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Training the Church of the Future.

BY REV. FRANCIS E. CLARK.

The fruitfulness of this work for the young is beyond all comparison. If as much effort, prayer, and agony were spent upon winning the children and youths as upon winning and edifying the adults, how incomparable would be the results! Think the matter over for a moment. What proportion of the average minister's time and thought is given to the adults of his congregation, and how much to the children? Reckon up the hours spent on the two classes. Two services a Sunday, fifty two Sundays in the year, largely for grown people; an occasional five minute's sermon for the children, a children's Sunday once a year, and the minister's sermonic duty to them is done.

But the adults, the sermon-steeped saints who little need them, or the sermon-hardened sinners who will not hear them, or from whose well-fortified conscience the truth will rebound like the cannon-balls from the steel skin of a monitor—there must be something like a hundred homilies every year prepared for the edification of one class or the unsympathetic criticism of the other.

The midweek prayer meeting is for the adult. To be sure, the young people are welcomed; but the meeting is prepared and planned with the mature Christian in view, and, if the young participate, it often seems like an intrusion into the special preserves of their elders, which only the boldest are equal to.

The Sabbath school is largely for the young, but many ministers consider it very small concern of theirs. The superintendent and the teachers are responsible, and as for the young people's meeting, some ministers—not many, I am glad to believe—resent it as an intrusion upon their valuable time if they are expected to attend.

TEN TO ONE.

Here are ten hours of prayer and planning and anxious thought given to the adults by many clergymen to one given to the young people, when the results of working for the young people, are as ten to one obtained in working for the adults. In other words, ten times the effort is, as a rule, spent on those who are, ten times over, the least susceptible. This is often not because the minister wishes it, but because the congregation demands it.

I do not ask that this schedule be reversed, and that ten hours be given to the young and one hour to the rest of the congregation, though that division would be more reasonable than the proportion now often observed. But it is unreasonable to ask that the time and thought be equally divided? There are quite as many children and youth in our congregations—or there ought to be—as there are adults. There are more of them in our homes. If a line were drawn at the age of twenty-five in all Protestant parishes in America, more would be found below than above that line.

Is it unreasonable to ask, then, that the majority, whose needs are as great, and whose openness to religious impression is much greater, should receive at least as much of the minister's time and thought as the less hopeful minority? We need to get over the impression so widely prevalent that the soul of the grown person is a little more valuable than the soul of a child, and that it is a greater triumph to win such a soul for the kingdom.

HEADS OF FAMILIES.

How often have I seen a statement like this in our religious papers: "There has been a revival of religion in the parish of So-and-so, in which fifteen of the twenty converts were heads of families!" Brother So-and-so often words his announcement of an awakening in such a way that one would think he was almost ashamed of the converts unless they had the distinction

of being "heads of families." The note of triumph, it seems to me belongs, if it belongs anywhere, in the other announcement; no, "twenty converts, most of them heads of families, but, "twenty converts, all of them children of youth; all of them to be heads of families; all of them consecrating the freshness and vigor of their best years to Christ; all of them giving not the fag-end of worn-out lives to Christ, but the strength and beauty of their youth, as well as the maturity of their manhood and womanhood and the ripe mellowness of their old age."

Consider the life-insurance system of averages. A boy of fifteen may expect, we will say, to have forty-five years yet to live; the man of fifty may expect twenty years of life. Suppose twenty boys and girls of fifteen are led in a time of awakening to decide honestly to live the Christian life. The aggregate expectation of these lives is nine hundred years, nine hundred years of service and influence, nine hundred years of pure living and noble striving, almost a Methuselah's lifetime of work and worship. Twenty boyhoods and twenty youths and twenty manhoods and twenty old men all for Christ and His cause are won when the twenty boys are won.

A SYSTEM OF AVERAGES.

But, when the twenty men in middle life, the much-heralded heads of families," are counted, their aggregate expectations of life will be at the most about four hundred years. They will have much less than one-half as long to live as the boys. Their boyhood, youth and young manhood are behind them. These years cannot be used for Christ, and the serene and yellow leaf is not so valuable a gift as the bud and the blossom, the flower and the fruit.

Besides, the possibilities of the youthful company are vastly greater. Of the man in middle life we say, "What is he?" of the old man, "What was he?" of the youth, "What will he be?" And in that question of the future tense are possibilities that set the pulses bounding.

Polycarp was converted at nine years of age, we are told; Matthew Henry at eleven, Dr. Isaac Watts at nine, Bishop Hall when eleven, and Robert Hall when twelve. What parent would take the responsibility of keeping out of the visible kingdom of God a possible Matthew Henry or a Robert Hall? What minister would not labor years to bring such a saint into the service of our Lord, and feel that he was well repaid for his efforts? The boy in our family, in our Sunday school, in our Christian Endeavor society, may be the compeer of any one of these.

