

jolly and indirect: "Too much sleep this morning, Billy?" "Sorry, Ellen, that you couldn't start with us;" "Some good points you missed at the opening, Fred."

If rightly used, this is an opportunity for learning of some need or temptation that besets your scholar. She may be lazy. He may be too fond of sleep. She may keep too late hours. He may be led astray by the Sunday morning papers. They may fail to see the value of the opening prayer and songs. You get fresh insight into their characters.

When Nature heals a broken bone she makes it the stronger for the break. And so, though the late scholar seem to fracture sadly the interest of the lesson, the wise teacher will know how to mend the matter in such shrewd fashion as to knit the whole class more firmly together.

THE PROBLEM OF "SIDE-TRACKING THE TEACHER."

Even the poorest teacher has a right to the course he has marked out for himself; even the smartest scholar has no right to side-track him.

Some scholars side-track their teacher merely to show that they understand how to use the switch; others do it by simply fooling with the switch, in pure carelessness and thoughtlessness; others really wish to bring the teacher nearer some private interest of their own.

Their motive must determine your treatment of them,—whether it is to be the bruskeness that rebukes conceit, the firm patience that resists carelessness, or the considerate postponement of questions that are prompted by a need.

But so far as its effect on the lesson is concerned, it makes no difference whether the teacher is side-tracked by a switch of gold or one of brass,—the lesson is "held up," and often permanently.

It is not always easy to tell when these question-switches are open, and when they are closed,—when they will side-track you, and when they will merely salute you with a friendly rattle and let you pass; the tokens are not so definite as on the red and white faces of the switch indicator. And yet you cannot engineer your class far without wrecking it, if you do not learn to read these ques-

tion indicators, and tell at a glance whither they will send you.

But what is the use of reading them, if you are to be at their mercy anyway? How shall we circumvent these mischief-making switchers?

Some would abruptly take away their switch-keys, and practically dismiss them from the force; that is, they would prohibit questioning altogether. But this is capitulating to the problem. Some would swing smilingly off upon the side-track, as if they had intended to go there. But that is surrendering their preparation. Some would rush precipitately into the side-track and through it, expecting to find at the other end a switch back to the main track. But thus the lesson is usually derailed.

On the railroad, of course, there is authority; but in the Sunday-school the less appeal to authority the better. No, the likeness, to a large extent, stops here; for in the Sunday-school the only way to deal with a scholar who side-tracks the train is to win him by friendly arts to become your helper rather than your hinderer.

In the first place, many a lesson is side-tracked because the main track is not made sufficiently plain to the scholars' apprehension. When the lesson winds like a snake, with a purpose known only to the teacher (if to him), small blame to the scholars if they switch it off the wrong way by a question. Strike out in a bee-line at the start, and stick to it. No one will then ignorantly side-track you.

In the second place, many a lesson is side-tracked because the teacher does not act as if he cared whether he ever arrived anywhere or not. Lackadaisical in manner and matter, his carelessness provokes equal carelessness in his scholars. Let him, on the other hand, appear to be eagerly on the scent of some truth, on the track of some fact, following the path of some event or demonstration, and his scholars will, in the main, be "forth and right on" with him.

In the third place, many a lesson is side-tracked because the scholars are not on the side of the teacher. Of course, when the two parties are at cross-purposes, things run on no more evenly than they would if the engineer of a train were out of touch with his crew. The teacher must get up an *esprit de corps*, a class spirit, or his class will be perpetually