

A PLANT'S TEACHING

A pupil had brought in a geranium in a pot as a gift; it was of the horse-shoe variety. It was a healthy, vigorous plant; there were evidences of coming buds, and the teacher was pleased to have this green thing to look at when she was tired of the bustle and noise of her school-room. It was placed in the window for the sunlight to fall upon it.

In the course of two or three weeks the plant had greatly changed; the upper surface of the leaves that had been so green now had a coating of dust; the under surfaces instead of the light green, now had a whitish look; the buds had dropped off; the leaf stems had changed; in fact, the whole plant was undergoing a change for the worse.

The teacher was not a florist and therefore applied to the donor of the plant for advice; he reported the matter to his mother who diagnosed the case by saying "the school ain't a good place for it." The plant was taken away and in two weeks returned looking about as well as at first. The word from the pupil's mother was, "It won't blossom for a long time now; it must have better care."

The teacher really wanted the plant in her school-room, and tried to give it attention; she set it in the window again; she watered it regularly; now and then she picked off a withering leaf. But do as she would the plant showed there was something wanting and reluctantly at last she asked the donor to take it back home again. But in passing the little plain house on the corner where this plant with others looked out of a window at her as she passed, the question often came in her mind, "Why did I have such poor success with the geranium?"

The reading of a little book entitled "Unconscious Influence" brought her thoughts back to the geranium and the suggestion would come up that there was a strong likeness between the child and the plant. Both were growing beings; both were built on a plan fixed

by the Creator; both must follow that plan or there would be failure; the teacher must make her object. This Creator's plan.

The remark too of the mother concerning the plant would come up, "The school ain't a good place for it." She remembered her father once took her out of school saying, "You can go too much to school as well as too little." That was an occasion when she had grown listless and careless; she remembered that her parents watched her and conversed about her together and finally took her out of school. She concluded she was in the condition of the geranium, and that her parents saw she would do better at home than at school.

The incident of the plant caused her a good deal of thought. It was plain from her own remembrance that children might not do well at school. Why they did well with one teacher and did not do well with another had never troubled her before. A geranium would do well with any florist, but a child would not do well with every teacher. Could a teacher imitate the method pursued with the geranium? Would that be teaching? How would it differ from the kind of teaching she was now doing? Mrs. M., the one sending the geranium, knew plants thoroughly, that was evident. Could it be said by the people in that little village that the teacher knew children thoroughly?

To know children, then, is what the teacher must make her object. This must come before she can undertake teaching. How could the knowledge be gained? Should it come from books? She had seen a book, "The First Three Years of Childhood" that she must own. But she determined to study the children before her day by day.

A beginning had been made; a starting point made in a career that was to be far different from what it had been. Reading and numbers were to be means now of developing the child, as the sunshine and the water should develop the plant.