, that a scholar is to be studied, and to be known by his

teacher. It is in his personal tastes and peculiarities, in his feelings and desires, in his methods of thought and his modes of action, in his characteristics and tendencies, and in the nature of his home and week-day surroundings, that a scholar must be known before he can be taught intelligently. It is related of Professor Orfila, the great French chemist, that when he was giving evidence in a court of justice, as to the relative power of minute doses of a particular poison, one of the lawyers in the case inquired of him derisively, 'Could you tell us, Professor, the precise dose of this poison which a *fly* could take safely?' 'I think I could,' was the cautious answer; 'but I should need to know something about the particular fly under treatment. I should want to know his size, his age, his state of health, his habits of life, whether he was married or single, and what had been his surroundings in life so far. All these things bear on the size of the dose to be administered in any case.' Surely a scholar deserves as much study, and as wise and as cautious treatment, as a fly. But not every teacher is as wise or as cautious as Professor Orfila."

Home *visitation* is undoubtedly the best possible means of gaining this acquaintance; and next to visiting is *letter-writing*; indeed, a letter will sometimes elicit what, through natural shyness, would not have been disclosed in conversation. Something may be learned from the testimony of parents and other relatives; and vigilant observation of a scholar's manner and conduct during the hours of teaching will supply indications of the bent of the mind and character; but nothing is so helpful as personal intercourse. It will supply not only materials and hints for direct instruction, but guidance as to the control and treatment of the class; and beyond all, it will be found, if faithfully pursued, to yield continued encouragements and incentives to faithful and persevering effort. Let the "wise steward," then, become so intimately

acquainted with the members of his little "household," that he may, indeed, be qualified to give to each of them "his portion in due season."

Our Model in Teaching.—We have already remarked that the principles of instruction are invariable, and that all true teaching is carried on in accordance with them. It should excite no surprise, therefore, if we find, in the recorded discourses of the Great Teacher, continual examples of the use of these principles. Doubtless few, if any, of our Lord's "Bible lessons" have come down to us in a complete form; and of these, the majority are incidental "talks," rather than systematic addresses, though of inimitable beauty and adaptation. Still, the underlying principles may be easily traced by a careful reader.

Examples from Christ's Teaching.—Let us take, for instance, the grand yet tender utterances contained in the earlier portion of the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. The previous chapter explains the occasion and circumstances. A blind man who had been healed by the Saviour, and had openly intimated his conviction that his Healer's mission was divine, had been promptly excommunicated by the Jewish Church authorities. The latter had also asserted that they only were the successors of Moses, and the doorkeepers of the divine fold, while as for this unauthorized teacher, no one knew whence he had sprung, and he could therefore be only an alien and an impostor (ix. 28, 29.) With admirable dignity and calm severity, our Lord retorts upon Scribe and Pharisee the charge they had brought against Him. He proclaims Himself the only "door" of the sheepfold, while they who neglect or despise Him are but "thieves and robbers," whom the true sheep would not regard or obey. He is also the Good Shepherd, faithful in feeding and defending His flock, while the hireling shepherds neglected and forsook them—a true picture of the relations of the Jewish teachers to the common people, whom they

abandoned to ignorance and then despised for their lack of knowledge (vii. 49 ; Matt. xxiii. 13, etc.). With such wondrous tact and pointedness, yet with an entire absence of the revilings of his adversaries, did the Great Teacher exhibit the vast gulf between Him and them. Here was **Adaptation**.

The season was winter (vers. 22, 23), and the flocks, no longer allowed to sleep on the hillsides, had been everywhere gathered into folds, as those devout Jews who had come up from their country homes to keep the Dedication festival at Jerusalem would have noticed, over and over again. Our Lord began His discourse by finding a common ground of thought and feeling ; every Jew could understand, and feel interested in the objects and details of pastoral life. Here was **Sympathy**.

The interest which His hearers could not but feel in the outward form of the discourse, would be increased by the knowledge that, in accordance with the Saviour's own practice, as also with Eastern modes of thought and expression, there was a hidden meaning beneath His figures of speech. We may marvel that what appears so plain to us, should have been veiled to them ; yet we are assured (ver. 6) that they understood not the inner significance of what was outwardly so simple and familiar. Hence, *curiosity* would be assured, and curiosity, "the parent of attention," invokes that wakefulness of mind in the pupil which tends to secure **Co-operation**.

A happy combination of **Repetition** with **Variety** is noticeable in this as in the other discourses of the Great Teacher. The same leading truths are reiterated, yet not so as to weary, because the *form* is varied, as a study of the passage will show.

The **Gradation** of the teaching is equally observable on attentive perusal of the verses. The parable begins with the simplest truths about the way into the heavenly fold, and the mutual confidence and affection between the

Shepherd and the sheep. Then it rises to the gift of salvation, freedom, and spiritual support, with a life that broadens and deepens as it progresses (vers. 9, 10); then higher still, to the voluntary atoning sacrifice (that hardest of lessons to the Saviour's disciples), the mutual knowledge of God the Father and God the Son, and the bringing in of the Gentile sheep of other folds (vers. 11-18).

We do not know what had been the previous lessons given by the Great Teacher to the same hearers, unless John viii. 12-59, represent the latest. If so, we have in the parable before us a reassertion, under new emblems, of the claim to Messiahship so fiercely denied and denounced in the foregoing passage. The truths *here* are therefore linked on by **Association** to the truths *there* (compare viii. 12, 32, 36, with x. 9, 10; viii. 18, 26, 29, 55, with x. 15, 17, 18; viii. 47, with x. 4, 14, 27; viii. 51, with x. 10, 28; viii. 28, with x. 11, 17, 18).

In the conversation which immediately follows the parable (vers. 22-30), the new statements made by Christ are closely and manifestly linked on to what He had previously taught on both occasions above quoted (see viii. 28; ix. 4, etc.). Here was **Association**.

The principle of **Analogy**—teaching the unknown by comparison with the known—is one of the chief characteristics of our Lord's instructions; and His similes, allusions, metaphors, and parables exhibit this principle, combined with variety, in a matchless degree. If the hearers failed to understand Him, the obstacle was moral and spiritual, not intellectual, and still less was it due to any imperfection in the mode of presenting the doctrines. Every person and thing employed here as emblems of religious truths were simple and familiar to those who heard.

We need not multiply references; enough, it is hoped, has been quoted to show how fruitful in educational lessons—lessons even in the **science** of teaching—the recorded sayings of Him who was emphatically the

Divine Word may become, to thoughtful and earnest readers. He is the only Model Teacher; and it will be our highest wisdom to sit at His feet, that we may learn from Him, not only the "words" which are "spirit and life," but the way to implant them in the minds and hearts of others.

REFERENCE.

"Manual," chaps. iv.-ix.

CHAPTER IV.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION: THEIR USE IN BIBLE TEACHING.

No young teacher, we hope, will infer from the preceding chapter that the Principles there set forth are intended or adapted to cramp or fetter those who expound the written Word of God to children and young persons. They impose some limits, it is true, such "limits" as the parapet of a bridge or the railings erected along the edge of a cliff impose on pedestrians—limits of warning and protection. If you do not teach in accordance with these laws, you are on the road to failure instead of success; as that physician would be, who should disregard the laws of chemistry or the laws of health.

Flexibility of Methods.—But though the Principles of Teaching are inflexible, the METHODS which are founded upon them afford, as previously stated, full scope for freedom of action. Truth, moral truth especially, may be presented in a variety of modes, all in accordance with sound principles. When we attempt to classify these modes of presentation we find ourselves among what are termed "Educational Methods." METHODS make up the **Art of Teaching**, as PRINCIPLES constitute the **Science of Teaching**.

Chief Methods—Telling and Questioning.—Now, if we consider the matter, we shall come to the conclusion that there are just two leading methods of instruction:

you may either *tell* the pupil what you wish him to know, or you may, by *Questions* closely put, lead him to *find it out for himself*. This seems obvious enough : and writers on education accordingly recognize the former as the **Didactic**, or *Lecturing*, method, and the latter as the **Interrogative**, or *Catechetical*, method.

Interrogative Method.

Looking at these two modes of instruction by themselves, apart from special circumstances and conditions, we can be in no doubt as to which is the more stimulative and awakening, and therefore the more *educating*. What we merely *tell* may fall on dull ears and passive minds ; whereas, if we lead the mind to discover truth for itself, we secure that activity which our first Principle, *co-operation*, demands, and without which there can be no mind-development—in other words no education. Hence, great teachers have usually been great *questioners*. The greatest of heathen teachers, Socrates, was so addicted to this method that “socratic” has become synonymous with “interrogative.” And One, yet greater than he, while He answered what Socrates could only ask, was a questioner of wondrous power and depth. And it cannot be too often urged upon young Sunday school workers, that the most common fault of method in those who teach the Bible to the young, is to *tell* too much, and *question* too little.

There are several forms in which a teacher should employ this method, and also some common mistakes in its use which it will be well to avoid.

Four Uses of Questions.—Questions are needed, *First*, to ascertain what the pupil knows at the outset, so that the “common starting-point,” of which we have spoken in a previous page, may be clearly ascertained. A few plain, direct questions, *previously prepared*, should

find a place at the beginning of every Bible lesson. These we may term **Preliminary Questions**.

Secondly, there are questions which enter largely into what one may call the main body of the lesson; and which, by skilfully guiding the class-conversation, lead the pupils to find out one point after another, so instructing themselves, and fixing truths on their own minds in the surest possible way. The name given to these is **Questions of Instruction**.

Thirdly, at the close of a lesson, or, better still, at the close of *each section* of the lesson, questions are needed to ascertain how much has really been learned by the scholars. Such are termed **Examinatory Questions**.

There is a *fourth* class, which the moral and religious instructor should by no means overlook, as they continually occur in the teaching of Christ and His apostles. We refer to those which require no *verbal* answer, but are designed to stimulate reflection or to quicken the conscience. The following will serve as examples:—“If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” Such questions, which may be termed **Applicatory**, are most impressive and salutary, when wisely introduced.

Abuse of Questioning.—There is an abuse as well as a use of the Interrogative method. A question must be in accordance with the great principle of **Adaptation**, and be suited to the comprehension and attainments of the scholars. If too difficult, the learner feels unfairly treated, or perhaps discouraged and humiliated; if too simple, there is no stimulus to thought, and the scholars, unless very young, are offended at such a “babyish” exercise. But beside these two extremes, the following are equally objectionable:—

“**Leading**” questions, which put the answer into the pupil’s mouth, and give him no mental exercise at all. For instance, “John the Baptist was a good man, wasn’t he?” “And he lived—where? In the wilderness, wasn’t it?” “Yes; he didn’t live in a nice comfortable house, as we do, did he? but away out by himself.” “And what used he to do? preach, didn’t he?” “Yes, preached to the people,” etc., etc. This may be *teaching*, though in very bungling fashion; but it certainly is not *questioning*. It is merely asking assent to what is told; and this children soon learn to give without paying the slightest attention to what is being said. Indeed, questions requiring only “Yes” or “No” for an answer are, as a rule, to be avoided. They are allowable, however, if they serve as stepping-stones to more genuine interrogation. Thus—“Did Christ comply with the disciples’ request?” (“Yes”) “Then, what do you suppose He thought of it?”

Ambiguous questions are equally common, and equally objectionable. Except when a teacher specially desires a variety of replies, in an enumeration of objects or qualities, or an expression of choice or opinion on the part of his class, *each question should admit of but one answer*, and therefore be so framed as to exclude a larger number. Hence such inquiries as “What was David?” “What did Joshua do when Moses was dead?” “If people love God, what will God do to them?” “Where do good children love to go?” etc., are indefinite and unfair, because two or three equally correct answers may be given, and yet if the teacher condemns as “wrong” all but the one he wants, the other pupils feel discouraged, and say within themselves, “My answer was just as good as that.”

In order to avoid these and similar mistakes, the young teacher should mentally go over his questions beforehand and see where they need mending. The perfection of interrogation is by means of a *chain* of questions to bring

out every point in succession which you desire to be elicited. And this is far from being difficult, while every exercise will bring an increase of skill. It is also desirable as a matter of prudence, for this method requires careful handling; and we have often seen a whole school thrown into confusion by random or vague inquiries, which brought out all sorts of replies except the ones hoped for, and finally set the entire assembly of juveniles in a tumult of hilarity.

Elliptical Method.

There is a modification of questioning which is called the *Elliptical* method, and consists in leaving out words or parts of sentences for the pupils to fill in. Thus—“When Jesus came down from the ” (Scholars: “*mountain,*”) “he saw a poor man who was called a ” (“*leper,*”) “who said to Jesus, Lord, if thou ” (“*wilt*”) “thou canst make me ” (“*clean*”); and so on. This method is scarcely suited to any but mere children, as it is but a mild sort of stimulant, and has an infantile sound. Its real place is in going over a lesson to see if it has been remembered. It saves time, and it calls forth *co-operation*. It excites some curiosity, and if carefully used involves *gradation* of teaching also. But the *ellipses* (*i.e.* the words or phrases left out for the children to supply) should be *essential* ones, not mere particles or catchwords; and to give the *first syllable* as a crutch to help them is specially weak and unsatisfactory.

Didactic Method.