Consecrated Ears.

A bevy of young school girls congregated under the great oak at the entrance of the academy were laughing and chatting gaily when one of their number, Ethel Mandel introduced the name of an absent acquaintance by repeating a bit of unpleasant gossip about her.

This was the signal for Alice Goodwin, the youngest member of the group, and almost a stranger, to turn on her heel and walk quickly away.

I look upon that as an insult, exclaimed Eleanor, with a curl of her pretty lips, her eyes following the young girl's movement.

Attribute the affront to ignorance, counseled Rose Adams. She was raised in the country, where good breeding is not up to par, she continued, in a voice loud enough to reach Alice's ears.

The blood rushed to her face, but she did not retrace her steps, until the ringing of the bell called her back into the class-room, where she was quietly ignored.

Later, when called to account, she explained:

Down among the simple Quakers, where I spent my vacation, the young folks are banded together in a little Golden Rule Club, in which they obligate themselves to live by the beautiful rule in all their dealings with other people. I joined the club, and—and to-day—

To-day you show your allegiance to it by your rude treatment of a classmate, sneered Eleanor.

I did not mean it so, faltered Alice. You see—well, there is a written law for sealing lips and hearts against all unkind speeches and thoughts of others.

Well, you needn't have run away so impolitely from the truth I was repeating, snapped Eleanor. You were under no obligations either to believe or repeat the story.

But I am pledged not to hear these stories, true or false, returned Alice. Our pledges demand consecrated ears, as well as consecrated lips and hearts. We are to turn away from all sorts of gossip, and are specially warned against three things—talking unkindly in one's absence, repeating what others say

under like conditions, and listening to such gossip, no matter where or by whom repeated. We are pledged not only to keep the doors of our lips, but also to turn our ears away from anything that would dull or defile them.

This is the way to keep oneself unspotted from the world, said Miss Garrett, the teacher, who had been an eye and ear witness to all that had occurred. A very good test in regard to confining the liberty of that unruly member, the tongue, is one given to me when I was a little girl: Say nothing about people who are absent that you wouldn't say, supposing they were present. And have you always lived up to it? asked Eleanor, humbly.

I wish I could say I had, returned the teacher soberly. If universally practiced, what a happy world this would be. Henceforth I trust my girls will not only keep their lips of their lip, that they sin not against their fellows, but that they will also consecrate their ears to kindness, by refusing to have their hearing defiled by the slightest breath of calumny.—Journal & Messenger.

Children Asking the Blessing.

Attention has been called in these columns to the pretty customs of allowing the children in a family to say grace, and some forms of blessing in prose and verse suggested. But is it not well, when they do it voluntarily and naturally, to let the children use their own form of words? They will surely understand and remember that. In one family the children successively officiated as chaplain at the table, the form for years with slight variations, being as follows: O God, bless us; thank you for this food; forgive our sins; for Christ's sake. Amen.

Even childish comments or improvised additions to the usual form are not at heart irreverent, and are far better than stiff, unintelligible formality. In one family, where the father had just begun the custom of saying grace, the four-year-old boy remarked that he did not like it as well as what grandpa said when here—papa's blessing is not he was long enough, and it doesn't ask God to give us better food!

A minister whose duties often took him away from home left the asking of the blessing to his little sons, also charging them strictly to care for the health and comfort of their invalid mother. The latter was much surprised to hear this petition in the father's absence: O Lord, we thank thee for giving us such a good father. We thank thee for giving us such a good mother, and when she dies we pray thee to give us a better one!

One interesting fruit of this custom in years gone by was the habit of the children of Christian families to imitate it in their own play feasts, as is no doubt well remembered by many now grown up. One such tradition is of three or four children partaking of a mud pie dinner on the roadside, the oldest sister, with thumb carefully placed under the forefinger, after the manner of their aged grandfather, reverently repeating, O God, more abundantly mazmore present tense. Years after it came out that this remarkable prayer was a snatch of the grammar lesson heard at school added to the grandiose's stereotyped petition. More abundantly bless and feed our never-dying souls! This points a moral. When grace is said in the presence of children it should always be expressed in simple, distinct language; else how shall the children that sit in the place of the unlearned say Amen, seeing they understand not?

A well-known doctor of divinity related a reminiscence of his childhood in a country parsonage. The children were not allowed to eat between meals, so that clothespins were served in place of food on their dining table in the barn. One form of blessing was, O Lord, bless this food, and don't let any of it stick in our throats, the last petition having reference to the experience of a young brother who had nearly come to his death by getting a piece of lead in his throat. As the children grew up they felt less inclined to ask the blessing at their clothespin banquets, and a discussion sometimes arose as to whose duty it was, the guests rightly claiming that it belonged to the host. At last they settled it in the same way they chose the it in a game, by using the time-honored formula. Intra, minti a cutra corn, apple seed, apple thorn. Even then, when it fell to the other boy, he would decline, and so the future D. D. had to ask the blessing anyway!

