WELLS AMOS RUSSEL

SUNDAY-SCHOOL SUCCESS

Amos Wells
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Sunday-School Success / A Book of Practical Methods for Sunday-School Teachers and Officers:

Содержание

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Preface

In these pages I have described the methods of the most successful teachers and Sunday-schools I have known. While a large part of the book is the direct fruit of my own experience in Sabbath and secular schools, it sets forth, as every teacher will understand, what I have learned from my failures rather than from my successes.

Though the volume has something to say on all the great Sunday-school problems, it does not pretend to be a complete manual; indeed, who could prepare one on so stupendous a theme? If it justifies its appearance among the admirable treatises already published for Sunday-school workers, it will be because it presents with frankness the methods found helpful by an average teacher, who never had charge of a large school

or a large class, but in district school, small college, and small Sunday-school has struggled with the practical problems of a teacher, and in some of them at least, like Sentimental Tommy, has "found a way."

A large number of these chapters have appeared in the "Sunday-school Times," and others in the "Sunday-school Journal" of the Methodists, the "Pilgrim Teacher" of the Congregationalists, the "Westminster Teacher" of the Presbyterians, the "Baptist Teacher," and the "Golden Rule." I am grateful to these periodicals for permission to include this material in my book.

Amos R. Wells.
Boston, September, 1897.

Chapter I
The Teacher's Crown

In one of those dreams which are truer than waking there passed before me a long line of the Sunday-school teachers I have known. One after the other they appeared—those that had taught my childish lips to repeat the Bible words, those that had led my youth into the opening glories of the International Lessons, those that had put to rest the rising doubts of the young man and clinched his faith to the Rock of ages; those, also, of less blessed memory, whom I knew in early or later years, that had done none of these things, but other good things not so good.

And I noted in astonishment, as each came into view, that all were decked with diverse crowns. I had not looked long before I saw that these crowns were not arbitrary and artificial, but sprung from the very substance of the character of each. They had all received their reward, but according to their deeds.

First came a teacher whom I remembered merely as an eloquent talker. His words were deftly chosen, his sentences smoothly formed. His teaching was a charming harangue, bright with metaphor, flashing with sparkling parables. I loved to listen to him. I was as proud of him as he was of himself. To be sure, the only good thing he ever did for me was to inspire in me the vain desire to become an equally eloquent talker, but yet I was

sorry he had not received a nicer crown. It looked very beautiful, as if it were thickly studded with lovely pearls richly iridescent in the sun; but when he came near I saw that each pearl was a little bubble swollen from a reservoir within. These bubbles were bursting all over the crown, fresh ones ever taking their place. It was a very pretty sight, yet a very trivial crown, and I was sorry for him.

There were several worthy teachers in the line whom I remembered as careful instructors in Bible history. They had every date at tongue's end, knew the order of the books and their contents, the relationships of the prominent characters to each other, all details of place and customs. They could repeat Bible verses by the yard, and gave prizes for such feats of unreasoning memory. They were mechanical, but thorough and useful. They had taught me how to dig into the Bible and study it as hard as I would study calculus. I was grateful to them for this, though they did no more, and so was rather sorry to observe their frail crowns. They were all of paper, neatly folded and plaited, and as I came nearer I saw that each crown was made up of leaves of the Bible.

I saw there also two or three teachers who had always taught with a sad countenance, teaching, not because they loved to teach, but because it was their duty to. "These," I thought, "will be joyful, now that their distasteful task is over and their reward has come"; but when I could see their faces clearly they looked mournful as ever. Their crowns were ebon black, pointed with little urns and lined with crape, and they often shifted them,

pressing their hands gloomily to their brows, as if the crowns were very ill fitting and uncomfortable. They wore them with a martyr's air.

There were several teachers whom I remembered with gratitude because they had been so careful, in teaching, to emphasize always the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. These doctrines were the warp and woof of the solid fabric of their lessons. Over and over, in the same set phrases, they pressed those great truths, until, strive as one would, one could never forget them. But they never taught me the relation between these blessed doctrines and my own life. For years the formulas they had taught me remained for me mere words. And so I was not at all surprised to find their symbolic crowns solid and rich, but not attractive, for they were thickly set with jewels in the rough. Here and there, from beneath the incrusting stone, some magnificent gem would flash out, but the beauty and splendor of most of them were hidden.

In my fantastic dream I saw another, who had been a good teacher and a very poor one by turns. His piety and zeal were subject to great fluctuations, and a Sunday's teaching from him, carefully thought out, full of wise helpfulness, would be followed by a fortnight or more of questions read out of a question-book, lifeless and mechanical. I was prepared, therefore, to understand the meaning of his crown, which bore many beautiful gems, but these gems gave intermittent light, flashing out for a moment with most brilliant hues, then suddenly growing dull and dark.

One alone of all I saw in my strange dream wore a looking-glass crown. He had done his Sunday-school teaching, I had always feared, for the praise of men, to be seen of them. His attitude, his pompous words and gestures, irresistibly suggested to me always the posturing of an actor before a looking-glass. And so his crown was all a mirror—clear, bright, beautiful, but mirroring a looking-glass soul.

And now, closing the long procession, who are these I see? A thrice-blessed band, to me ever sacred. There is the cheery little matron whose brisk kindliness gave charm to my introduction into Sunday-school life. There is the quiet and low-voiced lady whose gentle teachings carried me many a step toward my Saviour. There is the thoughtful and saintly woman whose prayers for the school-boy went up, I know, night and morning; whose urgings were so earnest, brave, and wise. And there is the noble-hearted man, familiar with a young collegian's perplexities, sympathetic as a woman, trustful as a hero, strong and uplifting in word and friendly deed. I see them all, and from their glorified heads a wonder shining, a crown of light, beautiful as the love-gleam from a mother's eye. And every one of the crowding star-points of those crowns is for a life won to the happy service of the Master.

As I gazed with tear-dimmed eyes at the dear vision, an angel stood at my side and asked me, "What are all these thou hast seen?" "Forms," I answered, "of Christ's teachers I have met; of my own teachers, these last, all crowned as they have taught."

"Yes," answered the angel, "but you have seen more than that. You have seen among them the crown you yourself will wear when your teaching days are over. Which shall it be?"

Chapter II
Who Should Teach in the Sunday-School?

The Master, who loves little children, stood in the Sunday-school door and cried to all that came up, "Who will teach my children about me?" And they all with one consent began to make excuse.

The preacher passing by said with conviction, "I have my sermons to preach, and Sunday-school work distracts my thought from them." Then answered the Master: "Crucify your pride in words, and seek the glory of deeds. This is your true sermon, to bring me close to human hearts. Thus did I most gladly preach, when on earth, to small classes and not to throngs. Thus should my ministers most gladly preach, face to face, one to half a dozen. You have many pulpits more effective than the elegantly furnished one to which you mount by three steps. They are the bedside, the wayside, the prayer-meeting table, the Sunday-school chair. Lovest thou me? Feed my lambs."

The teacher, when invited, shook his head with a sigh. "I teach all the week, and I am so tired! Why should I not rest on Sunday?" Then answered the Master: "The truest rest is a little change in work. Your Sunday-school and day-school will invigorate each other. It is I who have given you the sweet power of leading young

lives. Should you not use it in leading them to me? Have you not seen how teaching your scholars in holy things the first day of the week draws them closer to you in your secular teaching of the other days? Do you not rejoice in the opportunity this work gives you to get an insight into your scholars' characters and mold them more directly than by the roundabout route of grammar and geography? Indeed, if I excuse any from my Sunday-school, you, to whom I have intrusted in especial measure the teaching gift, must not be the one."

The business man rejected the proposal with emphasis, saying: "As a matter of course, Sunday-school teaching is quite out of my line. My days are kept in close contact with dull matter, with cloth and coal and wood and iron. I have no time for books, except day-books and ledgers. My mechanical, routine business quite unfits me for religious teaching." To that the Master replied, smiling kindly: "I was a carpenter, my son, but holy thoughts kept pace with my plane, and firm conclusions were clinched with my hammer. And at evening, work done, I found time for prayer and meditation and calling young children about me to talk with them. Your contact with men and things makes you one of the most valuable of Sunday-school teachers. What parables are acted all around you, in nature, in your work, in the lives of your helpers! What illustrations lie heaped up in your business experience, ready to your hand! Most of these young people in my Sunday-school will choose some business like yours. How happy for them, then, if they could have you

to tell them beforehand of its perils, strengthen them for its difficulties, point them the road to success and true happiness! No; I can better miss preacher and teacher from my Sunday-school than you men of affairs."

Then came the care-worn housewife. "Master," said she, "I am perplexed and troubled about many things. My days, and often my nights, are crowded with a woman's myriad unheralded tasks. The children are ever with me. Why need I go to Sunday-school to teach them? Why not each home the mother's Sunday-school?" "Why not each home the prayer-meeting?" the Master asked her. "There come from numbers an interest, a help and inspiration, which you cannot get in the holiest family circle, and which you dare not miss. And what of the little ones whose mothers are less faithful than you? Have you no love to spare for them? I have implanted in the very nature of you mothers my most earnest call to Sunday-school teaching. What is it? The greatest love of little children."

