

Sabbath School Teacher.

BE THOROUGH.

BY REV. CHAS. EDWD. CHENEY, D.D.

In the Psalter version of the Psalms of David, in the Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church, there is a word which has become entirely obsolete. Out of the depths of self-condemnation David is crying unto God in the fifty-first Psalm. He prays, "Cleanse me thoroughly from my sin." We have lost that old Saxon word of our modern English. Just as in the lapse of ages, by passing from hand to hand, a coin becomes so worn that you can hardly tell its "image and superscription," so our word "thorough" requires some careful study to sharpen its lines of definition, and bring out upon its surface the old impress of the Anglo-Saxon mint.

I wish that I could get the ear of lexicographers and persuade them to dig up the old word from its grave, and pile the earth of forgetfulness over its later substitute. The old wine is better than the new. The dead father is worth more than the living child.

In one of our best religious papers not long ago appeared a notice of a bad book. It gave to the vile production an unqualified commendation. Heartier praise could scarcely have been awarded to some work of sterling value. The reviewer had doubtless read the book, but not "thoroughly." He had not penetrated through the gilding of rhetoric into the base metal which it concealed.

Down on one of our business streets they tore up, one day, a few blocks of the wooden pavement. They ought to have been as impervious to water as if made of glass. But, reeking with dampness and spongy with decay, they fell to pieces at the touch. The coal-tar in which they had been dipped had not soaked through the heart of the wood.

With this prefatory definition of what the idea of thoroughness comprehends, let us apply it to the preparatory work of the Sunday-school teacher. A minister who made as shallow and superficial preparation for the pulpit as some teachers do for the class would soon find empty pews bearing witness to the just abhorrence of honest, Christian men for a lazy preacher of the Gospel. It is no answer to say that the work of instructing children is one which ought not to demand so laborious study as that of providing spiritual food for mature and thinking men and women. For the true test of a man's real character is his willingness to fill to his best ability the humblest position. A member of a great legislative body was once taunted by a colleague with his low birth and early poverty. Rising in his place the brave man answered:

"I am reminded by the honorable gentleman, as a proof of my unfitness for the position I hold, that when a boy I cleaned his father's boots. I have only to ask, Didn't I do it well?"

I. Be thorough in prayer.

There are many seeds which will only germinate when they have been soaked in water previous to planting. Beautiful picture of what must be the great feature in his preparation for his work, who "goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed." The arduous study, the sledge-hammer of earnestness never forged a bolt which carried conviction to the consciences of men except the soul was first made to glow in the fires of intensest supplication. But no where is this more true than in the preparation of the teacher for his class in the Sunday-school. That seed must not only be soaked, but like the seed of the cypress vine, soaked in hot water. That weapon must not only be forged in the fires of prayer, but its material must be melted in loving intercession.

We want thoroughness in prayer for the individual members of our classes. Of course the faithful teacher prays that the Holy Ghost may bless the instruction which he is to impart to the conversion and sanctification of his little flock. But is it well to stop there? There is one boy in your class who, generous and self-forgetful, affectionate even to a fault, has yet a temper which a breath of provocation will ruffle to a storm.

Another, perhaps the most intelligent one of all, is as unmoved by excitement as a marble statue; but as keen to see a personal advantage, and as eager to grasp it, as the most selfish speculator of the Gold Room.

A third, with all his genuine kindness of heart, has the most irrepressible sense of the ludicrous, and with his monkey-like tricks and odd sayings, which even his teacher can hardly resist, is perpetually turning the edge and blunting the point of your most solemn appeals.

Thoroughness in prayer will lead the earnest teacher to take these individual cases to the throne of grace in the arms of his loving intercession. Years ago the huge bell on the City Hall, whose fiery fate has become historic, used to peal out a general alarm, telling that somewhere in the city there was fire. But it always followed up its first warning by another, indicating the particular locality where the fireman's help was needed.

There is nothing that will so ensure a genuine success over every obstacle as to feel, when we take our places in the Sunday-school, that we have not only asked a general blessing of the Spirit, but a particular blessing on each one of the class.

II. Be thorough in study.

I knew, in my college days, a young man who had a most remarkable talent for making what little he actually knew pass current for large attainments. With extraordinary quickness of perception he would pick up some loose smattering of subjects on which thinking people talked, and handle his supplies of knowledge thus acquired with such rare skill that a casual acquaintance, or a stranger who met him for the first time, would leave him impressed with the idea that he had, by study, treasured up vast stores of information.

The Sunday-school teacher who thus attempts to deceive his class will soon find that bright children have a wonderful facility for penetrating such a thin disguise. They find out, very soon, the teacher who picks up scraps of explanations from commentaries, and strings them together with the flimsy thread of his loose-twisted talk.

