

The Relation of the Sunday School to the Church.

The following paper was read before the Christian Church of Portland, at the anniversary services, Sunday evening, Jan. 2, 1881.

Extended and all-reaching as is the command "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," yet none can deny that there are peculiar circumstances and propitious seasons, when good seed can scarcely fail to bring an abundant harvest. What would we think of a farmer who persistently plows his fields during the chilling blasts of winter, sowing his grain on a mantle of snow and ice, while he sits, with folded hands, in the warm spring-sunshine, sanguinely awaiting the reward of all his labors, when smiling autumn shall yield her rich store of yellow sheaves to his neighbor? And yet there are those much too wise to make such a blunder in temporal matters, who do, in actions, if not in words, imitate this very farmer in regard to their spiritual work. Neglecting the springtime of life, they depend entirely upon the frosty winter of old age in which to plant all seeds of truth, all knowledge of the Scriptures, and all invitations of the Gospel.

Forgetting the promise "They that seek me early shall find me." Letting the pleadings of the Master "Feed my lambs," and "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," fall unheeded upon their ears, they seem to consider nature a sufficient guide for their little ones, who are either left at home to spend their Sabbaths according to their own inclinations, or what is still worse, compelled to sit quietly through a long, and to them, tedious service, five words of which they do not intelligently comprehend, and which therefore not only fails to instruct, but positively creates a lasting disgust in their plastic minds, ever susceptible to impressions for good or evil.

But side by side of these, casting bright silvery rays over what would otherwise be a dark picture, stand earnest men and women, who, through the wisdom of after years, can look back to their own childish days, and, having perhaps felt some want in their own lives, remember the needs of the child-soul, and strive, by every means, to take advantage of the tender years of childhood and youth to cast upon the waters, bread, which shall, after many days, return again; to plant upon a soil which shall bring forth, not forty, but an hundred fold. But to none of us is given a measure by which to estimate the difference between a lifetime spent in God's service, and that of an old and trembling sinner, who may, peradventure beg for, and obtain pardon on the very threshold of eternity, but whose whole life has been in the interest of Satan, and for the purpose of degrading his fellow beings. None of us can estimate the power for good of a Timothy who, from his childhood, has known the Scriptures, nor of a Samuel who found favor with the Lord when yet a child.

If, in our day schools, we deem it all important to train the intellect, before like a gnarled oak, it becomes incapable of being bent or twisted into symmetry, of how much more important it is that we take the young heart, ere it has grown familiar with the ways of sin, and instill into it, by constant teaching, the spiritual precepts, which make it wise unto salvation, that we may send out into the world soldiers panoplied with the Word of God, which is the sword of the spirit.

Truly "the harvest is great, but the laborers are few." And often for the very reason that those who might will not, this work of instructing falls upon those whose only qualification is their willingness, which, however necessary an element it may be in a teacher, comes far short of being the only one.

As I have hinted before, where

there are two persons able to sympathize with those of their own age, there is but one who can reach the hearts and feel the wants of children; and since hearts cannot be moulded, like clay, against the wills of the owners, these loving sympathetic creatures are often the very ones who could, of all the church, do most good, but who of all feel their own unworthiness so keenly as ever to stand aside, compelling those much less fit for it to bear their share of the burden.

A pure life and upright walk seem to me essential to any teacher of the truth, and although I have heard it said a wicked man might preach as pure doctrine and do as much good by it as anyone, yet, however true we might admit this to be in the case of persons of mature judgment, it cannot be considered a matter of little importance that children at least, have teachers with pure hearts and true lives, which may be imitated by their pupils without their being led astray, in the minutest particular. How to obtain such teachers at all times and places is a query I shall not try to answer, but feel certain that in most, if not all churches there are idlers in this work, fitted by nature and education for it, and that a lack of willingness is all that keeps them from doing it. A thing that no individual member should lack. Though all may not be needed as teachers, I venture to say no one is quite excusable if he lend not his presence and encouragement to an enterprise among the most important, if not foremost, in the church.

What I would urge upon each is to be careful lest, by your own apathy, you leave your place to be filled by those who do not realize and cannot discharge the duties incumbent upon them. I have twice in my life, been a member of Sunday schools whose superintendents were not professed Christians, and one of whom was a man of great profanity. At another time my teacher was a young lady who had no heart or belief, at least apparently in her work, and is still outside the church. I need not ask if any one approves of such examples as I have cited, but recall them only to show what dreadful consequences follow the refusal of Christians to do their part in this important branch of church work. Perhaps we should be thankful that some, although unfitted for it have stepped into the places which should have been occupied by zealous Christians, and that they at least, are willing to guide little feet heavenward, although through paths they themselves have never trod. But what shall be said of the unfaithful who refuse to spend their time and talents in ministering spiritual food to the lambs of the fold? What but to repeat the words of Him who said "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat. I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink," for "Verily I say unto you inasmuch as ye did it not to one of these ye did it not to me."

