

ORIGINAL ESSAY.

[The following Essay, read before the Sabbath School Convention recently held in Halifax, we have been requested to publish, and have much pleasure in so doing as we believe that no Sabbath School teacher can peruse it without receiving benefit therefrom.—Ed. C. M.]

The Teacher Preparing for Class Work.

BY JOHN B. CALKIN, A. M., PRINCIPAL OF THE NOVA SCOTIA NORMAL SCHOOL.

"God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers."

"The first order was temporary, beginning and ending with those directly commissioned by our Lord; hence the teacher now holds the second place. One should know the dignity of his rank and the importance of his office that he may act in a manner befitting his character and calling. A quaint old German school-master was in the habit of bowing with uncovered head to his scholars, and yielding to them the most deferential respect. "Amongst those before me," said he, "I recognize the future nobles of the land, those who shall hereafter hold the highest positions in rank and influence in the church and state." It is said that Martin Luther was one of his scholars. Perhaps the old man was a little extreme in his regard for the possible future greatness of his scholars; but it is a thought that should never be lost sight of, and every teacher in the land should remember that the children now in our schools are to form the next generation, that they are to succeed us in all the various ranks of society and callings of life, and that their fitness for their respective positions and duties will be largely dependent on the education they are now receiving.

But if the charge of fitting for life's work is fraught with care and accountability, how shall we estimate the responsibilities of those who assume the task of training children for that higher sphere which shall only begin when life's work is done and which shall reach forward through the boundless ages of eternity?

"The teacher preparing for class work,"—I shall not attempt any exhaustive discussion of this subject. I shall simply outline a few points, and leave the filling up to others. I shall present the subject in two aspects,—General Preparation and Special Preparation.

GENERAL PREPARATION.

The teacher needs thorough Bible knowledge. This is a wide field, embracing an intimate acquaintance with the leading events recorded in the Bible; the history of the Hebrews from the call of Abraham to the final destruction of Jerusalem and scattering of the people; also a full knowledge of Bible biography; and the doctrines of the Bible as formulated in Catechisms, creeds, and confessions, with the Scripture proofs on which such doctrines are based. The teacher should also be conversant with the arguments in support of the authenticity of the Bible, on what ground it should be received as a revelation from Heaven, and other kindred topics. The fully prepared Sabbath School teacher should also possess a tolerable acquaintance with the history and literature of those surrounding nations with which the Israelites were more or less connected, as Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome; he should also be acquainted with the Geography of Bible lands, and the manners and customs of eastern people as described by modern travellers.

He should have some knowledge of the human mind, its various powers, the order of their development, and the means best suited to call forth their healthy action. In its earlier stages of development the mind is not capable of receiving and comprehending truth in an abstract form. Children may commit to memory a definition or a creed, and recite it with the strictest accuracy, and be wholly ignorant of the meaning embodied in such verbal expression. Are we not too apt to be satisfied with the correct answer to a question from the Catechism, regardless of the power of the words as vehicles of thought? I remember of asking whole Sunday School, the other day, what were the two leading or most important things taught in the Bible, and receiving no answer; but when I asked, "What do

the Scriptures principally teach?" Fifty tongues were in rivalry with the orthodox answer of the Assembly's Catechism.

We require in our teaching to imitate the Great Teacher, who knew what was in man, who fully understood the nature of the human mind and adapted himself to that nature. Mark his mode of conveying instruction! Where do we find Him teaching by definitions and abstract principles? Mark His mode of answering the question,—"Who is my neighbor?" or, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar?" or many others that might be named. In fact the Bible is one great picture book in which God's character, our relationship to Him, and our duty—all we are to believe and all we ought to do—are portrayed in living story,—in history, biography, incident, allegory, and emblem.

I am not saying anything against catechisms or creeds, but rather against the use often made of them in the religious training of the young. I would use them and make the child learn them as an exact expression of truth which he already knows, which he has been taught through illustrations and examples, and which he can state, though in terms less precise and accurate. Formulated doctrine is good, but it should be the apex of our structure, rather than the foundation.

It is sometimes said that we need not trouble ourselves so much to make the child understand the subject. Give him a concise and correct expression of truth, make him learn it accurately, and in after-years, when his mind is more fully developed, light will break in, and he will gain clear conceptions of what had hitherto been dark and unintelligible. I believe this is sometimes the case, but much more frequently the effect of such teaching is in the first place to beget disgust for religious knowledge, and then to form a habit of mental indolence. We begin by teaching children words which bring them no ideas; we heed not their natural revulsion to this process; and the final result is repression of mental power, they do not look upon words as vehicles of thought. They read books and listen to sermons without looking for ideas.

