

writer attended the first meeting called in England to promote Union. Dr. C. and his friends are 25 years behind us in their movement. This is a case of a youth telling his grand-papa to be a good boy!

The object of the promoters of Union has, so far as we comprehend it, our warmest sympathy. We have not yet, however, seen formulated any plan by which Organic Union can be attained. As to the so-called union some talk about the Y.M.C.A. idea, it is the rankest kind of folly in our judgment, except as a mere exhibition of neighbourly amiability. "Blest is the tie that binds our hearts in mutual love," is all very nice, but to bind severed religious bodies, something more is needed than a hymn. When the Y.M.C.A. theory goes one hair's breadth beyond that it is dangerous, it is a distinct attack upon the Catholic position of the Church of England. Dr. Carry knows more about the real difficulty in the way of Organic Union than we do. Let him send to us a scheme for bridging the gulf that Union seeks to span, and we shall pay it every courtesy, and give to his recommendations or suggestion the weight justly due to one whose scholarly attainments as a theologian we take pride in recognising.

THE CASUAL, AND HOW TO MAKE HIM A PERMANENT SCHOLAR.

A paper read before the Church of England Sunday School Association on March 14th, 1889.

BY MISS OSLER.

Every teacher, every superintendent, has had experience of the casual; erratic and irregular as an individual, invariable and certain as a class, obeying no law but the law of average, unless it be the law of attraction before the annual picnic, the casual is an anxiety in every Sunday-school. Not on account of his behaviour, for that is commonly good: he is not so much at home as to play pranks; he has no affection for his teacher; no standing in the school to make him touchy or jealous, while his curiosity makes him tolerably attentive for the few Sundays that he remains.

It is the sense of responsibility concerning him that disturbs a good teacher or a zealous superintendent. Having caught your casual, how can you keep him? There are many here who could answer that question far better than I; others who, to wise counsel, could add the charm of wit and eloquence, but this is beyond my power, I can only hope, as one who from many failures has learnt useful lessons, to be able to give a few practical suggestions to the inexperienced among us. The effort to retain the casual is due from the teacher, the classfellows, and the superintendent, and when these are heartily united we may expect good success.

The sex of the casual being determined for me by the title of this paper, I will, to avoid confusion of pronouns, suppose the teacher feminine, and since she is the first to come in contact with our subject, will give her duties the first place.

I am aware that in some schools all new scholars have to sit on a special bench and to await the leisure of the superintendent that they may be placed in suitable classes. But this plan seems to have little to recommend it. The new scholar is apt to come with a friend, or because he has heard some teacher favourably mentioned, and wishes to be in that teacher's class. The special bench deters such and daunts the timid arrival who has no friend in the school, so we will suppose that this rule of the special bench is not the custom of the school, but that the casual files into some class with the regular members. What should the teacher say or do?

A little common sense and the ordinary rules of good breeding will meet all cases. How would she act in her own house towards a visitor who was a welcome guest, and yet hitherto a stranger to her? Surely her first endeavour would be, in a quiet, unostentatious way, to make him feel thoroughly welcome. If she had other guests to entertain who must necessarily divide her attention, she would introduce him to one or two among them likely to be sociable and congenial, still contriving to pay him attention from

time to time. When he was about to leave she would express her pleasure at his visit and her wish to see him again.

But every good teacher plays the part of hostess, and her scholars are, in some sense, her guests. She is responsible, so far as her power extends, for their comfort, happiness, and welfare while they are in her charge, she should be present to receive them, should know them by name, should be so far acquainted with their families and circumstances as to be able to converse and sympathise with them, and she should have the quick tact, and perception that give such kindly insight into character that she can adapt herself to every member of her class. Some of these points of vantage can be gained only by degrees, but they can be aimed at from the first.

Few new scholars care to be openly and personally catechized before strangers, so invite your casual to come and sit beside you, and enquire his name and address, not in a blunt authoritative way, but as kindly and courteously as you would question the child of some personal friend. If he come with a companion, by all means let them sit together, if not, ask if he knows any one in the class, and call that scholar up to sit beside him and to share the lesson paper and hymn book. If a stranger to all, select some friendly soul from the rest to be his companion for the hour of school.

The teacher will, of course, see that her new friend has the necessary books to use for that day, that he can find the hymns and the places in his Bible or Prayer Book, and also that he gets a lesson paper for the following Sunday, and knows how much he is expected to learn from it. She will take an opportunity to ask him if he has been attending any other Sunday-school and to express her hope that he likes what he has seen of the one he has attended that day and that he will come regularly in the future. It may be well to defer the enquiry as to the reason for leaving his former Sunday-school or for coming to the new one.

If the scholar is old enough to understand clearly, she may from time to time explain to him the system of marks and prizes pursued in the school, the lesson course for the year, and the plan on which the school entertainments are given. He should understand the object of the Sunday-school collections and the uses to which the mission money is applied. If there is a Band of Hope, children's meeting, or other gathering of scholars in connection with the school, she should speak of these, and should she awaken his interest in them, and, still more, should she get any scholar, not necessarily her own, to take him in hand and bring him to any one of them, she will have done much to retain her casual. All this neither can nor should be done on the first Sunday, nor for two or three to come, but having these topics of conversation, she need never feel the anxiety, "What shall I say to him?"

