

The Sunday-School Teacher in Relation to the Diocese.

BY THE REV. CANON LAMB, M.A.

IF there be one voice which reaches us Churchmen from the educational world more loudly, more clearly, than another to-day, it is that which bids us set in order the house of our Sunday-school. We cannot shut our eyes to the dangers which threaten that definite denominational religious teaching in our day-schools which Churchmen value so highly.

Though the present Education Act does not, as the Archbishop of Canterbury points out, if properly administered, impair the religious teaching given in our Church day-schools, yet none of us know how long that Act may remain exactly as it is, nor yet in how many districts it may fail to be quite "properly administered." We know well what encroachments are attempted in some directions upon the time allowed for religious teaching; what attempts are being made to penalize the religious teaching, which is strictly denominational; and also what increasing numbers of our young people must for the future be trained in schools where either denominational teaching is absolutely excluded, or where no religious teaching is given at all. Knowledge of these things convinces us forcibly that in the future Churchmen must rely for distinctive Church teaching much more upon their Sunday-schools than they have done in the past.

Now, the numerical strength of the Sunday-schools of the Church, both in teachers and scholars—as shown by the annual statistics of the Church Sunday-School Institute—is unquestionably great; and it behoves all who are interested in the prosperity of the Church, and the religious and moral welfare of the nation, to ponder the enormous possibilities for good which lie in them, and to use to the utmost the opportunity which they present. The mere fact that 209,000 people should be willing to work as teachers in our Sunday-schools is itself significant; while the companion fact that, from one motive or another,

nearly 3,000,000 scholars are found at the present time on the attendance rolls of our Church Sunday-schools deepens that significance, and proves beyond doubt how great a power for influencing the young our Church possesses in her Sunday-schools. An institution, which brings within its influence so large a percentage of the youth of this country, demands attention to be given to it, and labour to be expended upon it, in order that the highest results may be obtained. For it is clear that in this case, as in the case of other armies, the efficiency of the troops must depend largely upon the efficiency of their officers. It is little use having numbers without efficiency, as recent events in the Far East painfully demonstrated. Of these 209,000 officers, there are, in the diocese best known to the writer, no less than 7,000, having under them young soldiers of the Cross—recruits for our Church—to the number of 102,000. Ample material is here for feeding the Church of that diocese with loyal sons and daughters.

In approaching the special subject of this article—viz., “The Sunday-School Teacher in Relation to the Diocese”—the first word must be one of appeal to the teacher to recognise his or her diocesan connection. One object of diocesan and ruridecanal Sunday-school associations, with their annual gatherings, is to make Sunday-school teachers realize that they are members of one great society, and that they have not merely to concern themselves with what affects their particular parish, but to work together for the well-being of that larger parish—that conglomerate of parishes which they call their diocese. Our diocesan associations, our ruridecanal associations, as well as our parochial organizations, depend for life and vigour on the co-operation of all the individual members for promoting one common aim. By all means be enthusiastic about your own particular class. Let it be your worthy ambition that no class in the school should excel yours for discipline, for reverence, for attainments, for spirituality ; but do not fail to recognise that the welfare of your class is wrapt up in the welfare of your school, of which it is a constituent part, and that if the school

suffers as a whole, your individual class must inevitably suffer with it. You must throw yourselves heartily into the corporate life of your school ; you must contribute your share of wisdom to its counsels, of obedience to its rules, and of loyalty to its superintending head. Isolation from fellow-teachers must be prejudicial to your work, and just in proportion as disunion exists among the teachers, in that proportion is the healthy condition and vigorous action of the school impaired. But it will not do to limit your idea of membership to that of your particular parochial organization. You must have faith in combination ; you must believe that certain advantages are to be gained not only by intercourse of teacher with teacher in one school, but also of school with school in one ruridecanal association, and of ruridecanal association with ruridecanal association in one diocesan association. You must recognise that various things can be effected, or at least attempted, by a ruridecanal association which a single parish could not essay, or which, in the weakness of its isolation, it could hardly hope to bring to a successful issue. You must recognise that to the larger society of the diocesan association larger possibilities will present themselves, that the ruridecanal units will introduce an advantageous variety of ideas, and that a strong diocesan tree will be able to impart fresh vigour, vitality, and fruitfulness to all its affiliated branches. You must resolve that you will contribute your share of living membership to your ruridecanal association by attending its meetings, by taking part in its deliberations, by conforming to its suggestions, and through it to your diocesan association. That ruridecanal association is to the diocesan association what an arm or a leg is to a body ; your parochial Sunday-school is to your ruridecanal association what a hand is to an arm, or a foot to a leg ; and you individually are to your school what a joint or muscle or tendon is to a hand or a foot. But the whole body is incomplete without every little joint, muscle, tendon, and nerve of every limb ; its efficiency is crippled if the minutest muscle refuses to act, and no other nerve or muscle can supply its lack of service. This view of

personal responsibility is a grand one, but it is not fanciful ; it is emphatically Scriptural.

