

The Duty of the Teacher Towards the Unsatisfactory Scholar.

That this is a subject of great importance all will allow, and yet it is a subject upon which it is hard to write.

It would not be difficult to write about the unsatisfactory scholar, for all those who have at any time had charge of a class of Sunday school scholars must have had to acknowledge that in each class there is one or more unsatisfactory scholar. Very rare, indeed, is that class of perfect scholars, and happy, indeed, must be the experience of that teacher who has a Sunday school class composed of scholars who are perfectly satisfactory. It has never been the lot of the writer to have the pleasure of meeting with such a class or such a teacher. Neither does he ever expect to do so. True, we sometimes read in books of wonderful schools, and wonderful teachers, and wonderful scholars. But such schools and teachers and scholars are dwellers in wonderland, and are not very real, at least it has not been my happy privilege to meet with them, though perhaps some teachers have been more favoured.

The subject is a very wide one, for there are so many ways in which a scholar may be unsatisfactory. We will notice a few of them, and then offer some suggestions as to the best way for a teacher to deal with each.

First, let us take the case of the late scholar: I mean the one who is nearly always late in entering the class. This habit is a very tiresome one to the teacher, and interferes with the teaching of the lessons—takes away the attention of the other scholars—and oftentimes spoils a whole afternoon for both teacher and scholars. Just suppose, for instance, a school in which the work has begun, the opening service is over, and each class has settled down to lessons. Presently the door opens and footsteps are heard walking through the room—not muffled footsteps by any means—and a boy enters the class taught, we will say, by Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown goes on with his teaching, appearing not to notice the late comer, but he finds at last it is of no use. The attention is now upon his late scholar, and he must wait until all have settled down, and then, perhaps, he finds that it is very difficult to make a new beginning; his mind has been somewhat upset by the interruption, and he cannot go on with the lesson with the same energy.

Punctuality is a very great virtue, and if a boy is to succeed in life, he must be taught the great importance of being punctual in all his engagements, and, not by any means least, in being punctual in

attendance at Sunday school. But how is this lesson to be taught? Various plans have been tried in different schools. First, I would say, let the teacher set a good example in this matter, for if the teacher himself is in the habit of being late, how can he deal with a late scholar. Therefore, I would say to every teacher, it is a duty you owe to the superintendent, to your fellow teachers, to your scholars, to the whole school, to be always in your class in good time, and by good time, I mean at least a few minutes before the time for the opening of the school. Perhaps this punctuality on the part of the teacher, on the part of every teacher, would cure the habit of late attendance on the part of the scholars.

But, again, if this fails it may be worth while to be very careful in marking the attendance. If the marks are worth anything, and I think they ought to be made to be worth a great deal, the teacher should be strictly honest in giving them, and the scholar who is late should by no means receive a mark for punctual attendance. In this way the bad habit may be overcome. The superintendent might also help. Before opening the school he might take a look outside the building and insist upon the entrance of all the scholars who may be loitering about. There is one other plan which has never been known to fail in preventing the interruption of the lesson by the entrance of late scholars. There may be a difference of opinion as to the advisability of resorting to it, but it is a perfect remedy—I mean the locking of the school door when the work has begun.

Next, let us notice the case of the inattentive scholar. Every teacher will at once, in his or her mind, remember only too well, perhaps, this very unsatisfactory scholar, for there is one or more such in nearly every class. The scholar whose eyes are directed anywhere but upon the teacher, who is looking at what is going on in other parts of the school; the scholar who is either listening to some other teacher, or talking to a fellow pupil, taking no interest in the work of the class. Let a question be addressed to the inattentive scholar by the teacher, and it is at once made very manifest that the mind is occupied with some other subject. It is very difficult to find the best way of dealing with such a scholar. The difficulty may possibly be with the teacher. The mode of presenting the subject of the lesson may not be interesting to such a pupil. If one style does not interest try another. Children, like men and women, are of different dispositions, and if we are to be successful in our teaching we must endeavour to study those dispositions. Many a child is of such a disposition