

OUR BIG BOYS *and the* SUNDAY SCHOOL

A. H. MCKINNEY



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By A. H. McKinney, Ph.D.

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✓ By
A. H. MCKINNEY, PH. D.



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BOYS

“A boy is a man in cocoon—you do not know what it is going to become—his life is big with possibilities. He may make or unmake kings, change boundary lines between states, write books that will mould characters, or invent machines that will revolutionize the commerce of the world. Be patient with the boys—you are dealing with soul stuff. Destiny waits just 'round the corner.”

James A. Garfield, himself a most illustrious example of what can be made from “nothing but a boy,” once said: “If the superior beings of the universe would look down upon the world to find the most interesting object, it would be the unfinished, unformed character of young men.”

Contents

I.	SOME PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS .	9
II.	WHEN DO BOYS BECOME BIG? .	16
III.	WHAT IS A BIG BOY? . . .	22
IV.	SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF BIG BOYS	28
V.	BEFORE BOYS BECOME BIG .	35
VI.	ESPECIAL PROVISION FOR BIG BOYS	42
VII.	THEIR TEACHER	49
VIII.	THEIR INTIMATES	56
IX.	THEIR ACTIVITY	63
X.	THEIR INTERESTS	70
XI.	THEIR SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS .	76
XII.	THEIR DOUBTS	83
XIII.	THEIR DAY-DREAMS . . .	89
XIV.	THEIR LOVE AFFAIRS . . .	96
XV.	CONCLUSION	102

Our Big Boys and the Sunday School

I

SOME PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

THERE are some of our big boys in the Sunday-school; many are not there. Where intelligent attention has not been paid to the big boy, his absence is more and more noticeable. On the other hand, there are schools where the number of big boys in attendance is increasing. There must be reasons for the presence or the absence of these youths. The big boy very soon becomes a man; hence the way he is handled will largely determine how many men will be found as workers

in a given school. There is no more effective way of solving the "man problem" of the Sunday-school than by considering the "big boy problem."

We suggest some preliminary questions for the thoughtful consideration of pastors, officers, teachers, and parents interested in having the big boy in the Sunday-school. Suggestive answers to these questions are given; such answers will be all the more appreciated if the questions are prayerfully and thoughtfully considered beforehand.

I. *When does a boy become a big boy?* There is much difference of opinion on this subject expressed by those who have not made a careful study of the boy. Some who are convinced that a boy becomes big at a certain time, do not put their convictions in this regard into practice when dealing with him in the practical work of the Sunday-school. This difference of opinion or of practice

may decide whether the boy is a member of the Sunday-school or not.

2. *What is a big boy?* Is he the same as a small boy? Is he a man? Is he in a class by himself? The correct answers to these questions will help us in the endeavour to reach some conclusions as to how he should be treated. The mistake is too common of regarding him as being the same as a small boy. Some, recognizing this mistake, have gone to the other extreme of dealing with him as with a man. The results have frequently proven disastrous, so far as his attendance at, and interest in, the Sunday-school is concerned.

3. *What are the characteristics of the big boy?* If he is unlike the small boy and the man, may there be some things predicated of him which put him in a class by himself? What are these things? Which of them have a pedagogical value in the practical work of the Sunday-

school? How may we become acquainted with them? How may we apply our knowledge? The right or the wrong answer to these questions may determine whether we have our big boys interested members of our Sunday-schools or whether they are occupied with those things which keep them from entering its doors, except on rare occasions. Surely the boy's temporal and eternal welfare, to say nothing about the progress of the Sunday-school, ought to make one desire all possible light on his peculiarities!

4. *Who is the big boy's teacher?* Will any one do for his teacher? Is a woman as suitable as a man? Is an old man as effective as a young one? Within recent years these questions and similar ones have been very seriously discussed to the everlasting advantage of the boy. The most experienced leaders are willing to consider them further. In the degree that they are looked upon as of little im-

portance, the boy fails to get the instruction best suited to the conditions in which he finds himself. So important is this matter of securing the proper kind of teachers that some do not hesitate to affirm: The big boy problem will be solved when the right sort of teachers are trained and put to work in the Sunday-school.

5. *What special provisions are made for the big boy in the Sunday-school?* Is he in a class with boys of about his own age? Is his class organized? Has it a room for its especial use? Does it meet during the week? Is some one planning to harness to good objects the unbounded enthusiasm and energy of its members? From the school concerning which negative answers must be given to these questions, the big boy will soon be permanently absent. Where the affirmative is true, he is likely to remain and also to induce his companions to enroll in the class in

which he is so intensely interested. Surely it is worth while to make especial plans to retain him in the school.

6. *What was done for the boy before he became big?* Very much depends on the answer to this question. Hence, the problem before us has its factors away back in the Beginners' Class and Primary Department, but more especially in the Junior Department. What was done for the little boys there, is bearing fruitage in what the big boys are now. What is being done to-day, will have great influence in determining what will be the condition of the Sunday-school in days to come.

It is of great advantage to think over these questions and endeavour to obtain the correct answers thereto. Hence they are suggested here. But this is not all; it is our purpose to help our readers so to answer them that they will not only realize the kind of effort that should be

put forth in our Sunday-school, but also be guided in putting it forth so as to keep the boys in the Sunday-school after they have entered the trying period of adolescence.

The questions discussed are of importance not only to Sunday-school workers but also to pastors ; for one reason why there are not more men in the churches is because there are so few big boys in the Sunday-schools.

Said a thoughtful elder of an historic Presbyterian church, " We have lost a generation of men from our church."

" How do you account for it ?"

" Years ago we let the boys, that are now men, slip out of our Sunday-school."

II

WHEN DO BOYS BECOME BIG?

THE importance of the answer to this question cannot be overestimated, for upon it depends much in the way of handling our boys, not only in the home but in the Sunday-school and the church. If there were some fixed rule according to which one could determine the bigness of the boy there would be little difficulty in the matter, but neither his age, his size, nor his mental development tells us just when he becomes big, although all of these factors enter into the problems that arise in connection with his bigness.

The boy and his parents, especially his mother, are disposed to differ much in regard to his bigness. When mamma calls him, "My boy," he is very apt to

resent it, and when she addresses him as if he were only a little fellow, he is very likely to get away from her.

The writer was once talking with a little fellow not more than six years of age, and was surprised when the boy, referring to something that had happened, said, "When I was a little boy." He was evidently in his own estimation becoming big.

