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SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

(Opening Address, by Rev. J. M. Withycombe at the Church Convention. Afternoon meeting Summerside March 21.)

I have been asked to say something by way of introducing a general discussion on this subject. I will endeavor to arrange my remarks under distinct heads, and say something brief and suggestive about each with the hope that each point may be taken up in consecutive order and fully discussed.

THE TEACHER'S OBJECT.

There is no work, no undertaking, no project, it seems to me—nay I am sure—which demands a clearer, surer, and more definite grasp of purpose or object than this work. We are liable to confound S. S' instruction with the purely intellectual instruction of the day schools. We urge, we tempt, our scholars to put forth effort,—by emulation, by premiums, by special care and acumen to make a good showing—but in what?

Let us ask this question: In what? I fear the bulk of our Sunday School teachers have a totally incorrect idea. And the results of that account for the widely diffused "exteriority," as it has been called by a great teacher, which characterizes the religion of most people to-day. We might as well bring up our children on the lines of agnostic sophism or ethical culture. We are feeding the children with husks—not wilfully, but ignorantly. Let me explain: The purpose of the S. S. is not intellectual. It is, *par excellence*, spiritual. As it has been expressed: "The true end and aim of the Sunday School is surely to lead the lambs of Christ's flock to the Shepherd." This is the point. The Christian life is an interior matter, and the children must early be taught that religion is a personal matter as between a personal soul and a personal God. In other words, to be a Christian means to live a life of union with Christ, because He was in baptism made a member of Christ, a child of God.

I admit this to be a theme deeper perhaps than the child-mind can grasp; but this is the love, this is the philosophy that can make that type which it was Christ's avowed aim and purpose to create. "I am come that ye might have life," said He. And it is the life in each individual which is going to tell towards achieving that masterly ideal and sublime project of banishing sin from this world. If you can teach the lambs of Christ's flock, by whatever means, that life can take away the sin of the world, not the sins, and that this is done in each individual heart—in a hidden life,—purified in conception by early impressions such as only a loved teacher or a mother can give, and lived out day by day, month by month, year by year, under careful and watchful tutelage; if, in a word, you can impress upon the children the significance and proportion and proper place in the lives of the three great factors of God's universe, viz: God, myself and all the rest of the world; then we might have them growing up as the Christ-child grew up in the Nazarene Church, the Nazarene Parish, the Nazarene Home, (1) as to themselves, "in wisdom and in stature" (intellectually pure, physically pure and (2) "in favor with God, as to spiritual life" and (3) "in favor with man" (as to clean and honorable reputation.) This then is the primary and all important object of our Sunday School work.

THE TEACHER'S IDEAL.

What then is the qualification of the teacher? Intellectuality? No. When our Lord, as we were beautifully reminded by the preacher of last evening, was examining Simon Peter for Holy Orders, mark you how He proved him. It reminds us of those last tests to which medical students are put at the final stages of their examination for diplomas. They are to be practitioners; and so they are tested on those points which mean practical, immediate success in serious cases. We too are practitioners, we workers in the Kingdom of Christ. And our first and most momentous cases are the dear lambs of Christ. Mark you, therefore, I say, the Master's final test of St. Peter. He went to the root of the whole matter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" He saith unto Him, "Yea Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." He passed. "He saith unto him 'Feed My lambs.'"

I hesitate not one moment to say that any lower ideal than this for our S. S. teachers would be a calamity. Sisters and brothers in Christ, do not we know, as being of the initiated, that what is killing the life and the influence of Christianity in the world to-day is this same 'externalism,' because we, like Martha, have not learnt what is the better part. It is essence, not

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Words cannot too strongly express its

great merit, and sufferers need only to put to test what others say of it to prove the claims of the great South American Rheumatic Cure. Years of pain may be dispelled in an hour, but it's only a matter of days at most till the most stubborn cases will vanish, and in the place of pain and suffering there'll be a joyous and lasting freedom

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the worker than he is about the work. His kingdom is advanced rather by what we are than what we do. This is where Martha failed of the Master's approval. She represents a type of fussy workers. It was lately said, "Zeal is the new cloak which covers the multitude of sins."