It is wrong in method to give doctrine first and then direct children to hunt up proofs from the Bible in support of them; neither is it right to bring forward passages of Scripture and tell the children the doctrine which they go to establish. The true method is to lead children by a process of questioning to search the Scriptures and derive the principles and doctrines for themselves. Some may say this plan will lead to error; children require to be guided. True, they need to be guided, but not crammed. Skillful questioning is the guiding hand. I wish children to be so trained that they will accept it, not because I have told them it is truth, but because they have found it taught in the Bible. If they lean wholly on me, their faith is unwavering so long as they believe in me; but when their faith in me is shaken, the whole superstructure comes to the ground.

The Sabbath School teacher needs also to be acquainted with the nature and relationship of the child's mental powers. The emotional nature is dependent on the intellect; we feel on account of what we know. Every teacher wishes his children to love the Sabbath School and its exercises. It is often erroneously supposed that this love can be awakened by appeals to a sense of duty. Hence we tell children they ought to love this and hate the other, but we make no effort to invest the exercises with interest and make the surroundings attractive. No one can love a person or object because he recognizes it to be his duty to do so; he must perceive in it attractive qualities, something which awakens emotions of delight.

A knowledge of child nature would show us that children need frequent changes. All the exercises of the Sabbath School should be short,—short hymns, short prayers, short lessons, short speeches. We are too apt to measure the value of all these things by their length. The successful teachers must be able to sympathize with children, to remember that he was a child,—in fact he must rejuvenate himself so that he can feel like a child again and can accurately estimate what will suit their tastes and meet their wants.

The teacher should have clear views

as to the grand object of his labors, to bring all to Christ. Subordinate to this we should strive to instruct and to influence,—we should aim to make the children wiser in respect to Bible truth and things that pertain to the kingdom of God, and we should remember also that this truth is not mere speculative knowledge. It is something to be done as well as to be believed. Let us set out with this fundamental principle that we shall influence more fully and effectively by what we say. We ourselves are to act God's word, to be living epistles, easy to be read and known of those whom we wish to teach.

SPECIAL PREPARATION.

When shall we begin the study of the lesson? Begin at the first of the quarter, making such an examination of the twelve lessons as will lead to the discovery of the leading idea in each and the connection running through the whole. This clear apprehension of the whole course will enable the teacher to arrange a consecutive plan and make each lesson prepare the way for those that follow. It will also enable him to gather up illustrations for the different lessons from the incidents that come before him in his reading or his experience. I believe that this plan would be productive of the very best results in such a series of lessons as those of the present quarter, in which the Apostle Paul is presented in his missionary tour, travelling from city to city. We mark a sameness characterizing his course of action indicative of his one grand purpose to "know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified"; and at the same time a variation in his mode of working showing his tact in adapting himself to Jew and Gentile that he "might by all means save some." With such a general view of our work we are like the builder with his plan spread out before him from the beginning.

Begin on Sabbath evening to prepare the lesson for the following Sabbath, and keep the subject before you throughout the week. It may then become as profitable for personal improvement as for the instruction of the class.

As to the manner of studying the lesson, I would suggest that the teacher first read the whole lesson carefully, including that part of the context necessary to give its full meaning; reflect on the leading points; consult references, comparing scripture with scripture so as to make the Bible its own interpreter. Having thus obtained an independent view of the lesson, examine notes and commentaries and any other source of information which may be available. Throughout the whole study of the lesson one should take notes of all matters of interest which may seem appropriate to bring before the class. The next step is to arrange the matter thus collected under appropriate heads, giving system and consecutiveness to all the parts. When the subject matter of the lesson is prepared, we need to study the proper method of bringing it before the class. How shall we question so as to lead them to discover truth for themselves; and how shall we illustrate so as to bring the various points of the lesson within the comprehension of every child? We should not in preparing a lesson attempt to draw out a full list of questions. It is impossible to determine beforehand what would be required, and a lesson prepared in this way would be wanting in adaptation and life. We should however arrange in our minds certain leading questions, aiming in this way, particularly with the older children, to guide to the discovery of truth by something approaching to independent effort, rather than to communicate by direct statement. It is better to give a child the disposition and the power to derive a principle from the Bible, than to give him the principle.

