

Making Use of the Scholar's Knowledge

By Rev. J. M. Duncan, D.D.

The skilful day school teacher strives to make the knowledge which his pupils have acquired in any one department help in the studies belonging to other departments. For example, in a history lesson, acquaintance with geography is used to make the teaching more easily understood and remembered. In the study of foreign languages, the learner's knowledge of history and geography is of constant service.

The Sunday School teacher will add greatly to the interest and effectiveness of his teaching by linking up the facts or principles which he wishes to impress with something already familiar to the scholars.

Let it be supposed, for example, that there is in the scholar's mind, as the result of previous study, a fairly clear outline of the history contained in the Acts of the Apostles. He will have learned that one of the great turning points in that history was when the preaching of the gospel, limited at first to the Jewish race, was extended to the Gentiles. Now, four out of the five lessons for April bear directly on this widening of the church's work. First, we have the conversion of Saul, who afterwards became the apostle of the Gentiles. Next, we see how Peter, a strict Jew, so far laid aside his Jewish prejudices as to become a guest in the house of Simon, the tanner, whose business the Jews regarded as unclean. And finally, we follow Peter to the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, where the apostle under the guidance of the Holy Spirit fully recognizes the right of the Gentiles to all the privileges of the church.

If this background of general scripture knowledge is lacking in the pupil, then it is one of the teacher's most important, and ought to be one of his most attractive, duties, to impart it in a well considered series of lessons supplemental to the regular lessons, so that, in course of time, the scholar will be able to see the place of each lesson in its relation to the whole sweep of scripture.

The pupil's knowledge of geography and of current events should also be made full use of. Take the places mentioned in the April lessons,

—Jerusalem, Damascus, Lydda, Joppa (Jaffa) and Cæsarea. These places all lie in a region which is the field of important operations in the war now going on. All that the scholars have learned of them at school and through the reading of newspapers should be brought out to add life and color to the teaching of the lesson.

The same principle may be applied to the teaching of the "Great Hymn of the Church." The present Quarter's Hymn for the Primaries is Hymn 567, Book of Praise,—"I think when I read that sweet story of old." The teacher should have the scholars recall the beautiful scene in the gospel story on which the hymn is based. An unbreakable link of association may thus be formed between the song and the scene. So, in the teaching of Hymn 111 for the Juniors and upwards,—"Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed—the scholars should be asked to repeat our Lord's promises to send the Holy Spirit, and also how those promises were fulfilled.

The teacher who thus makes use of the scholar's knowledge, will render to the scholar an invaluable service. The habit will be cultivated of connecting each new piece of information with information already possessed. This will make it easier to remember and recall and to see the right bearing of books that are read and sermons or other addresses that are heard.

Writers on pedagogy are accustomed to call the law of good teaching here explained the law of correlation. The importance of the law can hardly be overstated.

The Boy Problem

By Rev. J. A. MacKeigan, B.A.

The boy problem is the churches' problem to-day as never before. To tie up the boy's interests with the church in a helpful way during the formative period of the teens is at once the most important and most difficult work confronting us. In the country, or small town, the number of boys of the same age is too small for enthusiasm. In the larger town united work is difficult because of the complexity of organization and the seductive power of cheap amusements. But these things are only difficulties,—not barriers.