

The Moral Influence of the Sunday-School.

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After Frederic Robertson, that Prince among preachers, had drifted he knew not where, when he was groping in the darkness for safe mooring, he said, "after all, it must be right to do right." He fastened to that staple embedded in the eternal rock, and he was safe.

We all believe that it is always right to do right. This conviction of moral worth is the basis of all permanent progress and true manhood. Intellectual training is good. It is a power, and not to be undervalued. Physical well-being is essential. It is too much neglected, as some of us have found to our breakdown. But without careful moral training, issuing in noble and healthful moral character, labor has been worse than wasted. The demons know enough. They enjoy the best of health and long life without physicians. Their great lack is good character. It is not what a man measures in feet and inches; not what a man weighs in pounds avoirdupois; not even what a man knows, though with his vision he sweeps all classified knowledge. What makes a man is the man. What value is a beautifully constructed arch with the keystone left out? Moral character is the keystone which binds physical and intellectual well-being into one symmetrical whole.

Surely, then, the training of character is of the utmost importance. The modest Sunday-school was wisely founded on the principle of moral uplifting through the religion of Jesus Christ. Business called Robert Raikes into the suburbs of Gloucester, England, in 1780. His heart was touched by the groups of wretched, ragged, cursing children. He engaged four female teachers to instruct such children as should be sent to them on Sunday. Likewise the Sunday-school Society was formed Jan. 11, 1791, in Philadelphia, "to give religious instruction to poor children on Sunday." The Sunday-school began by caring for the moral life of poor children by giving them the gospel of Jesus. This is the highest kind of moral influence.

Dr. Guthrie, that big hearted soul, conducted his Ragged Schools on the same principle. It was to make intelligent, moral citizens, that he gave his great heart and brain to this work. When the crisis came, and the Roman Catholics demanded that instruction in the Bible should be abolished, the committee remained firm, declaring, "it would be utterly ruinous to the plan, and defeat all its benevolent purposes, considering the criminal and vagrant habits of the children who are to be benefited by it, if any other system were adopted, than that of subjecting them to the entire moral and religious discipline—simply based upon the Word of God—which it purposes to bring to bear upon them."

Morality and religion ought not to be separated. Christianity unites them inseparably. Morality without Christ is not Christianity, and Christianity without morality is not Christianity. Ethics is good; but without Christ, it is a bird with its wings clipped. It can never fly. Robert Elsmere needed Spurgeon's gospel. Colonel Sellar had no heat, only a suggestion of warmth, when he put a candle instead of blazing coals behind the door of his stove. Of all the abysses into which human ambitions fall and are eternally buried lapses in moral integrity are the deepest. Into this wide open maelstrom the souls and bodies of men are swept together.

And yet in the life of the child morality and religion are too commonly separated. For five days in the week he attends the public school, where little or no religious instruction is given, and where the Bible is not studied and scarcely ever read. A sixth day the child is on the streets. He mingles with evil companions, and too readily selects the evil instead of the good. His character is being formed for eternity and environment is shaping his destiny. The moral influences which play so constantly about his life are not always gripped by a pious home, a sure source of strength. For one hour in the seventh day, the child looks pathetically to the Sunday school for help. If true to her commission, the Sunday school will honestly endeavor to build up moral character by the religion of Jesus Christ. Who can estimate the silent forces which are making for true manhood in our Sunday schools where every Lord's Day more than 20,000,000 Protestant children assemble? If Horace Bushnell was right when he said, "the soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul," then our Sunday schools have no small share in the moral progress of any nation or community.

The tides of godless sentiment are bearing down upon us as never before in this Dominion. The greed of corporations is imperiling our Canadian Sabbath, a very bulwark of national greatness. The foundations of our magnificent future prosperity are being undermined, and it will be still harder for the next generation to resist the tendencies. By all that we hold dear, we owe it to the children to build within their impressionable minds a bulwark against these encroaching forces. The memory of some tender talk or hymn or prayer in our Sunday schools may be the restraining touch of an angel in some hour of temptation to the boy; and the remembrance of those blessed days will give strength to the daughter's heart when she comes to the deeply freighted years of the future.

