

Communications.

Our Troubles.

NUMBER XXVIII.

We have seen that God will, in the closet, in the social meetings, and around the family altar, hear and answer the petition of the

CHRISTIAN

when presented to him, in faith. Touching the prayers, offered by the preacher, before and after sermon, we know but little, and will say less. We have heard many of these prayers, that seemed to us, to fall like the smoke of Cain's offering of corn, made contrary to the law, received from his Creator. In the absence of heavenly instruction, our judgment, conscience and feelings would suggest this, as a more appropriate occasion for thanksgiving; than for petition, and all rising should be rendered with uplifted and holy hands.

But I opine we have lingered long enough around the altar of prayer, though it be never so interesting a subject. So we will direct the readers of the P. C. MESSENGER to another trouble, which has long impeded their progress in the divine life. A want of faith that we are sons and daughters of God and heirs according to the promise, has given the individual Christian much trouble. And as all the body is affected by the weal or woe of each member, so trouble will often come upon the whole church. But there is no necessity for any Christian being in doubt of his sonship or fearing for the result of his warfare, for want of testimony, to enable him to determine his status here, or assure his heart what will be his destiny beyond the grave.

Paul says: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. viii. 13-17. In the testimony of two competent and faithful witnesses all things can be fully established. To satisfy the Christian that he is a child of God, I will introduce two competent and faithful witnesses. The first witness is the Spirit of God. The second witness I will call to the stand, is the spirit of man. When Paul said the spirit bore witness with our spirits, he did not convey the thought, as many opine, that the spirit of God testified to our spirits by some miraculous impression, but that the spirit of God bore testimony with our spirits. So it requires an agreement between these two witnesses to prove that we are sons of God. We will now alternately introduce these two witnesses, who alone can testify that we are children of God.

Spirit of God says: "Be swift to hear." "How can they believe upon him of whom they have not heard."

Spirit of man: I have heard and learned of the father.

Spirit of God: "He that cometh to God must believe." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "With the heart man believes unto righteousness."

Spirit of man: I believe with all my heart that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.

Spirit of God: "Except ye repent ye perish." "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Spirit of man: I have repented, I have let my laughter be turned into mourning, and my joy into hearings.

Spirit of God: "If you confess me

I will confess you, if you deny me I will deny you." "With this mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Spirit of man: I confessed before men that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God.

Spirit of God: "Repent and, be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins." "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Spirit of man: I have been baptized into Christ. I was buried with him in baptism.

Spirit of God: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Spirit of man: I have obeyed the commandments, I am in the kingdom. I have been born of the spirit and water. I am a child of God and can cry Abba Father.

HENRY THOMAS.

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Intermediate Class.

BY VIRIA W. DEHRMAN.

[Read before the Sunday School Institute Healdsburg, Cal., and published by request.]

I do not know that there is one field of labor in the Sunday School of more importance than any other; but we are prone to think the one we are directly connected with of the most importance. This is natural. It is right. I am not here to instruct others how to teach intermediate classes, but feeling deeply interested in the work I want to be taught myself. Hence I shall not detain you long that I may hear from others on the same subject. There is so much to be said and I can say so little. O, if we could only have teachers whose thoughts were not so taken up with the cares of home and family, our Sunday School work would surely be better done. But loving the work, with the help of God I hope never to abandon the field. The aim of all Sunday School work, the grand object to be accomplished is to make Christians. If we fail in this, truly is our work a failure.

Some years ago it was stated in one of our periodicals, that nearly 89,000 converts to the churches in one year, were from the Sunday Schools. They were, necessarily, mostly from the intermediate classes. Hence you can readily see one grand reason, for the importance of this work. Again, want of reverence for the word of God, is one of the prevailing evils of our young people; we must meet this and eradicate it in these chapels, and it is no small work. It is also the turning point in the lives of the young; and how anxious we are, and should be, to see them Christians before the "evil day comes." It is a time in their lives when it is so hard to interest, and especially is this true if religious culture is neglected at home. Then teachers, what a work for us. We must gain the love and confidence of our pupils, and make them know that we feel an interest in them deep, true and abiding; ever greet them kindly, lovingly. The rudest may have a true noble heart. Talk with them in a way calculated to win, and this is no easy task. For in a class of eight or ten, you will find just so many different dispositions. There is Charley Mischief—old enough to behave himself? Certainly he is, but he is a boy, he is not a man, he is full to the brim; he can't be conquered in a day, have patience, chide gently, don't drive him from the Sunday School by being harsh, he is bright and in time it won't be funny to stick a pin in Ned, or pull Johnny's hair; when in after years you see him a noble Christian man, how you will from your heart, thank God, for the patience.