And then came up two young people, a youth and a maiden, and said to the Master: "We are too young. We have had as yet no wonderful experience. We know nothing of death, of disease, of great sorrows, of heavy responsibilities. We are not wise in these high matters. We do not understand theology. We cannot teach." "Why," answered the Master, "neither do my little ones in the Sunday-school want to know about death or disease or heavy responsibilities. I would not have them taught what you think of as theology. But you are wiser than they. You see beyond

their little worries and mysteries. Help them to your own measure of grace and strength, and as you teach and they grow, will not you grow, too, for further teaching ever? No, my young man and maid, with your ardent and fresh-hearted zeal; you can come very close to my little children, and I cannot spare you from my Sunday-school."

Long stood the Master there by the door of the Sunday-school, and many were those whom he called to the work, and many excuses were made. One pleaded ignorance. "But," gently questioned the Master, "have you a mind, to learn?" One urged timidity. "But I will be with you," said the Master. "There are others who can do it better," insisted one. "Will you not get them to do it, then?" begged the Master. "And if they will not do it, then you will be the best, and cannot refuse."

It was not long before a strong little group stood by the Master's side, ready for service, and as the regular teachers of the school came up, the Lord of whom they taught received them lovingly, or sadly turned them back. As hard-faced, unsympathetic Mr. Grim would enter—he whom all the children fear and elders do not love; he to whom a boy is only the necessary inconvenient early stage of a man, of promise only as he can commit to memory Bible verses—when he would enter the Master turned him back. "You must not teach my children," said the blessed One, "until you become as a little child."

He barred out also Mr. Brainy, whose ideal recitation is an argument, and whose scholars are far more familiar with points

of skeptical controversy than with the Bible. He would not admit Miss Tangent, whose sole preparation for the lesson is the culling from her book of extracts of choice sentiments, pretty fables, and striking bits of verse of mysterious relevancy, which she recites for her scholars' admiration, and makes them learn. He turned back also Mrs. Scold, with her sharp tongue and cold eyes. He rejected Mrs. Job, who taught only from a sense of duty, and only with a long face.

But ah, the warm smile, the eager greeting, with which the Master welcomed the school's workers! There was Jack Manly, who had not waited for the desire to begin teaching, but had seen the need and filled it, not knowing how soon and largely the love for the work would come and grow. There was Lucy Gentle, who did not feel able to teach, yet considered, not her ability, but the need, knowing that duty is measured rather by the seeing eye than by the feeble hand. There was Mrs. Patient, who had hesitated to begin the work because of her ignorance of the Bible, but who by quiet and faithful study for her class had become a wise and thorough scholar of the Word. There was old Squire Greatheart, who taught a group of full-grown men and women whom he had gathered into a class when they were boys and girls, and had led ever since in hard study of God's Book.

There were many others whom the Master received, of many varied talents, for the Sunday-school can use a wide range of powers; but all were alike in consciousness of their weakness compared with the greatness of their task, in willingness to resign

their work to any better able who could be got to take it, in gladness to go on with it if their betters would not assume it, relying for success on the God of it. Their credentials were that they saw the need of the work, that they saw their own unfitness to do it, that they knew their fitness and power were assured when God assigned the task.

Thus the Master chose his teachers and blessed them; and though there was no genius there, no mighty mind, no trained skill, but only humble readiness to serve, he poured out on them the fullness of his love and power, and they left the Sunday-school room ever bearing precious sheaves.

That is the end of my parable. Oh that all might know, as we, dear fellow-teachers, know it, the joy of our Sunday-school ministry! Then superintendents would have no search to find teachers, no trouble to keep them. Then to the enlarging band of teachers would come a constantly enlarging band of scholars, and all together would soon bring the multitudes of the world into the host of the redeemed.

Chapter III
Preparing the Lesson

Some teachers think that preparing the lesson is merely the loading of a cannon with powder, that it may go off with a big bang in the presence of admiring scholars. And the more powder, the bigger bang. So they load up with scintillating similes, and pretty parables, and striking stories.

Other teachers have set up some historical or theological or ethical target-board off at a distance from their class, and load their cannon with ball, that their scholars may see how accurate is their aim and how fairly they can hit the bull's-eye. So they prepare a mass of facts and figures, arguments and evidences.

But the wise teacher rejects *in toto* the cannon notion. He sees in each lesson a ledge of that grand mountain of life—of Christ-serving, strong life—up to which he must lead his little band, on which he must plant their feet so firmly that they may not slip back during the six days' interval, but may be ready for the next fair terrace, and the next.

So the wise teacher, in preparing the lesson, knows that he must first reach that ledge himself; must repeat the journey over and over until he has learned the easiest way for little feet; must make ladders with rounds close together; must spread sand on slippery places and stretch ropes along the edge of the cliff. He,

too, lays in supplies of stories and pretty parables, not, however, in the form of powder, to make a show, but (if this is not too severe a twist of the simile) as dainty food to keep the young travelers fresh and hearty. He, too, has facts and figures and arguments and evidences, not, however, as cannon-balls, but in the shape of iron bridges and railings and ropes, that the way may be solid and safe.

There are some teachers that do not study at all. It is as if a will-o'-the-wisp should undertake to guide one on an important journey. Those teachers are going they know not whither, over they know not what road, for what purpose they have not the slightest idea, and land always in a bog.

Emphatically, the teacher that is not always climbing himself will leave his class on a very dead level indeed. He should be reaching down and pulling them up, but he is soon compelled to stand where they are and push, and ends with believing his "level best" to lie along the smooth road of the easy-going valley.

The teacher who ceases to grow ceases to teach. That is why a Sunday-school lesson cannot be crammed. That is why preparation for it must extend all through the week. Growth cannot be ordered offhand. It comes from Father Time's shop, and he is a deliberate workman. You will lose your hold on your class if each Sunday hour does not begin with you a little above them, and end with them at your level. This advance cannot be won Saturday night, or during the space between the first and second bells for Sunday-school. Such a spasmodic leap ahead

will leave you too much out of breath even to tell them to come on.

Dropping metaphor, of which we may have had too much, there are several substantial reasons why the Sunday-school preparation should extend over the seven days of the week. Thus only can you utilize in the Master's work odd bits of time, your Bible on the bureau while you dress, in your hands on the street-cars or while you wait for the meat to be cooked. There are many Bible verses which should be carefully committed to memory in connection with each lesson, as the teacher's best reliance for commentary and inspiration. These verses should be running through our heads as we run on all our six-day tasks, and should sing themselves to all our labor-tunes. But chiefly, it is only in this way that we can accumulate hints, and grow into the truths of the lesson by experience. With the lesson theme for a nucleus, it is astounding to see what a wealth of illustration, of wise and helpful comment, each day's living thrusts upon us. Every event is a picture of some truth which needs only a sensitive plate to be photographed forever. That sensitive plate is a mind which is studying that particular truth.

How much time do you spend in studying your Sunday-school lesson? You see that no true teacher can answer that question, any more than the poet can tell how long he is in writing his poem. This is the inspirational part of the teacher's work, and not the mechanical part, and his brooding will have issue of life just in proportion as the Holy Spirit dwells in his heart. But along with

this lofty work must go lower processes, of which it is far easier to speak. I mean those lower processes which alone we are likely to call "studying." Permit me to lay down a programme for the study of a Sunday-school lesson.

To begin with, let it be always with pencil in hand. You have seen iron filings scattered in rough confusion over a sheet of glass. And then, when the magnet was placed beneath, you have seen those ugly bits of metal dance into the daintiest designs, fairy curves and most symmetrical figures. Such a delightful magnet is a pencil or a pen for all the disordered thoughts and fancies of our brains. Next to the Bible, the Sunday-school teacher's inseparable companion should be a lead-pencil.

What book is nearest you while you study your lesson? Teachers may be classified finally by their answers to that question. Is it the commentary, the atlas, the Bible dictionary, the concordance, the question-book, or the Bible? If the commentary, your comments will fall fruitless to the ground. If the atlas, your class will wander nowhither. If the Bible dictionary, your diction will have no issue in deed. If the concordance, your class will know little from you of that concord which passes understanding. If the question-book, the value of all your study is at least questionable. No; let me emphasize this statement: *Not a single lesson help should be touched until everything possible to be learned about the lesson from the Bible directly has been learned.*

For this you will need two Bibles at least, one to be kept

open at the lesson, one to turn back and forth in pursuit of references and information. The first must be a King James reference Bible; the second, the noble translation of Victoria's reign. Thus furnished, read the lesson. As you read, examine your mind. What questions assail it? Those moments are full of matter. Those questions are the clues to the lesson labyrinth. Those perplexities constitute your programme. "I wonder where this place is?" you will say to yourself. "Who was this man, and what was his past history, that he did this deed? What does this odd phrase mean? Is that sentiment a just one? Is that act a model for us modern folk?"

