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sanguine of Ritualistic law-breakers now despair of "union with Rome" as absolutely as the Oxford remnant in the forties abandoned all hope of an alliance between the English primate and the Greek patriarch after William Palmer's abortive pilgrimage to the Russian holy places. In 1704, for the first time, by refusing to accept the orders of John Gordon, a Scottish Bishop and Jacobite refugee, the Vatican first recorded its decision to treat Anglican Orders as null. To that precedent the Pope still adheres. None the less, the Roman opportunity would be looked for in the chaos which would follow the organic and ruinous changes in the position of the English Establishment that those enemies who belong to its own household talk so lightly of preferring to a reasonable obedience.



"In Earthen Vessels."

By MISS A. E. WOODCOCK,
Langholm, Bishop's Lydiard, Taunton.

"THE Vicar mentions the difficulty of securing enough Sunday-school teachers, and comments on the indisposition evinced by many to taking up work which demands regularity and self-denial. . . . The parish has a population of over 20,000."

These words, from a London daily paper, caught my eye, and arrested my attention at once. The paper fell unheeded, for my thoughts had flown to a little parish in Wiltshire under the shadow of the Great Downs. I could recall the pungent scent of the box-hedges along the chalky white roads and the song of the larks "rising and falling as on angels' wings." I could see the cloud-shadows passing softly over the downs that were now green, now gold with dandelions, while the village lay dusty-white at their foot. I could see, too, the shy, inexperienced teacher who, for many successive Sundays, trembled

outside the old school-door before she took her courage in both hands and walked in. The faces of the boys rose up before me, during the five years in which they had grown from a senior lad's class into a regular well-organized Bible-class. I could see them, too, kneeling at the Holy Communion month by month. It seemed but yesterday since those delightful winter practices were held, when they would bring cinders and wood themselves, and coax up the ashes of the defunct school fire, and one boy played, and the rest sang glees (at first, it is true, in "unison" voices); later on, in real part-singing.

Or there were long, hot summer days, when each week brought its gardening evening in the Church garden, and pinks and roses scented the air, and the cut grass and the cypress-trees gave forth of their sweetness.

In after days of stress and sorrow such scenes remained clear and vivid.

And this class was built up on the foundation of forty years' work in the parish, patiently and hopefully, by one who was schoolmaster and choirmaster too. The outward and visible memorial of his work may be found in the Church now, but who shall tell of the unseen results of such a life!

Then, when the hand of God touched him, and he slept, his work was completed, and all that remained was for others to carry it on. The details of teaching pass away, but the character of the teacher remains, and his unconscious—perhaps unknown—influence too.

There is a story told of one who went to hear a very celebrated preacher. The sermon was inspiring, yet, years afterwards, she said: "Curiously enough, I cannot remember anything that was said by that preacher, but I shall never forget the faces of some Sisters coming out of the church; they made me realize what it might be to live in the Presence of God."

And yet there is this need in most parishes for more Sunday-school teachers!

Surely the clergy themselves are partly responsible for this.

Over and over again we hear the cry, " The classes are too big, I know ; but we have so few teachers " ; or, " No, we have not got a Sunday-school ; we have to have children's services, as we cannot get new teachers." If the clergy really believe as they say, that there will come a day when the religious teaching of the children will only be given on Sunday, the importance of the Sunday-school teacher's work can hardly be over-estimated. Yet in how many parishes is there any attempt to help the teachers to teach well? Or, again, in how many churches is there any definite service admitting new teachers into this important work, giving them authority not only to teach their children on Sunday, but also to visit and know them in the week?

I confess that out of the eight parishes in which I have taught, I have known only *one* in which such a service was held. It is when we realize our utter powerlessness to do anything well, wishing, perhaps, that we had never undertaken so difficult a task, that this service, solemn as it is, reminds us that " our help is in *the Name of the Lord*," and though the sense of responsibility may be deepened, the knowledge of the helpful Presence of God is deepened also. It is impossible after this to give up a class because it is tedious or troublesome, for the solemn sense of re-dedication is borne in upon us. We have offered and presented to God the few miserable little barley-loaves and fishes we have to give, and lo! He can spread a table in the wilderness and feed His five thousand people at our hands.

Again, do the clergy take sufficient pains with their instructions for teachers? In many parishes there is no class for them at all, and even if teachers' meetings are held, it is often " only that, and nothing more." Expositions on the Prophet Ezekiel were given every week in one parish I know, while the Sunday-school lesson was on the Gospel for the day! Yet this was called The Teachers' Class. Or, again, the Vicar will probably content himself with going through the lessons in a book each month, just as they are, except for a little word-painting on

Cana of Galilee or Bethany (mostly culled from “ The Land and the Book ”), the whole four lessons occupying an hour, and including “ a bit for yourselves ” stuck in at the end like an unbruised clove in an apple-pie !