In every well-chosen system of lessons, like that presented in the National Sunday School Teacher, each separate lesson has some one great truth which it is designed to set forth. But, like the root of a plant, it often lies beneath the surface. That deep and underlying truth the superficial teacher never sees. He is not thorough enough in his study to have even made the discovery that it exists. He saws off a branch here, and a twig there, and gathers a bunch of leaves yonder, and undertakes to plant them in the fertile soil of the young hearts committed to his spiritual husbandry. But the root principle, from which the vital power of the lesson springs, he knows nothing about; and, as a necessary consequence, the lesson withers away.

The thorough teacher makes it his first purpose, in study, to grasp this central truth. To that all the rest is subsidiary. There may be a thousand minor points of interest; but through them all he pushes to gain, like a general on the field of battle, the key to the position. That point secured and the victory is won.

Such thoroughness in study prepares for the work as nothing else can. For the principle thus laid hold of becomes so incorporated into the mind and heart that the teacher goes to his class as one goes to the fountain with a cup of cold water. He has just what the class needs. He has himself made a discovery, and he is full of joy in revealing it to those who need.

Perhaps this may seem to many like setting up a standard of thoroughness which the work itself does not warrant. Such preparation costs time, labour, and the choicest fruitage of mental and spiritual growth, and all, not to preach the Gospel to listening thousands, not to speak to countless auditors by some widely-circulated book, but only to teach a half-a-dozen little children.

To such I commend the example of the old Athenian sculptor. Working upon a noble statue he gave as careful labour to perfect every detail of the back of the head as he had bestowed upon the face. Each hair seemed to be distinctly defined by his wondrous use of the chisel. A friend who stood by said to him, "What senseless folly! The figure is to be placed with its back against a wall, and at such a height that these minute particulars will be lost in distance. Who will see the details on which you have spent such toil?"

The artist answered "God."

WASTE PAPER.

Few housekeepers are aware of the many uses to which waste paper may be put. After a stove has been blackened, it can be kept looking very well for a long time by rubbing it with paper every morning. Rubbing with paper is a much nicer way of keeping the outside of a teakettle, coffee-pot and tea-pot bright and clean, than the old way of washing them in suds. Rubbing with paper is also the best way of polishing knives and tin-ware after scouring. This saves wetting the knife handles. If a little flour be held on the paper in rubbing tin-ware and spoons, they shine like new silver. For polishing mirrors, windows, lamp-chimneys, paper is better than dry cloth. Preserves and pickles keep much better if brown paper, instead of cloth, is tied over the jar. Canned fruit is not so apt to mould if a piece of writing paper, cut to fit the can, is laid directly on the fruit. Paper is much better to put under a carpet than straw. It is warmer, thinner, and makes less noise when one walks over it. Two thicknesses of paper placed between other coverings on a bed are as warm as a quilt. If it is necessary to step upon a chair, always lay a paper on it, and thus save the paint or wood-work foundation.

To pardon those absurdities in ourselves which we cannot suffer in others, is neither better nor worse than to be more willing to be fools ourselves than to have others so.

Our Young Folks.

LITTLE BUILDERS.

Lay the blocks on very even Place them skillfully, with care; And your minnie house is growing Large, and high, and very fair.

Little Nellie's eyes are watching As the painted walls uprise; She and Carlo think there's nothing Half so grand beneath the skies.

Keep thy patience, little builders; Wrath and hate thy work undo; If thy walls fall down before thee, Other walls have fallen too.

Older hands have oft erected Castles large and fair as thine, Built with every hope and heart-beat, Yet they crumble and decline.

Waste no time in vainly weeping, Over errors you have made; Work again, and build more strongly; So, - day thou wilt be repaid.

TEACHING A CHILD.

A great doctrine to teach a child is, that he must labour for what he wants. Is it riches? Let him stop envying those who have made money, and go to work and make it himself. Is it the position that character gives? Let him build up a good reputation for himself. Is it talent? Let him study to improve his mind. Possibly he may come honestly by somebody else's money without working for it, but he cannot inherit an education. Knowledge requires brain work, and there is no getting over it. A man may die and leave his money, but he cannot leave his education.

INDEXING.

Edward Everett Hale says, in the Youth's Companion:

"When I own a book, and am reading it carefully, I write, with a pencil, on the last page of it, references to the particular points in it which I think I may need to remember again or to recur to. Then I have my own index ready for me at any future time.