"Thou must be true thyself, If thou the truth would'st teach, It needs the overflow of heart To give the lips full speech."

I want no teacher whose heart is not in the work, and your scholar will dissect your character as a spectroscope dissects the rays of light. "Beware lest ye offend one of these little ones." I have no faith whatever in the influence and the use of a teacher who does not possess this first qualification, of a knowledge of what the Christian life is, and what is the value of Christ's proposal to regenerate a world. I have every hope of that one whose prayer, spoken in secret in that hour of meditation and supplication and intercession which every ideal teacher will inevitably work into the warp and woof of his or her common life, will be "Speak to me, Lord, that I may speak In loving echoes of Thy tones."

So much for ideal. PRACTICAL QUALIFICATIONS.

(1) Power of control. Perhaps it is unfair to expect everybody to be complete in this, but in the practical work of a teacher 'Attention, and how to secure it,' is one of the main principles of pedagogics. Even God requires attention when He teaches His great lessons, and will have it. Without this power of control all other gifts are practically useless. A noisy undisciplined class is a reproach to the teacher. Napoleon said, "There are no bad regiments; but there are bad colonels." How is this gained? Let me tell you as an old teacher who never failed with a class in this matter yet, and who has had interesting trials; begin, by gaining the love of your pupils. You will smile as you perhaps think of a certain Tommy Jones or Johnny Jenkins whom you knew as incorrigible and who had no soft places whatever in their constitution. But I re-assert it, win the love of your class! Do it first by self-control, patience, kindness, anything but ill-temper and savagery. And I say this, after experiencing many rebuffs and humiliations, that the boy whom you cannot win to you as your slave by earnest, faithful, prayerful interest in boyhood, is a *rara avis*. He is found, indeed, but so rarely that he doesn't count.

(2) Punctuality and regularity. I group these, they are twin sisters, even though one perhaps weighs a little more than the other. Your pupils will demand one thing of you, not by automatic mandate because they are the opposite of a constituted authority, but by a no less potential pressure, which all of us feel, when we come into contact with childhood under privilege or responsibility, to be God-implanted in the child to keep us true. That one thing is *conscientiousness*. I need not explain it. I need only say,

pend upon any worker to be true. If you lightly be unpunctual or irregular for any consideration whatsoever, your pupils will assign lack of conscientiousness in you as a cause, and you will lose their respect, besides disarranging the school generally.

LESSONS.

There should be thoroughness of preparation on the part of the teacher. This is truistic. The secret of spell under an orator is the orator's preparation for his effort. Inspiration is a mischievous delusion in a teacher of any kind. You cannot empty out of a vessel that wherewith it has not previously been filled. Any speaker who affects divine afflatus in order to be deified as a Mercurius is a pious fraud. A teacher must at all times be completely full of his or her lesson after faithful and accurate study. I do not advance this to make your work more difficult, but, on the contrary, to make it more pleasant. There is nothing which is calculated to give one a feeling of exhilaration and complete satisfaction like what one experiences in the consciousness of a work well wrought, like preparing your lesson. It is the secret of interesting your pupils and making them love your lessons. The only book in evidence during your lesson should be your own Bible, and I would like in advanced classes also a blackboard to impress points. Your lessons must have continuity of course. Let it be your aim to lead your children up to the higher knowledge of God and the great doctrines of our holy religion, "line upon line." For this you will appreciate the Lesson Helps provided by specialists.

THE IDEAL SUPERINTENDENT.

There are at least two personalities connected with this institution which are practically indispensable to the *bono esse* of the Sunday School. One is the Superintendent. We all have our ideal of the Superintendent. But to some schools he is, alas, only an aspiration, a desideratum and nothing beyond, i.e. he is not found in the parish. This is for the most part because, perhaps, it is so difficult an office to fill. It has many and many a time fallen to the lot of women to do this, and the names of such are always spoken with veneration and regard. Yet we all acknowledge it to be more appropriate to men. If there be one man let him be a Superintendent. There should be two men at least in every Sunday School. Hence every Sunday School should have a male Superintendent. What is the type of man required?