Limits of Interrogation.—Stimulating and invaluable as the Interrogative and Elliptical Methods undoubtedly are, when used with care and judgment, it must be obvious that there are limits to their employment. You cannot “question out” of a pupil’s mind any fact which is not already there, or which may not be *inferred* from his

previous knowledge. You may lead him to *new thoughts* concerning what he knows, and you may help him to draw new conclusions from the materials previously stored in his understanding. But new facts must be communicated by *telling* in some form or other. Again, the process of reasoning out by the interrogatory method, is often lengthy and more or less complicated. Sometimes this is worth while ; as, for instance, if the truth reached be of special importance, and doubts and difficulties have to be met and overcome ; but often it is not worth the time and trouble. No general rules can be laid down for either course ; but it may be remarked that *moral principles* are best worked out by questions, while *historical events* and other *matters of fact* are best given in a didactic form. For example, we are teaching from the Acts of the Apostles, and the subject is, we will say, the sin and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira. Now, the aim of a wise Christian teacher will be to engrave on the scholars' minds, not the mere circumstances and surroundings of the narrative, but the moral lessons with which those facts are fraught. To show that lying in any form, hypocrisy, religious hypocrisy—are abominations in the sight of a God of infinite rectitude ; these are the truths to be brought home to the learner's mind and conscience. Hence, the outward facts may be *told* indirectly by reading the passage with a few explanatory remarks ; or directly by relating the story in simple language. (The latter plan is best when the scholars are not yet able to read with facility.) But the moral principles involved in the conduct of Ananias and his wife could be most impressively taught by questioning out.

It would, doubtless, be possible by elaborate questioning to show that Sapphira was likely to support her husband in the garbled statement which they had agreed to make, and also that it might have been expected that a severe example would be made of these first and dangerous offenders. But the time thus spent would be almost thrown

away. On the other hand, the moral aspects of the case might be simply asserted—"They were guilty of this and that sin, and so they richly deserved their fate," etc. But it would be far more forcible and convincing to lead the scholars, by a few prepared questions, to pronounce judgment for themselves.*

The Didactic Method is the most natural and direct, and though often abused in the Sunday school class and elsewhere, has most important uses in Bible instruction. In the case of historical and biographical lessons, in descriptions of places, natural objects, and striking phenomena, and in statements of size, distance, colour, etc., *telling* in simple language, and then *questioning* on what has been so communicated, will be found, on the whole, the most manageable method of teaching. Of course this telling is often indirect, as above stated, the portion of Scripture read being the actual instructor. Yet so numerous are the errors into which children of all ages fall in interpreting the language of the Old and New Testaments, that it is always needful either to *repeat the chief particulars in simple, every-day English*, or, better still, to get the scholars themselves to reproduce what they have read *in their own language*. If they can do this, they understand the lesson.

The Illustrative Method.

This is a well-known and popular form of Didactic instruction founded upon the principles of *Analogy* and *Association*. It is **telling by the help of comparison**; and all figurative language, similes, metaphors, fables,

* The late Jacob Abbott has some useful remarks on this point in his little work, "The Way to do Good"—a book which, like his "Young Christian" and "Corner Stone," is far too little known on this side of the Atlantic.

parables, and allegories are examples of the above-named method. *Material* Illustrations, such as Pictures, Drawings (on paper or blackboard), and Objects, fall under the same head. And it is much to be desired that religious teachers of the young would make fuller and more frequent use of such visible aids to instruction.

Even a poorly executed sketch seldom fails to excite interest; and the process of outlining a figure, however simple or inartistic, will usually quiet a restless class of children.

The first attempt to expound and enforce this method, in relation to Sunday School work, was made, the writer believes, in a little tract now out of print, entitled, "Illustrative Teaching." The substance of the latter will be found in the "Manual," but a few hints are here appended.

Twofold Uses of Illustration.—The chief uses of Illustration are to **explain** and to **attract**. When a fact or truth is obscure, the readiest way of illuminating it is to use a comparison. For popular use, and therefore in teaching the young, an apt illustration has tenfold the power of an argument. No theological propositions have ever so exhibited the evil of sin, and the Father's love to the sinner, as the three matchless parables of Luke xv. The doctrine of the new birth was brought home to the mind of Nicodemus by reference to "the way of the wind," and the unwelcome doctrine of salvation through the death of the Saviour was pictured in the corn of wheat dying in the ground to live again in harvest.

And with this illuminating power comes an attractiveness in well-chosen illustrations which is felt by old and young, though for the latter it is more indispensably necessary. If we would be interesting teachers of children and young people, we must illustrate freely and skilfully. It is useless to expect that their minds will appreciate or remember moral and spiritual truths unless these are linked to familiar objects and events. It was thus that

our Lord deigned to deal with those who, while men in years, were but children in spiritual understanding. By making all nature and all human life eloquent with instruction, He took captive the attention of His hearers, and wrung praise from the admiring lips of those who would have laid hands upon Him. The sky above, the ground beneath, the cattle on the hillsides, the sun in its splendour, the lilies in their silent beauty, the grass in its lowliness, the gorgeous temple, the village well, the fishers on the lake, the shepherds beside the folds, the children playing in the market-place, the noble at his banquet, the beggar by the wayside,—all these, and many more, were associated by Christ with things unseen and eternal, in words such as “never man spake” before. In this, as in relation to His own spotless character, He says to every Sunday school teacher, “Follow Me.”

Kinds of Illustration.—In classifying illustrations it may perhaps be safe to assert that short *Anecdotes* are the easiest to manage, and the most attractive to *young* children. Of these, such as have come under the teacher’s own observation, or have recently occurred, especially if in the scholar’s neighbourhood, are the most telling. Next come Bible incidents, particularly from less familiar parts of Scripture. (The former excite *sympathy*, the latter awaken *curiosity*.) Then events from English or general history. Then simple comparisons, drawn from nature, art, or everyday life (such as may be found in abundance in Scripture), *e.g.* “He shall be *like* a tree planted by the rivers of water.” “The wicked are *like* the troubled sea,” “What is your life? it is *even as* a vapour,” “He shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver,” “He shall dash them in pieces *like* a potter’s vessel,” *etc.*,

“So, *like* the sun, may I fulfil
 The business of the day;
 Begin my work betimes, and still
 March on my heavenly way.”

In using *metaphors*, where an object is said to *be* what it represents, *e.g.* "I *am* the door," "Ye *are* God's building," "Ye *are* the epistles of Christ," etc., care must be taken with younger scholars to prevent confusion of ideas. It is better to open out such figures by turning them into simpler comparisons and explaining how the one is "like" the other. The small boy who was found crying because he had been told that he must be "Christ's little *lamb*," and who objected to wearing a fleece and a tail, *may* be an apocryphal character; but his mistake is certainly of no very uncommon kind.

Hearers' Misconceptions.—In the sketch of the life of Archdeacon Hare, already quoted, it is related of his pulpit illustrations, that the rustics who heard him fell into errors much less excusable. "He spoke of the danger of men 'playing at ninepins with Truth,' and they thought he was warning young labourers against beer and skittles. He likened fiery controversialists to men who 'walked with lucifer matches in their pockets,' and the farmers thanked him for the zeal with which he watched over their farmyards and stacks. He referred, by way of illustration, to the devotion of the Italian peasants to the Madonna, and he was reported to have told his congregation that they ought to worship the Virgin Mary." Such instances as these will not, we trust, be lost upon our readers. They eloquently echo the old maxim, "Strive to teach, not only so that the children can understand you, but so that they cannot *misunderstand* you!" And this applies more to illustrations. Figures of speech gratify the imagination of a child, and are therefore allowable and useful, but fancy must not be allowed to run riot.

Parables * and *Allegories* are, for the most part, too

* This remark is intended to apply to parables of human composition. Those of our Lord are, of course, introduced into the Sunday school lesson series from time to time as subjects for special study.

lengthy and complex for use in class-teaching ; but a short *fable* will often point a moral with advantage, and it is sure to be enjoyed if quaint and humorous.

In the choice of illustrations, preference should be given to those which are *short*. As each Bible lesson should include several, no one anecdote or comparison should be of undue length. It should be *familiar*, by which we mean that as it is intended to cast light on something else, it must not need to be itself explained. It should be strictly *appropriate*, not far-fetched or seemingly pointless, and it should be kept *subordinate* to the truth it illustrates. Do not let the incident or comparison overtop that for the sake of which you relate it, otherwise you will be in danger of putting a six-foot frame round a miniature, or hiding the jewels by a too showy casket. Do not elaborate your illustrations. Bring them in sharply and forcibly ; relate them in few words ; show clearly what point they bear upon, and pass on.

The *collecting* of illustrations will be referred to in a subsequent page.

Vary your Methods.—A skilful teacher will use the above-named methods as an able workman uses his tools, taking up first one and then another, as necessity demands or taste suggests. No Bible lesson should be given by means of any one method alone. Questions and Illustrations will always be requisite, and more or less of Didactic teaching is also needful. This interchange is called a “Mixed Method,” and it will be a useful exercise if our readers will apply the hints given in the present chapter to some particular discourses of the Great Teacher, remembering that probably few of these divine compositions are related in full. The following may serve as examples :—

Then the whole exercise is devoted to explaining and enforcing their meaning. The mode of doing this will be pointed out in the next chapter.

Matt. vii., xi., xviii. 1-14, xxiv. 23-51; Luke iv. 16-27, vi. 17-49, x., xii., xiii. 18-35, xv., xvii.; John iii. 1-21, iv., vi., x. 1-30, xii. 20-36, xiv., xv., xvi. A reverent examination of passages such as these will do more to help a teacher of the young than many pages of formal counsel.

Only let the *Principles* and *Methods* already defined be kept fully in view, and used as keys, to unlock, as it were, the secrets of those "Model Lessons."

REFERENCES.

"Manual," chap. x.

"Text-Book," sects. xiii.-xvii.

"The Art of Picturing." By W. H. Groser. 3*l.*

CHAPTER V.

BIBLE LESSONS, AND HOW TO PREPARE THEM.

Weekly Preparation.—In speaking of Scripture knowledge as a qualification for Sunday school teaching, reference was made to the duty of **weekly preparation**, which devolves on every one who has been intrusted with the care of a Sabbath class. One, and often two, lessons have to be studied and prepared every week; and until some facility has been gained in this work the labour is not inconsiderable. Hence, we have urged the importance of ample Biblical knowledge being acquired *before* beginning to teach in a Sunday school.

The necessity for such preparation will hardly be gainsaid by any of our readers. Just as the physician or the barrister must study each "case" submitted to him, and the minister must devote close attention to the subjects of his pulpit discourses, independently of their previous professional training,—so the Bible teacher of children must give his mind, week by week, to those sacred topics which he is to unfold to his young disciples. Neglect of this duty will insure failure, and probably humiliation; while the ease and comfort of the class exercises will largely depend on the fidelity and thoroughness with which it has been performed. But argument is scarcely needed to defend the practice; what is really

required (and, in the writer's experience, is usually appreciated) is a rough outline of the conditions to be fulfilled—a sort of ground plan from which the inexperienced teacher may build up the fabric of instruction. Such we will now endeavour to supply.

Sympathy with the Lesson-subject.—The importance of *sympathy* has been dwelt on more than once in the preceding chapters. We have spoken of that heart-sympathy with children and with Sunday school work which is essential in a teacher; and we have also endeavoured to enforce that general sympathy between teacher, scholar, and Bible-subject, which is requisite for commencing a lesson on a satisfactory basis. There is yet another aspect of the oneness of mind and heart which we call by that name, not less essential to usefulness and success: the teacher must be in *moral and spiritual*, as well as *intellectual*, sympathy with each lesson, before he begins to communicate it to others. It is something to feel that we have “mastered the passage” in all its facts and details, its history and connections; but it is immeasurably more important to feel *that the passage has mastered us*,—has taken possession of mind and heart, so that it seems fuller of light and life than ever before, and we are eager to impart our knowledge and our convictions to our youthful charge.

Divine Aid.—But this can only be when sacred truth is studied with earnest and prayerful desire for the Spirit's teaching—“Make me to understand Thy precepts, so shall I talk of all Thy wondrous works.” “In Thy light shall we see light.” We have no right to expect the “baptism from on high” for our scholars unless it has first descended upon our own souls. We may, like Apollos, be “mighty in the Scriptures, skilful in utterance, and trained in the way of the Lord,” but we need also to be like him, “fervent in the Spirit,” in order to “speak” and “teach” “the things of the Lord.” And

this "fervour" is not mere emotion—still less is it mere excitement; but that glow of mind and heart which results when the spirit of truth reveals the truth to us.

Early Preparations.—The preparedness which we are commending will be promoted if the study of each sacred theme is begun *early in the week*. It is a good plan to read one or both of the selected passages at the close of the Lord's Day, so that they are lodged in the mind, at least in their leading features, when the working week begins. An early period, however brief, should also be secured for *private* prayer and meditation on the lesson; after which it may be allowed to shape itself in the thoughts before it is finally sketched on paper. But writing materials should be always available—if they are only a pencil and a scrap of paper—to catch the passing ideas which, in these busy days, are so apt to elude our recollection. Our Bible lessons ought to be continually before our minds, so that we may be ever on the watch for facts and illustrations adapted to sustain or exemplify the testimony of Holy Writ.

Practical Hints.—In offering suggestions on the work of lesson-preparation we desire to keep in view the *average* young teacher, whose resources and attainments are moderate, whose library is far from large, and whose time for study is broken and limited. In not a few cases, also, the mental faculties have been so imperfectly disciplined in early life that the effort to study at all is a somewhat painful one,—though, be it remembered, that effort forms a most valuable means of self-training. Happily, such obstacles are not fatal to progress or even to excellence and success: singleness of aim and earnestness of purpose will far more than compensate for the lack of literary advantages. Very few books indeed are indispensable for the weekly task. A Bible with clear print, marginal references, and maps; a "Cruden's Concordance," *unabridged*; and one of the Sunday school periodicals

which give lesson notes,* will generally suffice in the way of printed helps. The writer would urge with all possible emphasis the wisdom and duty of searching the Scriptures by themselves, before appealing to human comments and opinions. Let the Bible be its own expositor, first and chiefly; the Concordance will soon demonstrate its excellence over every other commentary. A much larger part of the contents of our Biblical Cyclopædias and Handbooks than is usually supposed consists of Scripture statements rearranged, and might be obtained from the inspired Volume at first hand. If this be true of geographical and historical facts, much more fully does it apply to doctrines and precepts. There is real danger lest in the multitude of "cisterns" we lose sight of the great "fountain of living waters."

