

financial problems of to-morrow may be solved in the Sunday School of to-day.

Montreal



Attention and Retention

By E. A. Hardy, B.A., D.Pæd.

II. FACTORS IN RETENTION

In a previous* article we spoke about the different kinds of attention and the importance of recognizing the fact of such a difference. The same truth applies to memory. Pupils have different powers of retention.

For instance, there is a difference in the time factor. One pupil remembers almost instantly, while another requires a considerable period of time. After the first or second singing, one pupil knows a new hymn without the slightest difficulty. Another pupil can sing it while the music is being played and the others are singing it. The first pupil carries away the hymn in his memory and on his arrival at home sings it to his mother. His memory is rapid and accurate. The other pupil has apparently absolutely forgotten it, but later in the week it comes back to him, and after that it is his. Here is a slower memory, and it may be a less accurate one, so far as music is concerned. It is quite possible, however, that the memory ability of these two pupils might be reversed, if it were a question of historical facts.

Again, there is the factor of permanency. Some can remember easily for the moment, and forget quickly. They can "cram" for examinations with great success. Others learn easily and remember tenaciously. Others learn with difficulty and forget easily. Others learn with struggle, but never forget.

There is also a difference in memory according to subjects. One boy remembers names, with initials, with astonishing accuracy. Another remembers dates. Another remembers everything about fighting or soldiers or sailors. Another memorizes long passages of scripture or poetry. Yet no two of these has the same type of retentiveness. It is often said that childhood is the period of best memory. That is not true. What is true is that our power of memory changes according to our age and our interests.

Again, there is the difference in memory according to the sense organ involved. One boy's eyes are remarkably good, and his memory of form is wonderful. He registers accurate mental photographs, and he never forgets faces or pictures of any kind. His chum has poorer eyes and gets his mental photographs blurred, but nature has given him a sense of melody and rhythm and his memories of sound are wonderfully good. He

registers sound like a dictaphone; voices and tunes are never confused. Another has unusual power of smell, and odors are all clearly differentiated and remembered by him.

Is it any wonder that the boy or girl of immediate and accurate memory becomes the expert stenographer of remarkable speed, and that the others do not? Or that the others become painters or musicians? Nature differentiates us; otherwise this would be a very monotonous world.

What is the application to the teacher?

First, that he must realize that in the class gathered around the teacher there are no two alike, that in their powers of attention and retention every pupil is different from every other pupil, and that the class is a wonderful group of wonderful powers. Secondly, that the lesson must have something for each and every pupil. Why prepare for three out of five of the class and leave the other two out? Is it too much trouble? Not so; there can be only one right thing for the teacher and that is to search the lesson through and through, utilizing every help available, to get something for each pupil to catch his attention, and something for each one to carry away as a permanent possession.

Toronto



*Some Problems of the Small School

By Rev. John Mutch, B.D.

V. THE GRADED LESSONS

There are three obstacles that block the adoption of the Graded Lessons in the small School: expense, class division and confirmed habit.

The last is perhaps the worst of the three. Some of our small Schools have faithful superintendents and teachers who for years have been keeping the School in existence, to whom the church owes a great debt, and who are extremely averse to doing anything different from what they did twenty years ago. If any such read this article, let them bear in mind that the world is moving, not standing. The attempt to start such an innovation as adopting the whole graded system would be the overt act that would mean war.

Perhaps the most successful way, in such cases, to get Graded Lessons introduced would be to start with the Beginners and Primary Departments. This is where they are most needed, and the elementary teacher of Beginners and Primaries, who is usually aware of the difficulty of the Uniform Lessons for her tots, is likely to support the plan. Perhaps after a year the Juniors might have a turn.

*For previous articles in this series, see THE TEACHERS MONTHLY for July, August, October and November.

*See TEACHERS MONTHLY for November, page 646.