With the infant class, and perhaps even with older children, it is often important to tell the story of the lesson in simpler and more child-like language. Where there are children at home the teacher may by frequent practice acquire the power of telling the story simply and naturally. It is unwise to bring anything to read to the class; no matter how interesting it may appear it will generally fail in its object. Make everything you wish to present your own by careful study, and then tell it in your own way. Use no notes or question books.

The teachers' meeting is a most valuable means of preparing for class work. Many teachers seem to be under the impression that it devolves entirely on the superintendent, or on the one who presides, to make the meeting interesting and profitable. Hence they come week after week without any preparation of the lesson. They have nothing to contribute to the general stock, and they are so unprepared to enter into the merits of the discussion, that they can appropriate little of what others have to offer. Every teacher should prepare himself as thoroughly as if the whole success of the meeting depended on him alone, and should in the same spirit labor to sustain its interest.

It is a good plan, at least on some occasions, to form the teachers' meeting into a class, to be taught as a class in the Sabbath School. In this exercise, the

teachers should in turn take the post of teacher. The lesson might be followed by friendly criticism, in which merits and defects are pointed out.

I have said that the grand aim in our work should be to bring the children to Jesus. To this, like Paul's sermons presented to us in this quarter's lessons, which varying in style and argument in adaptation to his hearers, ended with the grand doctrine—"an mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus,"—to this everything else should be subordinate, and in preparing to meet our class we should fix our thoughts on this as the one central and all absorbing object. An essential element in this preparation is getting close to Jesus ourselves. We must live near to Him, have our minds imbued with His Spirit, our hearts warmed with His love, if we would be successful in guiding others to His feet. It is only when we stand close beside the cross that we can in any adequate way appreciate the love of Christ and the value of human souls, and without that appreciation all our efforts will be fruitless and ineffective. We should seek to find Jesus the Lamb of God, in each lesson. Let us first strive to find Him for ourselves. One who studies God's word to gather something for others is apt to forget his own need. The truth is looked upon as having no personal bearing on ourselves, but as an instrument to be wielded objectively on others. The soul of the teacher thus becomes lean, and starved, and weak. His grasp of the Divine hand is feeble and the current flowing from his soul is correspondingly weak and powerless. We must keep close to God, commune with Him in prayer,—prayer over the lesson for the light of Heaven to shine upon it, to illuminate it, and give it living power. The word itself is destitute of power. We are apt to study it and teach it as if it possessed within itself a life giving and transforming power. Children commit it to memory, and tell us with the greatest readiness the lesson which they should derive from it; but we are surprised to find that it had no influence over their conduct. The head is right, but the heart is still wrong. There is no conviction, or faith, or love. The word is a mere instrument which the Holy Spirit alone can wield with effect. In these last days the Spirit comes with no new revelation, but as life giving power to give energy to that word which has been revealed from Heaven. Sabbath School teachers, remember that Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase. "If any lack wisdom let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally." "Ask and ye shall receive."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

American and Foreign Bible Society.

Bro. Selden,—

Please allow a little space for the cause. Baptists in these Provinces know, or ought to know, that the British and Foreign Bible Society will not publish in Foreign languages a version of the Scriptures which Baptist missionaries are willing to circulate, or that Baptists at home are willing they should circulate, because they give an unfair and indefinite rendering of certain passages which Christ has commanded. In Telooqoo they render Mark i. 9, "What took place in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and received abluion from John near Jordan. In Acts viii. 38, "Then he commanded the chariot to stop, and afterward both Philip and the eunuch went down near to the water, and then he administered abluion to the latter." 1 Cor. xii. 13, "Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, servants of one Master, we all received abluion in one Spirit to form into one body." These are samples of all similar passages. These passages are given an indefinite rendering in all the languages of the East.

Brethren, are you willing to aid a Society that will treat your missionaries and the heathen in such a manner? In the Telooqoo we have no translation by Baptist missionaries. Dr. Jewett is an able Telooqoo scholar, it is very desirable the work should be done while he is living. Bro. Timpany has the language, and is anxious to aid in this glorious work. Will you help by your prayers and contributions? The American and Foreign Bible Society are the best suited to this work; it was what they were organized for; they are exceedingly anxious to do it; all they lack is the means. Such a version would be a mutual benefit to American and Provincial Missions. The missionaries give to the Telooqoo the British and Foreign Society's testaments, and when they preach are obliged to contradict the above passages.

