

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL EXCHEQUER.

BY REV. ALFRED TAYLOR.

WHEREVER religious, or missionary, or benevolent works are carried on, there will be heard the clink of money. We may call it an evil, if we choose, but if so, we must admit it to be a necessary evil, and one that will exist as long as we transact business in a world where money is the circulating medium. The Sunday-school is no exception in money matters. Its expenses must be provided for in some way. Funds must be raised by the children to carry on beneficent enterprises among domestic or foreign heathen. A Sunday-school which would ignore the existence of money, and the continual need for handling that much-coveted article, might stand in fear of the blotting-out of its own existence.

The church ought to provide for the current expenses of its Sunday-school, just as the father of a family pays the bills for the food his children eat. An outside school, which is not fathered by any church, is compelled to make its living in the best way it can, generally by trusting to the generosity of its friends; sometimes by giving concerts, lectures, and shows. Many a mission-school, in the poverty of its orphanage, is under the necessity of permanently engaging in a sort of moral menagerie business, which is, to say the best of it, a dangerous expedient. In its struggle for existence, it is likely to allow this element of seeming prosperity to crowd out a large part of its religious vitality.

There are some Sunday-schools whose scholars are sent round among their friends on the beggarly business of soliciting subscriptions and donations for the support of the schools. With small pass-books, the children force themselves before the faces of all whom they meet, and make themselves odious to their relations and neighbours, and even to strangers in the street. I have been at Sunday-schools where children with pass-books have thus passed round among the whole company of visitors who happened to be present, asking each one for a contribution, to the great annoyance of the visitors. The money given in response to such beggary can hardly be called the gift of charity. It is more likely to be given in the spirit manifested by people when they toss coppers to beggar-boys, in order to persuade the boys to pass on and cease troubling them. No school ever became very prosperous as a result of practising this description of pious fraud.

There is a science in taking up a collection. At anniversaries, and other public meetings in behalf of the school, there is great propriety in asking the congregation for money. It is equally proper to collect from the children their weekly contributions in behalf of some worthy object outside of the school. To make children contribute for the school expenses is hardly fair. At stated "missionary meetings" it is well to recount the donations, and publicly consecrate them to the missionary purpose for which they have been given. Even in this we need great caution, to avoid running into mischief. The emulation between classes as to which shall give the most money, is, to a certain extent, wholesome, yet loaded with danger if carried too far. A wealthy teacher can always manage to keep his class pecuniarily ahead of those whose teachers are not blessed with the goods of this world. An enterprising boy or girl in a class may succeed in out-begging the rest of the school to such an extent as to take the lead in the list of monies donated. A Sunday-school is in a bad way when it designates as its "banner class" the one which brings in the most money.

When divested of its objectionable features, the bringing-in of class contributions constitutes a pleasant feature in a public exercise. In many schools the classes are called by fancy names, or named in compliment to some "friend of the cause." The announcement of these names, with the amounts given by each name-bearing class, often adds interest to the occasion, if the names are not too queer. At a missionary quarterly meeting, not long ago, among "Busy Bees," "Little Lillies," "Willing Workers," and similar beautiful names, the secretary announced, "Friends of the Heathen." Of course, it was but natural to look for a substantial contribution from a class bearing such a name; but the response to the call was, "Friends of the Heathen, *nothing*." The thought could not help struggling into the heads of some of the visitors present

that the fewer such "friends" the heathen had, the better off they would be.

At some of these meetings, the brother who does the actual handling of the money becomes a general nuisance. He has no specific desire to disturb the meeting, yet he manages to inflict much botheration both on speaker and listener, for he is so full of the thought of the money that his soul can find no room for any other ideas. Sometimes the offerings are packed up in neat envelopes, or boxes, or bags, and handed to the secretary in a decorous manner. But where good Brother Jinglechink is the visible financial man, the noise and confusion of handling the loose change quench the decorum of the occasion. A heavily-shod child stamps up from each class, ostentatiously bearing the money, which is for the most part in copper. Brother Jinglechink announces each amount, as received, and the heavily-shod child stamps back, sometimes with a broad grin on its face. The cash having been brought in, the "distinguished speaker" from abroad, or elsewhere, follows with his remarks. While he is making them, Jinglechink and two or three of his coadjutors are counting the coins on an adjacent table. Little do they care for the annoyance inflicted on the speaker. To count the money is their business; to make the speech is his. It never occurs to their minds that the man can be disturbed by their pecuniary exercises. And if they would think of it, it is probable that they would reflect that he ought to have a soul above such things, and that, having such a soul, it is his duty to possess it in patience.

It sometimes occurs that Brother Jinglechink has charge of the money interests of a Sunday-school convention or institute. Almost every speaker knows him, from sorry experience. One of his efforts is very distinctly impressed on my memory. It was in a country town, at an institute held in a church which was packed so full of people that the basket-carriers had difficulty in going through the aisles to take the collection. The baskets were brought to Jinglechink, who emptied their contents into one great heap on the platform just as I had begun to make my speech. The people were in splendid condition for listening, and I thought I was going to enjoy large liberty in addressing them. But Jinglechink spoiled it all. The pile of coin and currency was just at my feet, and he commenced to count it with all the deliberation and importance of a third assistant cashier behind a broker's counter. I confess that I felt a strong disposition to kick his miserable collection from the platform, for to do that would have been both convenient and effective. But prudential considerations restrained me, and, letting him go on, I brought my speech to a speedy conclusion. Philip Phillips then sang one of his most touching solos; but the obtuse Jinglechink, not yet having finished his count, kept bravely on with his worrisome accompaniment to the music, to the annoyance of all concerned.

We need money, and we need sound judgment in gathering it. The Sunday-school work is too noble to be marred with the infelicities which so often attend on providing the means for its maintenance. It is worthy of our most energetic endeavours, our most generous contributions, and the greatest wisdom we can bring to bear on all the details of its management. Whether in the handling of the child's gratefully-offered penny, or the receipt and disbursement of the dead millionaire's legacy, "let all things be done decently and in order."

SENSIBLE ADVICE.—A great many boys, as well as men, complain that they cannot get employment. Perhaps it is hard to get such a place as you like, but, when you get a place, make yourself useful in it; make yourself so necessary, by your fidelity and good behaviour, that they cannot do without you. Be willing to take a low price at first, no matter what the price is, if it is honest work. Do it well—do it the very best you can. Begin at the very lowest round of the ladder, and climb up. The great want everywhere is faithful, capable workers. They are never a drug in the market. Make yourself one of these, and there will always be a place for you, and a good one too.

ALL FOR GOD.—Those who wish to bestow the years of their life upon God, must also give him the days, the hours, and the moments. Only think of *present* duties, the *moment's* work. Our life is given to us in *moments*, and we shall have joys for each.