But now, after this appeal to Sunday-school teachers for an *esprit de corps* which shall extend beyond the limits of class, of school, of ruridecanal association, till it embraces the wider circle of the diocese, it is time to turn attention to the other side of the question—to the larger, perhaps, and more important question—of the relation of the diocese to the teacher. If the Sunday-school teacher has obligatory relations to the diocese, the diocese must surely have reciprocal relations of an obligatory kind to the teacher. If the diocese asks, and asks justly, for the teacher's loyal, self-abnegating co-operation, what has it to offer, or what might it offer, in return ?

We venture to make a few suggestions, not dogmatically, but interrogatively : 1. Might it not offer for one thing increased diocesan recognition ? We are thankful for recent advances in this direction—for the formation within the last few years of several diocesan associations under the presidency of their respective Bishops, for the rise of numerous ruridecanal associations in these different dioceses, and for multiplied opportunities for united services and conferences. But we think there is still room for improvement in this direction. Why should not duly qualified Sunday-school superintendents receive episcopal recognition in the same way as licensed readers ? and why should not duly qualified Sunday-school teachers receive a diocesan certificate and diocesan registration, thus acquiring the recognised status of a "certificated diocesan teacher ?" There is a tendency to look upon Sunday-school teachers as persons who are rather glad to find some occupation for their spare time, and whose places can easily be filled by others of a like kind. Many appear to overlook the pastoral aspect of the office, and the importance of the trust committed to the charge of the Sunday-school teacher—nothing less than that of "feeding Christ's lambs." The office of teacher in the Church is one of great antiquity and of great responsibility ; and we venture to think that if its holders in the present day were furnished with a commission or

license, either from the Bishop of the diocese or from the clergyman of the parish ; if they were admitted to their office with some sort of solemn service and blessing suitable to so momentous a charge ; if they were thus recognised as an integral portion of the parochial staff—then the position of the teacher would be raised, the number of what we may call haphazard teachers would diminish, and there would be less of capricious and indefinite teaching. One little practical difficulty besets this scheme, which is reluctance on the part of many teachers to claim the dignity we wish to confer. Either they are too bashful or too unappreciative. But that difficulty could and should be overcome by educating the reluctant ones up to desiring it. Then, further, might it not be possible for Sunday-schools to receive some distinguishing encouragement in the way of an occasional episcopal visit? A friendly visit of this sort with a few fatherly words to the teachers at its close, how much it would be appreciated, what a stimulus it would prove! The Bishop of Liverpool, when speaking not long ago at the Liverpool Diocesan Association, said that when he went about the diocese he made a point of visiting the Sunday-schools as far as he could, and the result had convinced him more and more of the importance of Sunday-schools and of the great work they were doing. It is significant (though we do not press the connection) that in that diocese last year there was an increase of 357 teachers and 2,893 scholars! We pass now to a more important proposal ; and again desire to put it interrogatively.

2. Might we not have, besides increased diocesan recognition, largely increased diocesan support? The Bishop of Manchester in a recent sermon urged the importance of adequately supporting the work of Sunday-schools. Church-people, he said, had not yet realized the amount of support it was necessary to give to the Sunday-school to make it efficient. If they would examine the accounts of any Sunday-school, and extract from them the amount that had been spent on the materials necessary for teaching, and then make a comparison with the amount spent in even an ill-furnished day-school, the

contrast would be painful. They must not be satisfied so long as the school material in their Sunday-schools consisted merely of a few Prayer-Books, hymn-books, and Bibles. They must follow the methods of the day-school, and use ample material in the nature of blackboards, picture-cards, and various other apparatus for object-lessons. Suitable up-to-date literature for use of teachers is also sorely needed in many schools. Nor is it in equipment only that our Sunday-schools need the outlay of money. Many of them need a judicious expenditure to make them structurally fit for Sunday-school purposes. We look at many of the modern structures erected for Sunday-school purposes by different Nonconformist bodies; we see the spacious central hall and mark the ten or twelve doors on either side, opening into as many commodious class-rooms, each with its suitable furniture according to the kind of class which is to meet there; and we cannot but reflect how favourably those schools compare with most of ours for the objects which we both—Dissenters and Churchmen—have in view. Many serious difficulties connected with discipline, methods of teaching, arrangement of classes, etc., find in these structural arrangements an easy and peaceful solution. Our Nonconformist brethren have recognised the importance of having buildings adapted for Sunday as distinct from day-school requirements. But we are not free in this matter. Our structures are with us, and the inconveniences of many of our schoolrooms for Sunday-school purposes are painfully familiar to us.

We must seek for remedies in other ways. If questions of discipline cannot be solved by the excellence of our school accommodation, they must be solved by the excellence of our teaching staff, and especially of our superintendent staff, in the arts of teaching.