It is a peculiarity of good seed, that careful planting and cultivation are indispensable to a large harvest. Weeds,

brambles and thorns grow vigorously by letting alone. In the spiritual and moral world the same law holds. Truth must be sown with a vigilant hand, and cultivated with unceasing care, else tares spring up and spoil the wheat. It is the mission of the home and Sunday school to cast the good seed into the child's heart and foster its growth.

The immediate future of the world promises to be brilliant with invention and discovery. Whether it will have moral strength equal to its material powers is a problem I often ask myself. Think of the tremendous problems facing us in the filling up of our great North West. It is of the utmost importance that these bright prospects be not turned into gloom. One of the greatest blessings we can give to our country is more and better Sunday-schools.

It is of the greatest moment that the growing mind have a high ideal. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. Robert Browning in his poem Andrea del Sarto, develops the thought that the soul of the true artist must exceed his technical skill. Andrea had great technical skill, unerring certainty of touch, and a true pictorial style. He had all those gifts which go to make a great painter, except the inspiration of a great soul. The artist bitterly lamented this defect. He chided his wife Lucrezia for giving him no inspiration. But that would not satisfy his conscience. He realized,

"Incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest availeth not."

Browning then explains that Andrea's defective character was the secret of his inability to grasp the highest ideals of his art, and his lack of ideals was the cause of his failure to attain the highest rank as an artist. I know that some men of the brightest genius have been immoral; but they would have left a richer legacy to the world had they been pure in heart. High moral ideals are necessary to high moral attainment, and no attainment which is not moral is really high. The Sunday-school teacher insists into the youthful mind the highest possible ideal, likeness to God.

Do you ask me now for the cause of the moral influence of the Sunday? It can be put in a word, "The Bible." In all ages the Bible has made nations better, never worse. The three great nations of the world are the three greatest bible reading nations, with the largest percentage of regenerate citizens. Only that which is born of God overcomes the world. These three nations give us seventy-five percent of all the discoveries and ninety percent of the world's moral progress. From heathen and Mohammedan nations we get practically nothing. Catholic America with a closed Bible and Protestant America with an open Bible are examples of what the book is to the world. The Bible is the foundation of civilization, and the corner stone of pure government. It is the book of college and the home; the book of the pulpit and the sick chamber. As life fades away it becomes the everlasting lamp illuminating the darkest hour. As the granite rock beats back the fierce waves that roll upon it, so the Bible has beaten back every assailant by its immovable truth.

When an African Embassy asked Queen Victoria the secret of England's greatness, our noble Queen presented them with a richly bound copy of the Bible with this message, "Tell your Prince that this book is the secret of England's greatness." She was right. Pilgrims and Puritans have been called, "armed agents of the Bible." Cromwell led his army to battle, carrying a Bible in every knapsack and chanting the sixty-eighth Psalm.

The Bible was the text-book of the Reformation. Carlyle says of the French Revolution, "The period of the Reformation was the judgment day for Europe, when all the nations were presented with an open Bible, and all the emancipation of heart and intellect which an open Bible involves. England, North Germany and other powers accepted the boon, and they have been steadily growing in national greatness and moral influence ever since. France rejected it, and in its place has had the gospel of Voltaire with all the anarchy, misery, bloodshed of those ceaseless revolutions of which that gospel is the parent."

Men who deny the religion of the Bible recognize its power. "France must have religion" said a minister of Louis Philippe, "the only true foundation of a nation is morality, and the foundation of morality is religion; and this again rests upon the Bible." Girard's disciple of Voltaire penned his will, that "no ecclesiastic, missionary, or minister of any sect should ever hold any connection with the college that should bear his name; nor should they trespass within its premises as visitors." Then as if there could be morality apart from religion, he willed that the purest principles of morality should be taught. The trustees true to their trust were compelled to adopt the Bible which he hated as the greatest book of morals in the world, and had it taught in the school. Huxley willingly admitted the Bible as the best text book on morals and would have it taught in the public schools.

The Centaur Chiron, as the tutor of Achilles, fed the young child on the marrow of lions and other wild beasts, to give him strength and courage. Let us feed the youths of our Sunday-schools on the rich doctrines of the Word of God, that they may have moral courage to resist temptation, and make bold aggressive warfare against every kind of evil. The Bible is the text book of the Sunday School. But Jesus Christ and the Bible are inseparable. Revelation culminates in Him. Without Him the Bible would be a meaningless book.

