

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Growth of the Sabbath School Teacher.

BY REV. W. H. RICHAN.

Where is the teacher who possesses all the graces, gifts, and acquirements necessary to ensure the highest degree of success in his important work, and all these fully and completely developed? In other words, where is the man or woman who can lay claim to all the mental, moral, and spiritual qualifications which this service demands, and all in full perfection? Only one such has ever appeared on the stage of human action, and he taught, as man never taught—never can teach. Such being the case it is no discouragement to any teacher, however faithful, diligent, efficient, and successful, to be told that there is yet room for improvement. The highest possible standard of efficiency, though apparently beyond the attainment of imperfect humanity, is not too high to aim at. The conscientious and progressive teacher, whose breast is fired by the noblest ambition that can animate a human soul, even when he towers up like a giant, head and shoulders above his surrounding fellow-workers, will yet be heard exclaiming with the great apostle, who in reference to Christian attainment, says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but the one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark." And such a one will ever be ready to welcome a hint, coming from whatever source, which will stimulate or assist him in his upward progress. When a teacher thinks that he has completed his education, and neither desires or seeks for any further improvement, he has evidently reached the position of the barren fig tree, which only cumber the ground. I would not for any consideration say one word in disparagement of the feeblest effort put forth in the Sabbath Schools; nor do I put a stumbling block in the way of any, however meagre his attainments, when I say to teachers of every grade and condition, "Go forward. Do as well as you can to-day, and strive by the grace of God, and the use of means within your reach, to do a little better next Sabbath. Covet earnestly the best gifts, and let each week witness an honest effort to advance. If this is done, although your daily or weekly progress may be imperceptible, ere many months elapse your profiting will appear to all men." Let it be granted then that it is the duty of every teacher to grow—mentally, morally and spiritually. The question naturally arises, What are the means by which this growth is to be effected? May the Divine Spirit help us to answer it!

"Can the rush grow without mire? Can the flag grow without water?" asks Job. Surely not. In the vegetable and animal kingdoms appropriate food is essentially necessary to growth and development. It is not less essential to intellectual and spiritual growth. And such food is abundantly provided. Even those who seldom have the privilege of sitting at the feet of living teachers, can, by a little effort, obtain free access to those silent but faithful instructors,—books and papers—which are scattered all over our land. Bibles and Bible-helpers, and Sabbath School literature are now so cheap and abundant that none can plead poverty or inability as an excuse for destitution in these things. But it is not enough to have access to these storehouses of mental and spiritual nourishment. They must be read—and not only read, but in order to be profited, the teacher must read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Human helps are valuable, when properly used, but none, however excellent, should be allowed to supersede the careful study of the sacred text. "All scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished for every good work." The results of the careful research, critical investigation, and patient thought of wise and holy men, are like keys which unlock the hidden treasures contained in the sacred word, and as such they

are very valuable. Let us not substitute them for the treasures they are meant to unfold. The human must be kept in subordination to the Divine. The most important part of the teacher's work is to explain, illustrate, and enforce the teachings of the Bible, and in order to do this he must labor:

I. To obtain a comprehensive view of the general contents of the volume, which can be accomplished by a careful reading of a portion every day.

II. To acquire a clear and correct understanding of each lesson as it occurs in the series. In order to this he must inquire:

(a) Who was the writer; and when, where and under what circumstances he wrote.

(b) To whom that particular book was addressed, and what special design the writer had in view in penning it.

(c) He must make himself acquainted with the persons, laws, manners and customs, plants and animals, places, &c., which may be referred to in the lesson. Here valuable assistance may be obtained from a good Bible Dictionary, which every teacher should possess.

(d) Let him endeavour to understand the meaning of every word and expression. If he is a classical scholar it will be of great service to consult the original. If not, an English dictionary and a judicious commentary will afford much aid.

(e) He should compare scripture with scripture, carefully pondering all parallel passages, or whatever text or portion has a bearing upon the subject under consideration, and here he will find helpers in his Concordance, reference Bible, and Bible Text Book.

