

SCHOOL OR NO SCHOOL.

BY EDWARD G. TAYLOR, D.D.

Very nearly a century has elapsed since the modern Sunday-school was born, and it must be admitted that it has had a vigorous growth, and holds a large place in the sympathies and confidence of the Christian Church. It has done some good—we would not deny that—but has it not had its day, and as is said of a minister whom a church desires to dismiss, is not its "usefulness at an end." Every one must see at a glance that it has involved a vast amount of work and worse than all, of expense, and if this fact is an evil, it is a growing one, for the demands of the Sunday-school are becoming larger and more imperious every year. The infant which we have nursed is now a giant, and verily begins to feel its importance, and seems to be laying plans to become still more influential. Now or never, as we near the close of its first hundred years, is the time to give it its quietus; and it is a serious question whether even now it is not too late to abolish it without a concentrated and determined stand against it by the churches. We have been moved to sound the alarm. Lend your ears for a moment.

Have not all of us heard grave objections to the Sunday-schools among excellent Christian people? But have we given them due consideration? It is charged that it takes the place of the old-time home instruction; that it prevents the children from attending the preaching service; that it teaches some crude theology; that it substitutes religious ditties for Meas and Old Hundred; that it costs a great deal of money; that it gives undue importance to the child, so that the old-fashioned reverence to age is passing away; that it runs an opposition line to the church; and gravest of all, that it is so diffusing Scripture knowledge as to cause the preaching in some pulpits to seem tame in comparison; and there is likely to be some truth in all of these charges, and in more that might be mentioned. In short after a century's trial, it is found to be still imperfect in some of its workings—having imperfect human nature to deal with, one might say—and is open to such objections as have been stated. Is not this enough to condemn it? What need of further discussion?

Suppose, therefore, we abolish the Sunday-school. Let us fix upon a Sunday-school on which we shall turn the key upon the hundreds of thousands of eager scholars over our land, locking them and their successors out forever from the houses, halls, mission schools, sheds, railroad cars, or whatever place has given shelter to this presuming institution.

First of all, what amount of money will be saved? And is not the cry of "Hard Times" everywhere in our ears, and is not this the day of retrenchment? Think how many heathens that money might convert; how many poor it would feed; how many minister's salaries would be eked out with it, so that the brethren who have struck the "not" out of Matt. vi. 19, might not be troubled by "so many calls." Then remember the tired feet of teachers no more to be wearied in this exacting work; no more the drain upon the sympathies and affections. Now for the delicious rest implied in the very word Sabbath, the nap unbroken by the Sunday-school bell. Think, also of the relief from the peripatetic Sunday-school talkers; and again, of the money saved by having no Sunday-school periodicals to subscribe for. And one would long to pry off the roofs of the houses of our land to look down, some Sabbath day, upon the merchants, farmers, tradesmen, and all, now gathering their families together to resume the privilege of Home instruction which the Sunday-school so ruthlessly snatched away.

Let us by all means abolish the Sunday-school!

But pause a moment! Are you quite sure that this is done, the money would be saved? the preaching service would be filled with children? their theology would be sounder? they would never sing worse things than pious ditties? the Home instruction would be richer and letter? more souls would be saved, and the churches be stronger in number, in grace, in benevolence, and in every good work? suppose we try the Sunday-school another century. —Baptist Teacher.

WHO ARE THE STRONG MEN.

We mistake strong feelings for strong character. A man who bears all before him—before those frown domestics tremble, and whose bursts of fury make the children of the house quake—because he has his will obeyed and his own way in all things, we call him the strong man. The truth is, that is the weak man. It is his passions that are strong; he, mastered by them, is weak. You must measure the strength of a man by the power of the feelings he subdues, not by the power of those which subdue him. And, hence, composure is often the highest result of strength. Did we never see a man receive a flagrant insult, and only grow a little pale, and then reply quietly? That was a man spiritually strong. Or did we never see a man in anguish stand as if carved out of solid rock, mastering himself. Or one bearing a hopeless daily trial remain silent, and never tell the world what it was that cankered his home-peace. That is strength. He, who with strong passions, remains chaste—he who, keenly sensitive, with manly power of indignation in him, can be provoked, yet can restrain himself and forgive—these are strong men, spiritual heroes.

THAT SUBSCRIPTION.

Bishop Harris, in a private conversation recently, related the following incident, which ought to be a lesson to those preachers who are afraid to ask the people for money for the cause of God. The Bishop said:

"One morning in my early ministry I started out to secure some funds to buy lamps for the better lighting of my church. Almost the first

man I met was a noted atheist, who made his boast that he had not been inside of a church for twenty-five years. I stopped to speak to him, and he seemed quite friendly. I said to him 'Mr. Lambertson, I am out this morning to get a little money to secure the better lighting of my church. I am well aware that you never go into our church, but it may be you would be willing to give something for the comfort of those who do.' He took out his pocket book, gave me five dollars, and said, 'I give this, not for the church, but for your father's sake.' What was my surprise the very next Sabbath evening to see that old man in my congregation. He was on the very back seat, and went out at once as soon as the service was over. But he came again; he was convicted of sin; God converted him. He lived a Christian life, and died a triumphant death. I verily believe it was that five dollar subscription that led to this happy result.

THE VOICE OF GOD IN THE SOUL.

Theodore Parker has told the following story of his early childhood:

When he was a little boy in petticoats, in his fourth year, one fine day in spring his father led him by the hand to a distant part of the farm, but soon sent him home alone. On the way he had to pass a little pond-hole, then spreading its waters wide. A rhodora in full bloom—a rare plant in the neighborhood, and which grew only in that locality—attracted his attention and drew him to the spot. He saw a little spotted tortoise sunning himself in the shallow water at the root of the flaming shrub. He lifted the stick he had in his hand to strike the harmless reptile; for, though he had never killed any creature, yet he had seen other boys out of sport destroy birds, squirrels, and the like, and he felt a disposition to follow their example. "But all at once," he says "something checked my little arm, and a voice within me said, clear and loud, 'It is wrong.' I held my uplifted stick with wonder at the new motion—the consciousness of an involuntary but inward check upon my actions—till the tortoise and the rhodora both vanished from my sight. I hastened home, told the tale to my mother, and asked what was it that told me it was wrong. She wiped a tear from her eye with her apron, and taking me in her arms, said, 'Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen and obey it, then it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear, or disobey, then it will fade little by little, and leave you all in the dark and without a guide. Your life depends on your heeding this little voice.' She went her way, careful and troubled about many things, but doubtless pondered them in her motherly heart; while I went off to wonder and think it over in my poor childish way. But I am sure no event in my life has made so deep and lasting an impression on me."

PRINCE BISMARCK AND HIS TIRE-SOME VISITOR.

The German Chancellor is said to have been asked by Lord Russell, the British Minister, recently, how he managed "to get rid of that class of importunate visitors whom he could not well refuse to see, but whose room he found preferable to their company." "Oh!" replied the Chancellor, "I have a pretty simple method. My wife knows them pretty well, and when she sees that they are with me, she generally contrives to come in and call me away upon some pretext or other." He had scarcely finished speaking when the princess put her head in at the door, and said, "Otto, you must come and take your medicine; you ought to have had it ten minutes ago." Lord Otto Russell was not long in coming to the conclusion that "his room would be preferable to his company," so he instantly left.

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