Sunday-school lesson-books are most useful as *helps* ; they are invaluable when there is not time or power to make a lesson for oneself, but they were, of course, never intended to take the place of preparation, or to be used (as I have seen them used) merely to read the lesson through to a class ripe and ready for misbehaviour. Yet in one school I know they made their weekly appearance unchecked, and the Vicar would even change a lesson on the spot—say Lesson xli. to xliv. I remember once hearing, to my amazement, from the next class, “ Illust., burning house. Children asleep. Father’s anxiety. So with us,” and the lesson went on ! “ Oftentimes,” says a great worker, “ we have to work against the whole trend of Sunday-school teaching. In most places the children will expect a ‘ stock question,’ and be ready with a ‘ stock answer.’ For a time they will offer ‘ stock answers,’ even to real questions. But at last the ‘ stock answer ’ will fall out of fashion from lack of demand, and your children will begin to *think* ! ”

Surely this is the most important result of all teaching ; it is considered to be so in every subject taught in the day schools, but it will never be achieved by teachers who will not learn and by clergy who do not teach.

Again, the clergy, or those whom they appoint to be superintendents, have mostly little wisdom in their choice of teachers. They do not differentiate. One may have a special gift for teaching infants, but it is quite as likely as not that she will be pressed to accept a boys’ class, or one of elder girls, merely because it is vacant ; she meekly yields, and then probably before long gets sick of it, and gives it up. And of all the classes surely the infants are most important. “ Give me a child till he is seven,” said a great head-master ; “ I don’t care what happens to him after that.” Yet “ We will give you the infants till we can find you something better ! ” How many

teachers are not familiar with these words? And how few of us have the power to teach infants well! Perhaps that is why a really good children's service is such a treat; but, alas! such a rare treat. It is connected in most minds with children who fidget and with teachers who try in vain to keep them quiet. Being as often as not conducted on the plan of the "Missing Word Competition," the attention of the children is not gained, and answers fall very wide of the mark usually.

Some few years ago I was attending just such a service, taking charge of a class of boys aged from eight to ten. The subject for the day was that most inspiring story of the Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain, but if it could have been rendered commonplace and uninteresting it would have been so then. The preacher, in a heavy monotonous voice, inquired: "Children, why were not even the priests allowed to touch the bier?" One of my most brilliant and restless little boys raised his head, and in a loud, excited whisper, exclaimed: "Teacher, *my* mother do touch tha beer—she *do*, teacher; she do like un, an' zyder, too, teacher!"

I merely quote this story to show how entirely the ordinary preacher or teacher will talk over the children's heads without in the least realizing he has done so.

The Church Sunday-school, we must admit, is the great link between the child and the Church; and the Sunday-school cannot be kept going without Sunday-school teachers. They are often ineffective (for they are but earthen vessels!) from want of knowledge, though seldom from want of will. If, after careful selection, the clergy would help them by teaching them, and then, having faith enough in them *to back them up*, it would make the work vastly more interesting as well as more efficient.

I know a case of a teacher of twenty years' experience, who turned a really bad boy of sixteen out of her class after much earnest thought and prayer. She had tried everything, and it was impossible to teach as things were. She told the superintendent she had done so. The next Sunday he was brought back as a suffering martyr to the class, and this was done

three times! Most unprejudiced teachers could supply similar cases.

“Heaven knows,” says a thoughtful writer, “our Sunday-schools need reform. . . . The Church of England’s extremity is apt to be the Dissenter’s opportunity; but if that Church will really rouse herself, she may yet keep a large majority of the young within her fold. The Sunday-school will be the key of the Church’s position in the near future. What is imperative to-day is better methods, better teachers, better standards of efficiency.” And the Church of England “expects every man to do his duty”!



The Missionary World.

TRUTH alone is eternal, but certainly error dies hard. The man who objects to Christian Missions because he disbelieves in Christianity has logic at least on his side. But the challenge of which the last few weeks has seen a recrudescence in the daily press is only remotely connected either with logic or with facts. Sir Hiram Maxim—whom the *C.M. Review* terms, with some justice, “an impenitent critic,” seeing that it answered his strictures on Chinese Missions only last December—has been writing again. His letters in the *Morning Post* either generalize from individual instances, unidentified, and therefore unanswerable, or else make sweeping statements which prove either nothing or else absurdly much. If it be true, for instance, as Sir Hiram Maxim asserts, that for every Chinaman who becomes a Christian a thousand Chinamen lose their lives, then it is also true, as Sir Ernest Satow said at a missionary meeting immediately after, that the whole Chinese race would have been exterminated ere now. The challenge has been ably met by letters from missionary experts, citing testimonies from many men of knowledge and weight. But the most striking product of the controversy has been the