

value these reasons according to what, in their judgment, they may be worth.

A. McL.

### The Uncertain Sunday School.

It is recorded that, once upon a time, a backwoods preacher discoursed to his flock from the text, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." He said, "My brethren, take notice that this was a *certain* man. He wasn't none of your unsartain brithren that you can't count on. My brithren, he wasn't no such man as some of you are. You are the unsartainest set I ever preached the Gospel to, you are. The thieves would'n't have troubled you if they were looking for *certain* man."

Well might our rustic friend take his stand on the platform of many a Sunday-school in town, city, or country, and utter his blast against the "uncertainty" of a majority of the workmen before him. Uncertain in aims and purposes; uncertain as to the ways and means of accomplishing what purposes they have; uncertain as to what the result will be, or, indeed, as to whether there is to be any result or not. The wonder is, not that the Sunday-school work has accomplished so little, but that, with the random, aimless, purposeless style of labor too often bestowed upon it, it has accomplished anything at all. We find the aimless, uncertain school, into which we look, composed of a clever, comfortable set of teachers, and superintendent to match, who all get along well together, think very much alike, do nobody any violent harm, never make a disturbance, and do not put themselves particularly out of the way to perform their full duties as teachers of the young. They know that it is right to have a Sunday-school, and they feel that they are in some way doing good by teaching in it. But ask them *how* that good is being done, and you find that the details of the plan have escaped their attention, and that they are teaching more from force of habit than from stern convictions of duty. The great end of teaching—the conversion of the scholars, is not clearly and habitually kept in view. Great success in this most important respect is seldom, if ever, attained.

There is a lack of the firm conviction which should animate the labors of every teacher, that the Word of God, taught lovingly and ruthfully, is mighty and effectual as the means of subduing the rebellion of the natural heart against God's law. The teaching is done in feebleness, because it is not done with a belief that God will bless it to the ends which teaching should accomplish. It is very apt to be *poor* teaching.

There is a want of that close sympathy which should exist between teacher and scholar. The child does not feel that he has his teacher a friend to whom he may con-

fide his troubles, and of whom he may ask advice. When he comes to a knotty point in his lessons, he jumps over it, or goes round it, rather than ask the teacher to make it smooth for him. He loses much Biblical knowledge, simply because the idea of asking for it does not occur to him. The teacher loses many an opportunity to draw out what the child does know, because he and the child are comparative strangers to each other, and he has not studied the character of the child sufficiently to know how to get at him.

There is, too, a want of careful cultivation of seeds sown and roots planted; an absence of watering the soil, and of plucking out the weeds which spring up to choke the word, causing it to become unfruitful. The good gardener knows his soil, every inch of it, and carefully watches each stage of the growth of the plants and flowers on which he spends his labors. The aimless teacher takes a great deal for granted about soil, cultivation, and harvest; too often resigning the latter to the Lord so entirely as to have little or no care as to whether there will be a harvest at all.

And there is a fearful absence of diligent and prayerful study of the Word of God. Too often teachers themselves are miserably ignorant about the Bible. They teach the children, in an imperfect sort of way, lessons from isolated passages, without taking the trouble to study the connection of these passages with the rest of the Sacred Word. Too often the instruction consists in asking the hungry questions in the "Question Book" on a lesson which has not been studied, but only hastily thought of on the way to school. Such instruction amounts to very little. A child of ordinary intelligence is smart enough to see through it, and despise it.

Friend and neighbor of the uncertain Sunday-school! Aimless and unsatisfactory teacher! please not to be discouraged. Neither be angry at what is plainly told you. The education of a soul for God is the most solemn and important business on earth. It is not to be trifled with. It is not to be performed as you perform a piece of work for which you care nothing. If you have been trifling, you must reform. If you intend to continue trifling, you are not fit to be trusted with such a work. If you are constitutionally incompetent to teach, you had better stop teaching. But do not stop until you have made an honest effort in the right direction. Try in God's strength, and you may do much better. Aim directly at the youthful heart; with patience and prayer follow the work from its very beginning, and God will lead it on to a completion which will astonish and gratify you beyond all your expectations.—*Selected.*

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