The tone of the whole school, for which the superintendent is chiefly responsible, and the tone and behaviour of her own class, which it is her part to raise and maintain, attract or repel the scholar. The worst boy will not care for a school devoid of discipline, while the well-disposed will not remain in a class where good behaviour counts for nothing and the teacher is powerless to command a fair measure of respect and attention.

Another influence to attract and keep the casual, we shall find to be good teaching. Personal affection is commonly the strongest link to bind the older members of a class, so much so, that where this exists, we often find scholars refusing promotion when they are fitted for it, preferring to remain with the teacher they have learnt to love, although she cannot raise her instruction to the level of their capacity. Yet in the case of the new comer, we must, I think, admit, that the standard and style of instruction is the stronger force. Bright, intelligent teaching will often retain a chance scholar until personal magnetism has time to develop its hold upon him, for, while the love of learning is comparatively limited, the desire to know is almost universal, and this desire a good teacher continually gratifies. Your scholar should never be able to say truly, "I don't know a thing more about the lesson than when I went." It is not enough simply to go through the questions and answers in the lesson paper, though this should, of course, be done. The teacher can and should do far more than this. She will generally find that although a bright attentive boy can grasp the details well, he will rarely look at his subject from more than one point of view, and will have but little power to grasp it as a whole, or to single out the main practical lesson and to present it clearly to his own mind. Illustration, comparison, generalisation, deduction, these are the teacher's work, and the more she thinks over her lesson the better she will succeed. It is not enough to give more or less time on Saturday night, not enough to read all that the Teacher's Assistant or other helps may give, she should take the next Sunday's lesson for the previous Sunday evening's reading, and then hand it over to her own mind, so to speak, to bear in memory and to work upon throughout the week.

Let those who find it difficult to fill the lesson hour or to interest their classes, honestly try this plan, and they will find that they can hardly read a secular book or glance over a newspaper without gathering some thought or illustration that will bear upon the next Sunday's lesson. Current events, local happenings, pictures, music, the conversation of friends, all will help, but above all, their own daily Bible reading, undertaken with the prayer that God would teach them through it that they also may teach, will verily be "a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path," as they lead their scholars in the way of truth.

The strongest point comes last. Just as she would return a first call from one whom she was anxious to cultivate at the first opportunity, so she should return her new scholar's call during the same week, if possible, and if not possible, as speedily as may be. Let the parents feel that the casual is welcome and more than welcome, let them see that his teacher takes a real personal interest in him and his regular attendance, and half the battle is won.

But your casual may be an habitual wanderer, and after attending regularly for a few Sundays, may absent himself. Well used, this may prove a fortunate occurrence, but to make it so, your absentee must be looked up before the next Sunday comes. If a good reason be given for his non-appearance, accept it heartily, and although you may feel doubt as to the truth of the excuse, allow none to appear. You may, however, take the chance afforded you to explain that you call thus promptly because you desire that every scholar shall be punctual and regular, that while sickness, home duties, or absence from the city are valid excuses, you can accept no other, and that you prefer to lose a carelessly irregular scholar rather than retain a bad example in your class. The casual must never be allowed to imagine that you so earnestly desire his presence that you are willing to keep him on his own terms.

It may here be objected, and not without reason, that many of our best teachers are so tied by their weekly employments as to have practically no time for the regular visiting of new or old scholars. Their daylight hours are not their own, and they feel, very justly, that they have no more right to intrude, uninvited, upon the evening hours of their scholars' families than upon those of other friends with whom they are not upon terms of close intimacy. They must have known the boy and his people long and well before they could take this liberty. A friendly note supplies the place of a call on an old scholar, but I have not found it effectual with the casual. In either case the classfellows may be trained to come to the teacher's aid, and this brings me to their special work. There are those in almost every class who will undertake to call and enquire the cause of another's absence when the teacher herself cannot do so, and a special request would persuade such to visit the casual at his own home and influence him to come again, but this service should be asked and received as a favour, and the scholar heartily thanked for his help.

When living at the island in the summer, and rarely coming to the city save on Sunday, I find my girls very willing to come to my assistance by calling on any absent scholar who lives near, and reporting the cause of absence on the following Sunday. I commonly give them a lesson paper to take, which is an excuse for the visit when the absentee is not a personal friend. They will do this, but I have found the cordial treatment of new-comers by the scholars of longer standing one of the most difficult results to attain. In the case of girls, class prejudice, the fear of making acquaintances among those socially beneath them, operates very strongly, and this, not only between those who are "in society," or out of it, but between the grades of the lower, middle, and working classes.

Boys, with their sturdy common sense, have far less of this, but the difference is more than made up by their innate love of hurting, teasing, and oppressing, more, however, from the spirit of active mischief than from real cruelty. The average boy is very like the navvy and his companion in a sketch that appeared in *Punch* some years ago. The huge, big-boned navvy sat astride a broken wall, his burly chin leaning against it. He points to a slender, shy-looking man in gentlemanly attire who is coming towards them. "Who's yon, Bill?" "A stranger." "Eave 'arf a brick at 'im!"

Nevertheless, much may be done by pointing out the special duty of the scholars to new-comers when no new-comers are present, reminding them of their own feelings when they came as strangers, and of the relief it was or would have been to them to be dealt with as they are asked to deal with others. It is a good plan, in a class sufficiently large, to arrange with two or three to take new-comers under their special charge, to sit by them, perhaps walk home with them and offer to call for them on the following Sunday, but there must be not a little sympathy and unity of purpose between teacher and scholar before she can accomplish this.

Love for their own Sunday-school and *esprit du corps*