As these difficulties come up in your slow and thoughtful reading, jot them down, and the resultant half-sheet of scribbling means half the work accomplished. But hold! Did you read through a child's eye as well as your own? Did you read in the plural number? If not, you must read the lesson once more, with a poet's imagination noting this time the difficulties which you strode easily over, but which would soon trip up little feet. When you write down such points on your paper, underscore them. And underscore them again. A vast deal of preparation for teaching is fruitless because it is made in the singular number.

The next stage in our lesson study will be to answer our questions. Points in regard to antecedents and motives will be answered by the chapters intervening between the last lesson and this. Those should next be read. Many difficulties concerning customs and laws will be cleared up by parallel passages and

the references of your reference Bible. Those same references will collate for you helpful utterances on the ethical problems of the passage. Comparatively few people know, by the way, how nearly a reference Bible allows one to dispense with the Bible dictionary, Bible index, concordance, and commentary. I am continually astonished to see how few are the questions which may be asked about a passage that the Bible itself does not answer if closely scrutinized.

"But all this is a waste of time," you object. "In the lesson helps all of these points are stated and discussed, fully, methodically, concisely. Others have done this work for me, anticipating all my difficulties. Why need I repeat their labor?" Surely not merely to be original. There's too much original work crying to be done to waste a moment in duplicating unnecessarily work already done for us. But the Bible study cannot be done for you. It must end in familiarity with the Bible, in appreciation of it, in a wide-awake understanding of the problems it presents, to be obtained in no way except by original work. If difficulties are solved before we have felt them to be difficulties, if customs and phrases are explained before we have discovered the need of an explanation, and places located before we fall to groping after them, it is the old story of "light won, light lost." And so I wish to repeat that the one proper commencement of study of a Bible lesson is the Bible, and the Bible, and the Bible; once to note our own questions, once to imagine our scholars' questions, and once, in large measure, here, there, and everywhere, concordance, index, references, and

atlas at our elbow, to answer, if it may be, from the Book itself all the questions it has raised.

And when this is done, even if every question has been answered, open arms to the commentaries and the lesson helps, the wisest and richest you can find, and as many as you have time for. Why? Because twenty heads are better than one; because the Hebrew and Greek and travel and debate and experience and insight and spirituality of our best thinkers will suggest new points of view, add a world of illustration, may even upset some of your conclusions. Stand sturdily, however, in the presence of these learned doctors. You will be tempted to throw away your own honest results and adopt their wise and brilliant homilies. If you do, your class will laugh at you, or yawn. You will be giving them, not your life, but your rhetoric. These helps are for inspiration, not respiration and circulation. They are for hints toward originality, not hindrances. They are useful in strengthening your own thought, vivifying your own feeling, confirming your own conclusions, opening new vistas for your own exploration, suggesting methods for your own practice.

If these two lines of preparation have been faithfully carried out, you will by this time have accumulated a mass of material which will be confusing, and the third step is to reduce it to order. Long practice has convinced me of the utility of the plan of writing out questions. Whether these questions are used in the class or not, they clarify the subject marvelously, and the mere drill of writing them adds fifty per cent. to the teaching power of

the instructor. When I began trying it, I was astonished to see how many thoughts which seemed to me quite promising and bright could not be approached by the interrogative mood. I wanted to lead up to this simile, that illustration, this theory, that pretty idea. I would soon find that my questions refused to lead up to them naturally. Why? Simply because these fancies answered no query likely to rise, solved no difficulty likely to suggest itself, and were mere adventitious decorations wherewith I had been accustomed to load my Sunday-school teaching, to show off.

My attempt at formulating questions soon taught me, too, that I had been indulging in monologue. I found it unexpectedly difficult to frame a question—one, that is, which required the scholar to do some thinking to answer. I discovered that I had been in the habit of propounding "yes" and "no" queries, merely as excuses for five-minute orations.

Then, too, when I began to put down in black and white just what I expected to put into that precious half-hour, I wondered what I had been doing with it hitherto. By my previous methods two or three little notions would keep me going through the whole thirty minutes; but ideas do shrink so when you put them on paper with a question-mark at the end! It is wonderful how many questions can be asked and answered in half an hour. I gained a new conception of the value of time, and of the teaching value of study hours.

In writing out these questions, then, the first thing to be thought of is that consideration with which a good teacher will

begin his lesson, but a poor teacher will close: "What is the main teaching of the lesson?"—as important, this "main teaching," as the compass to the sailor. What particular characteristic of God's noblemen is this lesson to strengthen in my scholars? Every teacher should know the power which is given by an ultimatum; by a decision, that is, as to the one thing which, no matter what else it wins or fails to win, that lesson must accomplish. Is it to make my boys and girls more truthful, more brave, more cheery, more trusting? Whatever the point be, about that shall cluster the questions, the illustrations, the arguments. Countries, customs, times, history, shall be only its framework. There must be other points, to be sure, but merely as side excursions, from which we return with greater zeal to this our main quest. Those subordinate points we next determine, and the order in which we shall treat them, and then sit down to write out our questions.

Does all this seem too mechanical, this writing out questions, and determining point by point just what results you will seek, and in what order? It is businesslike; it is mechanical. Why are we so afraid of mechanism in bringing hearts to the great Mechanic, without whom was nothing made that has been made? A machine is merely a contrivance for applying power effectively, and the only question should be, Does this machinery make my aim more direct, widen and deepen the range of my efforts? It is a grand and godlike thing to be mechanical, but it is a pitifully weak thing to stop with being mechanical. Machinery accomplishes all the work that is being done anywhere, but it is machinery

informed by the Holy Spirit. Our lesson preparation will be in harmony with all of God's preparing if it is orderly, painstaking, and definite, binding together, however, all its labored details with the sweet and creative spirit of prayer. Machinery touched by prayer is always the machinery in which, as in the old Greek plays, the god descends. Nothing is mechanical, everything is poetical and spiritual, that can be prayed over.

But will not all this take time—all this ransacking of the Bible, original study, writing out of questions, and formulating plans? Of course it will. Time is what good things are made of—time and toil. It would be strange if the best of good things, the sanctification of lives, did not take time and toil. But let us remember two facts: one, that this work, being thorough work, need not be done twice. Seven years of such Bible study as I have indicated, and what a magnificently trained teacher you will be, ready, all ready, for the next International Lesson cycle, the next Sunday-school Sabbath of years! We Sunday-school teachers have enlisted for life. It is so much wiser, then, to study for life. And in the second place, familiarity with this thoroughgoing way of working makes it much easier and more rapid than at first. We no longer have to use the concordance, but memory supplies passages needed for illustration. Bible customs are soon learned. The peculiarities of Bible language are readily mastered. The poetic instinct which sees parables and applications grows with its use until they crowd upon you and must be critically culled. Nothing ends easy but that which begins hard.

After all, however, these are the lower motives. What matters it even if the preparation for this blessed work remains hard to our last Sabbath? Let it be the best we know, and on that last Sabbath, if God has given us the knowledge that even one soul has been turned to the supreme happiness by all our toil, we shall deem it rich reward.

Chapter IV
Something about Teachers' Meetings

The teachers' meeting is not so much to get facts as to vivify and arrange them. The leader does not teach the lesson unless he teaches how to teach the lesson. This is a place for comparison.

The meeting is perhaps less to make plans for the teachers than to stimulate them to make good plans for themselves. The gathering is not to listen to a lecture. You cannot make teachers, except by the Socratic method. A teachers' meeting is not a Bible class.

The ideal teachers' meeting focuses on the work of each the helpfulness and skill of all. The leader, then, must put into the meeting every one's peculiar talent, and must draw out from the meeting for every one's peculiar need. And do not—as so many teachers' meetings do—let the teachers for the older classes run away with the evening.

The right kind of teachers' meeting keeps itself up and keeps up the teachers. It "draws," because it is attractive. The only way to build up an attendance is to build up the interest of the meeting to be attended. Nevertheless, attention to a few bits of detail will greatly assist in building up the attendance. Have a constitution, a full set of officers, and stated business meetings. Make the teachers feel that they "belong." Many a teachers' meeting goes

to pieces for lack of something to tie to. Cultivate the feeling of responsibility. Insist on rotation in office. Give every teacher possible some regular duty, if only to pass the hymn-books. Once a year at least let the teachers' meeting have a field day. Get up its finest programme, with a special view to interesting the entire church in Sunday-school work. Then invite the entire church to hear it. Such an open meeting should come just before the beginning of a new line of study.

The teachers' meeting, in many small places, will be a union meeting, of all the evangelical churches, and sometimes of neighboring churches in cities. What finer close to a year's harmonious work than for all the teachers of this union meeting to sit down to dinner together at a genuine love-feast!

Attendance is in many cases increased by providing a variety of leaders. The brightest of men becomes wearisome ere long; his methods grow familiar. The heart of the teachers' meeting is the programme committee, ever pumping in fresh blood. Arrange with neighboring towns for the loan or exchange of helpful leaders.

