

DIOCESE OF ATHABASCA.

In response to an appeal from Bishop Young the S. P. C. K. have granted £200 towards the erection of a Church in the Liard River district, to cost about £400.

DIOCESE OF QU'APPELLE.

REGINA.—A concert was given at the North-West Mounted Police Barracks, Regina, on the evening of Monday the 26th ult., in aid of the fund for procuring a suitable organ for Divine Service. There was a large attendance of the citizens of Regina.

QU'APPELLE STATION.—It is reported that his Lordship the Bishop of Qu'Appelle has purchased a residence here recently erected by A. J. Baker, Esq., Immigration Agent. The Church farm is in the neighbourhood of the station. Rev. J. W. Gregory, the Incumbent of Qu'Appelle, expects to build a Church in the Spring.

Bishop Anson went down to Whitehead last week and opened a new Church there.

British Columbia.

DIOCESE OF COLUMBIA.

The Bishop of Columbia has opened St. James' Church, James Bay, and preached the sermon on the occasion. The *Victoria Times* says of the weather at that place.

SIGNS OF SPRING.—February has just begun, and already there are many indications of spring. Since the first of the year there has been no cold weather and scarcely any frost. We have had considerable rain, unaccompanied, however, by much wind; Sunday's rain was as gentle and warm as an April shower. Vegetation is far advanced, the mild weather having caused everything to spring and bud. Crocuses and hyacinths are appearing above the ground, the fruit trees have begun to bud, and lilacs, honeysuckles and roses are showing signs of returning life. With the green grass under foot, clear skies overhead and weather warm enough to render a warm wrap decidedly uncomfortable, eastern Canadians will have hard work to convince themselves that they have not slept away several winter months and waked in May or June.

How Religious Instruction is to be Imparted to the Young in our Rural Districts.

By REV. JOHN MAY, M. A.

Read at a meeting of the Rural Deanery of Dufferin, Manitoba.

(Concluded.)

Side by side with the *learning* of the Catechism might go on the *reading* of the Holy Scriptures. This is, if possible, a point of even greater importance than the former; not, perhaps, so far as the child is concerned, but as regards the entire household.

The Bible could be taken, book by book, in consecutive order, beginning with Genesis; or, where preferred, with St. Matthew's Gospel. Let the clergyman assign so many chapters for the month, to be carefully read through three times: say the first 10 chapters of Genesis to begin with; and on these let him examine when he makes his visit. Or, perhaps, it would be better to have one chapter read each evening, going straight on, without turning back. It would be foolish, or worse, at first, to expect children to pass a *severe* examination in these chapters. Just enough should be asked in the first course to test the question whether they have really been *read at all*. The aim should be to engender a *habit* of daily perusal, and to foster a taste for the duty. This aim will be frustrated, rather than promoted, by too rigid exactions, making what should be felt to be a pleasing duty a repulsive task. Keep as far as possible from this. Do not make the examinations exhaustive. A few questions at any one time will be sufficient; making one or two observations calculated to inspire a deeper interest in the study. The very heart of good teaching is the art of

inspiring a learner with the *desire to know*. This budding desire is frost-bitten the moment the work descends to the zero point of *burdenship*. You may remind me, perhaps, that the same objection lies against making the committal of the Catechism to memory a task. I reply that the Catechism is a very mine of instruction. It contains doctrine in a nut-shell. It is the foundation stone of the edifice. It *must* be learned; the Church demands this; sponsors are pledged to see it done. The child's Baptismal vows involve it. It is short, and can be acquired piece-meal, in little sections. The acquisition of it, though demanding effort, need not be made a burden. It is of vastly more importance to a Christian man or woman than are the wandering of the Tribes, or the wars of the Kings of Israel.

The grand feature of the part of my scheme, is this: It will tend to set up and establish for all time the *daily reading of Scripture in the family*. The accomplishment of this one thing alone would transfigure the whole church life of the parish,—yes, and its *social* life as well. My experience tells me of the prevalent and crying need for so blessed a consummation. At any rate, if the average farmer's home here at all resembles that in Ontario, I fear it is only too truly both prayerless and Scriptureless. Surely such a state of things is most deplorable,—a standing disgrace to all concerned. How can our Sunday ministrations produce their due effect so long as it lasts? It is our bounden duty to wipe it out; and it is our interest, if we would not be idle sowers of the seed on ground hard-trodden by the countless feet of mere worldliness and sin. Here is our opportunity. *We can do it through the children*. This thought more than reconciles me to the want of Sunday-schools. It *forces* us to set up an altar in every house: to make every father in *fact* what he now is in *theory*, the priest of his household. In most cases, to induce him to assume this position by direct injunction, I know, by experience, would be next to impossible. But, what cannot be done directly and abruptly, may be done *circuitously*. We can *steal* him into it. If he will not do it, at least he will not forbid his child reading his daily chapter. Perhaps he will allow that child to read the chapter aloud in the hearing of himself and the rest. Perhaps you may in time induce him to cast aside that strange *bashfulness*, which in general you will find to be what really holds him back, and every evening read the chapter himself, in the ears of his family. Generally it is not utter indifference, not sheer impiety, not scepticism; none of these, but an unaccountable sense of awkward *bashfulness*, that renders the home so, apparently, forgetful of God. Many people feel that their *lives* are not the best,—they swear, perhaps drink, scold, &c., in their homes; and thus they are literally *ashamed* to pray or open the Bible in presence of wife and children. We must take them as we find them. We must shew them that "two wrongs will never make a right." We must persuade them into this duty *just as they are*. The very performance of the duty will have a restraining effect on their own lives in future; not to mention the sobering and transforming grace of God, which will meanwhile be silently trickling into their hearts from contact with his life-giving Word.

