

# The Teacher's Preparation

A Paper Read at the Saskatoon District Convention

(AUTHOR'S NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST.)

FOR successful discharge of the duties devolved upon the Sunday School teacher the highest qualities of mind and heart are required. It demands more tact and delicacy to put the saving truth before a class of innocent children than it does to set forth the same truth to a multitude. The work of the Sabbath School teacher calls for as much strength, patience and tenderness, and discrimination as any sphere of evangelistic service.

Therefore, the teacher must seek varied resources by means of which to come before his class prepared and fully equipped for the duty. The truth to be presented must be given careful and prayerful meditation. Living in habitual fellowship with the Holy Spirit and walking all the week with Him will render the teacher more subtle to perceive the truth, more apt to apprehend it, and able more fully to come under its control. "To him that hath shall be given." Let not the teacher fall into the peril of becoming a channel of the truth, rather than a receiver of it—of receiving truths in order to pass them on rather than for their own sake.

Cramming from lesson helps will not give power. Facts gleaned from them have their full value, but only the teacher who is Spirit-taught can use them to advantage. The whole work of preparation should be begun, continued, and ended in conscious fellowship with the Spirit. Then, filled with the Holy Spirit, let the teacher pray and pore over God's Word. Solemnly and grandly built up, the Bible is the tower from which the world's purest light forever shines. It is never exhausted, nor can it be extinguished; the more we take from it the greater it becomes. But there is a very real sense in which only that part of the Bible is a source of supply to us which we have "tried and proved." "Having seen, we testify." Our real source of supply is in what "our hands have handled of the Word of Life."

But should the Sabbath School teacher be expected to prepare methods of treating the lesson as well as the subject matter? If not, what a failure to attain the best results the lesson will prove, when the moments of insight and of moral influence arise. The teacher requires some skill and experience to detect the approach of those golden opportunities, and to make the utmost use of them when they do arise. Moral and spiritual results do not come without being worked for and lived for. Even the few born teachers cannot leave their method of treating a lesson to take care of itself, for the better the teacher the more studious of method he will become. No amount of help can take the place of the teacher's own effort and practical ingenuity.

Nature is a storehouse full of suggestion and illustration. The Gospels are filled with pictures from Nature. The profoundest messages of the Great Teacher have their setting in scenes which were familiar to the villagers of Galilee. The objects of Nature were used by Him as illustrations of essential truths. The scribes marvelled at His teaching. They taught from the standpoint of much-handled tradition, but He from Nature about Him. He was the Great Teacher; therefore, our pattern.

Every teacher should, therefore, try to have a little store of knowledge all his own—something which no books gave him or could have given him. Not that the teacher can afford to slight books—he, of all others, needs to be well versed in what the greatest minds have thought; but, let God speak to him through the beauties which He has created for our use. If we would live near to the child we must live near to his interests, among the earliest and most universal of which is love of Nature and God's word.

The love of the child and of the things which interest him will dispel much of the strain and worry of teaching and will lead us out into its liberty and joy. We learn to look at things as they look at them; and, although experience may give us deeper insight and larger will, we do well to keep the power of childlike wonder.

There are times when the sympathy of other personalities is an almost essential part of our spiritual outreach. But

there are also times—moments of spiritual reaching—when we need to be alone.

"To him, who in the love of Nature holds Communion with her various forms, she speaks A various language."

Society and solitude alike minister to us. The solitary hours in the life of Jesus are as striking in their significance as His deep social passion and His longing for the full response of human hearts. Every teacher needs his quiet hours when God through Nature whispers to him.

The teacher needs freshness of heart and zest for the work. "Come ye apart and rest awhile" is alike the example and the counsel of the Great Teacher, as it is undoubtedly also Nature's inviting voice, whether in the awakening hours of spring or the majestic stillness of winter. Observation is another valuable aid for the teacher's preparation. Things gleaned by the way may prove as valuable as gold in emphasizing the points in a lesson. The subject may be secular, but by our using it properly we may leave a lasting impress upon the child's mind that would cause the child to deem it sacred. Part of the teacher's resources lies in the human nature of those he teaches. How much richer our message becomes when we are conscious that it touches the life of the hearer! But the teacher's greatest reinforcement is in the actual work. Lady Jane Grey once uttered words that might be taken as the life motto of every religious worker. Her friends and relatives were striving to persuade her, through her duty to the faith she cherished, to assume the crown. Her words are memorable: "I will do it," she said, "I am weak by nature and very timorous, unless where a strong sense of duty holdeth and supporteth me; then God acteth, and not His creature." We must walk humbly, and deem ourselves as God's servants in His work, and fully realize that we are but soldiers under command. A weak link makes a weak chain, and God, by His love, will strengthen us.

The teacher is ever learning; and, since instruction ministers to character, the very nature of the teacher's work is in part a resource for help in preparation. True teaching helps to create new worlds of thought, which stimulate us to nobler lives and deeds. If truth, beauty and goodness are the highest goals of man's endeavor, is not the teacher helping in the attainment of them all?

A deeper sense of responsibility in our work of dealing with immortal souls is needed. A careful watchfulness over our own life and conduct is essential if we would become more worthy of the honor of teaching the Word of God. "Blessed are the pure in heart," and only those who have gained victory over evil in heart and in life are fit to teach God's children. Let even such take up the work with deep humility. Thus the teacher, through his preparation, realizes the thought expressed in the words of the poet:

"Life's more than breath and the quick runoff of blood;  
'Tis a great Spirit and a busy heart;

He most lives

Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

## Lincoln and the Bible

When he had attained considerable fame, Mr. Lincoln still studied the Bible, using Cruden's Concordance, which lay on the table. His reply to a committee of colored people of Baltimore who presented him with a Bible, Sept. 7, 1864, gives his opinion of the Bible:

"In regard to this great book I have but this to say: It is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Saviour gave to this world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare here and hereafter are to be found portrayed in it."