This leads to a further tentative suggestion which may not commend itself so readily as some others to the approval of our readers. Might there not be in every diocese a certain expenditure of money upon the teaching staff of our Sunday-schools? We would venture to advocate the appointment in many schools

of a qualified superintendent at a small annual salary ; and the payment, in some schools, of a percentage of the teachers. Why not ? The honorary staff would continue ; but there would be an assurance of discipline, and there would be the healthy stimulus of high standards of teaching. We are always met with the reply, " This will destroy the religious influence ; the spiritual side of things will suffer ; a mercenary element will be introduced ; Christian love and earnestness and patience will disappear." We deny the necessity of harmful results ; we are confident of beneficial ones. Is not the discipline of some of our Sunday-schools sadly defective ? Can much good be done in an undisciplined Sunday-school ? How can there be reverence ? How can there be the profitable conduct of a class where there is constant distraction ? In schools of this sort the close of the session too often finds the teacher disheartened and the scholars unedified.

We would urge that by paying you can make more definite demands upon your teacher's time and study and teaching, and can secure distinctly better results. Volunteers are always apt to consider themselves " free lances " ; and many who call themselves Church of England Sunday-school teachers are loose in their attachment to the Church Catechism, and by no means experts in distinctive Church teaching. What percentage of Sunday-school teachers in many schools could write down six or even four clear reasons " why they are Churchpeople " in preference to being Roman Catholics or Nonconformists ? We want our elder Sunday-school scholars to have distinct teaching on these points. We want them, not only to be good Christians, but also intelligent Churchpeople.

For equipment, for structures, for teachers, money is wanted. In many parishes a sufficiency of means would be difficult to raise without outside help. Ought we not to spend more than we are doing upon our Sunday-schools ? Why should not the Sunday-school association of the diocese become a diocesan agency for giving help ? Why should not the Diocesan Sunday-school Association, as well as the Diocesan Education Associa-

tion, have a place on the list of what are known as "the diocesan societies"?

3. Might we not have, in addition to increased diocesan recognition and increased diocesan support, some system of diocesan visitation? We will not call it *inspection*, for that sounds a trifle too severe, inquisitorial, and consequently alarming. What we would advocate is the friendly visit of qualified advisers. "I have never entered a Sunday-school," writes an able expert, "without being impressed with the evident devotion and good intentions of the teachers, nor without deploring that their efforts were allowed to run to waste for lack of guidance or sympathy."

To supply this guidance and sympathy, as well as to test in some way, either by written or *vivâ voce* examination, the results of the teaching, and generally to assist the weaker schools in rising to the standard of excellence attained by the stronger ones, these would be the aims of the diocesan visitors. Going about, as they would, from school to school, they would become possessed of a vast body of experience, by which, in its turn, each separate school would profit. The adoption of a diocesan syllabus, still better of an interdiocesan syllabus (such as that proposed by the Church of England Sunday-School Institute), would greatly facilitate any efforts in this direction. There cannot be a doubt that the time has arrived when the Church should make a great and well-organized effort to increase the efficiency of her Sunday-schools. The religious instruction which is prohibited in the provided schools, and hampered with restrictions in the non-provided schools, may be carried on without let or hindrance in our Sunday-schools, and, what is of more importance even than religious instruction, an influence can be brought to bear upon children in Sunday-schools which we could scarcely expect from young teachers and assistants in our day-schools.

We would conclude by commending this work to the serious and patient consideration of all who desire to make our Sunday-school a means of filling our churches with devout worshippers—

believing, as we do, that the more these things are discussed and sifted in a right spirit, the nearer we shall come to the truth—into which may God guide us all!



The Historic Basis of the Twenty-second Psalm.

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THE Twenty-second Psalm, whether we view it as interpreted by Christ Himself or by the writers of the New Testament, or by the Church which has appointed it for use upon Good Friday, is certainly the most precise in Messianic reference of all the Psalms of suffering.

But what were the circumstances of its composition, and who was its composer? That great scholar and critic and Hebraist Delitzsch strongly adheres to the Davidic authorship, although he fails to find a situation in David's life suggestive of the detailed troubles recorded in this psalm. Others have wandered down the ages as far as to the Maccabees in search of suitable occasion—I cannot say with any great success. Others interpret the psalm as voicing the collective sorrows of the nation, and not a mere personal grief; but surely if ever any psalm was individual and personal in the outpouring of heart-sadness, this psalm is personal. Thus we return again to David, and ask once more, "Was there really nothing in the known circumstances of his life that could have given birth to such an elegy?"

I seem to myself to have found the necessary groundwork—an adequate support against the charge of psychological impossibility—but whether I am right or not, seeing so many abler men have missed it, I cannot say.

Where in the Bible should we look for the cry of a forsaken soul? Two names suggest themselves: in the New Testament Judas, in the Old Testament Saul. Each was a suicide. Of Judas' fate we cannot read without a shudder. His character