ignore the vicious, the improvident, the indolent, the foolish. Our prodigal brother is a fool and an outcast. We are thankful that we have nothing whatever to do with him. This sin of selfish indifference, of proud separation, is so great, that it constitutes us prodigals as truly as he who lives in drink and vice. It was this which Jesus affirmed time and again to the respectable and religious men of His day, that publicans and harlots would enter into the kingdom, while they would be thrust out. Would He say anything different to you and me ?

Calgary, Alta.

The Teacher and The Poets

IN TWELVE ARTICLES

VIII. WITH SHAKESPEARE

By Rev. F. H. McIntosh, M.A.

The Sunday School teacher who resolves to study Shakespeare must be reminded of the far horizons of this land he comes to see. The thirty-seven plays of Shakespeare are a whole world of their own, and it would take a lifetime to survey their wealth. Therefore, in the brief space at our command, we can but show a twinkling gem or two from this imperial realm.

It is Dr. Van Dyke who says, that Shakespeare's mightiest message is contained in his emphasis on the *majesty of moral law.* Let this clue be a light to our path as we go.

But let us not think that this majesty is proclaimed with a flourish of trumpets. Shakespeare was a dramatist, not a preacher; and his conception of good playing was far other than making preacher's applications. It was to hold, "as 'twere, the mirror up to nature." It is very true, he puts unmistakable moralizings into the mouths of his noblest characters; but he put sentiments as opposite and candid on the lips of his chiefest profligates.

How then shall we know his mind ? By close attention to the plot. As Professor Moulton says, the plot in Shakespeare's dramatic world corresponds to Providence in that bigger world, where real mortals have their being. We know what God thinks of right and wrong by His providence,— by His dealings with men and women.

We know what Shakespeare thought of right and wrong by his plots—by the way in which "all things work together for good" to those who do the right, and for bad to those who do wrong. No man can make us feel more deeply, that it is never worth while to do wrong, that it is ever worth while to do right.

To see that it is not worth while to do wrong, let us read Richard III. In the opening words of Richard we have the key— "I am determined to prove a villain." He was determined to prove a villain, because he preferred villainy above his chief joy.

For a time the tide goes with him. He gains the throne through slaughter. He sows lavishly to the wind, and defies the whirlwind. He is sure he has the iron will to keep this up until the curtain drops. But he counts without his God. There is a moral causation no iron will can stay. To quote Professor Moulton again, "He loses temper, he makes mistakes, he casts about for devices, he changes his mind, he feverishly takes refuge in strong drink."

Clearly, the determined man is breaking. Then, on the night before the fatal battle, he dreams and sees the ghosts of all his hapless victims. From his sub-conscious self there leaps to the light of dreams a few grim facts like foreshadowings of eternal judgment. He starts from sleep with a fearful cry :—

"Have mercy, Jesu !—Soft ! I did but dream.
   O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict
      me!"

Then, with the breaking of day, he goes to battle, shrunken to half his strength through nameless terror. He leads, he fights, he fails, his horse is slain, he cries :—

"A horse ! a horse ! my kingdom for a horse !" But there is no help; and he dies, crushed by the majesty of moral law.

To see that it is only worth while to do right, turn to the acquittal of Antonio in the Merchant of Venice. That good and beloved man, through no fault of his own, falls into the cruel power of Shylock. By a legal trick the relentless Jew becomes entitled to a pound of Antonio's flesh. Shylock demands his right before a court of law. He is in a fair way to gain his point, when, just at the darkest hour, the tendency that