There is a certain gain in a uniform programme for the hour, so that historical explanations, difficult exegesis, blackboard work, plans for the little folks, lesson analysis, and so on, may be taken up in a uniform order each evening. This will insure against the omission of any line of work.

Let one teacher—a new one for each quarter—be appointed to present within ten or fifteen minutes an outline of work for

the younger classes. If this teacher cannot draw, an assistant should be appointed who can. The remainder of the time, after these regular exercises are over, will be at the disposal of the leader of the evening, who will treat the lesson in general. Some such combination of permanent with changing leadership will be found exceedingly helpful and attractive.

Who should lead the teachers' meeting? Teachers. Not exhorters; not conversational monopolists; not lecturers; not the most learned doctor of divinity who is not also a teacher. None of these, but teachers. The obscure layman, if he knows how to ask wise questions. No one for compliment, no one for custom, but every one for practical utility, for learning how to teach.

See that the meeting begins on time, whether the leader is ready or not, and even if no audience is present. There will be an improvement next time. Promptness begets promptness. And let the meeting close on time, though in the midst of the most interesting discussion. All the better to leave a little interest as a nest-egg. Open with prayer. Some teachers' meetings also open with singing. One verse is better than two.

It is useful to read the lesson text in the meeting, provided the reading is made to teach something. The manner should be varied. Let the leader request the teachers to take up the reading whenever he stops, and let him stop at eccentric places, to hold attention. Let the teachers read each verse in the King James Version, the leader responding with the Revision. In a passage where description or narrative alternates with speeches,

let the leader read the speeches only, the audience inserting the narrative. Divide the lesson into sections that will analyze the thought or the story, and read these sections alternately, the leader prefacing each with a suggestive title. Divide the teachers into two portions,—right and left, front and back,—and let them read antiphonally. Let the leader read the entire lesson, injecting crisp comments carefully prepared beforehand, these comments being all in one line—exegetical, historical, explanatory of customs or of phrases. Let the leader prepare a set of questions, one to be answered by each verse, and to serve as an introduction to it as the teachers read. In studying the Gospels, whenever the lesson would be made clearer by it, read, instead of the regular text, the same passage as a monotessaron gives it, combined with all that is found in the other Gospels. Such ancient books as "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" or "The Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter" may often furnish a suggestive extract to add to this opening reading.

The work of the teachers' meeting will largely be cut out for it at the outset, if the leader knows his business. Announce your programme, if you want help in carrying it out. What wonder the meeting runs off the leader's track, when the track is invisible to all but the leader! "First," says the experienced teacher, "we'll form a scheme for our guidance in study; second, we'll go over the story of the lesson in a preliminary survey; third, we'll take up the words, phrases, customs, and circumstances that need explanation; fourth, we'll discuss the best way of teaching the

lesson to the younger scholars; finally, we'll bring out points for the older members of the school."

Many meetings fray out at the end. Nothing is finished, or at best there are only a few hasty answers to the stereotyped question, "Now what do you consider the chief teachings of this lesson?" If it has not been made evident before the meeting was half through what are the chief teachings of that lesson, it surely will not be made evident by this hurried question, whose answers are punctuated by the donning of overcoats. If the leader began with a good outline, now is the time to clinch the discussions of the evening by repeating the outline, enlarged and modified as those discussions may have required. Then let the evening be closed reverently with a few words of earnest prayer.

As to the general conduct of the meeting, probably the matter most necessary to be urged is the use of direct, brisk, suggestive questions, addressed, not to empty space, but to particular teachers. A question spread over a roomful is about as efficient as a bullet would be if fired flat enough to cover ten men. Don't be afraid to use proper names. Questions addressed to a crowd put a premium on forwardness. Call no one by name who is really too bashful to reply, but teachers ought to pass by that stage of timidity.

A second common mistake is to run the teachers' meeting on the low plane of mere facts, history, biography, when it should be all aglow with the spiritual life. If the teachers' meeting does not touch the teachers' consciences, hardly will those teachers touch

the consciences of their scholars. Let the leader ask at every turn this question in effect: "What need of your scholars' lives will this truth fit?" And he should not rest satisfied until the truth is applied in turn to the diverse needs of three classes—the little folks, the young folks, and the old folks.

The leader must put himself in the place of all kinds of teachers, and discern their needs. He must head off unseemly and prolonged discussions; he must have sprightliness to keep the meeting taut; he must have zeal to keep the meeting warm; he must have consecration to keep the meeting spiritual.

But the best of leaders may be thwarted by poor following. To be led in a teachers' meeting is an art almost as difficult as to lead. A skilful follower in a teachers' meeting will answer questions briefly. He will not commit the impertinence of giving ten times as much as is asked for from him, thus stealing from the meeting the sprightliness of nine questions and answers, even when all he says is to the point. He will make suggestive answers rather than exhaustive ones. His eager note-book and intelligent listening will be as encouraging as a continuous round of applause. In short, he will be anxious to do anything for the success of the meeting, even to the extent of sitting silent for fifteen minutes. And all leaders will bless him.

Chapter V
A Teacher with a Schedule

The weak point in the preparation most Sunday-school teachers make is their failure to prepare a schedule for their teaching—the order, that is, in which they shall take up and discuss the facts and lessons of the day's Scripture. Probably the majority of teachers begin with verse 1 and go stolidly through to verse 13, or as near it as the superintendent will permit them to get. This is teaching with a shovel, and not with a sieve.

Wise teaching selects, marshals, brings to a focus. It excels haphazard teaching as far as a painting by Rembrandt excels a whitewashed fence. It does not permit ideas to neutralize each other. It has a purpose, clearly and determinedly held in view, and to this purpose it subordinates everything else. It knows that the effectiveness of the lesson depends quite as much on what is left out as on what is put in.

Now the more ideas a teacher has, the greater need has he of a schedule, just as the railroad that runs most trains is in most need of a good time-table. Indeed, the performance of a teacher without a plan bears a strong resemblance to a railway collision. Ideas, illustrations, exhortations, bump into one another front and rear, telescope each other, and form at the end of the hour a disheartening mass of splintered fragments, with here and

there a jet of steam or a puff of smoke. If the teacher has no schedule, the scholars on his lesson train will grow confused and get nowhere. Small blame to them!

Imitating Paul, the wise teacher will take for his motto, "This *one* thing I teach." He will teach as much more as is possible, but first he will make absolutely sure of one thing. My own plan in connection with every lesson is to lay down one principal, and two or three subordinates. It is best to write these down on the margin of the quarterly, in precisely the order in which they are to be taken up. Ask yourself most earnestly, "What is the main lesson this Scripture is to teach my scholars?" Having decided on that, consider your teaching a success, whatever happens, if it has impressed this one truth. Leap to this task as swiftly as may be, even if to reach the chosen point you must pass hastily over the first portion of the lesson.

After driving home this truth, and making sure of it, take up in turn your subordinates. This will require a new view of the lesson story that will compensate for your previous haste. And reserve some time at the end of the lesson for a few parting words on your main truth. Save for this time your most telling illustration, your most ardent pleading. In preparation for this get all questions and difficulties out of the way. Be sure, before you begin, that your watch is with the superintendent's, and do not permit yourself to be caught by the closing bell with your lesson only half way to the terminus.

Some teachers are proud thus to be caught, but they should be

ashamed. If their neighbor admits that he got over the lesson with his class, they are filled with amazed pity at his lack of brains. "Why, how *could* you? There was so much in the lesson that I scarcely made a beginning."

Teachers, it is a disgrace to any workman to leave behind him an improperly finished job; and we are, or should be, just as thorough workmen as any carpenter. *Select!* One truth a Sunday means fifty-two truths a year, while fifty-two truths a Sunday would not mean one truth a year. *Plan!* Definite results do not come from haphazard methods. *Finish!* One goal reached is greater triumph than fifty goals started for. *Form a schedule, and carry it out!*

Chapter VI
My Lesson Chart

My recipe for a well-prepared lesson is expressed in Captain Cuttle's formula: "Make a note on 't."

I have read the lesson text, and the text before the lesson text and after it. I have read the wisest commentaries I can find, and as many of them as I can find time for. I have "mulled" over the matter for myself a day or two. By this time my brain is thronged with facts and a-tingle with suggestions.

Then, the lesson leaf or some other convenient copy of the lesson text before me, I construct the chart by which to make my Sabbath cruise.

First, one must get out to sea; there is the introduction. How shall I fit this trip in with last Sabbath's voyage, and how shall I get under way?

As I plan my introductory questions, I write at the head of the lesson text some word to represent each question, such as "author?" "time?" "place?" "circumstances?" "purpose?" "outline?"