The boy and the Sunday-school authorities probably disagree as to the boy's bigness. This, perhaps, is one reason why boys slip out of the Sunday-school in ways that are unaccountable to the officers of the school. Feeling that they are too big to be treated as if they were little, they no longer want to come into the school.

One fact is patent, namely, the boy is apt to become big far sooner than his elders think. If there is any question concerning this statement it may be set-

tled by the adult male reader thinking back to his boyhood days and recalling how big he felt at say, ten or twelve years of age. If he recalls correctly, he will doubtless remember that he was far bigger then than he is to-day ; that is, in his own estimation. Another fact is evident, namely, no rule can be laid down as to the time when the boy becomes big, for boys differ so much that one becomes big much sooner than another. This truth, of course, increases the difficulty of handling our boys, for we cannot say all boys of eleven or all boys of twelve shall be treated thus and so for they have now become big.

The period of early adolescence begins with the average, normal boy at about twelve years of age. As he approaches the development incident to this period he is very likely to feel his own importance, and, in his estimation, to become big. Therefore, we may say, that at

about eleven years of age most boys begin to feel big, and this feeling continues with increasing power over the possessors thereof, until they reach manhood. It is wise, therefore, to have a department of Sunday-school work into which boys shall be promoted at about twelve years of age, and in which their exhibitions of bigness shall be tolerated and overlooked unless they are detrimental to the welfare of the school.

There are some signs of the boy's bigness, but these are not always the same. One boy may manifest it in increased attention to his clothes, while many other boys are utterly regardless of their personal appearance as they enter the period of their bigness. Another boy may be very big in his talk, while his companion is the reverse, hardly uttering a word; and so we might go on over the list.

There is one sign, however, that is very conclusive as to the bigness of the

boy, and that is, as he becomes big, he shows more and more a disposition to rebel against authority. A boy of a certain type will say out and out, when told to do something which a year ago he would have done with alacrity and pleasure, "I won't." Another boy may not say a word, but he "won't" anyhow. This quiet boy is perhaps more difficult to deal with than the fellow who comes out flat-footedly and declares his rebellion against constituted authority.

It is of great importance that the officers of the school should be on the alert to detect signs of bigness in their boys, not that they shall allow them to do as they please, but that they may provide for them the proper kind of teachers. The big boy should have a male teacher who has not forgotten his boyhood longings and experiences.

It is of some importance that the teacher recognize this bigness of his

adolescent pupils, for, if he does not, he will be frequently surprised and often chagrined at the manifestation of it in unexpected ways and at times when other things would seem to be more fitting.

Perhaps one of the best suggestions that can be given in regard to the bigness of the boys is for the officers and teachers of the Sunday-school to determine that they will study their boys individually, compare notes, and come to some definite conclusions concerning the time of the development of the idea of bigness in their boys' minds, and, as a result of this conclusion, plan for the use of proper means in holding the big boys in the school.

III

WHAT IS A BIG BOY?

THE foolishness of endeavouring to answer this question seriously would be granted, were there not so many differences of opinion as to what is the answer. These differences are not so much expressed in words as they are manifested in actions. There are hundreds of intelligent, sensible people who would smile if the question were put to them, and refuse to answer it, who, nevertheless, by their treatment of big boys, answer it much more emphatically than is possible in words. Hence the necessity for asking and answering it.

There are some adults who treat the big boy as if he were a small boy ; fathers, particularly, err in this respect. They forget that the growing lad is no longer

an infant, and in their forgetfulness endeavour to think, speak, and act for him. This endeavour is often met with an unexpressed, but very deep, resentment on the part of the youth who no longer wishes to be treated like his baby brother.

Others come to the conclusion, that, not being a small boy, the lad must be a man. The injustice of this conclusion arises from the fact that such persons are very likely to lay upon him a man's responsibility without according him a man's privilege. A very little serious thought would enable one to imagine the effect produced on the big boy by such a course of action.

There are not a few who declare that the young adolescent is neither a boy nor a man. They talk of him as if his body were the abode of the evil one himself. The writer has heard more than one foolish father declare concerning his son, " I'll club the Devil out of him " ; and he has

been informed by various tearful mothers, "I think the Devil has gotten into my boy." He has had the satisfaction of being able to inform such parents that nothing had gotten into the boy, but that he had gotten into something ; namely, the most trying of all times, the period of early adolescence.

Some persons, not wishing to go as far as the foolish parents referred to, have characterized specimens of the big boy species as "colts," "mules," "hyenas," or they have employed other equally complimentary terms in describing them. It would be a very interesting and enlightening study that would reveal what "the colt" or "the hyena" is thinking about when he is being characterized thus.

The safest and sanest ground to take is that the big boy is in a class by himself and must be thought of and treated accordingly. At about twelve years of age

he becomes an entirely different creature from what he was before ; not that he is suddenly transformed into this creature, for all the years that have preceded have been leading up to the changes which now manifest themselves. At about sixteen years of age another period of development is entered, and the big boy becomes different from what he was before this time. In other words, the period of early adolescence in the average, normal youth, extends from about the age of twelve to about the age of sixteen ; then modifications take place according to climate, race, heredity, and environment. During this time, forces which have been gathering power for years manifest themselves ; these have to do with the physical, intellectual, and spiritual make-up of the boy. Concerning the physical changes, much has been said and understood. The intellectual evolution of the boy is now quite clearly recognized.

Much attention is being directed to his spiritual awakening, and its meaning for him and the kingdom of Christ.

Of one thing we may be quite certain : at this period the big boy is having the hardest time of his life. The trouble he makes for others is nothing in comparison with the trouble he is having with himself. So much attention is generally paid to what he does, that but little time has been left to consider why he does it. A brighter day, however, is opening up for him, because many persons are asking, "Why is he thus?" and, "Why does he do so?" not for the purpose of making his life harder than it is, but in order to help him through this tempestuous period.

Added to the fact that the boy is in a class by himself, physically, mentally, and spiritually, is another fact that increases the difficulty of dealing with him. He frequently considers himself a misunder-

stood and much abused individual, and often withdraws from the influence of those who might help him. This makes it extremely difficult to get his confidence in order to do him good.

Because he is hedged about as we have indicated, the big boy needs most of all to be understood by those who ought to help him ; that is to say, by his parents, his pastor, his teachers in both day-school and Sunday-school, and the officers of the latter. Without manifesting any pity for him, these various persons should sympathize with him, while they should deal with him firmly, because he is incapable of judging what is best for himself. Firmness should always be coupled with the resolution to endure much because of what the big boy is, and should always be accompanied by the determination to lay aside personal preferences in order to do the very best for him.

