

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND NORMAL CLASSES.

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It is generally admitted by those competent to judge; that the public work of continuous and uninterrupted discourse, in homily, sermon, or lectures is one of comparative ease, contrasted with effective and instructive teaching in school or class form. In the first there is no interposing mental energy from others, no interrupting question, no mutual inquiry or critical examination between the *speaker* and the *audience*.

The speaker goes on with his flow of personal meditation; here it is clear, and calm, there it is ruffled, and rolling; now it is tender, then it is threatening.

But in teaching all is apparently uncertain—ten, twenty, forty or a hundred minds of youths or adults are all in activity around the prescribed subject, or they have to be roused into activity, which adds to the difficulty of the work. The members of the class vary in mental attitudes, in degrees of knowledge, in moral temperament, in likes and dislikes; all that appears to be common to them is that they profess to be honest and earnest in work over the lesson; also that teacher and scholar by *mutual effort* aim to get hold of the truth in its revealed connections, to gather round it illustrative incidents, and to seize its moral and spiritual issues.

THE PREACHER AND THE TEACHER,

are both assumed to be prepared, with a clear apprehension of the truths to be unfolded, and the direction to be taken, and the results to be aimed at; but as the teacher proceeds in a wise approach to the subject in hand, commanding attention by the force of a deepening interest, and rousing others out of mental torpor, and as he succeeds, the difficulties of the work increase; his path, his purpose, and his preparation are beset with surprises of thought, relevant and irrelevant, questions come from every quarter, half conceived and meagrely expressed, difficulties of the heart and of the head, to all of which he is bound to give consideration that he may guide, keep, instruct, and impress those who present them.

Sometimes the captious tone of interrogation comes to embarrass; but it ought not to irritate, nor can it be ignored by silence. The teacher to be worthy of his high work needs fulness of preparation, readiness that can only come of training, tact that evinces wisdom at the helm; and with degrees of growing efficiency he will be able to direct, control, adapt, and make all the seemingly divergent questions, thoughts and illustrations tell in the elucidation of the truth of the lesson, in deepening conviction in the mind, and impressing the heart.

This statement of the nature of the teacher's work, is not overdrawn, but understated. The difficulty and delicacy of the teacher's mission compared with that of the public speaker is very manifest, and the sooner the Church discusses the problem and practically deals with the facts, by organizing means to meet the necessities as they bear on our Sabbath School work, the better for her strength in the earth and the honour of God in the heart, and the supremacy of His word in society.

NORMAL CLASS WORK PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD,

and wisely directed, proposes to meet the case; it deals with it in a tentative way, and in most instances the results have been hopeful. The attitude of the Church toward the work is at present one of criticism and hesitancy. We hope the examination will be thorough, and the decision concerning it thoughtful.

We will not detail the actual state of fitness possessed by the majority of those who are pressed into the work of instruction in our schools further than to say that it is a matter of the purest

EXTEMPORIZATION.

The great bulk of our most devoted teachers are timid, hesitating, and discouraged by the constant sense of their own unpreparedness to deal with the work committed to them, and generally it will be found that those who feel otherwise, are not our most hopeful workers; and on behalf of seven thousand Sabbath School teachers in the Canada Presbyterian Church, I appeal to her Sessions, Presbyteries and Synods to consider their claims to preparation before they are asked to enter this work. Is it to be said

that matters are well enough, or that nothing can be done?

NOTICE

The existing means of preparation for Sabbath School work. The immediate and abiding work of the Church is threefold:

1. *Evangelistic*, and promoted by the continued clear and fervent proclamations of Christ as the only Saviour, by appeals to the heart and conscience, such appeals to be based upon the great facts of his ministry and the atoning work of the cross.

2. *Educational*.—This is the department of special instruction, promoted by sermons, lectures, addresses, and school or class work to the extent and in the manner in which this last is carried on.

3. *Ecclesiastical*.—Built up and buttressed by an enforcement and exposition of our doctrinal summaries, distinctive tenets in church polity and methods of work. These constitute the organized church means for fitting the future Sabbath School teacher for his high vocation. As a Church, in history and present position, we leave no stone unturned to maintain our well earned reputation for a well instructed, thoroughly trained staff of official workers in the gospel ministry. But how does our present organization of means tend to instruct, equip and qualify our army of seven thousand that muster at roll call every Sabbath day to instruct in the word that makes wise unto salvation twenty thousand, who are made or marred for eternal life by the manner in which this work is done. The facts are overwhelming. The evangelistic work is directed toward those that are without, and therefore does not deal with the object before us. The ecclesiastical in its sphere of operation, is confined for the most part, to the official workers, and its effect on the unofficial helpers as a means of training is hardly appreciable. We come then to the established means of instruction, the sermon, the lecture, the address, etc., full of truth, well arranged as to an ideal sermon, well and worthily put, and earnestly given, points well taken and heart thrusts well aimed. BUT, when we reflect on the intense business activity of the age, and the weariness of body and mind that is necessarily brought to the Sabbath and the sanctuary, the hearer is too passive for the sermon to be to him what it was to his more leisurely and eager father. When we think of the unceasing whetting of intellect over earthly things, and the critical superficial state of mind it induces, the able lecture, or the solid sermon, are subjects all above and beyond such minds. When we consider these facts and others that are associated with them, we see that the sermon etc., are not to the present generation all that they might otherwise be. Is it too much to affirm that the largest share of the Church's strength is in the educational department, thrown into the sermon or lecture. Our official labourers are built up on it, trained up in it and to it. So exclusive is this the case that oftentimes they are enslaved by it. So much is this the case that when they stand before a class, or a school, nothing can be done if it is not in the sermon form. Teaching in the manner already described is a very small part of the Church's means of preparation for her seven thousand eager, anxious, hungry teachers; we set them to work, the qualifications for which have been forgotten in them that are over them in the Lord. Is it always to be so, or is the work of no importance?