"But I have, perhaps, already advised you somewhere not to buy many books. If you are reading in books from a library, never—as you are a decently, well-behaved boy or girl—never make any sort of mark upon a page which is not your own. All you need then is a little page of paper, folded in where you can use it as a book-mark, on which you can make the same memorandum which you would have made on the fly-leaf were the book your own. In this case you will keep these memorandum pages together in your scrap-book, so that you can easily find them. And if—as is very likely—you have to refer to the book afterward in another edition, you will be glad if your first reference has been so precise that you can easily find the place although the paging is changed. John Doeke's rule is this: refer to the page with another reference to the number of pages in the volume. At the same time tell how many volumes there are in the set you use. If you use this rule, you would enter Charles II.'s escape from England, as described in the Pictorial History of England, thus - Charles II. escape after battle of Worcester. 221 Vol. 3. Pictorial History of England, p. 221 3.

You will have but little difficulty in finding your place in any edition of the Pictorial History, if you have made as careful a reference as this is."

WRITE HOME.

There can be no excuse for any young man who never writes home, or whose letters to the old folks there—whose dreams are ever of their son—are few and far between, and not worth much even when obtained. It is sad to think that there are young men who let weeks and months pass away without a letter to their parents or their brothers and sisters, who, when they do write, only send a line or two, with some lame excuse for not doing more; a line or two saying nothing, just containing some stereotyped statement, of vague utterances, which gives no information. Why, the value of a letter from a young man to the far-off town or village home, consists in the little details; its affectionate gossip; its accounts of any circumstance or incident that may have promise in it of advantage; its story of hopeful struggle, of dawning success; or its references to new-formed friendships, to books read, churches attended, lectures attended, with a thousand things besides, which may be small in themselves, but which show an interest in the home circle and manifest the beating of the child's heart within the man's.

Young men are not aware what pain they may inflict by apparent neglect; how letters brief and unfrequent may give rise to fear and doubt, and occasion anxious days and wakeful nights! Now, don't neglect home; don't seem indifferent to your own family, as if all your own interests were transferred to strangers. Keep the chain of communication bright by use, and write freely and fully, with unrestrained confidence that it may be felt that there is neither blight on the affections, nor error in the life, which is too often the cause of that

lapse in filial or fraternal correspondence which, though the result also at times, of mere thoughtlessness, is always, unkind, and sometimes cruel.

THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR.

Many of our young readers, as well as some who are older, commenced on the first of January to read the Bible through during the year. To accomplish this, it is necessary to read three chapters daily, and each Sunday two additional chapters, making five for that day. Much the easiest way to do this, is to read two chapters in the Old and one in the New Testament daily, and on Sunday two Psalms for the additional chapters. This will avoid five long chapters on Sunday; which are apt to prove wearisome and discouraging, especially to the young. Three chapters daily, and two additional on the Sabbath, will amount to 1,199 chapters in the year. In the Old Testament are 929 chapters; in the New Testament, 260 chapters; making 1,189 in all. By counting each two divisions of the 119th Psalm as a chapter, we shall add just ten chapters, making 1,199, the exact number needed for the year's reading.

We give below a table, made upon this plan, showing weekly throughout the year where the reading for the date given should commence:—

Table with columns for months (January to December) and days of the week, listing Bible chapters to read. Includes a note: 'Read two Psalms each Sunday.' and 'Read two chapters in Old Testament and one in New Testament daily. Count each two divisions of 119th Psalm as a chapter. September 18, begin at 103rd Psalm. November 13, begin Amos. Leap year, omit reading in course February 29.'

PERSONAL RELIGION.

What does it matter to you or to me about John Calvin or John Wesley either? They were glorious men, and did a world of good in their day. But, instead of wishing to wear their shoes, let us wear our own, for they are more likely to fit our feet; and let us come to this Book, and find out what God would have us know by the use of our own personal judgment. This will make men of us. To be fed on spoon-victuals forever will leave us nothing but babes, such as sects might delight in, but such as men should not desire to remain. "To the law and to the testimony" let us come. It is the best way of creating a Christian unity; and throwing aside the prejudice of birth, and all other prejudices, and as far as we can, let us seek to believe the whole gospel, for we are put in trust of it as such; and though we may, and must, make some mistakes, yet we should come as newly as we can to the holding of the whole counsel of God.—Spurgeon.

"SMALL POTATOES."

