

**The Sabbath School.**

**The characteristics of an efficient Teacher.**

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This is an age of advancement in every department of religious work. Christians are beginning to realize—more fully than at any former period—the importance of systematic, continuous effort for the salvation of souls, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. It is not the object of this essay to take into consideration the whole field occupied, and discuss the various methods employed, societies organized, and appliances put in operation to disseminate truth, evangelize the world, and save sinners. I shall mention but one—the Sabbath School department.

Among the various instrumentalities employed for the spread of truth and the conversion of souls, the Sabbath School certainly occupies a very important place. As a means of imparting religious knowledge it is second only to the preaching of the gospel, and should have the support of every Church and every follower of Jesus. While a consideration of the success of the past is calculated to inspire our hearts with gratitude to God, it should encourage us to put forth renewed efforts in this department of christian work in the future. It is gratifying to know that God's people are beginning more fully to realize their value as an auxiliary to the Church. In the United States, it is admitted, that most of the accessions to the churches come from them, and we have reason to believe the same is the case in these Provinces.

In this age of general knowledge, Sabbath Schools are imperatively demanded to impart a healthy moral tone to the rising generation, and no church is fully and faithfully discharging its duty, that neglects organizing and sustaining one in its midst. Of the many things that combine to constitute a prosperous Sabbath School, we attach the greatest importance to efficient teaching. Without it, no school will long continue to prosper. Upon the Teacher devolves a very responsible duty: precious souls are committed to his care to be instructed in the truth, that they may become wise unto salvation. God works by appropriate means, and no fact in the history of his grace is better ascertained, than that the dews of the Spirit descend chiefly where the ground has been prepared and the seed sown. The Teacher labours in conjunction with the Minister of the gospel in sowing the seed of Divine Truth, and has the same reason to expect the blessing of God to rest upon his efforts. His field of labour is more limited, and the souls committed to his care fewer in number, but a proper consideration of the value of each soul is enough to stimulate him to prayerful, persevering exertions, to bring them all to Jesus. A sinner saved through the instrumentality of the Sabbath School Teacher, may be just as bright a star in glory, as the one brought thither through the direct preaching of the gospel. If we expect children to seek the Lord early, and the youth to consecrate the bloom of their age to God, they must know his claims, understand his promises, and fear his threatenings. "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."

Childhood and youth are—in some respects—the most interesting and favourable periods of one's existence; conscience is then tender; prejudices pliable, habits unformed, and the mind susceptible of tender impressions:—How favourable a time for training and moulding, by suitable instruction out of God's Word. All the direction the Teacher needs for a proper discharge of his duty is implied in that one short precept of Solomon:—"Train up a child in the way he should go." This may be the proper place to mention "the essential characteristics of an efficient Teacher."

1st. He has been taught of God to know the way of salvation. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." However well one may be qualified in other respects, he is really destitute of the essential requirement, if he do not possess heartfelt piety. It is not Literature, Science, or Politics he is to instruct his scholars in, but the religion of the Bible. His aim should be to lead every member of his class to Jesus; but, if he has never gone to him himself, he is poorly qualified to bring others to him. One who has never experienced the saving power of God's truth in his own

soul—as applied by the Holy Spirit—is scarcely competent to talk of the way of life and salvation to others; he who has never felt sin to be the abominable thing which God hates, cannot be expected to depict fully the evil and demerit of it, and impress upon the mind of his hearers the terrible truth—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die," and urge them to turn from it, and find a refuge from the wrath of God in the atoning blood of Christ. The truths to be imparted are wholly spiritual in their character; God and Christ, heaven and hell, the Holy Spirit in his office work, the soul and its ruin, transgression and its punishment, and deliverance through him who is "the way, the truth, and the life," are the principal topics to be discussed; hence the necessity of the Teacher being spiritually qualified for his work, so that the dewy influences of Divine Truth may be distilled each sabbath into the youthful heart of those under his instruction. A Teacher spiritually qualified—who has found deliverance for his own soul through the "precious blood of Christ"—will be a safe instructor for the youth; while he will teach them the nature and value of christian ordinances and duties, he will warn them against trusting in them, or anything merely external, for salvation, and will shew them, clearly and faithfully, the necessity of regeneration through the Holy Spirit, and justification by faith in Christ.