IV

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF BIG BOYS

FROM whatever standpoint, physically, mentally, or spiritually, we view him, the big boy is a most interesting subject for study. His characteristics are many and varied. They are not all manifested in the same individual nor in the same way by those who possess them. We shall be able to refer but to a few of the most marked in them :

1. *Rebellion against constituted authority.* The forces at play within the big boy make him restless under the forms of restraint which his elders think necessary for the conduct of human society. The youth does not understand why these restrictions should be, and is

very apt to show his disregard for them in ways that are not at all pleasant to his elders. While he should not be allowed to go too far in his attempts at overthrowing what is for the good of the majority, for the teacher to know that this rebellion is natural to him, helps in dealing with him. Above all, the one who is to do him good must be able to show him that the very restraints which chafe him so are helping to make a man of him. He must be inspired with the idea that he who would lead must first learn to obey.

2. *Doubt.* The growing, matter-of-fact boy of the Junior Department, who accepts everything told him by those whom he respects, is transformed into quite a different youth when he enters the adolescent stage of development. He questions everything and very likely doubts those things which are most dear to Christian people because of their

sacred associations. Where this doubt is expressed it can be met and dealt with. Where it is unexpressed it is very difficult to do much for the doubter. Many of the seeming inconsistencies of the young adolescent become at least explainable when it is known that he is in the period of doubt. Arguing will never help him to believe. The worst of all things is to endeavour to crush his doubt. What he needs most of all, in the first place, is more information, for he knows very little, and in the second place, an unswerving example of faith on the part of some one whom he can imitate.

3. *Day-dreams.* The day-dreams of the big boy, as a rule, concern himself, and are in the line of his future greatness. They are the natural outgrowth of the bigness which he attributes to himself, and frequently lead him to regard with pity, if not with contempt, those of his elders who have not yet

attained the greatness which is already his own in imagination. The wise teacher who learns what is in the boy's mind, has a point of contact which he may use to great advantage in turning the boy's dreams into something practical. He should not endeavour to laugh away the young adolescent's dreams, but should use them as starting-points from which to get him to put into operation the boundless energy within him, which is often spent in doing evil simply for want of the proper direction.

4. *Love.* The big boy is in love. Not, however, with those things which his elders love. As a rule he is infatuated with some hero, real or imaginary. For example, the writer once knew a boy who was so much in love with Napoleon that he knew of little else. When he found one who would talk about Napoleon, there was no trouble at all in the two getting along very well together. As

the big boy is shy, it will be difficult to get him to acknowledge what it is on which his affections are centred, but he who can discover it and prove to the boy that he is interested in it, will be able to do much in molding his character. If the boy loves a miserable yellow dog, I may reach the boy by way of a manifested interest in that dog, provided the interest is real.

5. *Activity.* The big boy cannot bear to be where, as he puts it, "there's nothing doing." He must be on the go all the time; that is one reason why it is so difficult for him to sit still in Sunday-school and listen to a lecture. If the teacher is intellectually active enough to keep the boy's mind on the jump, his body will be quiet. If, however, he is not able to give him sufficient material to keep his mind fully employed, very likely the boy will show it in physical restlessness. This activity may be made

use of in many ways, by giving it expression along channels of helpfulness for church and Sunday-school instead of allowing it to go to waste in other directions.

6. *Self-consciousness.* The young adolescent is morbidly self-conscious. In some cases, this makes him retiring and unwilling to engage in many lines of effort which will place him in the public gaze. In other youths, self-consciousness makes them do many things, which, to the uninitiated, seem to indicate that they are bad at heart. Their actions, however, are but the shell which they put up to keep those who do not understand them from getting at their real selves. Thrice blessed is that teacher who can get his boys to be natural in his presence!

The teacher who recognizes the pedagogical value of these characteristics, will not only study his pupils to

find manifestations of them, but will also endeavour to learn how to meet them as they appear in the various members of his class, with the variations which are sure to be manifested. It is our purpose here to call attention to them in order that the teacher may be prepared for them. "How to meet them," is a question that is answered in the following chapters. Much is already gained by the teacher, who, unobserved, is studying the actions of his boys in order to learn by which of the above-mentioned characteristics they are prompted. In this study, every successful leader of young adolescents must be engaged continuously, for, while there are certain well-defined traits which belong to this period, the manifestations of them vary; hence the necessity not only for knowing "big boys," but also for being acquainted with the individuals that are to be benefited.

V

BEFORE BOYS BECOME BIG

IF a mother had positive assurance that at about a certain age her boy would have a serious illness, she would do everything in her power to prepare him for the critical time. Such assurance, however, cannot be given. There is, on the other hand, an almost absolute certainty that in the early adolescent period her boy will pass through a moral and spiritual crisis. If she, and the others, who have to deal with him before this time were half as anxious concerning his spiritual welfare as they are concerning his physical development, it would not be difficult to prepare him for the time of trial. Let us hope that the present interest in the study of the big

boy will lead not only to a more intelligent treatment of him during the adolescent period, but also to a more earnest endeavour to prepare him for the storm and stress of that stage of development.

There is absolutely no question that the home, when the boy is an infant, is the very best place and time to begin to prepare him for the experiences through which he is likely to pass. In this case, as in many others, "forewarned is forearmed." Hence the plea is put forth that no time be lost after the birth of the child in beginning the work of putting him in the very best spiritual condition. Nothing will be quite so helpful to this end as the proper spiritual atmosphere in the home. The boy who breathes such an atmosphere as naturally as he breathes the air, may be troublesome when he becomes big, but there is much more hope of bringing him through his troubles than if the endeavour were made to introduce

him to spiritual things when he is under the pressure of adolescent development.

The Sunday-school should also be so forewarned that its leaders will begin to work for the boy's spiritual welfare as soon as he is enrolled in its membership. The superintendent of the Beginners' Class, as well as the superintendent of the Primary Department, may do much in leading the little fellow into vital touch with Christ, and thus be preparing him for what is in store for him in later years.