—Miss Helena Gladstone, a young daughter of the Prime Minister of England, is causing quite a sensation in England and on the Continent by the moral courage developed in her recent determination to enter an active and useful career, and to give to the young women of England a very noble example. A London correspondent of the leading political journal of the continent, the *Belgian Independent*, announces that this young lady has passed her examinations, and now returns to the Newham College to study for the position of preceptress in that institution. The idea of the daughter of the Prime Minister becoming a teacher, or, as some other authorities state, secretary and active agent, is something so new to the aristocratic feminine world of Europe that it is making an "epoch," as they say.

For the Messenger. Reflections on Death.

Sadly pleasing reflections have been awakened in my mind by the sorrowful death of Eva Martin, which occurred recently in our midst.

There are many mysteries in this life we cannot solve. God has many ways of trying our faith. Christians are God's children, whom he is sending to school upon earth; and he often presents difficult problems, the depths of which we cannot fathom. One of these is, why are the young, innocent and lovely ones called to pass away? No day rolls round but some home is made desolate, some loved idol of such is taken, and we know not why it is.

It is well that God has drawn the veil of secrecy between us and the future; for if we could draw it aside, we might forget to praise his many mercies. And we would probably spend our time in sorrow and mourning. God only knows these strange providences are dispensed, and yet, he doubtless has a wise purpose in all he does. Perhaps he foresees that if we should have no dark days, we would soon tire of the charming light of the bright ones, and if we should have no sorrow, we would too soon tire of the joy. We possibly might forget God's saving kindness if we had nothing afforded us to awaken comparison and contrast. God sees all this danger awaiting us, then the mystery is unveiled. First he takes from us some golden-threaded pleasure and stretches it hence into heaven. Then he takes a dearly loved child, and then friend after friend he calls, and thus his precious love bridges the dark chasm of death.

He thus reminds us that our treasures are not all of earth. Thus we are enabled to find our way from shore to shore. Every one he takes is only another added link in the golden chain of love and loyalty, which binds us closer and closer to our eternal home, enabling us to see more deeply into the future life, as every added lens enables us to pierce farther into the blue depths of the sky. Love and affliction are the guides to show us the way along which our loved ones walk, and while our sorrow is yet fresh, God teaches us to follow on to find our dear ones in heaven.

Eva came to Salem as a bright sunbeam to gladden the hearts of her friends, to spend the holidays with relatives. She came in the vigor of health, and bud of early youth; dreaming only of happiness and pleasure. She came thinking of the happy days of youth, so young and fair, so loving and beloved. That was for a time a happy band, a happy home circle, greeting one another with words of love, and social joys. But in the midst of that circle there came an unseen and uninvited guest. His mission was to blight and not to bless. He laid his hand upon the fairest flower of that newly formed household, and it drooped under his blighting touch. Then their joy was turned to anxiety, and their cheerful smiles to sorrowing tears; and they realized this truth, "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

But loving hands ministered to her, anxious and earnest prayers ascended to heaven in her behalf, imploring the kind Father to spare her a little while longer. This however, was all in vain; for God loved her as his own, and he sent the angel of death to relieve her from earth's cares and suffering and to bear her pure spirit home to him, who gave it, where she should have one eternal holiday, and where her pleasure should never cease. Although she suffered intensely, yet she was patient and obedient. When the final icy clasp of death's cold chill was creeping slowly and stealthily upon her, she said to her friends that

she desired to sleep a little while, and that then she would awaken soon again. Alas! she knew not that this was that dreamless sleep which knows no earthly waking. She nevertheless did wake soon again—wake from earth to endless youth and vigor as well as ceaseless joys. Thus this bright beam faded from earth away. Thus was this tender bud plucked from the garden on earth and transplanted in the garden beyond, to bloom eternally on the evergreen shore.

"Yes she shall waken; not to gloom and sorrow,
Not to the blight of care, the thrill of pain,

Wake to the day that ne'er shall know a morrow,
To life that shall not yield to death again."

"Thou weepst for a sister; in the bloom
And spring-time of her years to death a prey.

Shrouded from love by the remorseless tomb,
Taken from all life's joys and griefs away.

'Tis hard to part with one so sudden call'd,
So young, so happy, and so dearly loved;

To see the arrow at our idol hurl'd,
And vainly pray the shaft may be removed.