2nd. He has a love for the work; this is as essential to successful teaching as piety. No one will labour heartily in a cause for which he has no love. Love for a thing always begets an interest in it. When the heart is full of an object, one will be active in promoting it, he will labour, willing, faithfully, and zealously to advance it. The untiring devotion of the Apostles to Christ and his cause is frequently spoken of, and but one reason can be assigned for it,—they loved Him truly. Every christian should be willing to become a Teacher in the Sabbath School, but the majority are not, and many who do engage in it seem to be entirely destitute of that spirit of devotion to the work so essential to success; the reason is easily ascertained, love or it—the mainspring of the soul—is wanting. They teach only from a sense of duty, or the influence exerted over them by some brother or sister, zealous in the cause, but have no pleasure in it, and would rather be excused if any one could be found to take their place. We may easily know them by the following things:—1st. They are often late at school, sometimes absent from it without any reasonable cause, and generally think it will not be worth while to go on a very cold, or wet day, as not many children will be there. 2nd. They commonly depend very much upon their Question book, seldom go beyond its precincts, and get through their lesson in a very short time. 3rd. They take but little interest in the management and order of the school, and put forth no efforts to make it interesting and attractive. Such Teachers lightly esteem the Sabbath School, and seem not to value the souls of the children placed under their care for instruction. There will of necessity be some self-denial practised by every Sabbath School Teacher, he must sacrifice some of his time and ease, and submit to the inconvenience of travelling to the school-room on stormy days, and through bad roads; but, love for the work will cause him to surmount all difficulties, and ever be the "faithful sentinel"—waiting at his post—to give each child who may come a welcoming smile of kind interest, and of pleasant instruction.

3rd. He will use all available means to qualify himself for an efficient discharge of his duty. He does not think suitable preparation is needless because his class is small, and composed of children who have but little knowledge and experience, but, knowing that one of the chief excellencies of efficient teaching is simplicity, he will seek such familiar acquaintance with the lesson as will cause him so to simplify the truth as to enable each child easily to understand it. He will lay it down as a just principle in imparting instruction, that he must be understood, hence he will not be a mere Lecturer—talking in general terms on the truth contained in the lesson—but will strive to simplify and illustrate every part of it, so as to bring it down to the capacity of each member of his class. Too often the Teacher imparts instruction in general terms only—addressing the whole class at once—and while those of quick apprehension will understand him and be profited, those who do not possess so ready a mind will fail to comprehend him, and receive no benefit. All education is but the intercourse of one mind with another; it is only the mind of the scholar striving, by successive efforts, to follow the mind of the Teacher in excursions of reason or imagination, before unattempted, as the new-fledged bird strives

to follow its experienced parent, till its own wings have learnt to soar as high. To communicate truth to a child, and fix it in his mind, requires consideration and invention. It can be done only by laying aside the habits of thinking and reasoning, which we have acquired in the progress of life, and by going back, as it were, ourselves to childhood, and endeavouring to seize and present those aspects of objects which strike the youthful mind, and engage the youthful heart. It is very common for Teachers to bewail their want of influence over their scholars, and complain of their careless, indifferent manner, and sometimes to infer from it, that children are averse to all religious instruction; this is to some extent true, but not wholly so. They are averse to dry, abstract speculations, and merely Theological discussions of general principles and doctrines; but they may be greatly interested in that instruction, which, adapting itself to their capacities, brings before them truth in such a simple and familiar manner only as they can comprehend and appreciate. The Teacher who loves his work—and desires to be efficient—will often think how he may make the Sabbath School a happy Sabbath home; a resting place to the children who have wandered all the week, in the rough paths of the world; he will strive to make it a place of sunshine, where every face is lighted up with gladness, and where no cloud of gloom or weariness ever rises.

4th. He will cultivate a proper acquaintance with all the members of his class—admitting them to a judicious familiarity—so as to become acquainted with their dispositions, modes of thought, and various peculiarities, which will enable him the more readily to adapt instruction to them. He will know them when he meets them in the street, and have a pleasant smile and kind word for them; will visit them when sick, and sympathize with them; in this way he will convince them that he takes an interest in their welfare, and will win their confidence and secure their love, which will enable him to have easy access to their ear and heart on the Sabbath. He will look upon his class as his field which he is to cultivate with care. The fewer the number of pupils, the more he can do for each: those six or eight little boys may be thoroughly taught and moulded by the hand of pious care, he may know each of them intimately, converse with them individually, visit them frequently, or have them visit him, and make each of them a friend for life. To them his acts of kindness and words of love will be a well-spring of sweet and pleasant memories, as they grow to riper years, whence they may carry—as they go to mingle in the cares and temptations of this sinful world—blessed lessons and restraining influences.

5th. He will pray for them, that God will so bless the word of truth to their souls that they may become wise unto salvation through faith in Christ. His heart's desire is to see them all lambs in the fold of the Good Shepherd, treading the heavenly way, taking hold of God's hand for guidance and help, singing joyously the songs of Zion through life, and when the last earth song shall melt away, all their voices join in the "new song of the redeemed." He knows this cannot be realized unless God shall be pleased to breathe the Holy Spirit into their hearts. He feels that he cannot rely on all the instruction which men or angels might impart, if that Almighty power which created their souls, move not upon them to create them anew in Christ Jesus; this will cause him to bring each of them, every day, to the throne of grace in affectionate prayer; earnestly will he plead that their hearts may be early consecrated to God through the saving influence of his grace. If a correct record had been kept of the success that has attended Sabbath School instruction, it would, doubtless, be found that those who have prayed most for the salvation of their scholars, have been most instrumental in leading them to Jesus.