Above all, the Junior Department¹ is preëminently the place for the kind of preparation which we are suggesting. The old-fashioned method was to promote the big boy at about ten years of age into the main [school, where he was, in a measure, lost in the attention paid to those much older than he. Thanks to the heed that is being given to the study

¹ For a full consideration of this important subject see, "After the Primary, What?"

of the individual, there are now being formed all over the land Junior Departments, into which the boy is introduced when he is about nine years old, and from which he is promoted at about twelve, or just at the time when his adolescent traits are beginning to attract attention. The superintendent of the Junior Department generally gives such attention to the study of her pupils, both as they now are and as they soon shall be, that she knows something about the adolescent period, and possesses the ability, in a measure, to prepare her boys for it.

For example, the trained superintendent of the Junior Department now knows that the "gang instinct," which is so marked in big boys, begins to manifest itself when her pupils are about eleven years of age. She makes use of this knowledge by forming her boys into an organization under proper auspices and

thus allows them to give vent, under the direction of a competent leader, to that desire to be associated with others, which otherwise might lead them to form an organization elsewhere, and thus be kept away from the Sunday-school.

Again, she endeavours to bind her boys loyally to the church and the Sunday-school by giving them something to do in connection with the church, which will make use of their boundless activity in such ways that they will have their Sunday-school and their church constantly in mind. This, of course, means time and labour expended by the leader, but it is an expenditure which is more than worth the while.

There is much discussion as to the proper time for a boy to confess Christ. Statistics show that the greatest number of decisive religious awakenings occur at about the end of the early adolescent period. While these statistics are un-

doubtedly true, there is a fact that has been largely overlooked, namely, very many of those who confess Christ at this time were brought to Him at a much earlier period, but their religious life came to a standstill during the tempestuous development of early adolescence and their early religious experience seemed to be a delusion. Knowing these facts, the superintendent of the Junior Department ought to endeavour to get her pupils who have already been brought to Christ in the Primary Department, to confess Him publicly while in the Junior Department. Then it should be the duty of the church to safeguard these young Christians through the troublous time of early adolescence. Where this is done, there will be a decisive awakening at the end of this period, but it will be, in most cases, simply a coming back in a more intelligent and determined way to those things from which the big boy turned

aside for a while. In other words, it is much better to endeavour to bring the child to Christ and have him confess Him as Saviour, than to run the risk of allowing him to approach the adolescent period without having had any vital religious experience ; as he leaves the early adolescent period he will be all the more likely to have a decisive religious re-awakening for having done so.

VI

ESPECIAL PROVISION FOR BIG BOYS

OUR studies so far in the big boy problem ought to have led us to some conclusions. These conclusions, however, are of questionable value unless they lead to definite action that will accrue to the benefit of those whom we have been considering. As a result of our studies we may conclude, among other things, the following :

1. The big boy should be in a class with boys of his own age ; he should not be put in with small boys nor should he be with men. He looks with a good deal of contempt upon those who are younger than himself, and he is not ready yet for that kind of teaching which is due to men. The feelings of the teacher in this regard

should have no consideration. A lady may be attached to two big boys in her class, and for the sake of having a class of average size may have admitted several small boys into her class. She should, however, for the two boys' sake, have them transferred into a class where they shall be with boys of about their own age and be handled by a teacher such as is described in the next chapter.

2. The big boy should be in an organized class. The "gang instinct" begins to manifest itself before the period of early adolescence, and should be recognized in the Junior Department of the Sunday-school ; at the age which we are considering it is very strong, and should be taken advantage of in helping to hold the big boy to the Sunday-school. One method of doing this is to organize his class, allowing him all possible freedom of choice as to officers, committees, forms of work, etc., while at the same time the leader of

the class exercises that sort of supervision which keeps the big boy from doing foolish things, as he will do most likely, if left to himself.

3. The big boy should have a room where his class can meet by itself. The writer is well aware of the difficulties connected with carrying out this suggestion. As a rule, our Sunday-schools are not built so that many classes can have rooms to themselves, and even where such rooms are available, in most cases they are given to the old folks of the congregation. Every intelligent student of the big boy problem should be so convinced of the need of class rooms for the boys that he will advocate them, and thus hasten the time when the architectural arrangements in every Sunday-school will help in holding the big boy to the school and, consequently, to the church.

4. The big boy should have a place in connection with the church, where he can

meet the members of his class on one or two evenings of the week. Of course, we would like to have our big boy at the prayer-meeting, but he does not care anything for such a gathering. If, however, we keep him from saying good-bye to the church, there comes a time when he will be ready and glad to attend the prayer service. How foolish was that church session which voted that the big boys of the church might no longer have the use of the church parlour every Thursday evening, for the reason that they were wearing out the carpet! It would seem harsh to say that those elders considered a carpet of more value than men, but such is the fact.

5. The big boy should have work planned for him in connection with the church and Sunday-school. His activity is boundless; he will be doing something. When he is organized in a class with others under proper leadership, he will be

very glad to follow his leader in lines of activity that will tell for the advancement of the church with which he is connected.

There are some who fancy that this is a very high price to pay for the privilege of keeping boys in the Sunday-school. Such persons should consider how valuable would be the services of a group of Christian men in their church in addition to those whom they have now, and upon whom fall the exacting burdens of church work. The way to get such men is to keep the boys loyal to, and interested in, their Sunday-school.

In the whole realm of Christian work there is nothing of more importance than the endeavour to make special provision for the big boys in the Sunday-school. Incalculable benefits will accrue to any church if its officers will engage in a serious and prayerful study of the big boy problem, for the purpose of rightly handling the adolescents between the ages

of twelve and sixteen. Such a study ought to result in securing for these boys,

1. Suitable Teachers. So much depends upon the teacher that the question of what kind of an instructor the boy should have cannot be too frequently, nor too seriously, considered.

2. Proper Architecture. It is understood, of course, that the principal reason why the boys cannot have rooms for themselves is because of the old-fashioned method of constructing church buildings. As the officers of the church will have much to say concerning the future building to be erected, it is only fitting that they should be fully informed as to what is needed for class rooms.

3. Helpful Treatment. The present-day expert convention-speaker has much to say concerning the necessity of the church taking the young adolescent through his trying experiences, but, even as he says it, he realizes that his talk is

mostly in vain, for the reason that very few people in the church care anything about the young adolescent, and fewer still, perhaps, know how to help him.

A brighter time is dawning for the big boy. Men and women everywhere are studying him and are endeavouring to make the results of that study practical in the provision made for him in the Sunday-school. Shall we not rejoice in the advent of this better day and help it along?

