

HOW TO TEACH.

BY REV. WILLIAM WYR SMITH.

One of the anxious problems of the Bible Class teacher is, "How to get the young people to open their mouths." In anything that concerns the soul, in anything that relates to thought or motive, it is so difficult to obtain a free response whatever to the plainest question, however affectionately pronounced. Evidently the underlying problem is, "How to awaken their interest." Let us see. There are various ways; and some of these will be applicable to each diverse and individual case. A friend of mine preached a sermon once in two months of which his Bible class were expected to "take notes" and give him at their next meeting, a digest of it in writing. He assured me it wonderfully helped their intelligence and grasp of Christian truth. I listened to one of these sermons on a Sabbath evening, not knowing that the young people had been notified respecting it; and I remarked to myself that it was very full of what the reporters for the press call "points." Now, those young people—each reading his or her report, or outline, or "criticism," if they thought proper, of the sermon—would be so much interested in the subjects thus preached on and reported, that they would soon be able intelligently to speak and ask questions on the themes of study.

Another way I have known, is to ask some one or more of the pupils to put it in their own words, on paper, the "story" or substance of a chapter or lesson in the Bible. If the teacher's request is acceded to, the benefit is great to the pupil. And the example and the discussion of the little essay itself, are both very helpful to the others. Another way is—in almost any form it can be done—to get a Bible scholar to engage for the occasion in teaching. A large Bible class might thus occasionally be divided into sections of say four each, and each section put for the time under the leadership of one of the pupils—making altogether five in each section. In such case, a week's notice is advisable and necessary if the best results would be looked for. And the Bible class must never resent the interference of the superintendent when he comes once in a while to get a temporary teacher for a vacant class. It will be valuable experience for a "pupil teacher." Sporting characters tell us, "The only way to teach a young dog to swim, is to throw him in the water!" And the best of all "learning to teach," is just to begin teaching! When a Bible class scholar objects that "he doesn't know enough to be a teacher of a class," he is in a very critical state—he needs looking after he is like an apple with a little spot on one side, he is beginning to "spoil!" The most promising thing for a teacher—just as for a preacher—is to begin to do what he can, before he has become critical enough to know whether he does it well, but who is willing to help when help is needed.

Still another way is (giving a week's notice before hand) for the teacher to answer all the questions, and the pupils to ask them. I would advise in such cases to allow written questions. Not that written questions are invited or "expected," but just intimate that you will not refuse to answer a written question—in fact would a great deal rather have a written question than none. It is scarcely fair for a member of a Bible class to say "Our teacher just talks to us—scarcely asks a question," when the members sit round like dumb figures, and refuse to answer a single question. The precious forty minutes are slipping away, and the teacher has much to explain in the lesson, and takes perhaps the readiest way. It is not the best theoretical way, not at all the perfect way; yet, with a good teacher, a still somewhat effective way.

Twenty years ago, I attended the Rev. Dr. Somerville's Bible class. Then he was the honored and hard-working pastor of a Presbyterian church at Glasgow; now he is a world-wide known evangelist. The class (Sunday evening) was composed of a hundred and twenty young men. Dr. Somerville was punctual to a minute in coming in, and began at once, after the shortest breathing of a prayer, and the calling of the roll. The subject was a general view of First Thessalonians. He marched from side to side of the platform, the young men turning up the references in their Bibles—expounding in plainest pointed

words, throwing now and then a question at some member of the class. It was a model lesson of the lecture style! Others would adopt the question-and-answer style. That this class-work was effective, was evidenced to me by the fact the superintendent of the Sunday-school told me—that they had not only their home school and a large mission school, but twenty little Sunday-schools of six and twelve scholars, in cottages and private houses—where they drew in the waifs from the streets, whom they could not get till further trained, to come to the larger schools. And they paid each of the poor tenants whose "best room" they thus occupied an hour or two every Lord's Day, one pound sterling a year rent.

Every effort should always be made to get the pupils into conversation on the lesson. It is of immense benefit. Take an illustration: Two men are returning from a prayer meeting. One man says, "It was a good meeting!" The other says nothing rather thinking that the meeting was somewhat dull. The secret is, the first man prayed or spoke in the meeting and was interested in it. The other man did nothing, and found little to benefit or stimulate. Thus in a Sabbath class. One who makes a remark replies to a question or asks one, is sure to relish the session of the school and think the class was most interesting.