Views and Aims.—With Bible, Concordance, and two or three works of reference before him, the young teacher sits down to study and prepare the lesson which is to be the subject of instruction on the coming Lord's Day. Let him once more lay to heart the great fact that he is about to employ spiritual truth for distinctly spiritual ends. The object of meeting that band of youthful learners is not simply to impart information, but to mould character. We teach "the truth as it is in Jesus," in order to lead the children to love and trust Him, and so to be made like Him. Instruction, even *Bible* instruction, is only a means to an end; and we fail, where failure is most disastrous, if we rest satisfied with the means alone. If, however, our aims are right, we shall deeply feel the need in our preparation, as much as in our actual teaching, of that divine enlightenment and inspiration without which nothing attempted for God can be truly strong or truly enduring. Yet this conviction should never make

* The *Sunday School Chronicle* (weekly, 1d.) and the *Sunday School Teacher* (2d. monthly) may be specially mentioned. The monthly "Notes on the Lessons" are appended to the latter.

us less orderly or diligent in the use of arts and methods. The *heart* and *conscience* must be reached through the *understanding*, in order that religious decision may rest on rational conviction, and not be the mere product of passing emotions. We honour the God of grace when we work in accordance with the laws which the God of nature has ordained.

Leading Inquiries.—*Three questions* may now be proposed, as waymarks to guide in the study of the selected passage—

What does it mean? (*Explanation.*)

What does it teach? (*Exposition.*)

To whom does it apply? (*Application.*)

This is the natural and necessary order of things. For, on the one hand, as before remarked, neither we nor our scholars can be impressed by truths which we do not first understand; so, on the other, each must perceive their application to his own character and conduct in order to render them practically useful.

Lessons Classified.—Nor is there any essential difference in studying or teaching the different kinds of Bible lessons which from time to time are placed before us. They consist of HISTORICAL, DOCTRINAL, or FIGURATIVE passages of Scripture. Three-fourths, perhaps, are **historical** narratives, which must obviously be treated on the above plan. The *meaning* of the facts stated must first be ascertained. This is the true foundation; but of itself it is of little religious value. The chief use of all history lies in its moral teachings, and apart from these the mere events of past ages, even if they be Bible events, are but baggage with which to load the memory and understanding. Hence, after the facts are grasped, their moral and spiritual lessons must be unfolded. Another step follows: the many truths to be elicited from a Scripture narrative have various applications. Some will suit one class and some another. A selection, therefore, needs to be made, and the practical lessons so selected

must be adapted and enforced in a manner specially fitted to our own particular hearers.

Doctrinal subjects are those in which moral and spiritual truths are more or less explicitly stated. Sometimes it is a direct announcement, *e.g.* "God so loved the world," etc.; sometimes a precept, "Commit thy way unto the Lord," etc.; sometimes a promise, "Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely;" sometimes a prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" etc., etc. Here again, there must first be a clear understanding of what is stated,—the terms used must be *explained*; then the truths themselves are opened out or *expounded*, and finally *applied* to the particular cases of our pupils, individually as well as collectively.

Figurative subjects are either *parables* (which have a narrative form with an underlying spiritual meaning) or shorter *emblems*, which consist of comparisons between material things and their spiritual antitypes. Here, again, the *outward* story or natural object must be first explained, then the *spiritual* meaning brought out, and then this meaning *applied*.

Plan of Lesson-study.—Whatever class of subject is to be studied, the young teacher should follow some definite plan, however simple, so that he may not overlook important matters connected with it, and be found wanting when his scholars and he are talking together. The following "heads" of inquiry may serve as guideposts:—

1. *Persons*; 2. *Places*; 3. *Dates*; 4. *Doings*; 5. *Doctrines*; 6. *Duties*. Or, 1. *Surroundings*; 2. *Scope*; 3. *Persons*; 4. *Places*; 5. *Criticism*; 6. *Customs*; 7. *Difficulties*; 8. *Doctrines*. Or again, 1. *Authorship* (when a new book is commenced); 2. *Scope*; 3. *Parallel Passages*; 4. *Words and Phrases* (to be explained); 5. *Manners and Customs*; 6. *Difficulties*; 7. *Doctrines*.

The results of the orderly study of the passage after some such plan as the foregoing will be jotted down

roughly on paper. Then will come the final arrangement of the lesson for teaching. Here young workers often find considerable difficulty. The passage gets "all of a tangle," and will not shape itself into a manageable form. There is no need for surprise or for discouragement. Look steadily at the subject as you would through a telescope or microscope, and *focus* while you look. Continued attention will resolve mists into stars gleaming with heavenly brightness; and shapeless dots and patches into living creatures "fearfully and wonderfully made."

Look specially at what you have set down as the *Doctrines* taught by the passage. Consider these, and divide your lesson accordingly. If you have four, five, or six leading truths which the passage seems fairly to teach, put them down in the order of the verses out of which they most directly arise, and make a corresponding number of "sections," or "divisions," to your lesson, each section leading up to a "Doctrine." (Sometimes *two* doctrines will be taught by the same section; but one is preferable, as more easily remembered.) Thus, suppose there are eighteen verses to be read (and generally that is *more* than sufficient), the best arrangement for you might possibly be—Section I., vers. 1, 2; Section II., vers. 3-8; Section III., vers. 9-13; Section IV., vers. 14, 15; Section V., vers. 16-18. Usually, the number of sections will be found to vary from *three* to *six*; but of course all depends on the character and teaching of the particular passage.

The leading divisions being decided upon, a suitable **Introduction** to the lesson must be prepared with care. Enough, it is hoped, has been said in a previous chapter, under the heads of "Sympathy" and "Adaptation," to show how essential it is to start a Bible lesson with the wakeful interest of our scholars. It has also been shown that we may gain that interest by referring to something *familiar*, which touches their *sympathies*, or to something *unknown*, which tends to awaken *curiosity*. But, in order

to retain what we have gained, our introduction must lead on to the lesson itself. As a rule, an *Illustration*, whether a suitable *anecdote* or some striking *comparison*, makes the best kind of introduction for an ordinary Sunday school class.

The **Application** of the **Doctrines** taught by the passage should also receive careful thought. It should follow each Doctrine as it is brought out, so that there will be as many *Applications* as *Doctrines*, and (generally) as many *Doctrines* as there are *Sections* to the lesson. This will avoid a common source of failure—a hurried application at the *end* of the class exercises, falling too often upon wearied, and therefore listless, ears. Let the special points to be applied be jotted down with the doctrines out of which they arise.

Keeping up Attention.—Every teacher knows, generally by stern experience, that it is in the *Application* of religious truth that attention is most difficult to retain, and impression to be made. To counteract this, we have just suggested that such application should *not* be postponed to the end of a lesson, but “worked in,” so to speak, as the exercise proceeds. We would also point out the value and importance of the “*Illustrative method*” at these stages of instruction. Moral and spiritual truth is more interesting and impressive, and therefore retained more firmly in the mind, when *illustrated* by apt comparison or striking anecdotes. Hence, when doctrines are applied, such illustrative matter should be introduced. Doubtless, this will add something to the work of preparation, but the reward will be proportioned to the trouble taken.

Examples.—It may now, perhaps, be helpful to the reader, if we give a sample or two of such “Lesson Notes” as have been above described. There lies before us, as we are writing, the “International” Lesson for the coming Sunday. It is entitled “The Last Days of Joshua,” and comprises vers. 14–29 of Joshua xxiv.

A young teacher preparing for his class might possibly sketch out his lesson somewhat as follows :—

ROUGH LESSON NOTES.

THE LAST DAYS OF JOSHUA (Josh. xxiv. 14–29).

SCOPE.—About thirty years between entry into Palestine and Joshua's death. This shortly before the latter event (ver. 29). Gathering at Shechem, where law had been read to all Israel (viii.); natural amphitheatre; voices distinctly heard (xxiii.); a previous gathering only of representatives; this of all adult males. Joshua gives rapid sketch of past history and deliverances; urges them to renew promise; gives warnings and counsels. People respond zealously. Stone erected as memorial. People dismissed. Joshua's death.

PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Comp. *Last Words* of Jacob (Gen. xlix.), Moses (Deut. xxxiii.), Samuel (1 Sam. xii.), David (2 Sam. xxii.). *Choosing*: comp. 1 Sam. vii. 3; 1 Kings xviii. 21; Mark x. 21. *Self-confidence*: Matt. viii. 19; Luke xxii. 33. *Memorial Stones*: vers. 26, 27; Judg. ix. 6; ver. 29. *Servant of the Lord*: comp. chap. i. 1.

WORDS AND PHRASES.—Ver. 14, *Flood*, Euphrates; ver. 26, *the book*, Deut. xxxi. 24.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.—Ver. 23, *Put away*. Perhaps *teraphim*, like Laban's, or some other relics of idolatry.

Ver. 25, *Statute*. Recorded as part of the nation's history.

Ver. 26, *Stone*. Like Jacob and Samuel, *Oak—the oak*; places often so indicated. *Sanctuary*, not necessarily a building; a place "holy" by its associations, Gen. xii. 6–8.

DIFFICULTIES.—Ver. 19, *Cannot*. Not without spiritual change and divine strength; comp. Peter (Luke xxii. 33, 34).

DOCTRINES.—1. Ver. 14. We all are servants of some Master (John viii. 34).

2. Ver. 15. All have the power to choose whom they will serve.

3. Vers. 16–18. Reason for serving God (Rom. xii. 1).

4. Vers. 19, 20. Easy to resolve, but not easy to do.

5. Vers. 21–25. How to make the choice.

6. Vers. 26–29. Silent witnesses.

From the above rough notes, a Lesson might be arranged in various ways. The above scheme would give *six* Doctrines, and therefore six *Sections* to the exercise. Nos. 1 and 2, however, might fairly be placed together in one section, and No. 6 suggests some “last words” that will be easily illustrated and applied. This will give *five* Sections; all the above Doctrines being suitable for the young, and capable of application to youthful life and character.

The *title* of the Lesson suggests an *Introduction*—“The Last Words of Great Men”—which offers a wide field for selection. There is so much of bright and striking *incident* in the facts of the narrative itself, that comparatively few additional *Illustrations* are absolutely required. One or two may be introduced, however, to give increased interest and impressiveness to the Doctrines and the application of them.

SKETCH OF LESSON.

Introduction.—Last Words always impressive—remembered—those of great men not always striking. Nelson’s: “I thank God I have done my duty.” “Anchor! Hardy, anchor!” We are going to read the last words of a greater commander than Nelson—why greater, we shall presently see [*Passage read first time*].

Recapitulation.—We have followed the career of this great soldier, from his first appointment to his final victory. Had had perhaps seventeen or eighteen years of

quiet after the weary wilderness and the fierce tumult of conquest. Now he feels he is getting old; not much longer to live; past one hundred; and like to meet the people once more; old comrades. Mr. Herkomer's picture, "The Last Muster;" old soldiers at Chelsea. (Read ver. 1, and picture the scene.) What would it remind them of? (viii.). They would think how their leader was altered in outward appearances; but the voice has the old, brave, cheery ring about it. Joshua speaks to the chiefs, the judges, and the councillors; and they repeat it to those of the vast multitude who cannot hear it for themselves. He told them the old story of which they were never tired—how they had risen, from being a crowd of slaves, into a great nation. And then come the words of our lesson.

SECT. I. Vers. 14, 15.—Refer back to *Introduction*. What did Nelson mean by having "done his duty"? (Conquered the enemy.) Yes; and so he died satisfied. Had not Joshua done the same? Yet, if you look carefully at these verses you will see that *he* was *not* satisfied. In fact, he was very anxious. Can you find out what about? Turn to Deut. xxxi. 29. Had that come true yet (chap. xxiii. 8)? How old did we say Joshua was? What was he now expecting would happen to himself? Yes; and so he was afraid that after he was gone the people he cared so much for would——? Remember what good and wise advice he had given them long before; and ver. 15 shows he had given them something better even than counsel. But now he calls this great meeting to spend a few parting words. They are just like those of a soldier—short, plain, and to the point; but they came from his heart. Look at them carefully. First, ver. 15. "Fear," "Serve," "Put away;" and again, "Serve." [Explain and illustrate each. "*Fear*," not *fight*; "*serve*," not like slaves in Egypt, but as Joshua served Moses, "for the love of it;" "*put away*" dangerous things—like fire-

arms, gunpowder, or infected clothes.] Why so much about “serving”—almost every verse in our lesson has something about it? Two reasons—because Joshua knew that *every one must serve some master*. Jesus said, “No man can serve *two* masters,” and yet there are *only* two we can serve, either God or sin. (See John viii. 34.) Perhaps Joshua recollected how once, when he was young, the people had risen in rebellion against Moses, and had made one of the gods of Egypt, and worshipped it; and how Moses had cried out, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” and there was a great division into two parties, one for God, the others for the idol (Exod. xxxii.). It looks as if Joshua had this in his mind when he spoke (ver. 16). And it is the question which comes to all of us, some time or other; and which no one can answer but ourselves. *No one can choose for us*. This was the other reason why Joshua pressed so earnestly for an answer; and it is why we, your teachers, keep pressing on you the need for prompt decision for God. Youth is the chief choosing time; few come to God in middle life, fewer still in old age.

Apply. Which service will you choose? *You must serve some master. You must choose which master it shall be.* Christ’s service is the only true freedom. Satan’s is slavery worse than that of Egypt.

(The remaining sections may be similarly worked out in free conversation.)

SECT. II. Vers. 16–18.—God’s mercies. His *preserving care*, His *gracious protection*, His *special deliverances*. Similar blessings now. “Therefore” (ver. 18). See Rom. xii. 1. “*Reasonable*” to serve our best and kindest *Friend*.