VII

THEIR TEACHER

TOO much thought and attention cannot be given to the selection of the proper teacher for the big boy. Heretofore, in many schools, the question of availability has been about the only one considered. Here is a magnificent middle-aged lady with a class of big boys who are about breaking her heart, but whom she thinks she must keep because there is no one else in the school available for the work. Over there is a beautiful young lady, who has been coaxed into taking a class of young adolescents simply because a man teacher could not be found willing to devote time and energy to the instruction of the boys. While both these teachers are doing very

well, neither of them is doing justice to the boys ; for only a man, who has been through their experiences, can fully appreciate the things necessary to be known by the one who endeavours to give moral and spiritual instruction to the big boys.

While there are exceptions, this is the rule : A young man of character and force should be selected as the teacher of boys between the ages of twelve and sixteen. The fact that there are so few men of the proper calibre, who are willing to consecrate themselves to this service, is no argument against the correctness of the principle.

Whatever the age or sex of the teacher, if the boys are to get the very best, the teacher must possess, among other things, the following qualities :

1. He must be a student of the boy. The study expended upon the boy must first be for the purpose of learning wherein he is like other boys of his age ; and

second, to note the differences between him and other boys. To the study of the boy, there should be added the study of results of investigations made by others, as to the best way to handle the boy during the critical period through which he is passing.

2. He must be a sympathizer with the boy. The results of the study advocated should be manifested by the teacher in a kind of sympathy which is unobtrusive, but none the less real. Pity, the boy despises; manifestations of affection, he will have none of; but to the one who can enter into real sympathy with his longings, he will yield a boundless loyalty.

3. He must be a companion of the boy. This, perhaps, is one of the principal reasons why the teacher should be a young man. It is very difficult for a lady to be a real companion to the boy in his early adolescent period, and it is almost impossible for an old man to get

away from himself so as to be companionable to one living in a world altogether unlike his own. Even a young man must continually pull himself together with a recollection of what the big boy is in order to be his companion, but the efforts required will be amply repaid by the influence he will exercise over him whom he is endeavouring to benefit.

4. He must be a confidant of the boy. Perhaps the hardest thing in dealing with the young adolescent is that of gaining his confidence, for he is not only shy, but he believes that he is misunderstood, and that there is no one who really cares for him. When his teacher has become his companion, the way is opened for the boy to give him his confidence. When this is once done, and the teacher proves his loyalty to the boy, the latter will more and more confide in him. The wise teacher will make use of this confidence to help the boy, and will sooner bite his

tongue off than disclose what has been told him in confidence.

5. He must be an example for the boy. The young adolescent may not heed his teacher's words, but he is watching him with keen eyes, and has confidence in him, or the reverse, according as his life squares with his teaching. Consequently, while the teacher should be careful of his words, he should be more careful of his actions, for he will find that the latter are producing the deepest effects upon his pupil.

Above all, the teacher of the big boy should be spiritual, for all that he is attempting has a spiritual end in view. Next to his spirituality should be placed the necessity for absolute honesty ; whatever the adolescent may claim the privilege of saying and doing himself, he demands that his teacher shall be absolutely fair and square.

No one should feel, as the result of

what we have said, that he must resign his class in the Sunday-school. Where classes are already formed, let them go on as they are ; but when new classes are promoted from the Junior Department, the endeavour should be to secure for the boys a teacher somewhat after the order just described.

Moreover, let no one imagine that only an expert can successfully handle the big boy. Indeed, it has sometimes been found that so-called experts have proven to be lamentable failures in handling those about whom they have the finest theories. It is the heart that counts most. If a young man has a genuine love for Christ, and is willing to prove that love by working for the boy for the Master's sake, it will not be difficult for him to become a student of the boy in order to sympathize with him genuinely and to help him over his hard places. The boy will soon come to understand

what is the motive power that keeps the teacher at his work, and will respect him accordingly. Hence, the oft-repeated prayer of him who is to deal successfully with the young adolescent should be :

“ More love to Thee, O Christ,
 More love to Thee !
 Hear Thou the prayer I make
 On bended knee ;
 This is my earnest plea—
 More love, O Christ, to Thee,
 More love to Thee ! ”

VIII

THEIR INTIMATES

IT is more than likely that the big boy's most intimate friend is not his father. This statement is as sad as it is true. Perhaps the reason why the big boy is not intimate with his father is because the latter has forgotten that he was once his son's age, and lacks in sympathy with him. Very likely, he misunderstands his boy, and the boy misunderstands him; so there is a separation between them, which widens as the years go on, and causes the youth to make others, rather than his father, his intimate, confidential friends.

In all probability the boy's mother is not his most intimate friend, for her mother heart rebels against the thought

of his becoming big. To her, he is her baby, and she treats him as such, to his secret disgust, if not to his open opposition. Nothing hurts the big boy quite so much as to be treated as if he were a little child.

In many cases, the boy's Sunday-school teacher is not very intimate with him. The latter, at times, regards the former more as an evil to be endured, than as a friend to be confided in. Of course, the big boy has given his teacher various causes for forming such an opinion of him. At the same time, the teacher may have been demanding too much from the boy, in the way of consideration, and he may have been unwilling to give the boy all that is due him. The man, being older than the boy, ought to be able and willing to make more allowance for him, than the boy can make, by any possibility, for his teacher.

It is the case, sometimes, that the maturer Christians of the church are not very intimate with the big boys, for these mature men and women are thinking and living on quite different levels from those of the boy. Instead of making it their business to get down to the boy, in order to help him, most adults expect the boy to measure up to their standards of Christian thought and action, even if they themselves do not adhere strictly to them. This, of course, is an impossibility on the boy's part, and results in his unwillingness to confide in those who might help him most.

Occasionally, there is found a pastor, a teacher, or a church officer, who, having made a study of the big boy, understands him, sympathizes with him, and is really in a position to help him. It is too bad that such persons are the exception, rather than the rule.

But who are the intimate friends of our

big boy? They are generally fellows of about his own age. The "gang instinct," which began to manifest itself just before he entered the adolescent period, is now quite strong, and the big boy naturally seeks his friends among those of about his own age. It is not unusual to find big boys making confidants of one another, and, frequently, leading one another on into evil practices. What the individual would never think of attempting alone, the gang attempts with reckless bravado—to the sorrow, often, of those who know the consequences of their actions. Hence, in dealing with a big boy, one of the first endeavours should be to ascertain who are his intimates, and along what lines they are acting. This will often result, on the one hand, in learning what are the dominant traits of the big boy's character, and, on the other hand, in putting into operation those plans which will help him to higher things.