With the questions concerning the text itself, however, I do no writing; I simply underscore neatly those words or phrases of the text that will hint at the point to be raised. For example, take the verse, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," and

the questions: (1) How was this imagery prompted by David's life? (2) What use did our Lord make of the same simile? (3) What comfort should we get from this thought in the trials and uncertainties of life? (4) How does Christ's shepherding keep us from want? (5) From what kind of want does it keep us? (6) What makes you sure of this? (7) How was all this proved true in David's case?

As each question occurs to me, or is suggested by my reading, I underscore a word that henceforth stands for that question. These words, in the order of the questions, are: (1) "shepherd"; (2) "Lord"; (3) "my"; (4) a curved line from "shepherd" to "I" connecting the two sentences; (5) "want"; (6) "shall not"; (7) "I."

It will sometimes need a little thought to decide just which word will best represent the question, but that very thought will fix the question more firmly in the mind. If more than one question should be attached to one word, make two short underscorings, one beside the other.

When the question contrasts two persons, two expressions, or two events, "railroading" is in order—a line, that is, drawn clear across the printed page, connecting the words which the question connects.

If you have a parallel Bible, or some lesson help that gives the King James and the Revised versions in opposite columns, it is an excellent plan to mark in one version all the points of history, geography, biography, customs, dates, and the like, and in the other the points requiring practical application to heart and

life. The latter will obviously go best in the Revised Version. The points indicated by the underscorings in the King James Version may first be considered and got out of the way.

If, however, you must use only the Authorized Version, distinguish in some manner between the two sets of points—the merely explanatory and the hortatory. Use black ink for the first and red ink for the second, or a straight line for the one and a wavy line for the other, or for the first a single and for the second a double underscore.

Proceeding in this way, I soon have a line under every word requiring explanation, every hint of a strange custom, every reference to other parts of the Scriptures, every point for practical application. I have underscored words representative of all the thoughts that especially appeal to me as fitting the needs of my class.

When this has been done, it is time to make my outline. If my study has suggested to me an outline of my own, that will be better for me than any other man's. The outline is the plan of campaign, the thing I wish especially to emphasize, and under it, ranged in order, the points of minor importance. I write this outline on the margin of my lesson text.

Having decided on the outline, I go over my underscorings again, doubly or trebly underscoring the words that have reference to the thought around which I intend to center the entire lesson—the thought that is to be the lesson's enduring monument in the minds and lives of my scholars.

Now I am ready for review. I go over the whole, starting with the detached words jotted down at the beginning,—"author," "time," "place," etc.,—and consider all the underscorings, railroadings, and curved lines, stopping at each to frame a question of my own and to make sure of my best answer. I do this in precisely the order in which I intend to take up these points in the class. Not the smallest part of my work at this juncture is to simplify, by erasing the underscorings where the questions may be spared without interfering with my main purpose; and then I review once more in the same way, to confirm my grasp on the lesson plan.

By this time every underscoring is luminous, and my page of lesson text has become a graphic picture of the lesson I am to teach, a true chart for my voyage.

Do you think the process too tedious, brother teacher? It is not a whit too thorough when you remember the infinite interests involved; and every repetition of it will increase your skill, and the rapidity of your work. I have used this method for years, with various classes, and know it to be practical, pleasant, and profitable. Try it, and see.

Chapter VII
The Value of a Monotessaron

Far above concordance, Bible index, Bible dictionary, commentary, I count the monotessaron the very best help to Bible study. The monotessaron, it might be parenthetically remarked for the benefit of the lexicon-lazy folk, is a harmony of the four Gospels, so arranged as to make one continuous and complete story, in Scripture words alone.

"Fie!" says one reviewer of a recent monotessaron, "we have no use for such compilations. God gave us the gospel in four separate books. He could have put it in one if it had been best that way." This is an argument which would make a heretic of the locomotive, printing-press, and any other rearrangement of God-given matter. Having the four Gospels, we may have one. If God had given us only one, we could not have the four.

Christians will always read the four separate Gospels, in order to see Christ from four separate points of view, through four separate individualities, that their differences as well as their agreements may make the picture stand out more vividly, much as the two diverse flat portions of a stereoscope view combine into perfect perspective and reality.

But this combining is necessary; and it may be truly said that what we lose, in reading the monotessaron, of the personality of

John or Luke, we more than gain in the increased vividness of the person of Christ. Speaking for one, I may say that through my first acquaintance with a monotessaron that matchless life has shone upon me with an entire splendor of beauty and majesty before unimagined.

Never before was the life a whole, like Washington's or Lincoln's. The imprisonment of John was an event in the fourteenth chapter of one Gospel, the sixth of another, the third of the rest; the call of Matthew now in the ninth chapter, now the second, now the fifth; the parable of the sower in the thirteenth, fourth, and eighth chapters. Nothing was in a clear, definite relation to the single life. The talk with Nicodemus is now no longer to me an event of John 3, but of the beginning of the first year of Christ's ministry, at the Passover. No longer would I be puzzled to tell which came first, the healing of the nobleman's son of John 4, or the stilling of the tempest of Mark 4, but place the last a year later.

Not only has the narrative become clear and orderly, not only has the wonderful history parted itself into the true and helpful time-divisions so diverse from the confusing chapters, but the places now stand out, and journeys are distinct. Take any diatessaron—that is, any parallel arrangement of the four Gospels—and note the wide blanks in each book, filled out by others, so that between contiguous verses of one Gospel must be inserted whole chapters of another, complete journeys, many deeds and sayings, the location in the meantime greatly changing.

A geologist will think of the helpful triumph of taking from the full rock record here to fill out the unconformable strata there, until a geological column is built up.

A further inestimable advantage is the appreciation of surroundings. What light is cast, for example, on the story of Lazarus in John by its insertion in Luke! The contact of these parted elements of the gospel story sometimes rouses a current of thrilling thoughts, making a veritable electric battery of the monotessaron.

Still another priceless gain is an understanding of proportions. Matthew's parallels, Mark's deeds, Luke's miracles and parables, John's sermons—in reading any of the four Gospels peculiar elements come into prominence, and we are left with no idea of the relative proportion of these elements in the one life. What emphasis did Christ place on the doctrinal, and what on the practical? Just how much of his teaching concerned himself and his character? What space in the New Testament is occupied by miracles? Just what part of Christ's preaching was parabolic? What is the prominence of missionary effort and proselytism? How much is there of consolation, and how much of stern rebuke? What measure of promise? What quantum of theology? What share of ethics?

These and scores of other questions which occur at once to every Christian thinker, the monotessaron makes possible of easy and rapid answer. Indeed, almost its chief advantage is the spur it affords to the spirit of investigation. Those who are statistically

inclined can even get at precise ratios by the exact process of counting lines.

Well, that is my experience of the value of a monotessaron. It has given the life and person of Christ marvelous vividness, setting facts in their due order, location, relations, and proportions, while the facility it affords is constant inspiration to fresh, delightful study. This is the experience of thousands, and yet I am sure that among the readers of this book will be many who are yet unacquainted with this Bible help. Not only every Sunday-school teacher, but every Bible scholar, should own one.

The single year in which I wrote this chapter saw the publication, in quick succession, of four of these monotessarons, one the improved edition of an older work. Each of these four has its peculiar features of value, and I have compared them carefully to get at their characteristics.

1. "The Interwoven Gospels." Rev. William Pittenger. (5 × 7½ inches, pp. 245. New York: John B. Alden. Price, 90 cents.) Five plates give clearly the various journeys. The Gospel fullest in each event is taken as the standard, and its verse-numberings given, while sentences and phrases interwoven from other Gospels are preceded by an inconspicuous letter, to designate the book from which they come. This seems to me the ideal plan. There is a table for finding in the monotessaron any verse of any Gospel. There is a very distinct synopsis. The time is indicated only at the heads of the five divisions of the story. The place is given at the head of each one of the one hundred and

seventy-one sections. The index is scant. The typography is excellent. The American Revised Version is used.

2. "The Gospel Commentary." J. R. Gilmore ("Edmund Kirke") and Lyman Abbott, D.D. (5 × 7 inches, pp. 840. New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert. Price, $1.50.) This monotessaron is combined with an excellent and very full commentary, selected from the works of three hundred authors. These multitudinous notes somewhat mar the impression of unity and continuity for which the monotessaron is peculiarly valued. No maps. Information as to sources of the combined text is given only by references at the top of the page—an indefinite way. There is a table for finding in the monotessaron any verse of any Gospel. There is a chronological synopsis, but no diatessaron table. There is a good index of thirty-two pages, and a marginal synopsis. The time is minutely indicated at the head of each page, and the locations shown irregularly, in notes, chapter headings, or marginal synopsis. There are forty-three chapters. The typography is clear. The King James Version is mainly used.

3. "The Fourfold Gospel." J. G. Butler, D.D. (5 × 7½ inches, pp. 212. New York: Funk & Wagnalls. Price, 75 cents.) This is taken from Butler's "Bible Work." The sources of the text and transitions are indicated as in Pittenger's, but not quite so minutely. Places are given at the head of the one hundred and sixty-six sections. Times not shown. A good diatessaron synopsis, and a table to find in the monotessaron any verse from any Gospel. Two sketch-maps. No index whatever. King James Version.