THE RESULTS

of such uniformity of means and methods are:

1. Indefiniteness of view and conviction on the part of the people. Is not this just what is found by the pastor and superintendent in the teachers they call to the work. What disappointment is felt when you find your average teacher, or your average senior scholar asks a question or gives an answer that all unwittingly reveals the great darkness within—the utter absence of perception as to the relation this fact, or this truth has to that which lies along side of it in the lesson; is it any wonder that he never dreams of the history of that truth running far back into this wonderful book called Old Testament, or in its meaning reaches forth to the soul beyond death and the grave.

2. No other results can come from this exclusive public speaking. Is it topical? then the hearer fails to find the instructive surroundings of text and context. Is it textual? then the mind gets furnished with burning and brilliant clusters of passages, the mind is full as it were of star dust, but he is never led along God's pathway in the centuries as detailed in the Book, he is not

put in possession of those central facts around which associated truths revolve as in a solar system. Classification, organization, an enlarged vision, and a skilled hand are needed to make the most of sermons and lectures. This is what our teachers need. This is what our Normal classes propose, and the channel of power into which they should be guided.

To sum up our views as presented in this paper. Christ intends all his professed disciples to be workers. The work of instruction in school form has been wonderfully enlarged and pressed on the Church. Whenever he gives work he joins with it gift and grace suited to the work to be done. Gifts are largely embodied in the spiritual life imparted, and these gifts are discovered by work and appropriate training. Training always discovers capacity, and capacity gives value to training. The forms that our work must take, ought to vary with the necessities of society and the condition of the world. It is not the introduction of new means but the adaptation of the old perennial truth to new circumstances. We need an era of training "The children of Issachar were men who had the understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do."

NOTES FROM INDIA.

[The following letter addressed to the Secretary of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, (Western Section,) has been handed us for publication.]

I am "monarch of all I survey" this morning, for Mr. Douglas is in Bombay, Mrs. Douglas and the children except Freddy are in Mhow, and Uenoo and myself are left in possession for the time.

I suppose you have heard ere this, that we have been able to procure a site, or rather two such, for mission premises, and both are very suitable for what we require. One is the compound, in which stands the present lecture room and printing office; the other is at the opposite end of the station in a fine healthy locality. Looking to the future of our mission it was desirable to secure both, but the latter was negotiated for before it was known that the first could be obtained, and the lecture room, with its adjuncts, is the best for work, as it stands at the entrance to the bazaar, where there is always a probability of natives dropping in to have a talk. You can see, by consulting the map sent home, exactly where both buildings stand. You can easily trace the lecture room, with its compound, sheltered by several fine trees, and the other is nearly opposite the Episcopal church, a small place not originally intended for a bungalow, but having two fine rooms, and a good well and compound. In this country a good well is very costly in the construction, hundreds of rupees being spent for even one, and it is a very important item in selecting a site for building. It is also a most desirable neighbourhood if one had only to reside there without looking at the necessities of our work, as it is so far removed from the bazaar, and surrounded by the bungalows of the military and political agents. Behind the lecture room, in the same compound, was an old Mahomedan Mosque, and this they have pulled down to make room for us. Before I go further let me say a good word for Sir Henry Daly, the President, as I have formerly been hard upon him. His consent, had first of all, to be obtained before any sale could be made, and throughout the whole transaction he has shown us much consideration and courtesy, quite contrary to his former method of proceeding. In India the removing of religious edifices belonging to Mahomedans is a delicate matter, and cannot be done if there is strong objection to it on the part of the Mussulmans, but this time the President offered them a place in the bazaar for their Mosque, and they quietly took it down. One morning I was invited to see "Mahomedanism fleeing before Christianity." This was the removal of the relic of a false religion. About three months ago an official was shot by a Mussulman for insisting on taking away some of the stones of an old Mosque. It was a rash, I may say foolhardy act, and resulted in the official's death. There is an intense scathing hatred between the Government agents and the natives, on the part of the latter, and England may look to it if there comes a favourable opportunity for turning the tables, as there is often plenty of cause for heart-burnings and revenge, owing to the conduct of the petty officials, for which the Government cannot be held responsible.

Well, the Mosque is taken away, and the compound is being rapidly cleared of the old buildings, rubbish,