Not infrequently, an older person, for evil purposes, cultivates the friendship of the big boy, and, pretending to sympathize with and help him, leads him on to the abyss of moral degradation. A saloon-keeper, in a crowded section of one of our great cities, furnished the cellar under his saloon as a rendezvous for a crowd of big boys. He deliberately set himself to attach them to his saloon, in order that he might have their custom, in future years, when they would become addicted to the drink habit. Instances similar to this might be adduced, where, for the sake of gain, or, sometimes, something worse, evil-minded men and women have set themselves to capture big boys, by pretending to be their friends.

To offset this, the teacher who succeeds best in helping a big boy must become genuinely interested in him. He must endeavour, by every possible means, to come down to the boy's level of every-

day life. He must endure some things, which are in themselves disagreeable to his maturer taste, for only by doing so can he prove himself a friend to the boy, and thus gain his confidence. Of course, this means time devoted to the study of the big boy, and personal intercourse with him, as well as prayer for him; the rewards coming from this expenditure of effort will compensate for it abundantly.

It would be a great advance towards the solution of the big boy problem if, in every Sunday-school, there could be a consecrated young man who would be the medium of communication between the boys and the officers of the church and Sunday-school. Such men as are now devoting themselves to the boys' work of the Young Men's Christian Association would render invaluable help in the Sunday-school. The one who gives himself to this type of effort, to the exclusion of all other work, will find it to

be well worth the very best that is in him.

Since such a man is not available in every congregation, the next best thing is for the pastor, officers, and teachers to become as fully informed as possible concerning the intimate friends of the big boys of the Sunday-school. Thus they may plan wisely to meet any perils growing out of such friendship, and also gain the confidence of the boys in order to become real friends to them. How shall this information be gained? This is a persistent question. There is only one possible way, namely, by personal contact with the boys outside the Sunday-school. Those who come into touch with the boys, in various ways, and at different times, must meet and compare notes, in order to arrive at intelligent conclusions as to what is best to be done. All planning in behalf of the big boys should be based on these conclusions.

IX

THEIR ACTIVITY

THERE is no doubt that the young adolescent will be doing something, unless he is ill, or too tired to be on the go. This activity, unlike the restlessness of the little child, or even the activity of the boy of the junior age, has behind it a purpose. The lad is not only intensely interested in what he is doing but, according to his mind, he is working with a great object in view. To be sure, his purpose may not appeal very strongly to the adult, but to him it overshadows everything else. In the winter he may be manufacturing a bob-sled, which is to excel everything in the neighbourhood; in the summer he may seem to be tearing himself to pieces practicing for, and taking part in, the base-

ball contests of the neighbourhood. He is determined that his team shall come out ahead in the season's games.

Educators have not been slow to recognize the value of this activity as displayed by the adolescent. It has been declared that the whole pedagogy of adolescence may be summed up in this principle: Inspire enthusiastic activity. The inspiration intended here is in the direction of the studies which the instructor wishes the pupil to follow. Herein lies the difficulty of Sunday-school work. During the age of development under consideration, the boy is not particularly interested in those things which pertain to the spiritual side of Sunday-school instruction. Hence, to interest him in what is spiritual, an appeal must be made to him along the line of those things in which he delights. At the same time, the balance must be maintained, or the work of the Sunday-school

will be turned from its proper function, which is the instruction of the youth for the purpose of spiritual development.

Just here comes in one of the strongest arguments for giving the big boy a male teacher, who is young enough to understand him and sympathize with him. A wise, manly instructor manifesting real interest in those things which are of greatest moment to the boy, may be able to win him to an interest in the things of highest import.

The very first step, in solving the difficulties connected with the activity of the big boys in a Sunday-school class, is for the teacher to learn what the things are in which they are most intensely interested. He can do this only by gaining the confidence of those whom he instructs, and by mingling with them informally at times and in places other than the hour devoted to religious instruction in the Sunday-school on the

Lord's Day. This plea we have been making in many forms throughout this manual; it cannot be repeated too frequently, nor emphasized too strongly.

The next step for the teacher to consider is: How may the boys' activities be made use of in connection with the work of the Sunday-school? The writer is acquainted with a class of boys who have much musical and literary ability. They have been organized so that vent is given to their activities along musical and literary lines in the entertainments given for various objects in connection with the Sunday-school. They meet during the week, discuss their plans, practice their parts, and prepare for what, to them, is the real work of life. Their teacher's manifest interest in them serves as a bond of union between him and them, with the results that they are regular in attendance on the sessions of the Sunday-school, several have been

brought to Christ, and have joined the church, while others are approachable on spiritual subjects.

The next step is for the teacher to make a careful study of each lesson for the purpose of showing how it applies to the activities of the members of his class. Big boys, as a rule, are indifferent to the Bible, because they do not realize that it has any especial bearing upon the things in which they are interested. When, however, the boy is convinced that the Bible has something to say to him as a baseball enthusiast or amateur musician, as the case may be, he will listen to the truths brought to his attention from its pages.

While the wise teacher is thus studying the activities of his pupils, and making use of them for the present, he is also looking ahead to the future, for he realizes that these very activities which now seem of such little moment are the hope

of the church of the future. These active boys will become the working men of the church if held to it and trained properly. Hence, while seemingly yielding to the wishes of the boy, the teacher, who has in mind the work of the kingdom, will be gradually turning him from the lower to the higher activities and by degrees training him as a labourer who, in days to come, will help bear the burdens of church work.

If proof were needed of the value of making use of the activities of the big boys of the Sunday-school, it could be found in the conditions that prevail in the average church, in almost any community. One has only to answer carefully this question: Who are the active male workers in the church to-day? A very large majority of them are men who were instructed in the Sunday-school and trained for service when they were comparatively young. The number of men

who are drawn to the church and develop into workers are very few. Is there not in this thought a great inspiration for the Sunday-school teacher, who may be discouraged because of the seeming indifference of his big boys to the real work of the kingdom, while they are so actively engaged in those things which may be considered trivial?

X

THEIR INTERESTS

THERE is no question concerning the physical activity of the big boy ; if he is not on the go it is because he is tired, or hungry, or under unwelcome restraint. Some have questioned his mental activity. Perhaps one reason for this is that he has been unwilling to follow the wishes of others in regard to the things on which he will fix his mind. There is absolutely no doubt that the big boy is intensely interested in many things, and that along the line of his interests he displays a remarkable activity.