4. "The One Gospel." A. T. Pierson, D.D. (5 × 7½

inches, pp. 203. New York: The Baker & Taylor Company. Price, 75 cents.) This monotessaron contains the gospel story in forty-seven sections, with no section headings, and no indications whatever of times, places, or sources of the various portions of the text. Valuable for reading, but unsatisfactory for study. A capital index. No table for finding verses, no synopsis or maps. King James Version. Retains more than the others nearly equivalent words and phrases.

Each of these excellent compilations has its own field, and the student who can afford the luxury will rejoice in them all. Happy times in which we live, wherein the person of Christ is brought with such clearness and fullness and beauty as never before to the poorest and busiest and most unlearned!

Chapter VIII
Getting Attention

I was once sergeant of a college military company that was being trained by an officer of the regular army from the nearest barracks. In one evolution it was made my duty to march at the head of a long column, shouting at the top of my voice: "Hep—hep—hep—hep!" This was to give the time; we had no drum. I conscientiously obeyed orders and strutted off, shouting the required "Hep—hep—hep—hep!" But alas! at a critical turn, thinking more of my glory than of my duty, I marched to the right, while the column, more heedful, turned off to the left. So there I was, a long, lank figure, strutting off by myself over the field, shouting "Hep—hep—hep!" How many times since, when standing before inattentive classes, have I repeated that mortifying performance, less obviously, but none the less really!

How often teachers are bent on planning what they are to say and how they are to say it, but omit to consider how they may induce people to attend to it; just as if (to change the figure) a locomotive engineer should polish and oil his engine and turn on full steam, but forget the little coupling-pin that hitches the engine to the train! It is a very little thing, this coupling-pin of attention, and often the teacher goes puffing a long way before he perceives that it is left out; and it is a great humiliation, as well

as a great loss of time and steam, to go back and hitch on.

The first thing to be considered, if we would win attention, is the room. Poor janitors spoil more Sunday-schools than poor teachers. You remember how the Peterkins tried to take their drive, shaking the reins, clucking at the stationary horse, whipping and coaxing him by turns, and all in vain until the lady from Philadelphia *unhitched* the obstinate beast. We make Peterkins of ourselves every time we try to take an intellectual journey with our pupils when they are tied down by hot air, poor ventilation, uncomfortable seats, and surrounding noise and bustle. All our pedagogical ingenuity will fight in vain against the fiendish ingenuity of a bad janitor.

Having made it possible for the children to pay any attention at all, the next thing is to get it. Attention has something to do with tension. Now it takes two to stretch a cord, and there are two parties to every act of attention. How about the second party in this case—the children?

Imprimis, when you appear before the children, leap at once into your theme. Older folks rather like to doze along through the preliminaries of a speech, economically saving their enthusiasm for the end, if not for next time; but the attention of children is lost or won for good by the opening sentences. Our sharp boys and girls discover very quickly whether a veteran or a raw recruit is calling "Attention!"

There are some beginnings which are sure to offend them. There is the bagpipe beginning—the long, droning prelude,

which advertises a teacher set out on a mud-turtle to catch these lively colts. There is the jack-in-the-box prelude: "Eh! Now, children! What's lesson 'bout? Quick!" There is the crape-dirge beginning, which solemnly hopes the children have studied their lesson and will recite better than they did last Sunday. There is the plead-guilty beginning: "You'll have to teach me to-day, children. I've been unable to look at the lesson."

But it is by no means easy to give affirmative rules. The best of beginnings, if stereotyped, becomes inefficient. No general can plan a campaign in advance. And yet a general must understand the art of war, and a teacher must study his tactics.

In the first place, attention is won partly by position and attitude. Happy the teacher whose class is a semicircle, himself at the center! And luckless the teacher whose class, fixed on straight, fastened pews, sees past him the distracting background of a crowded, bustling school! He struggles against strong odds.

But whatever may be the position of the class, any one can see that his own attitude shall command attention. Let him be straight, alert, confident, quiet—not flabby, nervous, and diffident. Let his face and voice and bearing expect attention, and he will get it.

The opening sentences must be businesslike. There must be no indecision, no "puttering." The teacher must leap at once to that hand-to-hand combat with the theme which tells his scholars that there's purpose in it. The opening sentences may sometimes best catch the class by directly addressing one person in it, the

most restless, indifferent one, and nailing *him*.

A paradox is good to begin with, some statement of the lesson theme so startling as to spur to discussion, possibly to opposition. Then the next Sunday, perhaps a quiet picture of the historical setting of the story, or a description of the landscape surrounding the event, or a compact review of the last lesson. Then the next day you might begin with a bit of personal experience bearing on the matter in hand. Nothing wins attention better than the first person singular. Or your introduction might be a whiff of fun, for which the youngsters are so eager that the most witless piece of jollity, if it spring from a merry heart, is certain to reach theirs.

You are sure of their attention if you can get them to do something for you—open their Bibles, repeat something in concert, find a verse, or look at something. For this purpose maps, diagrams, pictures, all material objects connected with the lesson, are invaluable. Scholars yield their wills to yours through their hands or their eyes more readily than through their ears.

And none of this must be done with manifest purpose. Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. Woe to the teacher who shouts the word "Attention!" He will get nothing but the echo of the word from stony cliffs of indifference.

And finally, woe to the teacher who relies at bottom on any skill of his own to draw young hearts to his teaching; whose main dependence is anything but the attention-winning power of that incarnate Sympathy and Love who promised to draw all men—and children—to himself.

Chapter IX
Keeping Attention

We are likely to think that the attention of children is hard to get; but the very opposite is true. The minds of children, like their tongues, are hung in the middle. It is the easiest thing in the world to turn them in any direction. No teacher need spend much force on his introduction. Merely appear and begin to talk—that is enough. A fresh voice and presence and a new theme will draw all eyes and all hearts. If grown people are your audience, the situation is somewhat reversed. They are the heavy weights—hard to move, but just as hard to stop. An attention-forcing prelude will hold them attentive to a good half-hour of platitudes.

The teacher of children, however, flattered by the eager listening given at the start, is likely to relax his efforts and deem the crown of the children's interest already attained. But alas! soon here a little tot wriggles, and there another whispers, and yonder a third giggles, and now a fourth turns around to see what's up, and the teacher might as well be talking to a school of young fishes.

Demosthenes once said that if whatever a man got he took care to keep, he was grateful to the gods; but if he spent it, he spent with it all his gratitude. How many teachers are so prodigal of the attention given at the beginning that toward the close,

dismayed at the listlessness, they forget ungratefully their initial capital of bright eyes and eager ears! There are many ways of squandering this attention capital. We may waste it on those long exhortations so very valuable (when omitted), on side issues, on quibbles. We may choke it with dullness, drive it off with scolding.

The only way always to keep attention is always to be expecting to lose it. Be prompt to note signs of its vanishing in drooping eyelids, wandering gaze, jerking in the seat, uncertain answers. The teacher whose ingenuity can always recall stray-away minds need fear few other recitation problems. How to do it?

The best provocative of attention is variety. The skilled teacher brings as many suits of manner to the class as the bulkiest clown wears costumes to the circus. Before one suit becomes wearisome he strips it off, and presto! a fresh teacher before the wide-eyed children. If he has been sitting, he rises; if erect, he leans eagerly forward. His utterance becomes rapid from slow, impetuous from drawling. He darts from generalizations into personalities. If motionless before, he begins to gesticulate. This is acting? No. It is only doing what the facile children themselves do on their kaleidoscopic playground, where no one goes to sleep.

Again, a teacher must learn to emphasize his important points, not by enlarging on them, but by reverting to them. Slight impression on a wall by holding a battering-ram against it! Nor can you impress a child's mind by holding a fact up against it. It

is intervals which make blows possible.

So the child will attend to two things or three better than to one. Concentrate on one matter, burning-glass fashion, but only while the sun of interest is shining. With the first mist of indifference the wise teacher will drop the burning-glass. More teachers fail from having too few points to make than from having too many.

But to retain attention, you need less to multiply points than points of view. A teacher can usually fix the attention of his class upon one subject while using in succession six different methods of treatment. Passing swiftly from questioning to formulating principles and illustrating them, from Bible quotations to personal experiences and exhortations, he will hold his audience delighted, though a single method would have wearied it. Note how a skilled cook presents the Thanksgiving turkey on different days. It is a lordly brown biped, a plateful of nice slices, a salad, a pot-pie, hash. Teachers will be able to hold the youngsters' attention as well as cooks, if they learn thus to put things in different lights.

