

gone before them, step by step, know by experience the conditions and needs of each and every period?

Removed as it were from the more active duties of life, they have time and opportunities to cultivate friendships with the younger ones, which may be even warm and abiding, and, having gained their loving respect, to drop words of counsel which shall be of infinite service to them in the future. We often hear elderly persons say with a weary sigh, "I seem to be of no use to any one. Nobody appears to care about me." This, we are sure, need not be. Love begets love, and there is no reason why grandpa and grandma may not be the centre of a faithful, loving circle, consulted in every difficulty, entrusted with all the little secrets, and sharers in all the pleasures of the family group. But they must make the advances, and be always the same true, disinterested friends. Though young blood be hot, and impatient words may sometimes be spoken, yet in time they will be regretted, forgiveness sought, and peace restored.

We have known the most beautiful friendships of this sort. We recall especially, the love of one dear boy—who has now passed away in all his youth and promise—for his grandmother. It was a warm and enduring attachment. When discouraged, or sick, no place was so attractive as "grandmother's room," or so comfortable as "grandmother's bed." Many a confidential talk they had together, and she had opportunity to give him many a word of caution as well as of cheer. And now that his chair is vacant, one of her pleasantest recollections is the memory of his devoted affection for her.

NORMAL CLASS TEACHERS AND HOW TO GET THEM.

The people of the churches are ready for an organized movement in religious instruction conducted on educational principles and methods.

Normal classes for Sabbath School teachers and senior scholars promise help in this direction. In a previous paper we examined the ordinary means of instruction and education by which our teachers are to be built up and equipped for their important and delicate work; and it must be apparent that the means of grace and of religious education as presently endorsed by the Church, are not fully adapted to secure the end contemplated in furnishing a staff of reasonably qualified teachers for our Sabbath School work. Are matters to continue as they are in this respect? Are they all that is possible for the best results? Or are they all that is desirable? It requires no special foresight to believe, that in view of the growing importance being attached to the religious instruction of the youth of the Church, and the exposure of our Sabbath School work to dangers from without and weakness within, ten years of matters as they are will leave us barren in moral strength and feeble in enterprise. Official work however high in quality and abounding in quantity will not prevent great loss. Our unofficial workers must be raised in tone, in attainment, in experience and in training. Our teachers by the tacit consent of the Church, are placed at the sources of the stream of our future life, to cast in the healing salt, or the corrupting poison; to direct the streamlet in the path of the river of life, or to the dead sea of Sodom and Gomorrah. Mere reading the Bible and expounding it in sermon and lecture form does not meet all the necessities of a religious education.

Telling and training are different in process, distinctive in effort, and differently organized as means of help. We need an era of training co-ordinate with an era of telling, and the people that give the best and wisest attention to this, will in the future Church be the most powerful, intellectually, morally and spiritually.

The quality of the teaching practically settles the attainments of the learner; the attainments of the children mould the character of the home; and the life of the home forecasts the efficiency of the Church; and unless the children of this world are to be forever wiser than the children of light, the Church will at once take up this question of training her unofficial workers.

Every congregation with its training class will be an organized centre of influence, and these will prove the deepest and strongest entrenchment of the citadel in the day of trial and conflict.

Our first necessity in such a work is:

1. A body of teachers.
2. A course of study.

Let us deal with the teachers first. We need spend no time in inquiries as to who these normal class teachers are to be, or where they are to come from, but at once state our conviction.

That the pastor of the congregation with his Session are the responsible parties for the instruction of the children, in the oversight of the homes and the school, will not be questioned; therefore, whatever is needful for these parents and teachers for the wise and faithful discharge of this urgent duty comes within the scope of a minister's necessary work, as truly entering into his vows of ordination as that of preaching the word.

The training and equipment of teachers and parents to this work of instruction is the minister's true position, and his vital relation to what is called the Sabbath School enterprise.

The elevation, guidance and encouragement of those already in the work, and the qualifying of others who are to be called to the work, is the highest sphere of the pastor's educational efforts. "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

We do not regard what we have in view as accomplished by taking a senior class on Sabbath, or through the week, for the teaching of a specific Bible lesson, but by organizing a class of workers, selected from the congregation and the school, for a course of study and training adapted to awaken and foster fitness for school work.

From many letters of inquiry respecting normal class work we are satisfied as to the soundness of the following conclusions:

1. That many pastors admit the necessity of the work and feel the importance of it, who earnestly desire to help their present staff of teachers and wish to make provision for the future supply, but are utterly perplexed as to how to go to work, as to the kind of subjects, or course of lessons to be taken up, as to the manner of treating them, or where help is to be found.