Let him begin *at once*. Shew him that if he waits to be better the chances are he will never be better, and never begin. I have known instances in which the worst of men have been silently and gradually transformed into the best in this way. I am thinking of one at this moment, in my native parish. He was father of a family, a farmer; a hard drinker, a brawler at every "fair," a quarrelsome neighbour; a trouble to his own household. My own father, by example and precept, induced him to pursue a course somewhat as indicated above. That man is to-day in every way a model to the parish, in which he is a leading churchman, and a credit to his spiritual mother.

Shrink not, then, from urging this duty on careless, worldly, or even wicked men. "The constant drop wears the stone." Better that the work should be done poorly, or by even unclean hands, than not done at all. Whether the father be saint

or sinner, he *is* the father, the family priest, and responsible. You can never tell what blessed results may flow to the *reader* as well as the listener, from a mechanical, daily reading of God's word, if only it be done with reverence. And I am happy to say, that even among those who now habitually neglect the Good Book, very few there are, who, if they *could* be induced to read it at all, would do so in any but a reverential spirit. *All* churchmen, good and bad, reverence the Bible, how much soever too many of them neglect it.

Most of the sacred books might thus be read through in the year; and the operation could be repeated again and again as the years roll by.

Moreover, in every family there should be a book of *Family Prayers*; one of which should be read at least once a day, after the reading of the chapter. The Prayer Book of the Church must not be depended on for this purpose. It is not intended or well fitted for family use; and, in most cases, bashfulness or incapacity will effectually restrain from extemporaneous prayer. Such books may be easily obtained; but they should be simplicity itself.

As the youth of the parish advance in years and religious knowledge, other matters connected with the history of the Church and her formularies might be introduced. There is sore need of instruction in these things; but we "must creep before we walk." In process of time, it is to be hoped, that a further supply of choice church literature may be generally introduced to our firesides. Meantime, such a little publication as "OUR WORK," coming as a regular weekly visitant to the family would do much, not only to widen information, but also to beget a desire for further accessions of ecclesiastical knowledge. The *reading habit*, like any other, must be *acquired*. A taste for literature of any kind grows by its own gratification; and I know no surer way of exciting this taste and developing this habit than the use of some regular periodical.

As regards this whole matter, one thing is certain; *failure* will be ours unless whatever plan we adopt be carried out *on system* rigidly adhered to. Nothing must be left to hap-hazard. Unsystematic efforts, however zealous at the first, are sure to prove desultory; and, therefore, even while they are kept up, comparatively ineffectual. Moreover, in time their life will evaporate under the discouragement of unsuccess.

It is absolutely essential and *vital* to the scheme here proposed that it should be methodic, definite, precise in the actual operation of it. All that is needed for this end is skill, firmness, energy and punctuality on the part of the Parish Priest. This is why I should insist on fixed allotments of work for fixed *periods* of time; to be tested at definite fixed *points* of time. This idea is the very heart and soul of my plan. Of course, unforeseen occurrences would now and then break in on the work and slightly derange it; but it would soon right itself again, and for the most part go steadily forward.

To even the most sceptical I submit the question: Is it not worth a trial? For my own part, I regard it with confidence, as both *practicable* and *practical*. With moderate energy, foresight and care on the part of the clergyman, I consider its success assured. And what a success! It might *seem* to add to his labours. My opinion is, it would rather reduce them to a system, and so *lighten* them. Would it not eventually give him an *assistant* in every house? And, what an inspiring thought for him, as he sat, fatigued, by his fireside of an evening, to know that, at that very moment, all over the vineyard of which he is the "dresser," the tender plants are being watered; whilst those that "water" are also being watered themselves.

As the most efficient schoolmaster is he who quietly inspires vigorous, hearty self effort all around the school-room; so, I take it, that the most successful parish priest is the man who comes nearest making his parish a hive of spiritual activity. He can do this, on my plan. Under it, he can find for young and old, some spiritual work to attend to, some little Church problem to solve.

(For continuation see page 12.)