Furthermore, let it be remembered that no one was ever dignified with a child, and won its attention. And some teachers are too staid to be useful. Startle into inattention by a smart slap of the hands together, sharp extension of the finger, abrupt turns upon the floor. Preachers use such artifices when pews grow somnolent, and why not teachers? Never forget that the slightest inanimate object wins attention better than the greatest animation

of the teacher. A pencil-tablet will rivet all eyes. A finger laid upon a map is cynosure for the most fidgety scholars. If you have a picture which can be brought into connection with the lesson, it is a pedagogical sin to omit it. A chart is as necessary to the Sabbath-school teacher as to the sailor, albeit the teacher's is best home-made. I used to hesitate to take time to use such helps; but I found that the poorest picture did better work than my most vivid word-paintings, and that my clearest statement was inefficient beside the clumsiest diagram.

The beginner in this fine art of attention-holding is likely to derive the word "attention" thus: from *teneo*, "I hold," *ad*, "on to"; *attention*, "I hold on to" him. He tries to hold attention, therefore, by main strength. He grapples with his audience as a bulldog would. His nerves are tense. His voice is imperative. His eye glares. He is rapid, impetuous, strategic. This is power, he thinks, and this is skill; but his audience astonishes him by going to sleep. Abashed, he tries milder means of holding on to them. He begins to buttonhole his audience. He uses soft and flattering tones. He coaxes. He wheedles. He jokes. He chucks them under the chin. And then his audience gets up and goes out.

The real meaning of the word "attention" contains an invaluable hint for all who are trying to win others by speaking or teaching. It is *teneo*, "I hold, I stretch," *ad*, "toward"; and it is not by any means applied to the speaker, but to the listener. To get your audience, whether of little folk or big folk, to stretch out toward the same goal of truth that you are seeking is the true art

of winning attention.

This understanding of the matter implies that the teacher also is really in pursuit of truth himself. The failure of much teaching is because it cries "Go on" instead of "Come on." The speaker that you follow with most difficulty is the speaker who has the air of "knowing it all," while the speaker who succeeds best in holding your attention gives you the impression of a chase.

There's the game before you—that elusive truth slipping away through the thicket yonder. The huntsman's eye flashes. He whistles up the dogs. We all leap to the saddles. Off we go, over upland and vale, swamp and rock, fence and ditch, our leader far in the van, pointing here, waving there, and hallooing the huntsman on. And when the game is tracked down, and our leader stands above it, dripping knife in hand, our veins tingle with his, and we shout with delight at our triumph.

This is the first principle in the art of winning attention. The speaker must give the impression of a truth-seeker, if he would win others to seek truth with him. What Edward Everett Hale once said of a sermon applies to this. Every Sunday-school lesson should start out to prove something. It should have some goal. It should *intend* something. *Intention* must precede *attention*.

But though there must be this element of pleasing uncertainty and suspense, we all have difficulty in attending to a speaker who does not appear to have himself well in hand or to be quite sure what he is about. Have you not caught yourselves, teachers, talking as if in your sleep? Have you not sometimes waked up at

the end of a sentence, a question, or a harangue, and wondered what you had been talking about? Did you suppose that any one else knew? Did you expect to hold on to them when you had no grasp of the subject? Can listeners pay attention to any one who does not pay attention to himself?

Teachers make the mistake of dividing attention between the class, to watch that they hear; and themselves, to see how they are getting along; and the little attention left goes to the theme. Not unnaturally, the attention of the class is divided in the same way—much to themselves, less to the teacher, and least of all to what is being taught. Of course it is a teacher's business to hold his scholars' attention, but he will never do it by worrying and wondering whether he is succeeding.

Nay, I even go so far as to say, if one of your pupils pays no attention, then pay no attention to him, provided the mischief is not spreading. A teacher should not fritter away his attention on inattentive pupils. If he cannot win their attention by his own interest in his theme, he cannot win it at all. Not that I would imply for a moment, however, that the teacher is to rest satisfied while a single one of his pupils remains inattentive. If your chicks are average chicks they are gregarious, and one stray-away is enough to carry the whole flock with him into foreign parts. While you have a single inattentive scholar you should conduct your lesson with a view to holding him. You will hold the rest then, as a matter of course. I am only speaking of the best way to win attention. It must be won, or you are beaten to some extent;

and the attention of all *will* be won in the end if you are deeply enough in earnest yourself, if you do not allow your attention to be side-tracked by the inattention of a few. If you wish to win and hold the attention of others, *win and hold your own*.

Chapter X
The Importance of Questioning

Ever since Socrates, conversation has been the soul of teaching, and ever since Adam and Eve the question has been the life of conversation. A teacher's success depends, in about equal measure, upon inspiration, cogitation, and interrogation. Let the first be the great gravitative forces; let the second provide the truth, the liquid; then the interrogation-point is the curved siphon, which transfers from the full to the empty vessel!

Many, many a teacher has failed, thinking himself not wise enough, or not energetic enough, while in reality he has simply failed to be wisely and energetically quizzical.

But what is a question? Is it not a fish-hook for pulling out, rather than a siphon for putting in? Yes, later; but you cannot fish successfully in a dry pond. Any bungler can examine and test. The nice art is to use your interrogation-points as instruments of addition, rather than of subtraction.

But why is it often better to insinuate instruction through a question, in preference to pouring by direct harangue? Well, does not a question imply community of interest, and hint at equality or similarity of attainment? The question is neighborly; the discourse mounts a platform.

The helpful lesson commentaries fail, practically, to reach

many a class, because its teacher in reading has failed to translate from the declarative into the interrogative. If Doctor Somebody writes tersely, "A sin that is born of your own will is tenfold more dangerous to you than your own sin that is born of your neighbor's will," Johnny will not get the point unless the teacher transforms it somewhat thus: "If you are out in the country all alone, Johnny, jump over a fence, steal a pocketful of apples, is that a sin just as much as if some other boy should be along and persuade you to do it? Yes? Well, now, which sin is the more dangerous to you?"

So important does this seem to me that I always carry pencil and paper to the perusal of my lesson helps, and write out, as a point pleases me, the form in which I wish to bring it up in the class, ranging these questions under the numbers of the verses to which they apply.

The teacher who does not write out his questions, or do the equivalent of that work, is as sure to be defeated as the general who fights without a plan of campaign.

Should those questions be read in the class? Not unless your ideal of teaching is the company drill, instead of the conversation.

It is well, however, to ask the scholars to write out questions for you on verses assigned, and read these questions before the class. The teacher's work is grandly accomplished when he has induced the scholar to ask his own questions, and work out his own answers.

I often find that a general call for questions on some apparently

exhausted topic brings the richest results of the half-hour.

Few verses are completely treated without Lyman Beecher's "snapper,"—the appeal to experience. The question, "Is it I?" must be raised, no matter by how direct urgings, in every heart. That question is truth's barb.

There is a questioning face and attitude, indicative of a real and personal interest in the thing considered, without which a question will always fall dead, and deservedly.

Nor, on the contrary, will a live manner avail to foist upon the attention of a class a dead question. And a question is "dead" to your scholar which does not touch his own world of interest at some point, no matter how close connection it may have with your life and experience.

The questions on the lesson leaves make a good aid in study, but do most pitiably convict a teacher of unfaithfulness if he use them in teaching.

Most genuine of all questions, and most likely to be helpful, are the doubts, perplexities, and difficulties which attend a thoughtful teacher's first careful reading of the text itself. Then is the time when the cream of that lesson should rise.

Leading questions are always better than harangue, and are not to be despised, on a pinch. See what use Socrates made of them! And, by the way, modern teachers could learn much as to methods from the dialogues of that old pagan.

By all means we must learn to link our questions, naturally developing one from the other. Read a page of miscellaneous

proverbs, and you will carry away from it the same bewildered brain much Sunday-school sharp-shooting produces. Use the solid phalanx!

Infinite harm is done our teaching by "questioning down." Do you know how tiresome it is to talk to a man up in a third-story window, you in the street? Our "level-best" teaching must be on a level.

The novice at questioning, when first he becomes well satisfied with himself in this line, will probably be making his chief mistake,—will have hit upon an interrogative phraseology in which his thoughts run easily, which he uses incessantly. The artful questioner will rack his brains to the utmost stretch of ingenuity to devise striking and novel ways of quizzing, to hold the restless young minds.

Of course, no skilled questioner will take the class in order. Of course, he will name the person who is to answer, at the end, and not at the beginning, of his question. Of course, he will understand the use of long and attention-holding questions, interspersed with short, quick, attention-exciting questions. Of course, he will be ready with a varying form of the question if he has to repeat it, lest the class fail to listen the second time. Of course, he will train himself to become ready with a "catch" question,—a question with a quirk in it, to punish mildly the inattentive. Of course, he will know when the class needs unifying by the general question addressed to all, and when the subject needs unifying by the general question reviewing all. And,

of course, he will have learned that the best teacher of this, as of all arts, is He whose boyish questions in the temple grew to such mighty answers that no man thereafter dared question him, save only his true disciples.