S. B. AGENT.

[Christian Visitor please copy.]

Among the recent applications to this Society for Scriptures, we have culled a line or two from a few letters with great brevity.

From ALABAMA.—In thousands of families, says the writer, "There is not a book of any description."

From VIRGINIA.—"I have two schools numbering 300—all are poor and cannot purchase."

WEST VIRGINIA.—"In our school of 140 scholars, only 13 Testaments in the way of Scriptures."

GEORGIA.—"I have the names of over 100 schools, averaging 35 scholars each, that have no Bibles at all, excepting, may be, one in the hands of the Superintendent. 50 per cent. can read well enough to study the Bible, but are absolutely too poor to pay anything."

TEXAS.—"Multitudes all around me without the Word of God."

INDIAN COUNTRY.—"The Indian Baptist Churches have no Bibles."

GEORGIA.—"The people are poor, many are learning to read, but slowly; help us, as we need Scriptures."

NORTH CAROLINA.—"Do not deny our application, but send Bibles and Testaments into this darkened region."

MARYLAND.—"We cannot make progress in our schools without Bibles: as it is, we have neither money or Scriptures. Aid us, if you can."

ALABAMA.—"At an Institute lately held, considerably less than half of the leading colored brethren present had reference Bibles."

WESTERN N. Y.—"I am a missionary, and strange it is, it is no uncommon thing for me to find families and individuals without the Word of God."

MISSISSIPPI.—"You have no idea of the destitution of Scriptures and lack of knowledge."

TEXAS.—"Thanks for your package of Testaments, but oh! how few for so many."

SOUTH CAROLINA.—"Last year your society kindly sent us Scriptures, but our needs are multiplying, our stock is exhausted and numerous demands are now upon me. I solicit again; I am an Evangelist among the colored Baptists, but my work is among the whole heritage of Jacob. The churches are poor and cannot pay for Scriptures. Send all you can, as they are needed."

VIRGINIA.—"I find in this county several Baptist Sabbath Schools in which scarcely a Bible or Testament can be found. These schools are well attended. Do not decline this application."

GEORGIA.—"In my travels, I find colored and white people in great need of Bibles. Some are very poor, others can pay something."

VIRGINIA.—"We have a very large number of young readers among our school children, but only a few have ever seen a Testament or Bible in this part of the State."

NORTH CAROLINA.—"Have resided in this State two years. Traveled much. This whole county where I am, is as truly missionary ground as Burmah, China, or any part of Africa. The people, colored and white, as a general thing, are poor and ignorant. They have no Bibles among them and cannot buy. Send as many Testaments and Bibles as you can."

VIRGINIA.—"In travelling through this county, I find a worse destitution than in the adjoining one; schools and families with no books of any kind, no Bibles, no Testaments, no money."

For the Christian Messenger.

An Acknowledgement.

The following is a list of monies paid to the undersigned to aid in building the house of worship at Montague Bridge, P. E. I. Further favors will be thankfully received and acknowledged:—

Table listing donors and amounts: Duncan Robertson \$ 5 00, R. Burdett 5 00, Mrs. Nicholas 5 00, George Howlett 5 00, V. H. Knight 10 00, Neil McLeod 35 00, Mrs. Knight 10 00, Miss Annie Knight 10 00, Thomas Wood 5 00, Jas. Jones 4 00, Howard Wood 2 00, John Howlett 10 00, David Howlett 10 00, Lauchlin McLean 5 00, Jas. DesBrisay 20 00, J. N. 46 00, George Davies 121 00, Wm. Simpson 10 00, Jas. Newsom 5 00, Samuel Simpson 2 00, W. B. Howatt 5 00, F. D. Cooke 5 00, Mr. Curtis 2 00, Alex. A. McLeod 3 50, John Frost 6 00, Arch. McDonald 1 25, Allan McKinlay 3 00, Mrs. T. Wood 2 00, J. T. Burhoe 2 50, Wm. McLeod 5 00, Arthur Simpson 3 00, M. Ross 2 00, Thomas Clay 2 50, Wm. Simmons 1 00, Mary Ann McLeod 1 50, John A. Ford 2 00.

D. G. McDONALD, Charlottetown, P. E. I., Sept. 10, 1877.