Many teachers will tell me that such a course of study is altogether impracticable, that they have not time, and circumstances will not admit of it. This is doubtless true with regard to some, but many could do it if they would, and they would be amply repaid for all their toil by substantial progress in knowledge and efficiency, to say nothing of the benefit which would accrue to their pupils. In order to meet the necessities of those who cannot prosecute such a course, the leaders in the Sabbath School movement wisely provide weekly expositions, which are placed by the religious press within reach of all. In these the topics referred to above are condensed into a small compass and thus made available for such as have not time or opportunity for more extended research. Let the teacher beware however of relying too implicitly upon the statements of fallible men. Their authority in matters of fact may be unquestionable, but in matters of opinion they are liable to err. Each statement should be carefully pondered, that every man may be fully persuaded in his own mind. The Bereans, after listening to the chiefest of the apostles, searched the scriptures to see if his assertions were true. In like manner should we prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. By so doing the teacher will be not a mere passive medium for conveying the thoughts of others to the minds of his pupils, but his own mind will be continually expanding, his judgment ripening, his knowledge increasing, and his whole mental and moral growth will be promoted.

III. While the Bible itself should be the principal study of the teacher, he should endeavor by reading and observation to gain a knowledge of history, nature, and art. If he follows the example of the great teacher, who should be our pattern in all things, he will fully illustrate the ideas he wishes to convey, by emblems from past or passing events or present surroundings. If he cannot speak in parables as the Saviour did, he can use similitudes, and practice in the art will develop his skill, and render him more and more apt in imparting knowledge. Another means of growth is prayer. The food which is taken into the body cannot nourish the physical system unless it is vitalized by contact with atmospheric air. It is equally true that spiritual food cannot nourish and invigorate the soul without the influences of the Divine Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, they are spiritually discerned." When the Saviour was about leaving the earth, he promised the disciples that he would send them the Holy Ghost, "and he," said Jesus

"shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "He shall guide you into all truth." "He shall take of mine and shew it unto you." "And so they tarried at Jerusalem in prayer and supplication until the Spirit was poured upon them from on high, and then went forth to proclaim the truth with mighty power. We have no right to expect the same miraculous manifestations which characterized their labors, but the ordinary influences of the Spirit are still vouchsafed to those who seek for them, and we who are called to labor in the vineyard of our Lord, should tarry, not at Jerusalem, but at the throne of grace, praying for and expecting that spiritual aid, without which we are cold—dark—dead. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." "The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life." "If earthly parents know how to give good gifts to their children, much more will your heavenly Father give the Spirit to them who ask Him." The prayerful teacher must grow because the spiritual nourishment he gathers for the benefit of others, is first appropriated by his own soul, and becomes part and parcel of himself. Then out of the abundance, not of memory merely, but of his heart, his mouth utters good things. And having wrestled like Jacob, and prevailed like Israel, he will be far more likely to have power with the young Esaus who meet him in the class. A clergyman accosted a laborer on his knees breaking rocks and said to him, "I wish I could break the hearts of my hearers as easily as you break those stones." "Perhaps, sir," was the reply, "you do not work enough on your knees." Alas! is it not too true that prayer is neglected, hurried, or restrained, and the blessing from on high is stayed. Brethren, let us be instant in prayer. "They that wait," &c. They shall grow downwards in humility, upwards in faith, and expand with love and zeal towards their followers.

IV. Physical growth and development demands regular and suitable exercise. We are so constituted that our bodies cannot prosper and be in health without it. It is equally necessary for the teacher to walk to the Sabbath School, listen to a few recitations, read the questions from his papers, and the remarks that may have been penned by some eminent divine, and then dismiss the whole subject until the next Sabbath. He should be a workman. There must be some mental effort—some spiritual toil. The preceding remarks presuppose labor out of the class, in study and prayer and when he stands before his scholars he should feel the burden of responsibility resting upon him. The sculptor stands before the marble with the consciousness that every stroke of the chisel will either mar the image or tend to develop its beauty. So the teacher should feel that every movement will make an impression for good or evil that cannot be effaced. Indeed he is infinitely more than a sculptor. He operates not upon a lifeless block, but an active, thinking, immortal and accountable being, who may, by the blessing of God upon feeble instrumentality, be transformed into the image of his Lord, and the implements he uses are not dead chisels of steel, but life-giving principles which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, and accomplishing God's great purposes of mercy and salvation. Let him not be satisfied then with a mere mechanical routine. There must be labor to arrest attention, to excite enquiry, to quicken the memory, to exercise the thinking powers, and to impart instruction in such a way that it may be understood and appreciated, and that the practical teachings of the lessons may make a lasting impression upon the mind. All this involves effort, whatever may be the qualifications of the teacher. Well may the most intelligent and capable exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" while the sincere and painstaking toiler, however meagre his attainments, may say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