Care has been taken (and in what thing is it that care is not needful!) with respect to "curious and unlearned questions," as they are called in Timothy. Questions that seem the most frivolous, far fetched and utterly foreign to the lesson, are sometimes asked in all sincerity by the members of the class. It is not wise to "snub" the questioner. He may feel mortified, or perhaps irritated, and may be discouraged from asking any more questions. You may good-humoredly satisfy him without spending ten seconds of your time, at the same time letting him see that it is not best to wander away so far from the lesson in hand. A month or two ago, I preached in a vacant pulpit, and took charge of the Bible-class in the afternoon. A good many curious questions were propounded by some middle-aged members of the class. Our conversation was a little discursive, but most interesting and profitable. We were all sorry when the time for closing came. Last Sunday I was there again. Two Bible classes in one. There were no excessive questions this time. The fact was doubtless, that two or three of the men who had questions simmering in their minds perhaps, for years, took the opportunity of throwing them at a stranger, in hope of getting some solution for them. And last Sunday, one of them said to me, "We didn't give you any hard questions this time!" I can remember having just such questions in my mind, and wishing somebody would resolve them. But who can know of a question that is not asked!

I knew a Bible class of a dozen young and middle-aged men conducted on the principle of each member teaching in turn. They reported perfect success in the working of the plan. I was a spectator of their operations, for three years, being a scholar in another class myself. Ours was a "spectacle class," for we all used aids for failing sight. Another that might be mentioned in the same school. Every week some one (and not always a teacher) was named to present to the school one or two "points" on the lesson the next Sunday, to occupy five minutes. It was an excellent training for the younger men.

A good way to induce pupils to speak, is to ask them to search out two to four "proof" texts, respecting certain doctrines and facts. They will find these, and memorize them. Then, when repeating these, the teacher may ask, as Philip asked the Ethiopian, whether they understand the meaning. And before they are aware, they have opened their mouths on Divine things.

Other ways will suggest themselves to the puzzled and anxious teacher. But these are indicated as contributions toward answering the question, "How can we get our young people to speak in the class?" Our Lord "knew what was in man," and needed not to feel after and find their thoughts and strivings. We can only know it by indications and words. And therefore the persistent questioning of the class—questioning which good scholars find so helpful, but careless ones find fault with—and then, when the teacher only "lectures," find fault with the want of!—Intermediate Teacher's Quarterly.

JANET'S MARRIAGE.

A TRUE STORY.

Many years ago there lived in Edinburgh the widow of a naval officer. Her family consisted of twelve children, the eldest and youngest of whom were daughters. The widow's income was limited, therefore when an intimate friend who was about to emigrate to America offered Janet, the eldest daughter, a position as governess in her family, the proposal was gladly accepted. At this time the youngest daughter, Hene, was but four years of age, and the bustle and excitement attendant upon the preparations for Janet's departure, made an indelible impression upon her imaginative mind.

Janet had been away scarcely a year when news came of her approaching marriage to a gentleman of great wealth. The friends who had constituted themselves Janet's protectors, pronounced the match an excellent one, even though the gentleman was a widower and many years her senior. Therefore in all Hene's hopes and dreams, Janet was the central figure, the crowned heroine. Years passed. The sons grew up, married and winged away; some near, others far, and only Hene was left at home. When she was entering her eighteenth year the mother died. The thoughts of Hene turned to Janet, who, alone of all the family, was in possession of great wealth. To go to her—to see the world—to enter society—perhaps to hold sway as a belle; surely these were dreams to be realized. Her friends also deemed it best that she should be sent at once to the wealthy sister, and so, immediately after the funeral, the affairs of the orphan were carefully arranged, and she set out on her long and lonely journey.

On arriving at her sister's home she found "all as her fancy" had "painted it." Luxury and elegance reigned. Hene made her entrance into society, and soon her fondest hopes were realized. "The bright Scotch lassie," as she was called, became the reigning favorite. The future looked golden, and but for the remembrance of her lost mother, whom she had tenderly loved, life would have been without a single regret.

She had been about two months in her new home, when on returning late one afternoon from spending the day with a young friend, she found the front door locked, and she was obliged to ring for admittance. The drawing room shutters were closed tightly and a strange sense of dread tugged at her heart. "Where is my sister?" she asked of the servant who admitted her. "She is ill, and can see no one," was the reply, Hene, ignoring the latter clause, ran swiftly up stairs. She was of an ardent, impulsive temperament, consequently she burst abruptly into her sister's room without staying for the ceremony of a premonitory knock.