SECT. III. Vers. 19, 20.—Easy to resolve, not so easy to keep good resolutions. Need for strength beyond our own. Strength to *do right*, and strength to *resist evil*. The Israelites’ special temptations. What “strange gods”

are worshipped now? *Always resolve in dependence on God's help.*

SECT. IV. Vers. 21-25.—Making a promise. How promises are often made and broken. Here we have a whole nation making a promise. What called in ver. 25? What is a “covenant”? (Explain by reference to an apprentice's indentures, or “covenants” in a lease.) Importance of covenants. The people's covenant with——? A solemn matter. “Blue ribbon” covenants, covenants with God. Practice of Philip Henry's family, etc.

Apply. *The covenant should be made seriously, intelligently, deliberately, and finally.* You will never repent it in after days. See what David said about this when he was old, and had many troubles (2 Sam. xxiii. 5).

SECT. V. Vers. 26-29.—“Witnesses.” Illustrate by court of law. “Covenants” always are “witnessed.” So here. Joshua had already mentioned one class of witnesses (vers. 22, 23); now another (ver. 17); and there would be a third (vers. 25, 26). He seemed to say to them, “My voice and the voice of these ‘elders’ will soon be silent in the grave. Yet if you leave the God who has done so much for you and bow down to idols of wood and stone, your *memories* and your *consciences* will be witnesses to condemn you for your broken promise. Whenever you pass this stone, it will seem to cry out against you. And this book in which I have written an account of your covenant will be a silent witness too. And now, farewell for ever on earth. Be faithful and obedient to God, and He will bless you and defend you from all your enemies.”

Apply. Read ver. 29.—Parents, ministers, teachers, die; but there are silent witnesses to the good resolutions you make. The quiet bedroom where you prayed, the old place in the class, the worn Bible and hymn-book, the old sanctuary, the old home, the mother's grave, and, above all, the voice of conscience, will speak of resolutions happily kept, or the covenant broken and forgotten.

“Notes,” Written and Printed.—The foregoing roughly condensed sketch will serve to exemplify the manner in which a sacred narrative may be prepared for the purpose of class-instruction. It will be seen that the methods employed are chiefly the *Didactic*, the *Illustrative*, and the *Interrogative*; but it must be understood that in actual teaching a larger number of questions would be asked, it being most desirable to induce the scholars to contribute as much as possible to the conversation. The writer has always advocated the bringing of *written* notes into the class, unless a teacher’s memory is very tenacious and reliable. Notes counteract the tendency to wander from the subject, and prevent the loss of the “thread of discourse.” *Printed* notes of any kind are objectionable, as suggesting to the scholars that their teacher is a mere retailer of other men’s thoughts and words, but *written* notes imply that he has at least thought his pupils worth taking pains for.

Proportion of Illustrative Matter.—It was remarked in a previous page that the amount of *illustration* needed in a given lesson must depend chiefly on the presence or absence of such matter in the portion of Scripture read. The Sermon on the Mount, a chapter in Romans or Ephesians, or a selection from the Psalms or Proverbs, would generally require much more illustrative material to be supplied from without, than a historical narrative like the above, or a fictitious narrative, such as the parable of the Wedding Garment or the Prodigal Son. In other words, when moral and spiritual truth is stated in a direct form, with nothing of the “story” about it, it must be “clothed upon” with anecdotes and other illustrations to render it intelligible and attractive to the young.

For example, the Sunday School Union “Morning Lessons” for the month in which we are writing, are taken from Matt. v. and vi., and bear the following titles: “The

Blessed Life," "The Law and the Gospel," "Giving and Praying," "Care and Trust." Now, while it is true that these chapters include some very striking and beautiful figures and emblems, which in themselves *illustrate* the inner truths our Lord was uttering in respect to His kingdom, yet there is nothing of the historical or narrative element, nothing about particular persons or their actions and characters. Hence, such material must be supplied by the teacher; and accordingly, we find the *Sunday School Chronicle* and other periodicals giving samples of anecdotes and other illustrations for use in the class.

In arranging such passages for teaching (especially where the scholars are mere children), it will be advisable to select such verses as appear the most simple and suitable; group them in "sections," as in a narrative lesson; bring out and dwell upon *one* doctrine in each section; *illustrate* it, and *apply* it to juvenile character and experience. The most difficult of the four subjects above cited, for junior class instruction, is undoubtedly the second, "The Law and the Gospel" (Matt. v. 17-24; 38-48). What is a young teacher to do? Try to "get through" the whole nineteen verses, or throw up the subject altogether and fall back on Moses or Joseph, David or Timothy? We would reply, Neither. The former course would violate the principle of adaptation; the latter would furnish a dangerous precedent for evading any subsequent lesson-subjects which might appear more difficult than ordinary. Nor is there solid ground for diverging so far from the passage before us. Vers. 17-19, 38, 39, and 43-45, might be made to yield truths simple and practical. For example:

I. Vers. 17, 18.—All that God says is sure to come true.

II. Ver. 19.—The way to be really *great* is to do the *little* things which God has told us

III. Vers. 38, 39.—Great fighters are not great in God's sight. The followers of Christ must *bear* rather than *revenge* injuries.

IV. Vers. 43-45.—The greatest of all those who love all, and try to do good to all; because they are most like Christ.

No attempt needs to be made to explain the Oriental allusions in vers. 21-24, and 41, since junior scholars would not possess the knowledge requisite for understanding and appreciating them. They should, therefore, be passed over with some such remarks as, "You will understand these verses when you are older."

Parables and Emblems.—A lesson on one of the Parables would be treated, as already intimated, in the same manner as a real narrative, dividing it into sections for the sake of convenience, and observing carefully in each to follow the true order, viz.: (1) The *outward emblem*; (2) the *spiritual meaning*; (3) the *practical application*.

Shorter figurative lessons, so abundant in Christ's teaching, but occurring also in all the didactic portions of the Old and New Testaments, should be similarly treated—the *natural* object first; then its *spiritual* signification; and then the *application* to everyday life and conduct. A common fault with young and earnest teachers is to rush too hastily to the *second* stage; forgetting that (on the principles of association and analogy) it is only when the outward figure is securely lodged in the scholar's memory and understanding that the inward meaning and application can be retained also. The *anchor* must hold, or that which is fastened to it will soon drift far away.

Blackboard Lessons.—Now that Blackboard Plans for Bible lessons are so frequently offered for use in junior classes, it may be well to remark that a "Blackboard Lesson" does not represent any peculiarity of

subject or even of method. The "board" is simply a "note-book" of wood on which catchwords or short sentences, representing the "heads" or "points" of a lesson, may be written so that the eye may aid the ear, and the points be more fully committed to memory. The method of preparing a given lesson-subject is in no way affected by the use of a blackboard, more than by the use of a slip of paper, or by dispensing with writing altogether. It is a valuable help in junior-class teaching, for the reason just given, and also because the process of writing the key-words excites a measure of curiosity, if too much time be not occupied therein.

The use of **Pictures** and **Objects** as aids to Sunday school instruction is better known than practised. It needs care and judgment where a separate room is not provided, as the production of a coloured print may divert the attention of neighbouring classes. Yet in the present day so many pictorial illustrations of sacred truth are continually published in one form or another, that opportunities of "illuminating" a text of Holy Scripture by engraving, photograph, or natural object, continually present themselves to our observant teacher, and should not be neglected for fear of being "singular." Drawings on a blackboard fall, of course, under the same head as any other drawings. In all cases such appliances should be used simply as *illustrations* of Scripture truth, and be laid aside as soon as that purpose has been accomplished.

In bringing this chapter to a close, the writer would affectionately urge upon his younger co-workers the wisdom and the duty of *grudging no pains* in seeking to prepare for each sabbath's hallowed toil. *Early, ample, prayerful*, preparation is one of the chief essentials of comfort in teaching, as it is one of the indispensable conditions of success. But surely the highest motives may be appealed to here. "I think," said the noble Living-

stone, "that we ought never to apply such a word as *sacrifice* to anything that *we* can do for Him who laid down His life for us;" and the sentiment should find an abiding-place in the hearts of all who labour in the pleasant mission-field at home. It is little enough that we can do for Him, at the best; brief at most can be our term of earthly service, briefer still the period during which we can hold our young hearers beneath the sound of our voices. They must be won for Christ *now*, or the golden hour of decision will, in too many cases, have passed for ever. Could we view our work in the light of history—the history of many a guileless child who once sat on the forms of the Sunday school—we should need no human exhortations to fidelity as we gazed on the wreck of all that was once so fair. In wisdom and in love, the results of our labour are as yet hidden from our view; but down the long ages come the solemn words of Him who is our Pattern as well as our Lord, and from whom we draw our motive, our strength, and our inspiration: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; *the night cometh, when no man can work.*"

"How can I, Lord, withhold
Life's brightest hour
From Thee? or gathered gold,
Or any power?

Why should I keep one precious thing from Thee,
When Thou hast given Thine own dear Self for me?"

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CHAPTER VI.

CLASS TEACHING.

Excusable Hesitation.—No thoughtful young Christian who has pondered the nature and capabilities of his chosen work, can enter upon the duty of instructing a band of children in any portion of Holy Writ, without some measure of shrinking and hesitation. The knowledge that those youthful spirits are immortal; that the truths to be communicated are essentially divine; that the lesson about to be given must inevitably draw the learners nearer to, or repel them further from, God and His ways, and that its issues will reach beyond the present state of being; such considerations as these, combined with a sense of personal inadequacy, may well solemnize the mind as each sabbath's engagements return. But while they inspire the question, "Who is sufficient?" they ought also to suggest the answer, "Our sufficiency is of God." He, who regards the children with infinite love and compassion, will not fail to work in and with those whom He has called to tell them the story of that love. It is ours faithfully to plant and tend and train; it is His, and His alone, to give the increase.

Manner in School.—With such views and feelings a teacher will not need to be reminded that his demeanour in the school and in the class should be reverent and earnest. The humblest Sunday school is a con-

secrated spot; and the nature of its exercises should exclude all frivolities from its sacred precincts. Gossip and small-talk should find no place within its walls; and every teacher should remember that his or her bearing, in word or in act, constitutes an open book, which the children will be only too quick to read.

Towards the young people under their care, teachers should behave with an earnest kindness which expresses true sympathy and interest in all that concerns them. Anything approaching to an "official" mannerism or the (supposed) air of a theological professor, must be banished from the class; while the other extreme, of over-familiarity, is also to be carefully avoided. A scholar's love and confidence may be won without permitting any approach to rudeness; indeed, genuine friendship must ever rest on mutual respect as well as mutual affection.

Punctuality.—Early arrival at the school affords to a teacher legitimate and convenient opportunities for friendly inquiries, both personal and domestic, relating to each of his pupils, and so for the manifestation of sympathy, both verbal and practical, in their everyday affairs. Such personal interchange is no unfit preparation for teaching, since the *moral* sympathy awakened by kindly words smooths the road for the *mental* sympathy which the lesson will need. It may be added that the course now recommended is far preferable to that gossiping among the teachers which, in some schools, regularly precedes the "opening" of each sabbath's session.

An orderly, reverent, and cheerful interest should be taken in the devotional exercises of the school, both before and after class instruction; and by precept as well as example all the children should be encouraged to take part therein. The possession of a hymn-book by each scholar should be insisted on until that desirable end has been attained; and reference should be made, whenever opportunity occurs, to the hymns and prayers.

Physical Conditions.—Before commencing to teach, the physical comfort of the class should be attended to. If the privilege of a separate room be enjoyed, the *ventilation* will be under the teacher's control, and should be looked after carefully and regularly. The most impressive admonitions will be thrown away on pupils who are being gradually stupefied by the carbonic acid exhaled from their own lungs in a closely shut apartment; and even a bright and earnest teacher soon becomes, in point of energy and liveliness, "a spring shut up—a fountain sealed" (though *not* in the scriptural sense), under the influence of a worse narcotic than tobacco! An ill-ventilated schoolroom should be made the subject of remonstrance and suggestion at teachers' meetings, since the matter has a far more intimate connection with attention and impression than is generally recognized by busy superintendents and secretaries, too often "cumbered," like Martha, with "much serving."

The size, construction, and position of seats is another material point. Many a well-prepared lesson has been robbed of its due influence by over-long legs, ill-sloped backs, or the absence of backs altogether, in the forms allotted to the juvenile hearers. So also the seats should be placed where every scholar can see and hear, and be seen and heard, without change of posture. Much improvement has been effected in educational furniture during the past ten or fifteen years, but many glaring defects are still observable in the fittings of our Sunday schools.

Devotional Exercises.—Preliminary also to actual instruction are the devotional exercises with which all Sunday schools commence, and to which the young teacher's earnest consideration should always be given. More "reform" is perhaps needed here even than in the matters of light, ventilation, and fittings. A few hints, extracted from a larger manual, may be repeated:—

“ There is no need, however, for the teacher to be mute. The interval offers an excellent opportunity for friendly interchange of kind inquiries between himself and his scholars, and for reference to other matters of interest which too often are thrust unseasonably into the brief season allotted to actual instruction. This can easily be managed without noise, and will exert a favourable influence on both early and late comers.

“ At the first signal from the superintendent’s desk all conversation and all movements from place to place should *instantly* cease. The hymn-books, if not already produced, should be called for by a gesture, and any attempt to talk or whisper promptly and gravely repressed. It must be admitted that the bearing and attitudes of Sunday scholars during school worship are seldom devotional, and often unseemly and irreverent. Many have no hymn-books, and some who have hold them in positions where they cannot be read. Many—the elder lads especially—do not sing at all; a few bawl loudly or chime in at intervals, in a style which is either simply frivolous or intentionally mischievous. Some loll, some sit, some talk, some pinch or pommel their companions—their teachers, good easy souls! singing heartily with eyes averted from their charge, or with eyes closed, uniting fervently in the uttered prayer. The remedy for this common but most pernicious state of things is to be sought, not in remonstrances or appeals from the desk, but in reformation in the class. Each teacher should not only set an example of earnest interest in the acts of united praise and prayer, but resolutely endeavour to excite similar feelings in his scholars. He should stand perfectly upright, and at a spot whence he can see every member of the class. Every tendency to levity must be instantly checked by a movement of the hand or a glance of the eye; and if the tendency to disorder is persistent, after the fault has been kindly pointed out, it will be advisable to keep the eyes open during

prayer-time ; afterwards telling the children that this was necessary because they "could not be trusted," but will be gladly discontinued as soon as they are prepared to act in a more seemly manner. Devotion cannot be implanted, but habits of decorum should be perseveringly enjoined, and the duty and privilege of genuine worship frequently urged upon thoughtless youth."