Mr. Moody tells of his visit to a lithographic establishment. He was shown a stone on which was laid the colors for making the first impression towards producing the portrait of a distinguished public man. He could see only the faintest possible line of tinting. The next stone that the paper was submitted to deepened the color a little, but still there was no trace of the man's face. Again and again was the sheet passed over successive stones until at last the outlines of a man's face were dimly seen. Finally after about twenty impressions were taken the portrait of the great man stood forth, and seemed ready to speak.

Thus it is with the Scriptures, beginning with the Old Testament and culminating in the New. At last the face of Jesus Christ shines forth above the brightness of the sun.

It is a remarkable fact that the great masters of painting have drawn their chief subjects from the New Testament, so full is this volume of the best exhibitions of human character. Holman Hunt has given us the early manhood of Jesus in "The Shadow of the Cross." Raffael enriched the Vatican with his "Transfiguration." Leonardo de Vinci painted the wonderful, "Last Supper," on a Refectory Wall. Munkacsy, before his powers failed, left a rich heritage in "Christ before Pilate"; and the Sistine Chapel immortalizes "The Last Judgment" of Michael Angelo. All of these are taken from the New Testament. So the character of the youth of our Sunday Schools will receive their finest colouring from the life of Jesus Christ.

He began with a perfect life. His childhood was an unspotted celestial flower. He required no pruning of extravagances, no rectification. He had no eccentricities. He grows more sacred and divine the better we get acquainted with him. At first he is only a man; but he soon grows mysteriously sacred and divine. The world is not just the same since Jesus came. The air is charged with heavenly odors, and a consciousness of the other world is wafted to us.

Every Sabbath the true teacher will take his pupils to the source of moral life, Jesus Christ. The child will recognize the portrait he print. Dánica at first painted pagan pictures; but after his "Christ," he refused to go back to pagan models. He consecrated his art. After months of faithful and prayerful work on his great picture he gave the last touch. He did not call in the great and learned to judge; but he led in a little child and asked her "whose picture is this." The little one stood spell bound before the masterpiece. Her eyes filled with tears as she said, "It is the one who said, 'suffer little children to come unto me. It is Jesus.'" He knew that his "Christ was true to its purpose.

Sunday School teachers and Christian workers it is our joy to show Jesus, the children's friend, in such a way that they will recognize him. That means we will have to leave something unsaid, in the Sunday school class and in the pulpit. Like John Carmichael we will put away the carefully prepared lesson or sermon which would tend to unsettle faith in the word of God, and speak from our hearts "a gude word for Jesus Christ." That is what the world needs to day. That would bring more conversions. The cross of Christ is the great moral conductor of our Sunday school. In the midst of his little children sits the Christ of God, calm, majestic, sympathetic, repeating the golden words, "Come unto me all that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." In the Sunday school we can help to bring about this grand consummation.

The Captain of our Salvation.

BY REV. F. B. MEYER.

God's method appears to be always to choose two or three men in a generation, to richly gift and endow them, that they be the depositories of blessing for their followers. Of course, He might, if He chose, communicate to each individual soul the whole fullness of His blessed grace; but, as a matter of fact, throughout the whole history of mankind it has been His plan to gift men, endowing and setting them apart as the captains and leaders of the rest.

When He wanted to possess a people for his own possession He elected Abraham to be the captain or leader of the Hebrews. When he desired to bring them across the Jordan and into the promised land, it was at one great army beneath the leadership of Joshua. When he desired to bring His people back from exile He chose Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, that they might be captains and leaders of the march. So in the early Church there was a Peter or a John, a James or a Paul, who was the file-leader (for so the word means) of the rest.

In our time, when God wanted to bring out a great multitude of dark-skinned slaves from the sugar plantations of Jamaica, He gave Wilberforce to be the captain of their salvation. When the time had come for the myriads of the interior of Africa to be freed from the awful slave trade, He gave Livingston to be their captain, to discover their wrongs, and heal the open sore of the dark continent. Let your mind pass over all great discoveries that have blessed our race, whether in the social or economic side of it, or in the medical-surgical side, and deliverance has always been by some great captain or leader whom Divine Providence has raised up.

So when God wanted to raise our race from the abyss into which it had fallen, and to make it what He intended to make it at its creation, both victorious and royal, and