"Your minister is only small potatoes" was a thoughtless remark which sent an arrow to the soul of one of the praying ones in the pastor's flock. It fevered her sleepless pillow, and cast an unwonted shade over her aged brow, as she took her seat at the breakfast table the next morning. Small potatoes literally were before her; and as she tasted, her face resumed its wonted cheerfulness, and peace was restored to her soul. "Surely," said she, in her own eloquent strain, "these potatoes are good for food and greatly to be desired; and shall the heavenly manna be rejected, which God's providence provide for us, though it be small as the hour frost on the ground?" And that slight figure which for more than four-score years had withstood the storms of earth, continued to brave life's conflicts, and Sabbath after Sabbath her eager listening trumpet (for the unaided ear no longer caught the music of his voice) cheered the pastor's heart. Her prayers he knew were daily on his behalf, and the faithful pastor knew the value of such worshippers. Who can tell how much of the success of that ministry of a score of years was due to her prayers, to her influence, and those of such as she in that church?

Oh ye who murmur, because the food from the King's table is only small potatoes, unsuited to your dainty, depraved palates, remember that it is not against Moses and Aaron ye murmur, but against God.

HOW SHALL MODERN SKEPTICISM BE MET?

First: We must not be afraid of it. Skepticism may indicate power; but not of the highest order. It often indicates weakness. The highest form of power is in affirmation and construction; in building up, and not in pulling down. But skepticism is a negation. Its work is to deny, doubt, find fault, which is comparatively easy.

Second: We are to distinguish between facts and inference. Much of what is called science is mere inference. When Darwin observes similarities between man and the lower animals hitherto unobserved, we must admit the fact, but need not adopt his inference that our original progenitor was a monkey—probably an African monkey.

Third: In dealing with skepticism, we must welcome all truth, and duly respect every honest doubt. But upon this we need not enlarge.

But the most effective weapon against skepticism is the exercise of the faith we wish to produce in others. This is in accordance with the great law that like begets like. Would you produce kindness in others? Manifest kindness before them and to them. Would you produce forbearance? Be forbearing. Would you produce hostility? Manifest hostility. And so, would you produce faith in others, you must manifest before them and toward them the fruits of faith. If an intellectual result simply were aimed at, this would not be so; but aiming at a practical result, nothing can be substituted for this. Without this there may be arrangements, expenditures, meetings, addresses, but the work will be superficial. The unleavened mass, untouched by any particle with the true leaven in it, will remain unchanged. The whole secret of the spread of Christianity over the world is in this figure of the leaven. It is fire that kindles fire; love that kindles love; Christianity manifested that spreads Christianity. Talent, learning, conviction from argument, are well in their places, but avail little. Belief is needed, but it must be in the form of trust. It must be belief on the Lord Jesus Christ.

There must be in it the acceptance of Him for all that for which He offers Himself to us, and sympathy with Him in all that He proposes to do. In such a belief there is life; and in life there is power; and in the instincts of all life there is practical guidance. Under such inspiration and such guidance, which will be really that of the Spirit of God, the best forms of organization and of effort will be wanting. The ministry will be sustained. The great problem of lay labour, which is the problem now before the Church, will be solved. Denominational lines will be practically obliterated; and the pallid and protean form of skepticism will vanish before the combined power of light and love.—Mark Hopkins, D. D.

QUITE NATURAL.

The Christian Union takes a retrospective glance at its twelve-months' labours, and is impressed at once with the magnitude and utility of a great portion of them. It is inclined to change its course somewhat, and give more attention to the fruits of the Spirit and less to contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Its non-success is thus set forth:—

We have assailed and logically routed a large proportion of the heresies of the day. We have touched up the Jews; we have confuted the Unitarians; we have bothered the Catholics; we have utterly confounded the Atheists; the Baptists, with their close communion, have been made to squirm; and as to the High Church Episcopalians, we haven't left them a leg to stand upon. By all the best known laws of cause and effect, there should be very little remaining of any of these denominations; and yet we are much afraid they all still live, and hold each its peculiar tenets as firmly as ever—and perhaps the more so for our unanswerable arguments.

The Israelite seems actually to have entered upon a new lease of life. The Unitarian will take his own time in dying, and refuses to be hurried. The Infidel gives fatal indications of never having read our articles at all. The Catholic, when he deigns to allude to us, consigns us to a hotter place than ever. The Churchman (Baptist or Episcopalian) actually smiles at us "a smile serene and high," from behind his barricade, as he bids us "Go round by the gate;"—and this is the end of all our efforts to reform the Church and the world.

"An elder" writes to the Evangelist, giving some interesting reminiscences of Dr. Beman. The Doctor was a powerful foe of the liquor-sellers, and on one occasion a member of that fraternity applied to a trustee of his church for a pew. "The trustee showed the applicant one wall forward in the church. 'This is an eligible pew,' said he; but added, significantly, 'it's pretty near the muzzle, Mr. B—'"