Of course, the foregoing hints apply to the *closing* equally with the *opening* exercises of the school.

Our reader may perhaps be thinking that we have lingered too long on the threshold of actual lesson-giving. But, since there are always enough *unavoidable* obstacles to be confronted, it is no waste of time to remove those which may be averted by a little care and foresight. We will now, however, proceed to offer a few counsels on the practical use of a lesson prepared as already described.

Reading Round.—Most teachers begin a lesson by "reading round," whatever the appointed passage of Scripture may be. The practice seems to us to be of doubtful expediency. Unless the children are already still and attentive, it appears hardly reverent to Holy Scripture to read verse by verse in order to produce quietness ; nor is such reading likely to be "with the understanding." Besides, on principles which will need no further exposition here, a passage of the Bible is much more likely to be understood and appreciated when the scholars have some idea of its bearings, than when they plunge, as it were, into a subject entirely new. Wherever, by the use of lesson-papers or other means, the children can be induced to prepare for the sabbath conversation beforehand—a most desirable step—this argument will not apply. Yet, on the whole, we consider that it is better to give the INTRODUCTION of the lesson *before* "reading round." It is not needful, however, to adopt an unvarying rule. Change is sometimes good, even for its own sake.

The Introduction.—In the *Introduction* itself, care will be required to avoid two common faults—*undue length*, and *wandering* from the subject of the lesson, *towards* which and not *from* which the introductory remarks ought to lead. It is essential that this “key-note” should be struck in a lively tone. As we are all aware, by experience, the first five minutes of any spoken address will usually determine the degree of attention which it will gain. It should, therefore, be always a *prepared* section, designed, as shown in the preceding chapters, to arouse the interest of the scholars, and enlist it for the sacred theme which is to be unfolded. It may be an anecdote, a fable, a quaint proverb, a pithy saying, a wayside observation; but an Introduction is not the place for doctrine or precept,—these will follow in due course.

Class Conversation.—It is in the instruction of the class through the various stages of the prepared lesson that the teacher’s abilities and resources will be most severely taxed. To attain the art of skilfully guiding a conversation is an invaluable gift—as difficult as that of driving “four-in-hand;” yet, like it, to be reached by practice and perseverance, and by these alone.

The *interrogative* method should be adhered to with full determination to draw out the thoughts of the children in words, and so to ascertain the limits of their knowledge and their ignorance. In senior classes, particularly of girls, it is often difficult and sometimes impossible to overcome the silence caused by bashfulness; but among juniors no such reticence exists. The embarrassment felt by those who teach children interrogatively is due to the number and variety of the answers, and the confusion which they often seem to produce; hence, young teachers are tempted to fall back on the *didactic* method, so as to be able to “lecture” without awkward interruptions. But the gain is more than counterbalanced by the loss. A mere talker never knows how much of his talk is

received by his hearers ; and instruction didactically given, soothes those it ought to awaken, and leaves in a merely passive condition the energies which need to be called into activity.

Random answers are often but the natural results of random questions. Queries should be made as definite as possible, and then careless answers can be firmly but kindly checked. The *general line* of the questions should be arranged beforehand, though, of course, it is not necessary to prepare every single question that may be put,—indeed, it is impossible, for the scholars' answers constantly suggest questions not previously decided on.

The questioning should be interspersed with instruction and comment from the teacher, and pointed inquiries be put after each section, or as each important fact or doctrine is brought out, to ascertain if the pupils have really *learned* what has been communicated to them.

A cardinal maxim in all teaching (our readers will forgive the repetition of so important a precept) is, *Give every pupil something to do* ; and this should be a matter of special endeavour in class conversation. “How is this to be accomplished?” will naturally be asked. *Not*, certainly, by the antiquated plan of *individual teaching*—calling up each child in rotation to read, while the others amuse themselves as best they can. Nor by adopting the *simultaneous system*, wherein all the scholars read and answer in chorus ; since, although this kind of exercise is useful in infant classes taught in separate rooms, it is far too noisy under ordinary conditions. But while it is a mistake to teach our scholars one by one, we should keep each before our mind's eye, and intersperse questions and remarks addressed to one and another child, among the more general interrogations or instructions addressed to the whole class. We must try and foster the timid, while gently checking the too impulsive ; for, as was said of the two Greeks, we shall meet with the “dull horse that needs

the spur," as well as the "restive steed that requires curb and rein." No scholar should be unduly patronized and none feel neglected, or even overlooked. We can frame more difficult questions for the forward, and easier ones for the less advanced. Then, such a personal acquaintance with each child as has been enjoined already will enable the teacher to provide special portions for different pupils. A word of counsel; a familiar and well-understood reference to affairs at home; an illustration drawn from a particular trade, or favourite amusement, or juvenile "hobby," to this scholar or that; a sympathetic or encouraging word of interest for any in trouble or difficulty;—these and other simple expedients will augment the teachers' influence and facilitate the work of instruction. Almost every sacred narrative will be found to touch, at some point or other, the everyday life and experience of one or more members of a sabbath class, and it needs no extraordinary abilities to discover such points of contact when the habit of seeking them has been acquired.

Thus the minds of the scholars may be kept in an active condition, both by the stimulus of questions, and by the sympathy awakened through familiar and personal allusions, as the lesson proceeds.

Adaptation of Bible Scenes and Incidents.—In the presentation of Bible truth it must be constantly borne in mind, that, while Scripture is wonderfully human and many-sided, as just hinted, yet its histories and biographies relate to ages long past and to modes of life widely differing from our own. To render such scenes vivid and real to the mind without sacrificing accuracy will need some care and painstaking. It will not do to follow the example of some of the old artists, and describe the lives of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles as if they belonged to the nineteenth century—to dress Adam and Eve, Moses and Elijah, in the costumes of Belgravia or Kensington,

and lodge them in suburban villas or English farmhouses. Yet they ought to be as real living personages as any whom the children of our classes meet in their own town or country abodes—not mere shadowy ghosts of the distant past. How shall this realization be secured? *First*, by honestly describing Bible scenes as they actually were, whether by words alone or with the help of pictures or other illustrations. *Secondly*, by using the principle of *analogy*, and explaining the oriental and ancient by whatever most resembles it in modern life. *Thirdly*, by bringing out the *moral qualities* and *motives*, the virtues and the faults, which underlie the facts of Biblical, as of all other history. The externals of human life are always changing, but moral principles are ever the same. When these are brought out, Jacob's deceit, Moses' forbearance, Samuel's integrity, Peter's self-confidence, are seen to be qualities familiar enough even to a child's mind, and hence those who manifested them become no longer myths but realities.*

Technical Terms in Religious Teaching.—But the Bible has not only its peculiarities of historical colouring; it has also its great spiritual doctrines—its revelation of good tidings concerning God and things unseen. Hence it has also its *technical terms*—new words, and words used in new senses, to express new ideas. By the time we have reached adult age we become so familiar with most of these Scripture technicalities that we are apt to forget that we once had to learn their meaning. And so in instructing the young we often make use of terms which are wholly unintelligible to them until explained. This is one of the commonest errors on the part of theological teachers of all grades and titles; and nowhere do they more frequently or more unconsciously mislead their hearers. For where the true meaning is not known, the

* The author's little tract, "The Art of Picturing," will be found to offer more detailed hints on the subject.

imagination usually supplies an erroneous one—often a caricature. Nowhere so much as in religious phraseology is the duty of being simple ignored by Sunday school teachers. *All words and phrases peculiar to Scripture or to religion should be explained clearly, and the more important terms repeatedly.* It was one of the excellences of the old catechisms that they defined these terms with precision; though it was one of their defects that the definition was couched in language as unintelligible as the thing defined, and often much more so! A sound rule for the teacher of children to follow, is to communicate first the *idea*, and then the technical *word* which expresses it.

It is to be feared that, through oversight or slovenliness, not a few Sunday scholars (even those beyond the age of childhood) have been allowed to remain with the vaguest of notions, and in some cases no notion at all, of the meaning of terms so important as *disciple, apostle, judgment, righteousness, repentance, faith, kingdom of heaven, justification, grace, gospel*, and many other Bible words and phrases, not to speak of current expressions, as “under conviction of sin,” “coming to Christ,” “yielding themselves to the Lord,” “giving the heart to Jesus,” “having the assurance of faith,” “setting the face Zionward,” and so forth. To these may be added a host of figurative modes of speech found chiefly in hymns of the revival and evangelistic type, and reaching their climax of extravagance in the ditties of the Salvation Army. Most of these metaphors are strongly sensuous, not to say coarse; and some appear to ordinary minds to border very closely on profanity. They tend, however, not merely to diminish reverence on the part of those who use them, but are a fruitful source of error and misconception, especially with children. Hence the teacher should be on his guard against the common delusion that the shouting of strongly worded choruses is necessarily connected with an intelligent comprehension of the sentiments expressed.

Simple Language.—The language used in the scriptural instruction of the young should be studiously simple—adapted, of course, to the ages and capacities of the particular pupils; yet, on the whole, embodied in plain Saxon—homely, without any slang or vulgarisms; familiar, yet not babyish. Long words and grandiose phrases are as objectionable as technical terms. The latter cannot be avoided, but, as we have pointed out, must be interpreted by translation into ordinary language; the former are to be excluded altogether from the Sunday school.

Aspects of Divine Truth.—A volume might be devoted to a topic which we must needs pass over with but a few desultory suggestions—“the *aspects* of Scripture truth best adapted to the young.” In what light should we present to children and youth the Divine character, the nature of sin, the atonement, conversion, practical religion, heaven and hell, the final judgment, and similar momentous topics?

Perhaps the safest general answer may be somewhat as follows:—We must exhibit these spiritual realities in the aspects in which Scripture itself presents them, in the particular passages which we have from time to time allotted us for exposition; for *all* these aspects are true and just. Since, however, we live under the new and final dispensation, not the patriarchal or Jewish economy, we are permitted, nay, bound, to *dwell specially* upon *New Testament* aspects of truth, rather than *Old*, as being both higher and milder. Dr. Watts appears to have reached this conclusion in the composition of his version of the Psalms, if we may judge from the well-known extract so often prefixed to modern editions of his devotional poetry. He says, “Where the Psalmist describes religion by the fear of God, I have often joined faith and love to it. Where he speaks of the pardon of sin through the mercies of God, I have added the merits of a Saviour. Where he talks of sacrificing goats or bullocks, I rather choose to

mention the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God. Where he promises abundance of wealth, honour, and long life, I have changed some of these typical blessings for grace, glory, and life eternal."

To come, however, to particulars. It is of supreme importance that the *Divine character* be so presented as to inspire right feelings in the youthful heart, as well as correct ideas in the mind. We cannot hesitate to affirm that the utmost prominence should be given to that aspect which it is the peculiar glory of the gospel to reveal—"Our Father" in Christ Jesus—the God who is all that a Father can be to a child, and who so loved *us* as to give His only Son for us. At the same time *all* the Divine attributes, of majesty, holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, etc., should have their place in Sunday school teaching. Indeed, it is to be feared that a desire to show forth the Divine love and compassion towards the ungodly, has led to unintentional suppression of correlative truths, as clearly enunciated by Christ and His apostles. We need not revert to Old Testament language to learn that "all things are naked and opened in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," and that it is a fearful thing "to fall," unpardoned, "into the hands of the living God." The most scathing denunciations of sin and insincerity fell from lips of infinite tenderness, even as we are taught by "His cross and passion" the infinite hatred of God to all evil. And it is an error which may prove of serious practical moment to permit even children to think lightly of sin, because of that other truth that "God is love."

Side by side with the *evil* of sin, and its *grievousness* and *hatefulness* on God's right, the inevitable *loss* and *injury* which it must always bring to the sinner should be plainly enforced. Wrong-doing should be exhibited as a real "sowing of wild oats" in a deeper sense than the world attaches to that phrase, and also as *ingratitude* towards our best Friend. It will often prove a help in

inducing conviction of sin, if we dwell upon the sinfulness of bad tempers and sins of omission—the passions which make us unlovely in word and deed, and the good which we fail to do. It is scarcely necessary to add that a teacher should point especially to *youthful* faults and sins, and such as *his own scholars* are likely to be chargeable with, instead of denouncing transgressions peculiar to the mature in years, or the wealthy and influential in station. A child cradled in poverty is not likely to be led away by worldly pride; nor does one who has never known want need warning against distrust of Providence. But let them exchange places, and the counsel may be timely enough. *Repentance* and *faith* must not be separated. The former must be shown to be, not a mere feeling, but a turning away from sin.

“’Tis not enough to say,
We’re sorry, and repent,” etc.,

is a hymn which, like many others, needs to be graven on youthful minds more extensively than modern neglect of such memory lessons seems to allow.

The *sacrificial* idea of Christ’s atonement is not a very easy one for children to grasp, unless carefully pictured out, because altars and offerings are no longer familiar objects, but its essential element—*substitution* of the innocent for the guilty—may be illustrated in many ways; and the innocent Saviour should be shown taking our place and suffering in our stead, having fulfilled the “righteousness” of which we all have “come short.”