Again, there is Frank Indifference—you tell the class an important matter ask him to repeat the same, and with a careless wink replies, "I can't." It will then take so much patience to

urge gently more attention to these all important things. But don't grow weary, continual dropping will wear away the stone of his heart; then, when you hear him say in a manly voice, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God," you will again, thank God for your untiring patience.

We might multiply such instances, but let these suffice. One time in my life, I had the pleasure of taking a class from the primary to one year in the intermediate class, and when a few days ago I heard two of the number had become Christians, my heart was filled with joy, and I could but hope that I had helped to guide them in the narrow way that can lead them to life eternal.

I think it should be our aim to make our Institute as practical as possible. The world is full of theory. We are profited only by what can be put into practice. I believe if I am capable of teaching anywhere, it is a class of boys, rough boys—mischievous boys—bad boys—I love them all. I would not be understood as loving bad boys best, or loving them because they are bad, but under that outward garb of mischief and evil doings, there is an inward soul, a pearl of great price that is worth having. It is made in the image of our God. What a grand truth. It is worth laboring for. Christ died for every one of them, and with our aid they may conquer and be bright and shining lights in the church of God. And if they do, oh! there is so much in them to love. Dio Lewis says, "women are sent to earth to take men in their arms of love and bear them to heaven." If such a noble mission is ours, I pray we may fill it well.

But this class of boys, do you ask what I would do with them? I would try to win their love; I would invite them to my house; I would give them dinners; I would visit them at their homes; if they were absent, I would inquire after them; if sick, I would get them interested in their lessons by having them come to my house one evening in every week, to study the lesson. As I said, I like to teach boys that need much teaching. When I work I like to see that I have accomplished something. If you go to the marble shop, and get a block all chiseled and polished, it is but little work to write the inscription upon it. But go to the quarry, get the rough stone without form or comeliness, and when it is completed you can see you have accomplished much.

I love boys; I wish we had more teachers that loved them. I mean boys that mothers only love. It is said of Horace Mann in a speech at the dedication of a reformatory school for boys, "If only one boy is saved it will pay for all the trouble and expense of this building." A person afterwards asked him if he did not exaggerate in his statement. The reply was, "not if it was my boy." Ah, that is it, my boy. My dear teachers, all these boys are "somebody's darling." Let us go out after them. Let us bring them to Sunday School. Let us strive to make noble Christian men of them. It is a work of which we might well feel proud.

I remember to have read some time since, when a man of wealth, influence and renown, came to die, he said, that he would willingly give all his wealth and fame, to know that he had been instrumental in bringing one soul to Christ. I feel that this would be the experience of every one if life had been devoted to self alone. But if we would be "master builders that need not be ashamed" we must show ourselves as "workmen rightly dividing the word of God." To do this we must study. Who would ever think of employing an experienced mechanic to do a fine piece of work; who would ever think of employing a teacher for our common schools, who had not made himself acquainted with our text books, or a rude painter to paint a Madonna; and yet, it is far more wise to do any of these than go

to our Sunday School class, and not be masters of the situation. With our present helps in the Sunday School work, we ought by the blessing of God to accomplish much; but if we rely entirely on our papers, snatch them up as we leave home for Sunday School, and let our class know that all we know is on that little piece of paper, we need not be surprised if our class lose their interest, if we never awaken it. The teacher that studies his lesson, will love his work. We should for many reasons master every lesson before going to class.

1. We should study for the benefit we ourselves derive from it. It will be food for our souls, and make us stronger in our Christian lives.

2. We should study that we may inspire confidence in our class, and thereby better teach them.

3. We should study because it will lead us nearer to God. If a person glances over the word of God thinking to grasp the depth of his inspired word, they show at once they do not comprehend its vastness, as well as show a want of reverence for it.