6th. He will occupy any position, however lowly, if it will advance the interest of the school; will take the humblest class, if requisite, and think it no disparagement. His object in teaching is, not to elevate himself, display his ability, or gain preeminence among his brethren; but to do good, advance the interest of the school in general, and win a soul to Jesus if possible. Further still, he will go to the homes of poverty, and into the highways, and obscure places, and gather in the poor, ignorant, forsaken, and degraded, form them into a class for himself, and labour faithfully for their moral elevation, and final salvation. A Sabbath School having Teachers possessing such qualifications, must prosper. Happy the Teacher who shall gather in—from the broad, deceitful way

of sin—the little ignorant, neglected ones, and bring them to the Sabbath School, where their weary little hearts may receive love and kindness and tender counsel, where each young voice may learn to sing of Jesus, and, like young Timothy, "from a child know the holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus."

**Correspondence.**

For the Christian Messenger.

**Ontario Correspondence.**

I find in my desk some sheets intended for the Messenger which should have been sent ten days ago. The news is now altogether too stale to bear the long passage. The subject mainly treated of was, I find, the celebrated trial of Whelan, at Ottawa, for the murder of the late Hon. T. D. McGee. That trial is now a thing of the past. Twelve men have unanimously testified on oath that, after a full, patient, impartial, weighing of all the evidence, they have no doubt as to his guilt. The sentence has been pronounced and in a few weeks, unless executive mercy interpose, as there seems no reason to expect, he will be in the presence of that Judge who never errs.

In addition to the intense feeling excited by the atrociousness of the murder, and the high position of the victim, there are several other circumstances in connection with this trial, which, have clothed it with a deep interest to those accustomed to reflect upon the character and to watch the administration of our criminal laws. Several questions of importance have arisen, or have at least been brought into unusual prominence.

Some of the evidence, probably, I may say, the chief evidence upon which his conviction rests, was unusual in its character. The evidence brought forward by the prosecution was of three distinct kinds: proof of intent as shown by conspiracy and threats; proof of actual guilt as derived from the prisoner's own admissions, overheard by two witnesses, and proof of actual guilt by the testimony of an alleged eye witness, a simple minded French Canadian. The evidence under the first head was pretty strong, but could not, of course, warrant conviction. The statements of the professed eye-witness were tolerably consistent, though marred by one or two discrepancies. But his conduct was, by his own showing, so unaccountable, so contrary to the ordinary impulses of human nature, and the identification of a stranger, of whom only one glimpse was had, and that by moonlight, and in a state of mind most unfavourable to accurate observation, is so unreliable, that no jury could brand a fellow being over to the hangman upon such evidence alone. The great link in the chain, the convincing proofs of guilt, must have been found in the man's own admission. This, it will be remembered, was overheard by men stationed for the express purpose. How far is such a mode of obtaining evidence justifiable? To what degree is the evidence itself, so obtained, reliable?

Another question of interest suggested and brought into some prominence by this trial, relates to the effect upon a fair and impartial administration of justice, of the present system of journalism. In this as in every other case in which intense feeling is excited, the public are familiar with the whole chain of evidence long before the trial takes place. The facts elicited at the Coroner's inquest, are flashed over the wires; the newspapers teem with suspicions and surmises, founded or unfounded; the whole life-history of suspected persons is ransacked and thrust forward in most unfavourable lights, and every new discovery of a new link, or supposed link in the chain of evidence is heralded over half a continent. Is all this prejudicial, or otherwise to justice? Is it possible to find a jury each of whom has not already tried the prisoner at the bar of his own judgment and pronounced upon his guilt, or innocence? It is by no means to be rashly inferred that the cause of justice suffers, in the end. I merely mention this as one of the aspects of this case strongly dwelt upon.

Another question of right and wrong must be left, I fancy, to the individual lawyer's conscience, i. e., if we may fly in the face of the vulgar opinion by assuming him to keep one. Has a counsel any moral right to choose and to refuse, in the matter of defending a prisoner? Is he conspiring to defeat the ends of justice and to foster crime, or is he discharging a professional, and a moral duty, when he undertakes to defend a man whom he believes, but does not know to be guilty? If he refuses to defend the man he believes to be a criminal does he not, in proportion to his reputation and influence, prejudice that man's case? If he succeeds in clearing the man he verily believes to be a murderer, ought he to go home with a serene mind, a peaceful conscience? Is there any middle course for him?