So thou wilt find relief. For deepest woe
A fount of healing in our pathway springs;

Like Lethe's stream, that silver fountain's flow
A soothing draught unto the sufferer brings.

A Father chastened thee? oh, look to Him,
And his dear love in all thy trials see;
Look with the eye of faith through shadows dim,
And he will send the "Comforter" to thee."

J. E.

A Short History of a Short Man.

A short man named Short, lived in Shortville, a short village, a short ways from Short creek, which empties into Short river. Short married a tall wife and lived a short life with tall wife when he took sick and in a short time died. In short was buried after a short sermon respecting the shortness of his life; the choir sung a short hymn, and in a short time all was over. So ended the short history of Short.

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The Possibilities of American Wheat.

Speaking of our gigantic crops of wheat, the *American Miller* remarks that few people, even in our own country, realize how inexhaustible our resources are for wheat growing. The total area of lands available for wheat culture in the United States is not less than 470,000,000 acres. Our entire wheat crop of the past year, phenomenal though it was, would not supply seed enough to sow so vast an area of wheat land.

"Quench not the Spirit! You quench him in many ways; you quench him with your unbelief, you quench him with the world, you quench him with your folly, you quench him with your lusts, you quench him with your idle company. How awful! You quench your only light! You strive to put it out, and in doing so to make your destruction sure; for without it how can you find your way to heaven? Oh, beware of doing despite to the Spirit of grace. Beware of disbelieving his testimony to the Savior! Beware of denying his love! Beware of resisting his power! Quench not the Spirit! For if you quench him, then what remains for you here but darkness? and what remains for you hereafter but the blackness of darkness forever?"—*Kelso Tract.*

Dust is more injurious to plants than many suppose. Those who grow plants in their houses should with a sponge wipe off the leaves of all smooth-leaved plants. Others should be set in a tub or a sink, and watered with a fine rose watering-pot. When dusting rooms in which flowers are kept, cover the plants with paper.

The Bell-Ringer.

Little Mary was one of my most encouraging hearers when I preached from Sunday to Sunday in a little school house in Rhode Island. Her mother was a Christian, but her father, though often expressing the hope that he might become a Christian some day, never, to my knowledge, settled this most important of all matters. The village in which this family lived was small, and had no church. The use of the school house had been granted to a young man who conducted Sunday school every Sunday afternoon. At his request I taught a class in the afternoon, preaching in the evening, for several months together. Mary's father was the voluntary sexton—lighted our lamps and rung the bell. He was usually prompt in the fulfillment of his self-imposed duties, but one Sunday he was absent. He had made no provision for ringing the bell, and unless the bell were rung, the people would suppose there was to be no church service. My friend and I, however, started for the school house at the usual time, but while on our way we were not a little amused to hear the bell ringing in a very irregular manner. On reaching the school house we discovered little Mary, then only eight years old, ringing with all her might. She could not bear the thought that there should be no service, and in her father's absence, was doing this duty for him. The singular ringing of the bell excited considerable curiosity throughout the village, and some of the people unaccustomed to attend came out that night to ascertain the cause.

The preacher made the most of this little incident at the service. He confessed that his preaching was like little Mary's bell-ringing—very imperfect,—but hoped that it might prove equally effectual in calling the people to Christ. The few faint-hearted Christians in the place were reminded, too, that, though not skilled in Christian work, nor educated for it, they could effect something for Christ. Nor was the lesson lost. Mary's mother and others were often led, when discouraged by the weakness of their efforts, to remember how effective the little girl's service had proved, and to hope that God would own their humble labors for the glory of his name. And he did.

Many a little girl, by some simple service like this, has been made an instrument of great good to others, when she thought only of doing her duty. God often blesses the feeblest efforts of the weakest to the bringing about of great results.—*Ee.*

—Many people, not young, are forever straining after admiration and praise. It is the great hunger of little souls. Dress, furniture, parties, manners, conversation—everything has a look in this direction. More is spent than is learned, debts contracted obligations assumed, excuses made day after day, deceptions of all sorts practiced, and life itself turned into one long lie, to bide real poverty, to seem to be rich, in order to win the smiles and the honeyed words of the crowd. This is the food they live on. Appropriation, popularity—though of the smallest sort—is the necessity of being with them; and for it they make sale of their dignity, their truth, and honesty, and manliness, and all that makes them worthy of the popularity they seek, worthy of their own or the respect of others.—*Christian Leader.*

—The Zulu King, Cetewayo, is still confined in the old castle at Cape Town, where, guarded by a couple of soldiers, his only occupation is to sit on the ramparts and gaze at the vessels in Table bay, or watch the trains go by between the outer walls of the fort and beach. He has besought Sir Garnet Wolseley to intercede with the Queen for his pardon.