2. Others admit the desirability of what is proposed, but realizing their own unpreparedness to grapple with the proposed work, sometimes assume a dignified position which when put into words, means that the phrase "Normal Class," expresses strongly very poor and unimportant work. So matters stand. The necessity is owned; the desirability is admitted; but the pastor cannot think of undertaking it. His work as set forth by the Church and expected by the people, IS ENOUGH.

Instead of falling back on the ultimate of helplessness and despair we would ask three questions:

1. Is not the training of Sabbath School teachers a new necessity in the Church, one she never contemplated in her organization of means of instruction and education? If it is she can deal with it and adapt herself to it.

2. Has not the necessity arisen from her increased LIGHT on the importance of the early period of convictions and formation of character; also from her increased LIFE in the willingness of multiplied workers? If this is the case, ought not the Church gratefully to acknowledge the open door to do higher and better work for Christ?

3. Is it not largely the result of an altered state of society in the matter of popular and public education, in the increased attention given to the education of the child, the wisdom of the methods adopted, and the completeness of the machinery set in motion, all to fit for earthly citizenship?

Shall the church be less wise, less able to see afar off, less willing to adopt her means, and organize her forces for the work of training a generation that shall be high in character and loyal to Christ.

These altered conditions have called forth great variety of agencies in the shape of societies, associations, etc., these also have shared in the work of breaking up fallow ground, but when that is done their mission is fulfilled, but if the Church will not

deal with the necessities thus created, socialism may lead the people in unfruitful ways. From these and other important considerations, we regard this matter of trained workers and the way to do it as claiming careful consideration.

The pastor of a congregation is placed in new circumstances from what he was twenty years ago, and the preparation that on the whole suited his work then is unsuited now. If this work has become a necessity for him and his office, then his own preparation and training ought to be adapted to his prospective work, that is to say. Our higher institutions in their work of training the public and official workers, ought to recognize the new circumstances and instruct and equip for it.

Our colleges should have a department of DIDACTICS alongside of, or associated with, HOMILETICS. If this were the case, and vigorously carried out, our pastors would not be so helpless as to the means and methods of training others.

PAYING SUBSCRIPTIONS TO CHURCHES.

In the lax morality of the times there is occasionally a want of conscientiousness even in church members, especially in the matter of "paying subscriptions." A man hears a rousing sermon, which makes him "feel good," and in the ardour of the moment puts down a generous subscription. So far all is right. But is there not sometimes hidden away in his inner consciousness a secret feeling, which he does not dare to confess even to himself, that if for any cause he regrets his impulsive act, he can "take it back," pleading that he is "dissatisfied," or has changed his mind? This is a species of dishonesty which is condemned alike by the Bible and by the law of the land. No man is under compulsion to give or to subscribe. But when he *does* subscribe, he is under a solemn pledge which he cannot violate. "Better that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay." It is time that the consciences of men were pricked up on this subject. A subscription to a church is just as binding as a note in the bank, and a man who has once given it has no moral nor legal right to violate his obligation.

We are glad to see that the courts have come to the help of the churches in this matter, and that the law is a schoolmaster to bring delinquent members to a sense of common honesty.

Away in the centre of New York, nestled among the hills, is the town of Knoxboro, so named from the late General John Jay Knox, one of its first settlers. Here was planted, some fifty years ago, a Presbyterian church, which, like a vine in the cleft of the rock, struck its roots into the earth, and put forth its branches, and yielded its goodly fruit. After the lapse of a generation, it set about erecting a new church, and among those who subscribed to the undertaking was a Methodist brother, who put himself down as a contributor to the Building Fund. But after a time (according to the Methodist doctrine of falling from grace) he fell away, and refused to "pay what he had vowed;" whereupon the Presbyterians undertook to illustrate their doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, by "putting him through." Their attorney was a young lawyer of New York, Mr. John H. Knox, a grandson of General Knox, one of the venerable founders of the church as well as of the town. To the claim of the church the delinquent subscriber offered certain technical objections, founded on an alleged lack of organization, proper appointment of treasurer, and defective wording in the subscription paper—objections which were at first sustained in the lower courts, but on being taken to the Court of Appeals, the judgment was reversed, and a verdict found for the church, for the whole amount, with interest and costs.

The case is an important one, as showing that our highest courts are disposed to uphold the rights of churches against refractory subscribers, who make large promises, and then refuse to keep them, hiding under some petty technicality to escape their just obligations.—N. Y. Observer.

THE Grand Masonic Lodge of Italy has offered a prize of 2,500 lire for the best "moral treatise for children, to be used in schools in place of Roman Catholic Catechism."