

"Well, what do you know?" asked the teacher at length; "tell me something you know."

The little fellow brightened. He said: "I know the head from the tail of a cent."

He had seen the boys pitching pennies in the street and was proud to have learned the head from the tail. The wise teacher took out a penny and tested his knowledge. The boy was delighted. Then the teacher told the story about Jesus being taxed and sending a disciple fishing, telling him that he would find a penny in the fish's mouth, and the other story about Jesus finding a lesson on the "head" of a penny.

A teacher often can learn the common ground by finding what the class is talking about before the school opens. If possible, throw yourself into this conversation. This will help to establish comradeship. A teacher was given a class of giddy girls. She prepared her lesson carefully and questioned her class faithfully, but no answer came. They would not even listen to her questions. One Sunday, going earlier than usual, she saw this communication:

"What will the interrogation point ask to-day?"

And another girl had answered:

"Something pious, I suppose."

She was a wise teacher and, instead of allowing herself to feel hurt, she determined to learn what was interesting them. They were talking about punctuation, which they were studying in school. She began talking punctuation with them and asked them to tell her some things she had forgotten about it. And then she proposed that they find verses closing with exclamation marks and question marks, commas, and periods.

She gently called attention to, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself?" under question marks. And that verse which closes with a comma (Luke iv. 18). In short, she made the prosaic subject of punctuation a common ground, and from that day she held her class.

Follow the example of Christ and use the loaves and fishes which the lads and lassies already have, and multiply them for food.—*Sunday-School Journal*.

THE International Lesson Committee has to take a long look ahead in preparing the lessons in order that books of comment and lesson notes may be prepared every year in time. The lessons for the first six months of 1899 are from the studies in the Gospel of St. John, and for the second and third quarters are studies in the Old Testament, chiefly in the Prophecies and Psalms. This announcement is issued by the Rev. Dr. Potts, chairman, and the Rev. Dr. Dunning, secretary. The lessons for 1898 we announced some time ago.

## The Teacher Before the Class.

BY MARION LAWRENCE.

HAVING been invited to conduct the department "Before the Class" for the next three months, we wish to present some general thoughts upon the subject, and also to indicate somewhat the method of treatment we have in mind for this feature of the teacher's work. No stereotyped rules can be made for the presentation of all lessons, nor indeed for any one lesson, for teachers differ in knowledge and skill; the classes differ in age and teachableness; there are differences in conditions, length of recitation, etc. No restrictions should be placed upon a teacher which destroy his individuality.

Nevertheless there are certain conditions in the teacher's work "Before the Class" which it will be disastrous for him to disregard. Many a jewel forfeits its beauty to a bungling setting. Many a well-studied lesson is lost to the class for a similar reason. A mastery of the subject-matter to be taught is essential, but no more so than a skillful manner of presenting it.

The teacher who expects to succeed must, at least "Before the Class," have:

1. *Life*. There is nothing so chilling upon a class as a slow, mopy, lifeless teacher. He should be active, alert, prompt, vigorous in speech and action, throwing himself soul and body into his work.
2. *Earnestness*. He should be "fearfully in earnest" in his work. He should regard the teaching of that class as the opportunity of a lifetime, and make the class feel that he does.
3. *Cheerfulness*. This is like oil on dry machinery. It smooths the way and carries both teacher and class over the dead center of many a discouragement. It makes pleasure out of what, without it, would be drudgery, and it is contagious. All else being equal, the happiest teacher is the best teacher.
4. *Sympathy*. He should enter into the life of his scholars—place himself in their surroundings. The real teacher is more than instructor—he is friend. He should carry his scholars upon his heart. There should be no reserve or barrier between them. The experiences of their lives should take hold upon his sympathy. Happy is that teacher who is always thought of by his scholars when they are in trouble.
5. *Aptness to teach*. A teacher must teach. Some very good people make very poor teachers. However, most people who love the work sufficiently to desire to teach have more or less ability to teach, and that ability may be greatly increased by proper training and study.