

OUR SABBATH SCHOOLS.

THEIR momentous worth, as a part of our educational apparatus, is universally admitted, and the good they have been the means of effecting, incalculable. But a higher degree of efficiency than has ever yet been attained is most desirable, and must be sought and reached.

The advancement of the educational standard on all hands necessitates this; and especially the fact that is becoming increasingly patent, that to the Christian Church principally, if not exclusively, must we look for the religious instruction of the young.

Preparation classes are indispensable. They are not less important to our teachers than is preparatory training to ministers, and should be as conscientiously attended to. Where possible—and I must be pardoned if, considering the importance of the matter, I say it ought to be made possible, even at a large cost of time, and strength, and thought—it should be in the hands of the minister. This is about all he can do, actively, for the school; but with this, and by his counsel, and sympathy, and frequent reference to the teachers and their charge, in his prayers and preaching, he will keep the fact of their existence and operations before his own mind and the minds of his people. For otherwise, in these days of separate services, the majority of the congregation would know little about them, and think and pray less.

I wish I could impress the minds of teachers with my own estimate of the vast importance of their work, and awaken a trembling dread of the responsibility they assume, which should lead to most determined efforts to meet it by diligent preparation. They must have this laid upon them as a solemn duty, from the prayerful and conscientious observance of which there must be no shrinking.

Results of Sabbath-school teaching, though they are great, are nothing to what, considering the amount of machinery at work, we have a right to look for. Our watchword must be, "A more instructed, disciplined, specially trained class of teachers; and so a more efficient staff of workers."

It is not so much an increase in the number, as the efficiency of those who teach, I desire. Gideon's three hundred men are better fitted for the work assigned them than the ten thousand, or even the thirty-two thousand would have been, without the required qualification. It becomes a matter that imperatively demands the most anxious consideration of all interested, how to raise the standard of Sunday-school instruction so as to make it more effective.

The most natural method of accomplishing this is to raise the standard of our teachers. They must be much superior in knowledge to those whom they instruct, or they will never draw or keep the young. In order to secure this superiority, there must be more of our best educated men and women engaged in the work; so that it shall not be left almost wholly, with the exception of the officers, to the younger members of our churches.

Far be it from me to think otherwise than gratefully of the self-denying labours of those young people who give the best part of the best day to this work. Their motive, in most instances, I doubt not, is praiseworthy and pure. But goodness of intention is not enough for a mechanic to work with; there must be goodness of tools, and materials, and skill, or he will turn out a poor article. So while, with the Sunday-school teacher, excellency of motive is an important qualification, that alone is not sufficient. There must be knowledge of his business, and skill in the work he undertakes; and this can only be looked for as the result of judicious training.

The above is an excerpt from the very able address delivered by Dr. Aveling as chairman of the Congregational Union, May 9, 1876. See "Within the Fold." (London: Hodder.)

DILIGENCE.—We find in Scripture that most of the manifestations of the will of God made to eminent saints took place when they were busy. Moses is keeping his father's flock when he sees the burning bush; Joshua is going round about the city of Jericho when he meets the angel of the Lord; Jacob is in prayer, and the angel of God appears to him; Gideon is threshing, and Elisha is ploughing, when the Lord calls them; Matthew is at the receipt of customs when he is bidden to follow Jesus; and James and John are mending their nets. The Almighty Lover of the souls of men is not wont to manifest himself to idle persons. He who is slothful and inactive cannot expect to have the sweet company of his Saviour.—*Early Days.*

OUR WORK.

A FEW WORDS TO SENIOR SCHOLARS.

A MAN in our neighbourhood has got a very large and valuable property, but he lives miles away, and seldom comes to inspect it personally. And yet how orderly everything is; fences are kept in good repair; gates are well hung, lands are properly cultivated, beast and sheep want not for anything—how is it? You say, "Oh, Mr. So-and-So, the landlord, has a friend, who looks after the estate quite as well as he could himself." What should we say if things on that estate went to decay and ruin? Should we not say the man who ought to look after the estate, but who does not, is a foe rather than a friend? Jesus has got the largest and most valuable estate in the world; it is called His kingdom, "the Church, which He hath purchased with His blood;" but this estate He has to a large extent entrusted to the care and vigilance of His friends. And what work is there to do? Sheep and lambs to be fed, houses of prayer, as schools and chapels and churches, to be built and kept in preservation; fences to keep out the wolves must be attended to, and the proper cultivation of the entire estate carried on moment by moment. I wonder, then, what the angels think of some who call themselves friends of Jesus. They don't preach, they cannot teach in the school, they cannot reprove sin, however black it is; in fact, they are completely helpless, they cannot do anything; and what they will do when the Master shall say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward," I cannot tell. I think I can guess what angels say as they see the friends of Jesus praying, working, living, giving, looking after this fence and that gate, feeding this lamb and watching over that sheep. I think angels would say, "Yes, those are the good stewards;" and soon to them Jesus will say, "Thou hast been faithful over few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Oh, let us never forget if we are the friends of Jesus we must look after His interests. If we are neither strong enough nor wise enough to repair the fence, we can tell someone who is. If we are not sufficiently courageous to frighten away the great wolf of hell, we can surely tell the Shepherd of his cruel intentions. If we cannot find nourishing food for adults, can we not feed the lambs of the flock? If we cannot make bright with flowers and heavy with golden grain the plots belonging to our neighbours, we can surely cultivate with greater assiduity, and so make our own hearts like the garden of the Lord.

Let everyone who reads this paper be resolved never to trifle with the friendship of Jesus, never to forfeit or lose it, never to be ashamed of it or to let it slip. Solomon says He sticketh closer than a brother; and they are the wisest who resolve to stick the most closely to Jesus through sunshine and through shower, through life and through death. Jesus, taking the hand of all such, will say, "Forasmuch as ye confess Me before men, I also confess you before My Father and the holy angels."—From "*The Teacher's Theme*." (Stock.)

WASH AND BE CLEAN.

VERY simple were the directions given Naaman, "Go wash in Jordan seven times." He could obey such a counsel with the greatest facility. And surely nothing can be more within the power of feeble mortals than the requirements of the Gospel. Man is simply asked to trust in the completed work, and in the consoling word of the world's Redeemer. All obstacles have been removed by Infinite Love, and man is now told that "He that believeth shall be saved" that "whosoever believeth in Jesus shall not perish but have everlasting life;" that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;"—and that "whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely." What simpler terms could man possibly desire? Of what more practicable conditions can the mind of man conceive? There is nothing intricate or embarrassing—nothing that the humblest, the weakest, and the youngest cannot grant—nothing demanded that man is not accustomed every day and every hour to yield to his fellow man, without effort and without solicitation. "Go," said Elisha, "and wash in