V. In order to grow the teacher should have his eyes and ears open to catch every suggestion which has a bearing upon his work. The best teacher may often get valuable hints from those who are generally inferior. Hence one great benefit of Conventions such as this. Here we come in contact with a variety of opinions and practices, out of which each may cull something for the improvement of his own method. But let none be a mere copyist of any method, however excellent. Rather let him act the part of an assayer, testing everything, first by a searching examination, and secondly in the crucible of actual practice. Valuable suggestions may also be obtained from Sabbath School papers and other publications which are intended to aid the teacher in his work; but caution should be exercised in adopting them. Rather use the sling and stone than Saul's armor until it is proved.

VI. In order to grow the teacher should have his eyes and ears open to catch every suggestion which has a bearing upon his work. The best teacher may often get valuable hints from those who are generally inferior. Hence one

great benefit of Conventions such as this. Here we come in contact with a variety of opinions and practices, out of which each may cull something for the improvement of his own method. But let none be a mere copyist of any method, however excellent. Rather let him act the part of an assayer, testing everything, first by a searching examination, and secondly in the crucible of actual practice. Valuable suggestions may also be obtained from Sabbath School papers and other publications which are intended to aid the teacher in his work; but caution should be exercised in adopting them. Rather use the sling and stone than Saul's armor until it is proved.

The Collection.

The questions proposed by your correspondent "X" seem to call for a reply, and as you have declined entering "into the discussion," I suppose the duty of replying devolves upon me.

"X" asks, "Why should one Board attempt to control, even indirectly, the whole funds of the denomination for benevolent objects?" Again, "What business has the Home Mission Board collecting money for Foreign Missions or for Education or Infirm Ministers?" And then after enumerating other Boards asks, "Now will these Boards be content to let the Home Mission Board distribute the moneys as the plan proposes?"

From all these questions it seems that "X" thinks this matter to have originated with the Home Mission Board.

We reply, The Home Mission Board has had nothing whatever to do with it. It has never been mentioned in one of its meetings in my hearing, and I think I have been present every minute that the Board has been in session since last January. It has not been talked over in private by any of the members of the Board so far as I know, except that Bro. Warren referred to my article the next time I met him after its publication, expressing approval, &c. I wrote as a member of the denomination, not as a member of the Home Mission Board, and, as before stated, "in accordance with a suggestion made at the Western Association." But it will be said that the commendations of the Corresponding Secretary and General Agent, and the offer to furnish envelopes shows that the Home Mission Board is guilty of the interference indicated in the questions of "X." These commendations appear to me, however, to mean nothing more than that their brethren approve of the suggestions offered by myself and are willing to aid in carrying them out. That no attempt was made to control the distribution of moneys, the following from Bro. Robbins letter published in the Messenger of Oct. 31st, clearly shows: "I would just mention that the cards supplied by the Home Mission Board mention a certain percentage for the different denominational objects. They have not attempted to fix the proportions for the denomination. Churches wishing cards can have any rate of proportion they wish or strike off part of the objects, or any way to suit themselves."

If by adopting this "plan" and seeking to aid in its working the Corresponding Secretary or General Agent, or even the Home Mission Board should aid in collecting funds for Foreign Missions, or Education, or Infirm Ministers, is it a misdeed worthy of "death, or of bonds?"