It is said of Pericles the Athenian orator, that before he went to address the people, he prayed to the gods that nothing might go out of his mouth that might not be to the purpose. Might we not my fellow teachers, profit by this heathen's example. We know his gods could not answer prayer any more than the fire could come and consume the sacrifices offered to Baal. But the God of Elijah is our God, and we know if we ask aright he will bless us. Let us ever ask God to help us in our efforts to advance his cause, then let our examples be pure and holy. You are a lover of the grand and beautiful in nature, and you decide to climb to the top of some of these mountain peaks; you realize the task is a difficult one; the sides are steep and precipitous, but feeling strong you fear no danger. Suddenly you hear a voice from behind you, saying, "Teacher guard well your steps for I am following." Ah! that is it, our examples are followed. We may tell others how to go, but if we travel another road they will follow.

Let us then as we ascend the mountain of life, which leads from this to the world eternal, walk in the commandments of the Lord, blameless, that we may hear the welcome plaudits, "Well done good and faithful servant enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

Child Culture.

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother, Lois, and thy mother, Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also.

This is an age of great activity of thought in both religious and irreligious minds. While it is true that there is much religious zeal being manifested, and the missionaries of the Cross are bearing the Bible to every land, and giving the New Testament to each one in his mother's tongue. Africa is being redeemed; missionaries are succeeding grandly in China; Japan is bidding the Christian religion to make her land its home. It is equally true that scepticism is bold and infidelity is scoffing at the most sacred truths of our holy religion. And in this land (our California), "upon which the smiles of heaven beam with uncommon refulgence," the minds of the masses are filled with scepticism, scoffing, and even blasphemy. The tendency of the times is to look with contempt upon the experience of past ages, and in breaking away from their errors to go to the other extreme of being overwhelmed with our own. In battling against priest craft and oppression, we are going to the other extreme of unbelief and moral anarchy. The proposition of to-day is not so much "What does the Bible teach," as "Is

the Bible of any authority." The question once was, Is this or that religious party teaching the Bible? The question now is, Is the Bible worthy of consideration? The God of the masses in California is each man's ideas of right; each becomes God to himself, and in his vanity of opinion falls down and worships himself.

Men will take the most solemn oaths on the Bible, alleging faith in its God, and on the street tell you they do not believe a word of it is from God. Swear by it on all solemn occasions, curse and scoff at it in private conversation. I need not picture the result of these actions on their children.

The greatest oracle of human wisdom (Lord Bacon) has said: "The custom of profane scoffing in holy matters doth by little and little deface the reverence of religion." And Chancellor Kent has said: "No government among any of the polished nations of antiquity, and none of the institutions of modern Europe (a single and monitory case excepted) ever hazarded such a bold experiment upon the solidity of the public morals, as to permit with impunity, and under the sanction of their tribunals, the general religion of the community to be openly insulted and defamed." Yet, in California, the Christian religion is openly assailed on the streets and in the shops, and the frothy lecturer spits his venom at it. Would be literary men assail it in the secular press, openly insult and defame it. Sometimes the relapsed show equal bitterness with the most abandoned, for when a man has parted the cable of Christian faith, he is a dismantled wreck drifting in a stormy sea of winds and waves, the sport whose end is to be swallowed up by the maelstrom of his own corruption.

Seeing that scepticism has no comfort for the soul, infidelity, no bonds of sympathy and scoffing, destroys all honor and virtue. We turn our eyes to the only beacon of hope that casts its bright beams over life's tempestuous sea and beckons our frail bark to a port of peace.

The truths of the Bible are the rock upon which the fabric of our institutions is built, and permit me to say in the words of Lord Erskin: "The religious and moral sense of the people is the great anchor which alone can hold the vessel of the State amid the storms which agitate the world." If we wish to bequeath our civil and religious liberties to our children with our dying admonition for them to deliver them to their children as we received them from our fathers. Then must we teach them faith in the Christian religion, for this is the only citadel of our temporal and eternal happiness, knowing, with President Quincy, that human happiness has no perfect security but freedom, freedom none but virtue, virtue none but knowledge, and neither freedom nor virtue has any vigor or immortal life except in the principle of Christian faith and in the sanction of the Christian religion. The proposition that demands the attention of the religious thinkers of to-day is, How can we best save the children from that ruin which inevitably awaits the irreligious? In other words, "Child Culture," and hence to this subject I invite your earnest, prayerful attention.

I use the term child in the broad sense of a minor, a boy is a minor until the age of twenty-one, a girl until eighteen. They are until this age recognized by law and society as being under parents, teachers and guardians. On this subject it may be there are certain propositions that will be granted.

Proposition. "The character is largely formed during the minority." I think Solomon affirms this when he says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when old he will not depart from it." Prov. xxiii. 6. Paul commands parents to train up their children in the nurture and admoni-