The manner in which the *Lord Jesus* is “openly showed forth” before the mental eye of childhood is of primary importance. The young mind cannot realize the God who is a Spirit, either in nature, providence, or grace. It is “the only-begotten Son” who has “revealed Him” to mortal understandings. “He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father,” should be a motto constantly in the

teacher's view. Gazing into His character as manifested in His earthly ministry, we learn what God is.

The Lord Jesus should also be presented as the Friend, Guide, Companion, and Example of youth. "He will be to us what He was to His disciples; we can go to Him in all our troubles and difficulties; He will, by His Holy Spirit, counsel, direct, strengthen, and comfort us; He is always able, always near, and always willing—a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'"

Saving faith may be accurately exemplified by the *putting of the hand* into that of another, trusting Christ for forgiveness, and strength, and guidance.

Religion should be always presented as a happy and privileged *service*. Children delight to do anything for those they love, and so the "light and easy yoke" of Christian service should be offered to them. At the same time, the obligations of a true follower of the Redeemer should not be concealed. Self-sacrifice for Christ will not be a burdensome duty to those who have learned to love and trust Him, however young they may be.

Heaven and *hell* are frequent themes of comment. The former should be pictured to the young as a place, not of enforced *rest*, but of glorified service and unwearied occupation. The late Dr. Southon, who met his death by an accident after the brief but devoted service in the missionary field in South Africa, wrote in his last letter home, "Oh! if He calls me to help Mullens, and Thompson, and others gone on before, how gladly will I respond, and knock off work here!" Every pure and innocent enjoyment *here* is to have its counterpart in our heavenly home, only in a fuller and more exalted form. This idea is impressively worked out in an American work which attracted considerable notice some years back, entitled "The Gates Ajar;" while a theologian of much greater eminence, even Luther himself, did not hesitate to exhibit the same view of the celestial world, when, in writing to his little

son, he tells him of a garden fairer than any on earth, and of playthings so curious and beautiful as to make a child's heart leap for joy. These he promises to little Hans by-and-by, if he is a good boy.

The New Testament reveals a hell, as well as a heaven; and in terms sufficiently solemn even when we set aside the mediæval notions which have incrustated the actual teaching of Scripture. Since the immature minds of children are as yet unable fully to realize the evil of sin,—and, indeed, what finite understanding can do so?—it seems most judicious to represent the state of future punishment under negative rather than positive aspects, as a condition in which sin works out its bitter fruits, and shuts out the soul from God, and gladness, and the companionship of the good, in darkness and banishment. Happily, there is no need to make this awful and mysterious topic a prominent theme of conversation in a Sunday school class.

Let us add that *all* Bible truth should be presented in view of the mission and work of the Lord Jesus Christ—in the light that streams from the cross and sheds its radiance over all the ages.

Adaptation to Different Temperaments.—Throughout his instructions, the teacher must be prepared to meet and to make due provision for those diversities of temperament which occur in every class, even of young children, and which place each individual, so to speak, in a different attitude from the rest, in relation to spiritual truth. The gospel never comes to two persons in precisely the same aspect, and hence, without sacrificing fidelity, there is needed a *special adaptation* of the gospel to each particular mind and heart. Each “case,” as in medical practice, must be studied and dealt with on its own grounds.

One type of juvenile character is the slow, heavy, and apparently unimpressible; at the opposite extreme is the lively, volatile, thoughtless, easily affected nature; and be-

tween these poles lie many intermediate zones of disposition. From the resources of the inspired volume, we may draw instruments of impression and conviction adapted to all shades of character and temperament. The Apostle Paul will furnish an admirable model for imitation. We find him not only varying his modes of presenting Divine truth, but also employing different motives to persuade to repentance, faith, and holiness. He appeals now to gratitude and now to fear; now he exhibits God's authority, "commanding men everywhere to repent," and now to God's condescending love, "beseeching" the rebellious, through His "ambassadors," to be "reconciled" to Himself. He exhorts to godliness, at one time in view of the example of Christ, at another because of His atoning sacrifice; and again, because of the brevity of life, and the certainty of a judgment to come. Now he entreats his readers to strive to please their Master, and then exhorts them to shun any conduct which would bring reproach on Christ and Christianity. So, they who teach the gospel to the young must seek to find and to touch, by suitable appeals, the unseen springs of thought, feeling, and will.

Manner in Teaching.—We have adverted in a previous chapter to the importance and influence of the *manners* of a teacher; *manner in teaching* is a part of the same subject, and will need but few additional remarks.

That a devout and earnest bearing should accompany the delivery of inspired truth, whether in the pulpit, the platform, or the class, every reader will admit. Indeed, if a Bible lesson has been thoughtfully and prayerfully studied, a deep sense of responsibility can hardly be absent, and the outward manner will correspond with the inward feelings. And without such convictions it is as useless as it is culpable to assume earnestness and solemnity of deportment; our insincerity will be detected and despised even by the youngest. Anything, therefore, which approaches a "professional" or artificial mannerism, must be utterly

repudiated; the candour and simplicity of childhood recoil from all such unnatural airs. "Be what thou seemest" and "seem what thou art," are precepts never to be forgotten, in or out of school.

A sense of responsibility, however, may in some cases induce an excessive gravity of manner, tending to repress and repel the innocent liveliness of youth. This is a mistake; a teacher may be bright and cheerful without indulging in unseemly lightness or frivolity. Indeed, a funereal bearing, if persisted in, will soon disperse a juvenile class, inasmuch as the teacher violates thereby the great principle of sympathy. We must try to be childlike with children. Dulness is an unpardonable fault, for it misrepresents the true cheerfulness of Christian life, and fosters the error—too common, alas! with old as well as young people—that religion's "ways" are anything but "ways of pleasantness."

A *loving and sympathetic* manner, when it is the outcome of like dispositions, is among the strongest and most enduring of the many ties which bind teacher and scholar together. To gain a child's affection is not a difficult task. Love evokes love; and when obtained, places in the Christian teacher's hands a mighty influence for good. Let it be treasured with unceasing care; let it be wisely and perseveringly employed; and as in the past so in the future, and far more abundantly, will the response be heard from thousands of youthful lips, "Where thou goest I will go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

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CHAPTER VII.

CLASS MANAGEMENT.

A Distinction drawn.—The management of a class of children is something entirely distinct from the work of instruction ; and many teachers, by no means unskilled in the latter art, fail of success through a want of aptitude in the former. We can scarcely take a critical survey of any Sunday school without coming to the conclusion that the authority in many of the classes sadly needs strengthening, while closer observations would probably suggest that skill in government is partly natural and partly acquired. There are some persons who appear to possess an innate faculty of managing children, which in others seems entirely wanting ; gentlemen fail here much more than ladies, womanly tact being far more efficacious than masculine force ; yet, on the whole, few of our schools are as orderly and well disciplined as they might be.

Cause of Lax Authority.—One of the chief causes of this laxity of government lies on the surface. The authorities of the Sunday school have to depend mainly on the voluntary attendance of the scholars, and they have no power to compel obedience like their co-workers in day schools. Corporeal punishment is felt to be repugnant to the very spirit of a religious institution ; to impose tasks as a penalty for misconduct is equally objectionable ; and the severest infliction at their disposal is suspension or expulsion, either of which may do more harm than good.

If we add to this the infrequency of the regular engagements as contrasted with the daily attendance at secular schools, we shall cease to wonder that the latter are far in advance in point of discipline. As, however, there are well-ordered Sunday schools and classes, showing that improvement is quite practicable, a short chapter is here devoted to a consideration of the subject.

Causes of Disorder.—The causes of disorder are numerous and varied. Some are *physical*, such as impure air, uncomfortable seats, awkward positions during teaching, overcrowding of classes, etc. These were referred to in the preceding chapter as obstacles to instruction. Some are *mental*, such as unsuitable matter or style in the teaching, rendering it unintelligible or uninteresting. Thence arise inattention and restlessness, and the next step is confusion and insubordination. This defect has also been pointed out in a former page.

Among the chief *moral* causes of disorder are, laxity in home discipline (or sometimes the opposite extreme, of over-severity); the example of other scholars' frolicsomeness; love of mischief; vanity, and a desire to appear conspicuous; self-will; obstinacy of temper; and sometimes, though not often with mere children, deliberate refusal to recognize a teacher's authority.

Of these, the *first* is one of the hindrances for which neither scholar nor teacher is responsible; nor can it be dealt with except by seeking to gain an influence over the parents. The *second* is a too familiar occurrence in Sunday school experience, and one which requires tact rather than punishment. The placing of the members of a class should not be left to the children themselves, unless no ill result follows the arrangement. All "higher" and "lower" seats should be repudiated, and all "taking of places" for correct answers to questions should be remitted to the day school. Two persistent little chatter-boxes should be kept separate, and any "ringleader" in

gossip or fidgets be seated next to the teacher, who should decline to give reasons for such classification.

That volatility and love of fun, graduating into mischievous practical jokes, by which so many children are characterized, need gentle and kindly, though resolute, treatment. The injury done to a class by the overflowing animal spirits of one small boy or girl is vastly more serious than the offence committed. The evil must therefore be suppressed, but not dealt with as if it was a deliberate moral offence. In most cases the child requires more occupation; but if this be not sufficient, he or she should be taken in hand *privately*, and talked to in a quiet and earnest manner. Generally such children are affectionate, and kind words will "enter in," where a solemn lecture would be forgotten as soon as delivered.

Principles of Class Government.—The other sources of disorder are of a much more serious kind, and almost every case will need some peculiarity of treatment. We can only, therefore, lay down some general principles for a teacher's guidance, it being understood that the government of *elder scholars* does not fall within the scope of the present work, but will be found treated of in the author's larger manual.

Subordination Essential.—It is of vital importance that every teacher, young or old, should be supreme in his own class. It is essential to the welfare of the scholars, as well as to his own self-respect and comfort, that it should be so. Appeals to the higher authority of the superintendent are almost invariably recognized as signs of weakness, and increase the evils they are meant to cure. It has been truly observed that if "the virtue of Paganism was strength, the virtue of Christianity is *obedience*;" and never was the lesson of submission to lawful authority more imperatively demanded than in the present generation. It is incalculably mischievous to allow a class of children, or any one of them, to get the upper hand; since

this is to train them in wrong-doing, while the example set is only too contagious.

Firmness of Will.—Let every reader therefore resolve to have order and obedience at any legitimate cost. It is certainly possible; let him resolve to realize it. And to do this, it is not needful to assume a despotic air, or sit down with an “I-am-not-to-be-trifled-with” look of defiance. The firm hand should be gloved with velvet. Having first sought to gain the sympathy of his little flock, he should be ready to check the first signs of wandering and self-will. They should be given to understand that obedience is the condition of their remaining in the class, and if the instruction is made so interesting that attendance is felt to be a privilege, a stronger motive to orderly conduct will seldom be required.

Prompt Interference.—While it is sometimes wise to shut the eyes to effusions of juvenile fun, provided the teaching is not obstructed, yet no act of *wilful* insubordination should be passed over. Promptly and firmly, though gently, the offender should be checked, and nothing else be proceeded with until obedience has been rendered. A boy, for example, changes his seat, and takes a place which he knows he has no business to occupy. The teacher requires him to return. He refuses; or, perhaps, complies for an instant, and then repeats the offence. What is the teacher to do? Certainly not to yield, even though the offence be again repeated, in the hope of eluding him or tiring him out. The scholar must be made to obey, or be sent out of the class. And why? Not because it matters much where a child sits, but it matters everything whether teacher or pupil rules. So with such frequent tricks as pushing or pommelling other scholars, snatching caps or books, upsetting forms, passing written notes from hand to hand, and the more trivial fault of surreptitiously eating cakes or sweetmeats during teaching. All these sources of disturbance must be noted and stopped, with

vigilant eye and unfaltering hand, the alternative offered simply being, "You must desist from these practices, or quit the class." The maxim that we should "check the beginnings of evil," forcibly applies to order and discipline among the young. Much trouble may be prevented by vigilance, but many teachers appear to be afflicted with chronic defects of vision. They either do not see, or, "seeing, they do not perceive," the rising symptoms of disorder which to a bystander are patent enough; and only wake to a full consciousness of their existence when a continuance of instruction is no longer possible for the hurly-burly. A skilful teacher takes care to see and know everything that occurs in his class, though he may not take notice of all that he perceives.

Isolate the Offender.—An important principle in cases of actual insubordination is to deal with the offender *alone*, and therefore removed from the stimulus to resistance which the presence of other children affords. A letter to those who can read it, or for younger scholars a quiet conversation, will generally accomplish far more than any public reproof, and is always preferable, provided that the offence is not wholly passed over at the time it is committed. Even if reproofs are given in secret the rest of the class must not be allowed to suppose that the teacher did not notice the fault.

"Rules of the Class."—It is well to have a few well-known, though unwritten, "rules" to which the teacher can refer in place of a mere utterance of his own will and pleasure. "Charlie, you know it is *against the rules of our class* to snatch things from one another. Give Harry his cap, and don't let us see you behave so rudely another time." So also there should be efforts to create a sort of *class patriotism*—a general desire to maintain a good reputation in the school. Thus, "I was sorry to see some of you so restless and fidgety during prayer. You reminded me of some water-birds, who are always standing first on

one leg and then on the other; and very awkward it looks. I am afraid Mr. Jones will call us 'the awkward class.' But it is not right to act so when we are speaking to God in prayer."

Motives to Obedience.—But the most powerful motive to obedience is undoubtedly *personal attachment*. When we have found the key to a child's heart the battle of authority is more than half won. Faults will be committed, ill tempers appear, and restlessness break forth on warm afternoons; children will be troublesome, playful, mischievous; but if they truly love and respect the teacher, there will be no wilful resistance to his authority.