Since the above was written a letter has been read from a native pastor in the Armenian country, one item of which touchingly illustrates how the New England custom has borne fruit in the distant Orient. Theodore is sweet in many ways. Before we begin anything to do at the table he is the one to say, Pray, preparing his hands so beautifully.—The Congregationalist.

Which Was More in Need of Sympathy?

About three months before the sad daybreak when the great heart of Phillips Brooks ceased its throbbing and the busy brain its planning for the good of others, I was one noon-time seated at a table in a well-known Boston cafe, when two young women earnestly engaged in conversation, entered and took the opposite seats.

One could not help hearing the conversation that ensued, so intense were the tones of the speakers. A regret was then experienced, that has since deepened, that it was impossible to have taken its verbatim.

One of the two, or a near friend of theirs had evidently been grievously wronged, and, after the manner of so many Boston people, had gone to talk it over with the good man, who was, in a large sense, the bishop of us all, and now at this mid-day hour were meeting by appointment to tell what had been the advice of Phillips Brooks.

Well, what did he say, for I suppose you have seen him?

Yes, and he said just what we might have known Phillips Brooks would say. He listened so quietly with that sad smile of his, speaking never a word until we were done, and then he said so gently: I'm sorry for you, very—it is hard to be misunderstood, injured, wronged in this manner—and yet shall I hurt you more if I tell you that I am not so sorry for you as for some one else?

Really, my friend, my larger, deeper, sympathy is not for you, but for the wrong-doer, the one who has so needlessly caused all this pain. It is so, so pathetic to have made so much trouble in a world already so full of heartaches. I am, oh, so sorry for him. As I have listened I have been wondering if it were not possible, after all has occurred, to yet bring some gladness out from the pain, and if you had not best just have your revenge by forgiving all the wrong, and helping him to awaken to a new life, with the hope of his yet amounting to something good.

That would be such a splendid way to surprise him and would make you so much gladder than to cherish the wrong. Are you willing to do this? That was what he said to me, she exclaimed, with her face flushed and smiling through tears, with the glad consciousness that she had been led to act worthily of her larger womanhood and was going to do this very forgiving and helping to something good.

These two young women were of the highest type of wage-earners, who, having associated their lives with Trinity Church, had also enriched them with a personal pastor.

To them as to all others, Phillips Brooks' message to the suffering and the wronged was the same, whether private counsel or public teaching: Suffer if you must; do not quarrel with the dear Lord's appointments for you. Only try if you are to suffer to do it splendidly. That's the only way to take up a pleasure or pain! These were his oft-repeated words, and he never seems more majestic than when he uttered them, straightening himself to his full height, while his voice echoed and re-echoed through Trinity with his closing exhortation, Yes, suffer splendidly!

The surroundings, the woman and the principle of this bit of pastoral work, have all lodged so helpfully in memory that an impulse of almost responsibility impels me to send on this conversation.—Congregationalist.

Love thinketh no evil, but rejoices in the truth. How much time is spent in thinking evil of others, and how some people delight in spreading the errors of some one else, and in circulating falsehood! Hence the confidence of man in man, in all the pursuits of life, is being destroyed, and infidelity, which is the opposite of fidelity, is taking the place of truth and righteousness.

Jacob Barker, the English infidel said, after his conversion, that his skepticism had been a form of self-conceit. It is often nothing more.

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He Promised to Obey.

A good story is told of a Scottish clergyman, who, while going through a village, was requested to officiate at a marriage in the absence of a parish minister.

Just as he had told the bridegroom to make the usual promise of love and honor his wife the man interjected the words and obey. The clergyman, surprised, did not heed the proposed amendment. He was going on with the service when the groom interposed, with emphasis

Aye, and obey, sir; love, honor, and obey, ye ken!

A few years afterwards the clergyman met the hero of the wedding incident.

Do mind, sir, you day when ye married me, and when I was insisting upon vowing to obey my wife? We've may now see that I was in the right. Whether ye wad or no, I have obeyed her; and, behold, I'm the only man that has a two-story house in the hale town!

The Scot even went further than Franklin, who said, The man who would thrive must ask his wife.

Disappointment is always hard to bear, but it may be made easier if we endeavor to bear it bravely, finding comfort in the thought that things are seldom so bad that they cannot be mended.

Good Health

It is doubtless the highest human good. It is especially so to women, to whom it means the preservation of beauty, happiness in the home, and the enjoyment of social duties. There can be no good health for any woman who suffers from womanly diseases. Her complexion falls. Her flesh loses its firmness. Her eyes are dull. She has no home happiness, no social enjoyment.



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