Alas! for the sight that met her eye. On the floor lay her sister, partially dressed, her face slightly flushed, her hair disheveled. The room was in disorder, yet, on a couch several yards removed, sat her sister's husband, contentedly reading a newspaper. He looked up alarmed as Hene burst in.

"What are you doing here?" he said gruffly. "Did not the servants tell you that Janet was ill and must not be disturbed?" "Yes, oh yes," cried Hene starting forward, "but why does she lie like that? Cannot you—cannot I do something for her?" A she spoke she bent over her sister as if to lift her head from the floor, but suddenly recoiled, a look of horror darting over her expressive face. Her brother-in-law laughed fiendishly. "O, yes, you can do something for her, of course; take her up and put her to bed, yes, take up your sister, your drunken sister, and care for her if you can. I am through with that sort of thing long ago."

Hene burst into tears and rushed from the room.

It was several days before she saw Janet again. When she appeared among them, on allusion was made to her recent "illness." Hene, despite her brother-in-law's words, tried to believe that the dark occurrence was without precedence; but alas! less than two weeks elapsed when the terrible "illness" returned, and under circumstances still more heart-rending to Hene. She longed to ask some one how all this horrible state of affairs had come about, yet she found it impossible to propound questions on the subject to either Janet or her husband. One day however, while the wretched woman was

shut in her room for the third time, a chance remark from Hene brought from an old servant a graphic account of the sad downfall.

"It is every bit his fault," she said, "and now he abuses the poor mistress for it. He always has had his wine on his table, and a barrel of beer in the cellar just as you see it now. My first mistress could drink as much as he and never feel it, but yours is different; it goes right to her head, you know, poor thing, so she'd never touch a drop, which used to make him fearful mad at her. But, after a while her health gave out, and he and the doctors together made her drink it for medicine, and that was, as you might say, the end of her. She never since then has been so long sober as she was just after you came. The master has been pickled in the filthy stuff since ever he was born, they say, and a hog-head wouldn't make him curl up, I do believe."

Janet's affairs gradually went from bad to worse, and at last the whole of her fortune slipped from their grasp. Now, in their old age she and her husband are dependent on a son, who is in strained circumstances. Wine no more flows freely to tempt Janet every hour, yet, she is ever haunted by the craving thirst for it, which was awakened by its medicinal use, and sometimes, even yet, by "hook or crook" she obtains enough to reduce her to the old besotted condition. But saddest of all is that she cannot recover the wasted years of womanhood, when with her accomplishments and engaging manners, she should have been in the full flower of her usefulness.—*Lover.*

FOR MY SAKE.

There are a thousand applications of this principle of self-denial for Christ's sake. Grand old Paul had it in his mind when he wrote: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine or anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is made weak." It is not easy for a true Christian to keep this text in his Bible and to keep a bottle on his table. They do not harmonize. The bottle means temptation. The text means that things were not always sinful, *per se*, should be cheerfully give up for her sake of others; and the legal liberty of the man or woman whose heart is in the right place will never be exercised when a moral evil may flow from such exercise. We have no right to put a stumbling block in the path of others. As a Christian I am bound to surrender every self-indulgence which works directly against the best interests of my fellow men, especially if it endangers precious souls for whom Jesus died. This principle gives to the doctrine of total abstinence from intoxicants a broad Bible basis as solid as the Hudson "Palisades" on which I am now writing.

The two thousand unanswerable arguments against the drinking usages are these: An alcoholic beverage endangers me if I tamper with it; it endangers my fellow-man if I offer it to him. My Bible teaches me to let it alone for the sake of the "weak" and those who stumble. Ah, those stumble! How many wrecks the word reveals! How many tombs it opens, whose charitable turf hides out of sight what surviving kindred would love to hide from memory! For Jesus' sake, and for the sake of the easily tempted, who will hide behind our example, let us who call ourselves Christians put away this bottled devil, which conceals damnation under its ruby glow. This subject of self-surrender for Jesus' sake is as wide as the domain of Christian duty. To live for Christ is the sweetest and holiest life we can live; to live for self is the most wretched. Every cross is turned into a crown, every burden becomes a blessing, every sacrifice becomes sacred and sublime, the moment that our Lord and Redeemer writes on it "For my sake."—*N. Y. Independent.*

There's a song in the air,
There's a star in the sky,
There's a mother's deep prayer
And a baby's low cry;
And the stars rain its fire
While the beautiful sing,
And the manger of Bethlehem
Cradles a King.

—J. G. Holland.