Physical Force.—Our readers will infer from what has been advanced that we condemn, almost wholly, the use of physical force in the Sunday school. It may be sometimes needful to take an obstinate child by the arm and place him or her in the place assigned. But the teacher must be "no striker." Boxing and slapping are as mischievous as they are unseemly, and a wrestling-match, however ignominiously it may end for the pupil, is scarcely less so to his conqueror, whose ruffled temper and excited countenance will assuredly lower him in the esteem of the spectators, young as well as old. In those rare and extreme cases where the teacher's best efforts to win the child have failed, an appeal to the superintendent becomes inevitable. It should be made, however, not in the humiliating tones which are sometimes thoughtlessly used, "I have brought you this scholar, *for I can do nothing with him,*" and so forth; but rather, "This scholar refuses to abide by the rules of the class; I cannot consent to let her remain with me any longer, unless her conduct is completely changed." It is to be hoped that this "last resource" will seldom be reached in the experience of those who read these pages.

Summary.—To conclude—the discipline of a Sunday school class should be founded on sincere affection and

kindly interest, tempered by a wise and judicious firmness. There is a happy medium between severity and laxity, and this the ruler of children must seek to maintain. A humble recognition of the Divine forbearance, and the "gentleness" that "makes great," will enable a Christian teacher to bear with the frailties and follies of youth; to control the rising indignation and suppress the angry word, when his spirit is vexed by waywardness or obstinacy; to check with mild dignity the impertinent word or gesture; and so to show his young disciples that he has himself graduated in the school of Christ.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HELPS AND HINDRANCES—ENCOURAGEMENTS—CONCLUDING
HINTS.

Our Advantages.—Half a century, or even a generation, ago, a chapter devoted to a consideration of the “Helps” provided for Sunday school teachers would have been a very short one indeed. Happily, this is no longer the case. Ample assistance is available, and much of it is placed within reach of the poorest of workers in the Sunday school field. Books, periodicals, pamphlets, notes, lesson-papers, and other written aids to efficiency, abound; while oral help, in the form of lectures, addresses, specimen-lessons, and classes, may be had for the seeking. In fact, there is far greater need of a more general desire to learn, than of means for supplying the want where it is felt. Our references, therefore, will be selective rather than comprehensive.

Biblical Helps.—To begin, then, with *books*. As already stated, the **Bible** and **Concordance** stand first, the latter being but a classification of the former. A good Bible, with large clear type, references, and maps, is most desirable; and among the vast variety offered, the Cambridge “Teacher’s Bibles,” prepared by the Queen’s Printers, and those issued by the University of Oxford and by Messrs. Bagster, stand in the foremost rank for condensed excellence. They are also published at prices

to suit all teachers, as a reference to the advertising columns of the *Sunday School Chronicle* will show.

An *interleaved* copy of the Bible may be made of great value by an industrious teacher, as it enables him to enter his own notes and comments opposite to any given passage. Second-hand copies may be had at very low prices. Among **Concordances**, we have used for years an old edition of "Cruden," *unabridged*. "Condensed" Concordances are a delusion. You want to know *all* the passages on a particular topic, not an arbitrary selection of them. Dr. Robert Young's "Analytical Concordance" is well worth the price asked for it—and far more, as it gives the Hebrew and Greek original of every word in the English version.

The "Scripture Text-Book" and "Scripture Treasury," published by the Dublin Tract Society, are cheap and useful classifications of Bible topics, both doctrinal and material. We have found them of much practical assistance.

To assist in the understanding of Holy Scripture, a good **Cyclopædia** is very useful, but not indispensable. Dr. Smith's is the most recent and scholarly; but Kitto's, Eadie's, Fairbairn's, and others have their peculiar excellences. The Cambridge "Companion" and the Oxford "Helps," often bound up with the "Teacher's Bibles," are practically cyclopædias of much worth. The following also can be recommended:—

For **Geography** and **physical features** of Bible lands: Conder's "Primer of Bible Geography" (Sunday School Union), 2s. 6d. "Palestine," by Dr. A. Henderson (T. & T. Clark), 2s. 6d. Conder's "Handbook to the Bible" (Longmans), 7s. 6d. "The Fifth Gospel" (Palestine), by Otts (Oliphant), 5s.

For **Eastern manners and customs** there are Dr. Tristram's "Eastern Customs in Bible Lands" (Hodder), Mackie's "Bible Manners and Customs" (A. and C. Black). The late Dr. Thomson's "Land and the Book" is well known;

and, though very discursive, contains a vast number of illustrations of Scripture, drawn from modern Eastern life. The price is 7s. 6d. in cloth.

On the botany and zoology of Palestine, there are "Trees and Plants of the Bible," by W. H. Groser; "Animals of the Bible," by H. Chichester Hart (R.T.S., "By-paths" Series), each 3s.; Canon Tristram's "Natural History of the Bible," 7s. 6d.

The "Biblical Treasury," originally issued by the Sunday School Union as a monthly serial, has lately been revised, and republished in a condensed form at two shillings per volume. This work is devoted to Biblical illustration in all its departments, critical, expository, topographical, social, historical, and incidental, and has proved a storehouse of useful material to many a teacher and preacher. There are numerous engravings.

The question of "the best **Commentary**" is often a perplexing one to young Christian students, and the field is so wide that no two counsellors would give precisely the same advice. Most teachers have some commentary or other in their home library, often of not very recent date. Yet there is no reason why seventeenth or eighteenth century commentaries should be discarded. Pool, Trapp, Patrick, Henry, Scott, Adam Clarke, though most of them wrote in days when Biblical criticism was but in its infancy, and Oriental discovery had scarcely begun, were able and scholarly students of the Word; and for forcible and practical expositions of Divine truth have never been surpassed. Nor, in these hurrying times, are we likely to approach them in excellence. To our own mind, Matthew Henry is still the prince of expositors, and no one can read what he has written on a given passage without being the better prepared to appreciate its spiritual bearings and to apply it to life and character. Scott is much less lively, but always sensible and judicious; Clarke, learned; Pool, ingenious; and Trapp, quaint.

Since the first edition of the present work was issued a flood of valuable help in the way of commentaries, large and small, has been poured forth for the benefit of Sunday School teachers and other students of Scripture.

The following is a brief selection :—

Bishop Ellicott's "Commentary for Schools" (Cassell), "Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges" (Cambridge University Press). These are perhaps the simplest and cheapest, considering that a volume is, as a rule, devoted to each book of Scripture. Messrs. T. and T. Clark issue, among their "Handbooks for Bible Classes," several small and excellent commentaries on various books of the Old and New Testament. To these we may add, "Introduction to the Old Testament," by Dr. Wright, 2s. 6*d.*; "Introduction to the New Testament," by Dr. Marcus Dods, 2s. 6*d.* (Hodder); on Joshua to 1 Samuel, "Joshua and his Successors," by the present writer, 2 vols., 3s.; on the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, "The First Three Kings of Israel," by Rev. R. Tuck, 2 vols., 3s.; on the succeeding history to the Captivity, Dr. S. G. Green's "Kingdoms of Israel and Judah," 2 vols., 3s. For the Gospels and Acts, Mr. Eugene Stock's admirable "Notes" (3 vols. in all) are among the best condensed helps for teachers yet issued.

Among works on the Sacred Writings and their study may be mentioned "The Bible the Sunday School Text-book," by Rev. A. Holborn, 1s. 6*d.* (S.S.U.), Professor Paterson Smyth's "How we got our Bible" (1s.), and "The Old Documents and the New Bible" (2s. 6*d.*), which are cheap and most interesting; also Girdlestone's "How to Study the English Bible," 1s. (R.T.S.); "The Study of the Bible," by Professor Findlay, 6*d.* (Kelly); "The Written Word," by Dr. S. G. Green, 2s. 6*d.* (S.S.U.)

There are two series of valuable little handbooks issued by the Christian Knowledge Society, at 2s. each; the one on "Ancient History illustrated by the Monuments"

of Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and Persia respectively, the other on the "Heathen World and St. Paul." Both sets are full of information, throwing light on Scripture history and Biblical allusions. The same remark may be applied to the "Bible Handbooks" (2s. 6d.), and "Bible Primers" (1s.), published by Messrs. T. and T. Clark, and to the "By-paths of Bible Knowledge" Series issued by the Religious Tract Society.

Periodicals.—Periodical literature for Sunday school teachers may be described, with but little exaggeration, as the product of the Sunday School Union and its younger contemporaries. School organization led to a demand for school literature, and an effort to supply it soon followed. Now papers and magazines for the assistance of teachers are happily both cheap, abundant, and, what is of more importance, exhibit marked and varied excellences. A very few pence weekly will secure the best; and in these the results of judicious gleaning from more expensive and permanent publications are provided, more or less ready for use. To mention only two or three. For one penny per week the *Sunday School Chronicle*, with its varied stores of Biblical and educational papers, lesson helps of all kinds, and intelligence, may be obtained through any bookseller; while for threepence per month the *Notes on the Lessons* and the *Sunday School Teacher* are also to be had. Nor is it a wise economy, but, on the contrary, a foolish parsimony, or still more culpable indifference, for a young worker to ignore the printed helps from which he might learn so much.

Only let one rule be steadily borne in mind. Whatever books or periodicals we consult, nothing can fill the place of earnest, individual study of the lesson from week to week. Balusters are very useful to rest the hand upon as guides in descending a staircase, but *riding on balusters* is a dangerous experiment. Some young teachers "ride on" printed helps; who can wonder that they come heavily to the ground as a consequence of such misuse?

Pictures—a Suggestion.—Most of the above-mentioned works are embellished with pictorial illustrations, as auxiliaries to verbal description, and exemplify the marvellous progress of the engraver's art during the past quarter of a century. But still further use may be made of the same class of helps by a teacher whose "eyes," like "the wise man's," "are in his head." The constantly widening intercourse of Western nations with the East, and the increased interest taken in all manners connected with Palestine and the surrounding kingdoms, whether ancient or modern, result in the introduction of woodcuts, topographical, archæological, and scientific, illustrative of sacred history, into periodicals of a purely secular class. These should be made available for Sunday school purposes. Collected and preserved, they may be pasted into scrap-books of convenient size, and if the texts which they bear upon are written below them, an *Illustrated Bible* of a peculiarly interesting and instructive character may easily be compiled. Such a book occasionally introduced into the class, or opened and commented on during a social evening, would prove "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever."

A Teacher's Museum.—The suggestion is not a new or original one, but a hint has been thrown out which might be made more fruitful than at first sight appears. It is that each Sunday school teacher should try to form a little "*Biblical Museum*" of his own. "What would it contain?" and "How could objects be procured?" are questions which would naturally be asked in reply. To this it might be rejoined, that the products of the East are continually making their way into English markets; and, moreover, that many of the plants named in Scripture grow wild in this country or are cultivated in gardens. Suppose, for example, that the Sunday lesson is on the "Visit of the Wise Men to the Infant Saviour;" how much it would interest a class of children to see and handle a piece of "frankincense" or a sprig of "myrrh!"

Yet it would not be difficult to procure specimens of both of these. So if the story of "Esau and Jacob" be the subject, a few *real lentils* would give point and interest to the lesson. In like manner the history of "Joseph in Egypt" may be illustrated by a real specimen of Egyptian *wheat*—a product frequently seen in this country. And it is surprising how many objects of interest will turn up when once we set ourselves to seek for them.

Classes.—*Classes* for the instruction of Sunday school teachers in the *matter* or *methods* of their work are the growth of the last thirty or thirty-five years. Of these "*Preparation*" classes are the oldest, and "*Normal*," or "*Introductory*," classes the most recent, while "*Training*" classes occupy an intermediate place. It is well that the reader should understand what these terms represent. A "*Preparation*" class is one in which teachers meet together for mutual study of a given passage of Scripture—generally one of the next Sunday's lessons. In the "*Training*" class, lectures and specimen lessons are given for the purpose of showing *how* to teach a class of Sunday scholars. A "*Normal*" class is designed, primarily, to train those who *intend to become teachers* for the work to which they are looking forward, giving them information on *what* to teach as well as *how* to teach it. Such classes are held in different parts of London and the provinces, either independently or under the auspices of the Sunday School Union, during the winter months; and our readers are earnestly recommended to avail themselves of such help whenever they find it within their reach. The course of study will be found to coincide, more or less closely, with the subjects contained in the present little volume, and the other issues of the series, while mutual study will afford both pleasure and encouragement.

Home Visitation and Personal Intercourse.—Reference has been made in an earlier chapter to the value and importance of *personal intercourse* between teacher

and scholar, as a means of gaining both insight into character and influence over conduct. Home Visitation was specified; but this is only one form, though perhaps the chief, in which contact may be secured. A knowledge of each scholar in the sabbath class will soon suggest modes of friendly interchange and individual help; and this again will indicate various directions where united association may prove pleasurable and beneficial.

To take a few examples. Two or three home visits, or conversations on the road to or from school, will not only bring to light details of daily occupation, but also disclose a boy's or girl's particular tastes and aspirations: these may tend towards mechanics, chemistry, or natural history; boating, cricket, tennis, or chess-playing; literature, elocution, or music. Here at once a field opens for kind interest and practical assistance. The loan of a book, pamphlet, magazine, or musical composition; the gift or exhibition of specimens; the communication of new facts gleaned from time to time by observant sympathy; and even the mere inquiry about progress made, or the encouraging commendation of earnest efforts to excel—such acts, while they broaden the teacher's comprehension of his pupils' characters and habits, furnish him with new claims on their respect and new ties to bind their affections to himself.

Where a teacher can not only manifest sympathy for, but personally join in, his scholars' amusements, whether indoors or out, like benefits will be conferred on all concerned. The presence of an elder will check irregularities, whether of temper or outward wrong-doing; while it will silently but not less powerfully convince light-hearted children that it is not only possible to be merry and wise, but that the mirth which is dissociated from folly and irreligion is the heartiest and most genuine of all. We are not unmindful of the fact that many young teachers are unable to show hospitality to their sabbath pupils,

and where this is the case individual interviews must suffice. But the idea that young folks require elaborate entertainment is quite erroneous, and should never stand in the way of an invitation when it can be given. Very few teachers have resources so limited as to be unequal to the ensuring of an evening's enjoyment to half a dozen boys or girls. The "Illustrated Bible" above recommended would of itself be a source of lively interest on such an occasion.