(1) He must possess strong vitality, ability and energy. (2) He must be able to keep in touch with the bounding exuberance of youth and at the same time belong emphatically to the order of vertebrates. (3) He ought always to be well acquainted with all new notions and plans of Sunday School work. (4) He must be methodical and business-like in details. (5) He must have a little knowledge of music. (6) He must be enthusiastic. I do not say that every man will rise to this ideal. And when you hear him

ing books on the priestly ideals and the ideal pastor. I personally always feel like a nervous man who has bought a Family Medical Book. Immediately does he sit down to read it through and in due course comes to the conclusion that he has got pretty nearly every disease described in it. This then is the ideal, if you please, and I might now add that he should have a memory for faces and names, (Christian names), not only in the S. S. but on the street as well. He must be a bit of a catechist. It must also always be assumed by him that he is subordinate to his rector. I have heard of a clergyman in a S. S. Conference thus describe his superintendent: In one particular he forms a striking contrast to Satan. We are told that if you resist the devil he will flee from you. Resist my superintendent and he will fly at you! He must be a layman always, says one, and a business man always. You know what I mean. A business man is never a gentleman of leisure. The two most effectual superintendents I have ever met was a judge of the supreme court of his province, and the biggest merchant and the busiest merchant of his county. The latter was one whom I induced to take up the work, and yet he was spoken of to me as being a man who on account of the multiplicity of his business cares was signified to me as one who would probably fill an early grave. He must impart exact business-like ways to every department of the school. He must be ready for self-denial and have a spirit of holy zeal not tinged by desire for personal distinction so much as love of Christ and solicitation for the souls of the growing generation. Given a man who has a grasp of the fact of the human race being a vast perennial living organism, passing through ages of development, and you have useful man, the man of greatest possibilities as a worker that you can find. All honor to the business man who gives up his Sunday afternoon to do Christ's primary fundamental work, after a busy week. He may, however, be blessed through his opportunity for change of work. If in any connection the poet be proven right in saying that absence of occupation is not rest, it is in connection with the typical business men of this feverish age. But in spite of this let us honor and value him for his work.

The Ideal Rector—in connection with his position as real head of the S. S. work in his parish. He is the other personality. "150 years ago a tiny seed dropped by the Great Sower into the heart of one of His humble servants, and since then under the Holy Spirit having overspread amongst Christian communities of English-speaking Anglo-Saxons, the ideal rector will estimate at full value this agency whose *raison d'être* it is his tool ate to question and use it to the best advantage. He will be present as often as in these days of overworked clergy he can. He will be in such touch with his teachers that will be so many telephone wires in his hands to reach souls and families etc. And he is a fortunate man if he can have the organizing skill or attrac-

The ideal rector will shine especially as a catechist. He will have the greatest lever in his hand that he can use if he learns an adeptness in this art. Old Dean Comber said "Sermons never do good upon an uncatechized congregation." This is a deeper truth than appears at first sight. Our congregations, owing to the neglect of careful accurate instruction in the principles of Christian doctrine, owing that is to neglect in early days of discipleship to have been fed with "the sincere milk of the Word" do not get the good from hearing sermons which is anticipated by the exhortation in the Baptismal service, "ye shall call upon them to hear sermons." Nobody can do this work as well as the clergyman. If he cannot, nobody, is able to supply the great lack. He has authority, wisdom, knowledge and professional status to back him up.

The excellence of the catechetical method would be sufficient matter for a long and interesting paper. G. Herbert said, "At sermons men may sleep and wander, but when one is asked a question he must discover what he is." (The older meaning of discover—"lay bare.") I remember the days when I was taught the basal principles of my churchmanship and (what is the same to me now) of my spiritual life. I know what Herbert meant and appreciate it. Throughout the ages as well as to-day there is nothing in didactic science that has superseded the Catechetical method. Moreover, it appeals to us, because it is the Church's traditional mode. A great door and effectual is opened to us in our Sunday Schools. Let us not allow it to invite us in vain.

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