

Stephen went to his heavenly home, but the work of preaching and helping people went right on. Then Saul determined to stop all preaching about Jesus (X), but what happened? The Church only grew the faster (Acts 8, 4, Lesson XI). Can anything ever hurt the Church? The children will undoubtedly remember Lesson VI in this connection, and Lesson XII may be taught with that thought as its foundation. Here is something we must all keep away from—"touch not, taste not, handle not"—because it can so harm people and make them unfit to serve God. The Easter Lesson will round out the quarter's teaching, showing the living Saviour helping his people now as he did then, and leading his Church, which is always and steadily growing.

Primary Lesson Construction.

BY JULIA H. JOHNSTON.

LESSON study should be comprehensive, but lesson building should be selective. To the material of Scripture truth or story must be added its connection, the exact meanings of words, the thoughts of others, our own reflections, and the illustrations that will make all lustrous. But an effort to build in all that is gathered up will result in confusion. The embarrassment of riches will overtake teacher and scholar. To construct wisely and compactly we must make a choice and hold ourselves to it. Then we must arrange material in an orderly and harmonious way. If we simply get all we can and give out as much as we can, in a "miscellaneous" manner, is any child likely to receive and retain it?

In the plan of lesson construction evolved from my own past there are three vital parts: The Point of Contact, the Lesson Story, the Lesson Truth.

The whole Sunday school world is indebted to Mr. Du Bois for his book *The Point of Contact*. It has become a classic in its realm. He has called attention to the law that we must proceed from the known to the unknown; but the experience of countless teachers responds to this and indorses it as among the absolute things, and others must realize it and "perform the doing of it," or the rule will be lost to them.

In order to teach or "cause to know" we must arrest thought and secure attention, but it must be upon the vantage ground of child knowledge. We must touch first of all the experience of the child world. Let us, then, construct lessons with direct intention to adjust them to the right starting point.

Many teachers introduce the lesson with a story which appeals to the little scholar's knowledge, curiosity, imagination, or senses. This is admirable. But we must be on guard against anything so unfamiliar and striking as to overtax the child mind in seeing the connection, or to forestall the lesson and leave no room for the truth. I heard lately of a teacher who used a tale of an escape from a bear as the point of contact for a lesson on the cities of refuge. She found afterward that all remembered the bear story, and not one the Bible story it was meant to introduce and impress.

The point of contact need not necessarily be a story. It may be an illustration or bit of experience in child life, drawn out by question. We may "suppose" that this or that happened, and the children may be induced to tell what they would do under certain circumstances. It will not do to try this, haphazard, on coming to the class. We must think down to the child level beforehand, and construct the introduction so that it will touch the little one at the point of his own experience or knowledge.

The next thing to be considered in lesson construction is the Bible story or portion, which must be presented clearly. Be minute enough in the recital to satisfy childish craving for details, but do not overload with them. Be sure that you know them all perfectly yourself, but select wisely, and rehearse in your own mind, or practice upon a child if you can, till your word pictures have a glow, a form, and color not to be forgotten. To tell a story well, especially a Bible story, is an almost indispensable art. It may be cultivated, and should be. Feel the story, live it, love it, and then tell it.

The third division of the plan of preparation is the Lesson Truth. Choose it well, word it simply, fix it in the mind, and then let all the light of the lesson play upon it. Although this division is naturally mentioned last, it should indeed come first, in a sense, and should penetrate all the rest. Decide upon the truth (just one) after careful examination of material, then build around it, embody it in the introduction, or point of contact, let it color the Bible story, and culminate at the close of the lesson. Repeat, illustrate, impress it, draw from the class again and again, till it is so associated with the story that recalling the lesson will recall the truth taught.

So let us hold ourselves to systematic preparation. Let us so build up the lesson as we study that we shall build in the truth as we teach; for only thus shall we become workmen that need not to be ashamed.