It is not our purpose here to discuss whether the big boy is interested in those things which are the best. As we are studying the problem, it is necessary

for us to know its factors. One set of these factors includes the big boy's interests. To ignore them is to put ourselves beyond the possibility of solving the problem for the one, whether he be father, pastor, or teacher, who wishes to help the big boy. For him who wishes to be helpful, the following suggestions are made :

(1) Become acquainted with the big boy's interests. In order to do this the big boy himself must be studied, and time must be expended in becoming familiar with those things to which he devotes himself. No generalization can be made except to repeat the truth, that every boy has his interests. In order to know what they are, each boy must be regarded as an individual, and attention paid to him as if there were no other boys in the world.

(2) Endeavour to sympathize genuinely with the big boy in his interests.

The opposite course is the one too frequently pursued; the adult, as a rule, ignores the boy's interests, and expects him to become interested in those things which are of importance to his elders. When Christ talked with the woman of Samaria at the well, He manifested a genuine interest in that which was of importance to her, and because of the genuineness of His sympathy with her, was enabled to bring her to look at things from His standpoint. Had He ignored the water and Jacob's Well, He would not have led her to declare that He was the Messiah. From Him we may learn a much-needed lesson; namely, if we are to get the boy interested in the things which we regard as of prime importance, we must show him that we are interested in those things which he considers to be the greatest of all.

(3) Encourage the big boy in his interests. It is true the boy may be in-

terested in some things which in themselves are wrong, but this is likely to be the exception and not the rule. The one who is to benefit the boy can encourage him along the line of those interests which are in themselves proper, even if they are not of the very highest order. For example, a foolish mother lost her influence over her son, because she was vexed at him for being intensely interested in machinery, when she wished him to think of studying for the ministry. A wise father found that his son was neglecting his studies in order to make chemical experiments. Instead of reproving the boy for what he was doing, the father became interested in his work, fitted up a room on the top floor of his home as the boy's laboratory, and provided him with material for his experiments. While the boy did neglect some things in school, the father kept his hold upon him, and the result to-day is, that

boy, now a man, is an eminent professor of chemistry. Did not the father's encouragement pay better than the mother's vexation?

(4) Make use of the big boy's interests to lead him to higher things. The patient, studious Sunday-school teacher, learning in what his boy is interested, may use the boy's interests to lead up to attention to spiritual things. Most boys are interested in heroes and the heroic. Perhaps their hero may be a pirate or a prize-fighter. This interest may be used as a point of contact between the boy's hero and the heroes of the Old Testament. By degrees he may be led to appreciate the heroic in Christianity. The moral furnished by the records of splendid achievements on the mission field both in the past and the present, may be employed in thus leading the boy.

Much is written to-day on the necessity for the teacher observing the principle of

apperception, or, as it is more familiarly put, getting the point of contact between his pupil and that which is to be taught. While many suggestions may be given as to how this may be done, none will be more fruitful of results than the endeavour to become thoroughly acquainted with the big boy's interests, in order to make use of them in presenting the truths which we so much desire him to know, accept, and follow.

"But my big boy will not talk to me about his interests," interposes a teacher. Perfectly true, unless you and your big boy are intimates. Hence, the importance of Chapter VIII. Unless you and your big boy come close together, you will not be able to learn in what he is most interested, and consequently will not be able to help him. The helpful teacher must get down to his pupil's level of every-day life.

XI

THEIR SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

THE writer has in his mind's eye a typical picture. Two years ago, William was an artless boy in the Junior Department. He had many friends, for his open-hearted confidence made it easy to be friendly with him. William, however, is no longer a junior; a decided change has taken place in him. Instead of approaching one with the artless confidence of the young boy, he is shut up in an armour of reserve, for self-consciousness is playing an important part in his make-up. He seeks a remote corner of the room; he is shy and diffident. It is with difficulty that he can be induced to utter more than a monosyllable. His friends are alarmed at the change that has taken place in him, until

they grasp the thought that it is due to the boy's development.

While there is one general term to describe this characteristic of the big boy, self-consciousness, its manifestations are almost as various as the boys themselves ; they differ in different types of individuals. Here is a boy whose self-consciousness manifests itself in a morbid sensitiveness. He is always looking for slights and insults not intended for him, and, by brooding over his imaginary wrongs, makes himself a most miserable individual. Here is another boy who imagines, every time he is in public, that all eyes are fixed upon him. His self-consciousness, accordingly, manifests itself in nervousness or awkwardness. He is very much vexed at himself for what he does, and yet for the life of him he cannot prevent the sometimes amusing and sometimes hurtful results of his awkwardness or nervousness.

When you speak to John he blushes, and, not understanding the cause of his embarrassment, you conclude that John has been doing wrong or is guilty of something which he wishes very much to conceal. Your inference, however, is altogether incorrect, for John's blushing is the accompaniment of the bashfulness which is one of the natural results of his self-consciousness.

Henry is an adolescent of far different type. There is no timidity or shrinking in his make-up. His self-consciousness takes the form of self-conceit. He imagines that everybody is paying attention to him, but he also fancies that they have reason for doing so, for he is worthy of much notice. There is little use, at this time of his life, arguing with him or laughing at him, for his self-appreciation gives him such a high opinion of himself that he simply puts you down as an "old foggy" for not recognizing his preëminent powers.

One form of self-consciousness often leads to extremes. Hence, we have that bravado which is so trying in some of our young friends. Their extravagant words and outrageous actions are frequently the results of this feeling of importance which has taken hold of them. Whatever may be the manifestations of self-consciousness, it will be very helpful to remember that the boy's chief aim is to keep others from getting at his real self; that self lies hidden within him and he is very much disinclined to expose it to the gaze of another. Hence, his blushing on the one hand, or his braggadocio on the other hand, is very likely but a shield which he puts before himself to keep you from getting at him.

In discussing this subject once, a group of educators gave illustrations as to the extremes of speech and action to which this trait of self-consciousness often leads the big boy. One told of a boy in day-

school who had highly polished his shoes before leaving his home, but who, on his way to school, noticed that a number of his classmates had mud on their shoes. He deliberately stepped into a mud puddle and thus put his shoes in the same condition as those of his companions. It was figured out that his reason for this was his fear that his highly polished shoes might attract attention to himself.