Chapter XI
A Good Question

If I were asked to name the chief fault of the average teacher, I should say, "Asking questions that can be answered by 'Yes' and 'No.'" Among my acquaintances was once a teacher in a secular school whose method of questioning was invariably this. He would have before him the statements of the text-book, copied out with painstaking care, and would develop the subject thus: "Is it true or is it not true, Mr. A–, that"—and here would follow the statement or definition of the text-book. The ambiguous answer, "Yes," was amply satisfactory. Unfortunately, when such teachers gain a foothold in the Sunday-school, they are not so easily dismissed as from secular establishments.

Now, a good question merely furnishes the starting-point, and pushes the scholar out along the course toward some goal of truth; but in a question that can be answered by "Yes" or "No" the teacher himself ambles amiably up the track, and condescendingly allows the scholar's monosyllable to pat him on the head after he himself has reached the goal. A question that can be answered by "Yes" or "No" merely formulates the truth as it exists in the teacher's mind, and invites the scholar's assent to it; a good question, on the contrary, provokes the scholar to formulate truth for himself.

Now, it is much easier to express what we see to be true than to get any one else to express original thought. There is also, to the unwise, more glory in laying down principles to which others must agree than in getting others to lay down principles to which we must agree. It will always be true, therefore, that the lazy and the pompous will have no aim beyond educing monosyllabic answers. Most teachers, however, are earnestly desirous of the best, but do not know how to frame wise questions. What must be said to them?

First, that they must not go to school before their scholars. Expert questioning is not learned in the class-room, but in the study. A lead-pencil is the best teacher. A sheet of paper is the best drill-ground. As I have urged before: Let the Sunday-school worker who aspires to the high praise of a good questioner sit down persistently, after studying the lesson, and write out a set of questions. Nay; on each point, so far as he has time, let him write several questions, criticise them, fancy what kind of answer each will be likely to elicit from the scholar, and choose what appears the best question. Try it on the class, and learn valuable lessons from the result.

This method, laborious as it is, must be kept up until skilful questioning has become instinctive. That there may be hope of this happy result, by the way, the written questions must never be used in the class,—only the memory of them, and the drill the preparation has given. It surely will happen, sooner or later, that the careful student of practical pedagogics will be able to

get along without writing, merely formulating fit questions in his mind as he studies the lesson. After a time he may dispense even with this, and look simply after the points to be presented, trusting to extemporaneous question-making.

Not wholly, however. The best questioner in the world gets into ruts. The best forms of questions ever invented are worse than the worst if they are used with dull reiteration. No one can devote careful attention to the form of his questions without falling in love with some particular way of questioning; and this will not always be the best way, but will probably be the most original way. A form of question that is irreproachable the first time will be unendurable used six times in succession. It is necessary, then, even for the trained questioner, to revert now and then to his old lead-pencil drill, in order to study variety.

But how may the uninitiated know a good question when they see it, or make it? As said already, it must not be such that a lazy monosyllable may answer it. As said already, too, if one is in doubt, he has but to try it on the class, and note results. But further. A good question will be likely to have something piquant about it, if the subject admits. For instance, "James was killed, Peter was freed; why was that?" is better than saying, "How do you account for the fact that while the apostle James was beheaded, the apostle Peter was delivered from the hands of his persecutors?"

Furthermore, the difference between a poor question and a good one may often be a mere matter of length. "Why did the

Christians at Antioch keep the inferior leaders for work in the city, but send away the most prominent men in their church to labor as missionaries?" That is abominable; it should be, "Why did the Antioch Christians send away their best men?"

A good question will contain as much as possible of the personal element. "What do you understand by the phrase 'remission of sins'?" is much better than "What is the significance of the phrase 'remission of sins'?" Because the personal question puts the expected answer in a more modest light, the answer will be more unconstrained and full.

And, by the way, there are few forms of questions more zealously to be avoided than the form I have just used, "What do you understand by—?" It is the unfailing resource of the poor questioner. A verse will be read, a phrase quoted, a doctrine or a principle named, and then will follow, as the night the day, the tiresome old formula, "What do you understand by this, Miss A–?" One would be quite safe in declaring, at any particular instant during common Sunday-school hours, that one-fourth of the Sunday-school teachers of the world were repeating, with united breath, that Methuselah of a query, "What do you understand by this?"

Again, a good question must be swift. It must come so quickly that there will be no time to get out of the way. Some questions that, if written out, would not be bad, are prolonged in the utterance of over-deliberate teachers like foggy illustrations of the law of perspective. Good questions leap. You feel their

buoyancy as you read them or hear them. It is like the huntsman springing into the saddle and shouting, "Come on!" No one with an atom of thoughtfulness is dull to the exhilaration of spirited questions. They have inspired all the wise thinking of the world.

And, finally, good questions should be absolutely clear. There is one thing in the world that must always be faultlessly perspicuous and distinct, and that is a marching order in time of battle. Now, questions are the marching orders of our scholars' brain regiments, in a battle of infinite moment. Let them ring clearly as ever bugle-call was sounded. Questions mumbled, hesitant, caught up and patched over, confused and slovenly,—what wonder if these get slow and mumbled answers? A question clearly put, not only proves that the questioner has clear ideas, but it wondrously clarifies the ideas of the answerer.

Good questions, then, are thought-compelling, varied, short, personal, piquant, unhackneyed, brisk, and clear. Do I ask too much? Nothing that all may not acquire, if but a tithe of the zeal and labor claimed by the trivialities of a few years are spent upon these issues of eternity. Let every teacher consider what characteristics of a good questioner he may add to his pedagogical outfit.

Chapter XII
Inspiring Questions

I use this title advisedly, because I believe that it requires more genuine inspiration to lead the average scholar to ask questions than to perform any other part of the teacher's difficult task. How easy to ask our own questions, to put in our own answers in order to draw them out again, were that all of it! But to transform the passive into the active, the auditor into the investigator, the questioned into the questioner, that is the goal of the true teacher's endeavor.

Shall we count a recitation successful when the teacher has been earnest and zealous in his inquisition, the scholars ready and full in their responses? A single question, borne, it may be, on a voice so timid that it is scarcely audible in the buzzing room, yet sprung from some young heart just moved with the sudden desire of truth, is worth all the rest.

If the teacher wishes to carry his scholars beyond the parasite stage, which is just as dangerous intellectually as physically, both to the parasite and its supporter, he must learn first that this weaning comes not without thoughtfulness and design. He must learn that, even more carefully than he plans the questions he is to ask his scholars, he must plan to inspire them to ask questions themselves. He will be most successful if, from the

many matters which could be brought up in the lesson, he selects two or three of prime importance, and schemes to elicit the questioning enthusiasm of his class along those few lines. But how to do it?

In the first place, the teacher must be a questioner himself. An old hen can hardly teach the eagle's brood to fly. Do not hesitate to tell your scholars of the doubts you once had, and how you won certainty from them. Show them by example that doubt is never a thing to be afraid of or ashamed of, unless it be a lazy doubt, viciously pleased with its own fog.

Then there is a question-inspiring face and attitude. If the teacher assumes the manner pontific and speaks *ex cathedra*, and has the air of one who says the ultimate word, he will smother every question. A sympathetic, open face, and the hearty spirit of good-fellowship, are the best invitations to inquiries.

Nor must the teacher be in a hurry, hastening from verse to verse with the nervous dispatch of an auctioneer. How many times must even a wise man look at a beetle, and how long, before he is moved to ask a wise question concerning it? Don't we sometimes make the recitation a mere exhibition of shooting-stars?

Then, too, be on the watch for questions. How far ahead can you see a question coming? Before the scholar has made up his mind to ask it, if you have seeing eyes. An almost imperceptible quiver of the lips: "Question, Thomas?" Eyes suddenly wider: "What were you about to ask, Mary?" Forehead

wrinkled: "Anything to say on that point, Edward?"

And if the question is a good one, why, "A capital question, Thomas!" "I hoped that some one would ask that, Mary!" A good question is more to be praised than a good answer, because it is rarer and more original; but does it always receive our hearty commendation?

Though the question leads you far out of your way, turn aside for it as gladly as you would turn from the road to pick up a diamond. Though you must leave the climax of the lesson unreached, see in this the climax. Though you are in full harangue, eagerly showing forth some great truth, stop short at once. A question in hand is worth a whole system of theology in the bush.

And even if the question be trivial, or pointless, or utterly irrelevant, in anticipation of other possible questions, this one is not to be scornfully or slightingly waved aside. Don't kill the goose that lays golden eggs when she chances to lay one of pewter!

Half-statements, when shrewdly managed, will often elicit questions. "Yes, God was terribly angry with the Jews,—terribly. Think how powerful God is, and how awful his anger must be! You want to ask something, Billy? Whether it is right for God to be angry? Well, I am glad you asked that, because I want to tell you the difference between his anger and ours."

An over-statement will often draw out the longed-for inquiry. "When John urged every one with two coats to give one to some

person who had no coat, what did he mean but this,—that, as long as any one in the world is poor, those who have more than they need ought to keep giving to those who have less than they need? I see that you have a word for us, Lizzie. What is it? How about the lazy people and the bad men? I hoped some one would bring up that point!"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.