

every possible way. We may not, indeed, choose for them. Each must be wise for him-self. There is a freedom of the will, a power of choice and self-direction, which shapes final character and destiny, and whose action we cannot prevent. Before each soul there is set the possibility of good and the possibility of evil. There are open doors in each direction, upward and downward, and no man can shut them. Still, man can aid his fellow. By the force of divine truth and human sympathy, by precept and example, he may make rough places smooth and dark places light. He may lead those who are in danger of wandering, and lift up those who have fallen in the way, and succor those that faint.

This is the work of the Sunday-school teacher. And there is a divine call to this work as well as to the work of the regular ministry. In this case, as well as the other, the call is a call to work. What the harvest needs is *laborers* who will engage in the work from the love of it, and of souls, and of God, and delight themselves in study, prayer, and preparation. It must not be treated as a pastime, but made a serious business, to which time and effort shall be devoted, and in which self-denial shall be exercised. Thus alone will the teacher measure up to his high vocation, thus alone will he win the crown.—*Sunday-School Journal*.

The School "Atmosphere."

THE Rev. John Hall, D.D., gives through the *Sunday-School Times*, words in season when he speaks to the Sunday-school workers as follows:

Let a farmer sow too early in the season and his prospects of a crop will be bad. Why? the seed is good; the soil is good; the sower is skilful; but the temperature kills the seed before it strikes out a rootlet or sends up a bud. So the truth taught by the teacher, and the class may be all one could wish, but the desired results may be precluded by an unfavorable atmosphere.

In some schools there is an atmosphere of irreverence. There is little or no seriousness in the exercises. Some, indeed, are more noticeably wanting therein than

others; the singing, for example, being more flippant than the Scripture-reading. But the general character of the school is that of lightness, frivolity, or mechanical routine. It may be hard to say who is most blamable. Nor could you take hold of special and tangible proofs of the evil; but you can feel it.

Now, the opposite of this should be studied and cultivated. The air, manner, address, and tone of all, while at work, should be serious and reverent. Reverence is not gloom, nor is it inconsistent with natural cheerfulness. Seriousness is the natural expression of a deep, earnest purpose. No sensible surgeon operates on a man's throat, close by the jugular vein, with a joke on his lips. No ship's officer steers by a perilous reef with a running fire of drollery. It is forbidden to speak to the man at the helm, on the ocean-going steamers, for obviously good reasons.

When Christians assemble on the Sabbath to lead immortal souls from hell-ward paths to Christ, they are about earnest work. Levity is shocking; and when to the gravity of the work, we add that the word they use is God's, the presence they invoke is God's, the work they do is God's, the blessing they seek is God's, it will be plain that reverence is the fitting frame of mind; and that frame of mind is to be shown by appropriate manner. I presume there are churches in which persons are made to feel, by the entire service, that solemn affairs are in hand; that God is there of a truth. Why should not Sabbath-school reverence produce the like impression? Why should the unspoken impression of a boy looking around his school be, "I guess it's not of much importance?"

In some schools there is an atmosphere of ostentation. Too much is for show. If anybody's hand does anything good, not only the other hand, but every other hand in the school, knows all about it. The little prodigies are trotted out, and put through their paces. The lesson is readily interrupted that Brother Freeland may hear how the school sings its strong piece—Brother Freeland being a great friend to Sabbath-schools in general, with no connection with any one in particular.