

cates of the so called recapitulation theory, which asserts that the development of the individual recapitulates in brief the stages through which the development of the race has passed. Until eight or nine, they hold, the child is essentially non-social; in the gang age, his instincts and impulses are those of primitive man. And we are asked to believe that the surest way to get rid of what is undesirable in these impulses, and to promote a healthy, normal development, is just to let them have their fling for a few years. The mischief of boyhood, so runs the theory, is cathartic; it is nature's way of getting the ancestral poison out of the boy's system.

This is dangerous pedagogy. Exercise is far more apt to fix than to eliminate undesirable tendencies. The law of habit none can doubt or escape; but the principle of catharsis, I believe, exists chiefly in the imagination of its advocates.

We shall neither repress the gang, then, nor let it go its own way; we shall seek to understand and enlist it. Its virtues are sound, but they stand in need of enlightenment and

expansion. Its code of honor is to be respected, however inadequate it may seem to our larger experience. Its group loyalty is to be fostered and directed, for the sake of the larger loyalties that are yet to be.

We must help the boy to grow in loyalty, to incorporate older loyalties into new, lesser loyalties into greater. We must help him pass from loyalties which are personal merely, to those which involve devotion to causes and ideals, impartial, impersonal and eternal in their worth. We must help him to practise loyalty, and to understand that real loyalty is never mere enthusiasm, red fire, speeches or even heroic acts; but that it is rather a steady, thoroughgoing habit of devotion to whatever one has undertaken to do in the world. Much of this help we can only begin to give in the "gang" years; for a large part of the boy's education in loyalty will take place in later adolescence and in young manhood, as he faces the responsibilities of mature life. Who of us, indeed, could say that his own education in loyalty has yet been finished?

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## Explaining Difficulties

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Sometimes, in a labor dispute, the head of a great corporation, on being interviewed as to the attitude of the corporation towards arbitration of the matter in dispute, summarily dismisses the whole question in the terse statement: "There is nothing to arbitrate." Similarly, many teachers practically adopt this attitude in the preparation of their lessons, by failing or refusing to acknowledge any difficulties in next Sunday's lesson. They simply ignore them. This treatment, however, brings disaster as surely as the magnate's method. How shall we find a better way?

The first step towards explaining our difficulties is to see them. A clear perception of what we have to meet and overcome is of the highest value, but it is not always easy to attain. It will help us to take a general look at some of the difficulties we may meet and possibly a closer look at one or two of them.

In general, Sunday School teachers' difficulties might be grouped as: (a) those in the lesson itself; (b) those in the class; (c) those involved in bringing the lesson and class together. In the lesson itself there are difficulties in the facts, in the language and in the teachings. Take, for example, Neh. 2: 1-11. What are the facts involved in the following terms,—"cupbearer," "Nisan," "Artaxerxes," "Nehemiah's fear at being sad in the king's presence," "my father's sepulchre," "gates of the city," the presence of the queen

in the court room, the letters from the king, the "river," "the governors," "Judah," "the king's forest," "the Horonite," "the Ammonite?" A very considerable knowledge of an ancient Oriental history and geography is required to explain these terms. And where shall we get that knowledge? From every source available,—Lesson Helps, Bible Dictionary, illustrated volumes of travel, history and archaeology, lectures on Eastern lands illustrated by lantern slides, etc. Your own library, the Sunday School library, the public library are all available and should be consulted.

So far as this lesson is concerned, there are no special difficulties in the language, but in some of the doctrinal passages from the Epistles there are many terms hard for the boys and girls to understand and even for the adult classes. As to the teachings, the first difficulty is to find them, the second to select the one or ones you want for your class, and the third to state the teaching or teachings in language apt and suitable. In the Nehemiah lesson these two teachings out of several may be noted,—the striking answer to prayer and the value of seizing the occasion. Either or both of these teachings may be suitable for your class, but just how to phrase them and just when and where in your teaching period to bring them in constitute part of your problem.