Co-operation.—In this, as in other efforts for the benefit of his own class, a teacher may often be guided and assisted by the co-operation of one or more fellow-workers; while there are some in which the school committee or officers may deem it advisable to secure the action of the whole body of teachers. It is not wise to work in secret, but rather freely to interchange ideas and suggestions with our associates. It is well to know what has been tried already, and what is, or seems to be, new and original; only thus can we hope to avoid repeating the mistakes and incurring the failures of our predecessors. And it is not only an error, but a fault, to lose the opportunity of consulting those who are more skilful and experienced than ourselves.

Hindrances.—Having dwelt thus upon the manifold helps placed within the reach of a young Sunday school worker of the present generation, we should be wanting in candour did we suppress or pass over the unquestionable truth that he must also be prepared to encounter *Hindrances* in his chosen field of labour. We would emphasize the last word. Sunday school teaching, like all other teaching that is worth the name, is a *labour*—a *toil*, not a pastime or a recreation. To engage in it with the idea of treading a flowery path, or winning admiration or applause, or gratifying taste by cultivating a sort of religious fine art, is as delusive as it is culpable. Upon every enterprise undertaken for the glory of God and the

extension of His kingdom on earth, the stamp of the *cross* is deeply impressed; and there are seasons in the experience of every true labourer when "the burden and heat of the day" weigh down both body and mind; when the flesh grows weary, and the heart is sick and sad; when the confession is wrung from the lips, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought." And although the hindrances are fewer, and the toil is lighter, when our sphere is among the young and impressible, instead of the old and hardened, yet a few weeks of practised experience will suffice to prove that even here "there are many adversaries."

Children's Faults.—The faults and sins of early life—the volatility, the thoughtlessness, the self-will and impatience of control, the untruthfulness, the weakness of moral and spiritual perception, and so on—constitute a class of obstacles which every faithful educator must resolutely face, and with which he should, in dependence on Divine aid, prepare to grapple. Let him never forget that there is a *corrective* as well as a *directive* element in his work, and he must prepare to be a physician as well as a guide. The human heart, whether in early or in later stages, turns away from God, and neither responds to His claims, nor acknowledges His authority. The will of self, not the will of God, is the law of unregenerated humanity, and from this root of self-will spring the bitter fruits of evil tempers and dispositions—only too conspicuous even in childhood's sunny morning.

In seeking to rectify what is thus wrong and mischievous, conflict and opposition must needs arise. Hence the argument for commencing the work of religious training as early as possible. The shallow plea that children "should not be biased" is met by the obvious fact that they are biased already, and that towards evil, not good. To supplant that bias by a mightier tendency is a work which cannot be begun too soon.

Moral Hindrances.—To those faults, so common in Sunday schools which tend to disorder and anarchy in the class, such as restlessness, volatility, and impatience of control, reference has been made in the preceding chapter. There are others, however, which often startle, and as often discourage, the pious and devoted teacher of the young; and some of these it may be well briefly to consider.

At the close of Chapter VI. some remarks were offered on types of natural temperament as affecting the attitude of the mind and heart towards the claims of the gospel, and the consequent necessity for the specific treatment of each individual case. We have now to observe that almost every type of moral character presents some peculiar *hindrance* (though varying widely in degree) to the reception and acknowledgment of the Divine claim to obedience. It is obviously so with the heavy, stolid, apparently unimpressionable temperament on which sacred truth falls like good seed on the beaten path. But it is so, too, though less obviously, with the susceptible, lively, emotional nature; for here impressions, though easily made, are as easily effaced, like footprints on a sandy shore, which the first wave blots out as though they had never been. Easily influenced for good means easily influenced for evil. The former may harden into obstinate indifference, the latter may fly off into utter thoughtlessness of mind and fickleness of character.

Slow Scholars.—In dealing with the first class, much patience and gentleness are demanded. The *intellectually* slow need waking up from their torpor, as hibernating animals are aroused in springtime by the warmth and brightness of sunshine. They need lively instruction and sympathetic kindness, so that they may first perceive and then admire the beauty of religion. The *morally* slow must not be *driven* towards Christ—indeed, they cannot—but drawn towards Him, by presenting His graciousness and loving compassion towards children.

Quick Scholars.—As to the second class, the quick and volatile pupils, we must distinguish between the *impressible*, whose emotions are as changeful and unstable as the clouds, and the *sensitive* and timid, who seem to lack fibre and firmness. The former need a strong hand, and to be taught even in early years the solemnity of life, the authority of law, and the reality of things unseen. They must see that we are in earnest, that we feel strongly, and that, while sympathizing sincerely in all their sunny, light-hearted glee, we are supremely anxious that they should even now yield to Christ's claims on their love and obedience. They must learn that indifference to those claims, however due to mere thoughtlessness and frivolity, is a sin in God's sight, and a grief and disappointment to us; and this should be pointed out both privately and in the more public instructions of the Lord's day.

Sensitive Children.—Sensitive and timid children need strengthening and encouraging, lest they should grow up weakly and stunted in character. They require "the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ" as their spiritual food, rather than emotional and exciting hymns, and such like, in order that they may not shrink back from trusting and confessing Him.

Conceit.—Pride and unbelief as motives for resisting the gospel are not sins of childhood, but belong to a later stage. Nevertheless, vanity and conceit are sometimes manifest enough in little people, and cannot but be a hindrance to the teacher's work. They should be kindly but pointedly dealt with, not by scolding or denunciation, much less by satire or ridicule, but indirectly, by pointing out the folly and sin of being proud of what we owe to the labour or the love of others, or to the undeserved mercy of our Father in heaven.

Untruthfulness is one of the darkest of juvenile faults. "Children," says one writer, "are habitual liars,"—too sweeping an assertion, yet lamentably approaching the

actual fact, as most schoolmasters and schoolmistresses could testify. Yet this discreditable tendency is comparatively seldom due to either malice or a preference for falsehoods. There is usually some inducement, more or less influential, to deviate from the truth, and the moral strength to resist the temptation is wanting. Such is the simple history of most juvenile falsehoods. Sunday school teachers must deal, more frequently and more severely than they have been accustomed to do, with this crying evil, which infests the family and the workshop as well as the school, and permeates all classes of society. Englishmen are seemingly losing sight of the good old-fashioned maxim that a lie is a mean, contemptible, inexcusable thing; and the sooner our children are re-educated in that sound doctrine the better for them and for the nation to which they belong. There are texts and illustrations enough in Scripture to point our instructions on this head, and the utter incompatibility of falsehood and godliness should be exhibited, not once or at rare intervals, but frequently, and with all the force of language which the teacher can command.

External Hindrances.—There are other hindrances to the work of the Sunday school for which the children themselves are in a less degree or not at all responsible. For example, *Irregularity of attendance*, and consequent diminution of the opportunities of instruction; *frequent change of residence*; *poverty*, and its social temptations; *unfavourable domestic conditions*, whether mere formal religion, indifference, or hostility on the part of the parents; to which may be added, though more applicable to a somewhat later stage, *improper companionship* and *impure literature*. Most of these obstacles can be dealt with only by indirect means, such as are employed to a greater or less extent in connection with most of our Sunday schools, and which scarcely lie within the province of the individual teacher. But the latter may exert a powerful and salutary

influence over the *reading* and the *companions* of his scholars, if he will but take the trouble to learn what they really are, remembering that these evils can be remedied only by replacing them by *something better* of the same kind. Give the children better reading, introduce them to other and more suitable companions, and we may hope that a blessing will attend our efforts to supplant the evil by the good. In thousands of instances Bunyan's parable of the burning fire is reversed in Sunday school experience. The oil of Divine truth is dropped upon the flame; but the fire is quenched, or at least suppressed, by the foul waters which books, periodicals, and street associations are continually pouring into it. We must supply an antidote, and seek to correct the mental and moral appetite.

Encouragements of the Sunday School Worker.

—No doubt it would be possible to add to the list of Sunday school hindrances; but even with such additions the fact would still remain indisputable that work for God among the young is the most hopeful and encouraging of all spheres of religious effort into which His Church has been called.

Impressibility of Childhood.—Inferior only to parental education, it offers the greatest advantages with the fewest drawbacks. Under whatever figure we may view Christian instruction and training, its vantage-ground must be found in child-culture. Are we builders of character? The materials are close at hand, and not yet mutilated by the rude touch of vice or crime. Are we soul-gardeners? The ground is almost clear of weeds, and the saplings may be bent to our will. Is our art comparable to that of the potter, the sculptor, or the painter? The plastic clay is responsive to our fingers, the marble is fresh from the quarry, the canvas is yet undisfigured by other hands. Are we musicians? Though the harp be unstrung, we have a key by which it may be tuned to the undying harmonies of truth and righteousness.

Again, in childhood the affections guide the whole nature; they are the rudder which controls the course of thought and will. Those affections it is not difficult to gain; the love and trust of a child are soon yielded to kindness and sympathy, and the citadel of character is won.

Parental Sympathy.—The parents, too, of our scholars, in the large majority of cases, cherish a degree of respect for us and of appreciation of our work and its objects, which secures us a welcome, more or less cordial, whenever we visit their abodes, and, indirectly, a certain amount of co-operation and assistance. Very rarely indeed will a father or mother feel anything but goodwill towards the friend who takes so kindly an interest in Tom or Harry, Emma or Mary Jane; and the school, with its executive, comes in for a share of esteem, if not of grateful recognition. The lower aspects of Sunday school effort are appreciated even where there is no true understanding of the higher.

Public Sentiment.—Public opinion is also in favour of the enterprise. Its philanthropic and educational influence is admitted and approved, even if its spirituality is regarded by only a comparative few. We may not place this among our highest sources of encouragement, yet it is a factor not to be overlooked.

Benefit to the Teacher.—Of the good accomplished through the instrumentality of Sunday schools, the benefits conferred upon *the teachers themselves* form no small or unimportant part. The well-worn quotation—

“In teaching others we ourselves are taught,”

represents very imperfectly the reflex influences of this work. It is most true that in imparting information of any kind the facts are impressed upon the mind of the giver as much as or more than on that of the receiver. But the necessity of engaging in more or less systematic study of Holy Scripture, and of books bearing on Biblical

topics, is an inestimable blessing to a young Christian. Every one knows the advantage of reading with a definite object and on a definite plan, in place of mere discursive perusal of different books. This a good lesson series of Bible subjects effectually supplies. Then, also, the knowledge acquired has to be arranged and adapted, the mental faculties of judgment and reflection are trained, as estimating the relations of one truth to another, and their application to daily life and conduct. Observation is demanded for the gathering of illustrations of sacred doctrine, and the imagination is exercised upon those analogies of natural and revealed truth which are so attractive and enlightening to young and opening minds.

Beyond and above these intellectual benefits, the teacher's sympathies are both broadened and softened by contact with childhood and youth; while, best of all, his own spiritual life can hardly fail to be stimulated and strengthened by seeking to lead others to the Fount of all blessedness. Such considerations should elevate our estimate of the great and glorious enterprise in which we are permitted to bear a part, and encourage us to a fuller consecration to our ministry.

Motives to Consecration.—Many and powerful are the motives which urge us to such self-devotion. On all hands it is admitted by statesmen, philanthropists, and educators, that the Sunday school was never so needful to the well-being of our country, or so pressing in its claims upon the sanctified talent of Christ's disciples, than in the present age. The soil is rich in moral and spiritual possibilities, as yet unrealized. Young people flock into our Sunday schools to an extent which far more than keeps pace with the increase of population. There is no need to cry "More scholars," but the cry for "more teachers who are efficient instructors as well as pious Christians," grows more urgent and more plaintive every year. We *gain* the children, but do we *keep* them? Do we store their under-

standings with divine truth in so intelligent and winning a manner as to bind them by the golden cords of respect and affection to us and to our schools? The fields are white unto harvest, but in comparison with their needs the labourers are but few.

And are these not motives which should animate every young teacher to "attempt great things for God"? He will not lack companions in this hallowed toil. The sun never sets on the Sunday school teacher's work; when the voice of instruction is silent, thousands and tens of thousands of busy minds and fervent hearts are studying, planning, praying, on behalf of the young ones for whom the Saviour died. But there is a higher and nobler fellowship even than this. Every work *for* God is a work *with* God. Our Master has not left us alone. It is His to stand by our side in every toil and conflict for His cause and kingdom; His to quicken the intellect and cheer the heart; His to hold us as we stand, and to raise us when we fall; His to comfort us in our failures and to show us the secret of our successes; His to give us patience and meekness towards the weak and wayward, the ignorant and unruly; His to set before us His own glorious example, to bestow present encouragements, and to lift our weary eyes to the full recompense of reward. Such rewards, both present and future, His infinite merit has purchased for the lowliest worker in His cause. "When Mary anointed our Lord's feet, the act was transient; it was done 'for His burial;' the holy feet which she anointed ceased soon after to walk on earth. Yet He declared that 'wheresoever His gospel was preached in the whole world,' that act should also be 'told as a memorial of her.' So has it ever been with what has been given to God, albeit blindly and erringly. While all other things have perished, *this has endured.*"

Not less fragrant in His esteem, not less permanent in their issues, are the humble deeds wrought for Him in the

obscurity of many a Sunday school class ; not less gracious His approval, not less glorious their reward.

Lay no faltering hand, young Christian, to this great enterprise ; yield to it no divided heart. Consecrate all your powers unreservedly to it, or reverently seek some more congenial sphere of labour. Yet ask again, on bended knees, "Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?" And if the answer be, "Feed My lambs," go—go in His name ; go in His strength ; go in conquering faith and brightening hope, and "seek and save that which was lost."

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