But the scale is objected to. But as each church can change that to suit itself, and as it was given merely as a sample, why object so strongly. I do not know what the scale on the cards furnished by the Corresponding Secretary is. The scale on the envelopes provided for our church do not exactly agree with those published in my article.

But is the scale so erroneous as "X" supposes. Does it follow that, because the Union expended ten times as much on Home Missions as on the French Mission, that no more was needed for that mission? We are convinced that writing about the French Mission as needing only a little money to carry it on has much to do with its being always in debt. If these people need the gospel, and if we as a denomination undertake to give it to them, we should ex-

pend very much more in the work than we are now expending. If they do not need it, then why attempt to do anything for them.

In contrasting the College with a "few Infirm Ministers, and a few poor students," "X" forgets that the College has other sources of income, while the other funds have not.

Further, "X" does not like Union Societies. I was not aware of urging the organization of a Society of any kind. Nor was I thinking of helping along an unpopular object by uniting it with popular ones. I know of no unpopular objects as far as I am concerned. The objects which the denomination is trying to sustain I believe to be good and each, according to the work they attempt, worthy of support. If I did not think so I should write and speak against them and that openly.

But it fosters ignorance! I have not found this to be the result of its working. Let it be remembered that in the former paper I said that instructions were necessary for this or any plan.

But the scale must be readjusted, and who shall do it? Each church for itself, and then each donor can give as he pleases after all. Surely all the independence so prized by us is left untouched.

Hebron, Nov. 16th.

A. COHOON.

For the Christian Messenger.

New Glasgow.

Dear Brethren,—

Before returning to New Glasgow last month, I obtained money and pledges in various places towards paying for finishing the inside of our Vestry, which I will report, with many thanks to the kind friends who aid us in our enterprise. Pine Grove Church, cash \$13.73; pledges \$25.50; Paradise and Clarence, mostly the latter, cash \$13.58; pledges \$18.00, Niotaux cash \$11.75; pledges \$32.00, Berwick cash \$9.73; pledges \$33.50, Falmouth cash \$9.75; pledges \$9.00; Hantsport cash \$18.65; pledges \$15.00; Rev. W. B. Boggs, \$1.00; Rev. Atwood Cohoon, \$1.00; Dea. Geo. West, pledge \$1.00; Rev. A. J. Stevens, 3rd donation; \$0.75; Mrs. Baily, St. John, \$0.50; Rev. J. C. Blakeney, \$4.00. Friends in various places sent in the amount of their pledges, but as these have been reported before, they should not be reported again, but I must not omit to mention a nice stove sent by Messrs. Wilson, Clarke & Co., of the Milton Iron Foundry, Yarmouth. I ought to add that the stoves made by these gentlemen cannot be surpassed in durability, finish and model. A. C. Thompson Esq., of New Glasgow, remitted freight &c., on the stove \$1.00. Also from Isaac Shaw, Esq., of Berwick, a bundle of beautiful fruit trees which arrived in good order, and are for sale to aid our cause. Purchasers would do well to order trees from his excellent nursery.

We hope that the prompt payment of all pledges will enable us to pay for our building thus far, as we owe the builders about \$200 on the contracts for finishing the interior.

We have also commenced raising \$100 additional to furnish seats, lights, stove pipe &c., &c. When this is accomplished we will report in full. A complete list of all donors' names, and donations will be drawn up and thankfully and prayerfully cherished by us as a memorial that among us, we that are strong, support the weak and so fulfil the law of Christ. We hope the furnishing will be completed for dedication early in December. On reviewing our efforts in the past we thank God, and our friends in Christ, and take courage for the future. As the Great Helper has aided us in the material temple, we doubt not He will aid his people in building the spiritual house. To this end we ask the prayers of all.

I am, yours in Christ,

D. FREEMAN.

New Glasgow, N. S., Nov. 14, 1877.

In Memoriam.

MRS. ELENOR BORDEN,

relict of the late John Borden, aged 73 years, died at the residence of her son-in-law, Joseph Bezanson, Hantsport, Oct. 28. Sister B. professed faith in Christ years ago and united with the Baptist Church, of which she was a member at the time of her death. She was a Christian wife, mother and neigh-