Perhaps the very worst type of youth to deal with is that in which the extremes of self-consciousness alternate. Occasionally there is found a boy who is now bashful and timid, and again brazen and impudent. These divers manifestations all spring from the same root, namely, self-consciousness, and are dependent on the boy's mood. Some conclusions may be reached as to the way to deal with boys in view of these facts :

1. It is best to have the big boys occupy a place in the Sunday-school where

they will attract as little attention as possible. Their room should be so situated that they will not be gazed at by the whole school. If they have not a room, a corner of the department should be assigned to them, where they will not be the observed of all observers.

2. In questioning such boys, whether in the class, or in the school as a whole, the proper course is to avoid putting questions to individuals in such a way as to attract attention to them. They may be spoken to in groups or as a class.

3. When one of these boys persists in disorder, the very best method is to avoid saying or doing anything that will call attention to him. To discipline him, simply remain quiet and let him call attention to himself. For him to realize that he has made himself an attraction, will be punishment enough.

As in dealing with all other characteristics of the young adolescent, it will be

necessary in the case of the one under consideration, to deal with boys as individuals, by carefully studying them and trying to help them through the period when their self-consciousness is most marked. Hence, the one who is to be the most helpful, is he who understands the general principles connected with this trait, and puts this knowledge into practice in dealing with individuals personally.

XII

THEIR DOUBTS

THE boy in the pre-adolescent period is a literalist. He believes just what is told him on the authority of those whom he respects. He draws a straight line of conduct, and expects his elders to walk according thereto, although he may deviate therefrom. A time comes, however, when the frank, truthful boy will look his teacher or pastor in the face, and concerning some truth or doctrine that the elder is trying to get him to accept, will declare, "I do not believe that." What is the trouble with him? Has some new species of wickedness gotten hold of him? No, he is simply going through a natural evolution; he has left behind him the literal, matter-of-fact stage of development, and

has entered another, in which he will question almost everything.

This questioning should be encouraged, for if attempts are made to repress it, the boy may become a hypocrite, pretending one thing, while he really believes another. To every intelligent person, this is a much worse state of mind than that manifested by the boy who questions and gives one an opportunity to explain.

Doubt begins at about twelve years of age, and reaches its climax in the normal youth at about nineteen. At first, it is simply a part of the adolescent's development. He doubts largely because it is in his nature to rebel against everything. Afterwards, however, his doubts become more intellectual, and, therefore, more serious.

Concerning two facts at least, the one interested in the big boy should be convinced. First : the big boy's doubts cannot be laughed away. They may seem

to disappear in the presence of ridicule, but they are simply concealed beneath an exterior that does not betray what is going on in the boy's mind. Second : they cannot be crushed out. Foolish persons have undertaken the serious task of compelling a boy to give up his doubts. Such attempts always result not only in failure, so far as the doubts themselves are concerned, but in the endeavourer losing his influence with the boy.

Is the teacher, then, helpless in the presence of adolescents' doubts? Not at all ; it means much for him to know that doubt is natural to the big boy, and it means more if this knowledge will enable him to go on treating the boy in a friendly way as if the doubts had no existence.

While, as in dealing with other characteristics of the big boys, no definite line of treatment can be prescribed, as they differ so much one from the other, two sugges-

tions may be made, the following of which will help greatly in tiding the boys over the period of doubt :

1. One reason for the boy's doubt is his lack of knowledge. He fancies that he knows a great deal ; the fact is, he knows very little. He doubts, because he thinks he knows it all, whereas, the data at his command are not sufficient to convince him of the reality of those things which he questions. Hence, a wise course of procedure is utterly to ignore the doubts, but at the same time to keep giving information concerning those things which are doubted. The instructor must be very careful that his information is correct, for if he deceives the boy in one point, the latter will question things that are true, as he thinks of this deception.

2. To the big boy nothing speaks with quite as much force as truth incarnated in a person. Therefore, to get

him away from his doubt, those whom he looks up to as his instructors and leaders should live quietly, but persistently, the truths which the boy questions. For example, a lot of boys once paid particular attention to their minister when he lost his brother. He had often preached to them of the Christian's hope of immortality, and of the joy of meeting loved ones above. The time came for him to practice what he preached, and his young people, who questioned the great truths which he had announced with so much conviction, were very eager to observe just how he acted when he, himself, was called to give up a loved one. His living as if he actually believed what he had been teaching, did more to convince his big boys of the reality of some spiritual truths they had doubted than any number of sermons or any amount of arguing would have done.

There comes a time of settling of

doubts, when the doubter will seek help. Naturally, he will go to the one in whom he has most confidence. That one most likely will be the person whom he has observed as living true to his convictions. Hence, there is nothing at all hopeless in the effort to deal with the big boy when he is passing through the period of doubt. Without saying a word to him, a life may be lived which will speak in unmistakable language, which will affect him, because he will think about it ; it will lead him to go to the one who lives that life for help when he is beginning to come to himself again. What a glorious privilege this is for the pastor, parent, or teacher !

XIII

THEIR DAY-DREAMS

“**I** WAS nineteen years old before I had a day-dream.”

“How was that?”

“I followed the plow like a dumb beast and thought nothing of anything but my work, food, and sleep.”

“What occurred when you were nineteen?”

“I awoke, then, and for a few years dreamed at a lively rate.”

The one referred to in this conversation was an exception to the rule. When he narrated his experience, it was for the purpose of showing that there are exceptions, for as the principal of a school he had learned that his boys of the early adolescent age were dreaming

day-dreams. As a rule, this is a fact ; anything else is an exception.

He sat in an old-fashioned pew in an old-fashioned church, facing an old-fashioned minister delivering an old-fashioned sermon. He was fourteen years old, and he was saying to himself, as he looked at the old-fashioned minister, " If I were up there I would show him how to preach." He has preached many a sermon since that day, but it is a very serious question whether any of them were ever as good as the one delivered by the old-fashioned minister. The point to be remembered is : At fourteen he was dreaming his day-dreams, and they were in the line of his future career.

Not every big boy, however, is dreaming that he is to be a minister ; but very likely he is having his dreams all the same. A clergyman once reproved two boys of about fifteen years of age for outrageous conduct in Sunday-school.

The boys withdrew not only from the Sunday-school, but also from the church. Their pastor desired very much to get them back, and, seeking advice from the mother of one of them, who was equally solicitous that her boy should return to Sunday-school, was informed that the boy imagined himself a great railroad magnate, and that, with the other boy who had been spoken to in Sunday-school, and a third young fellow, was accustomed to meet regularly at the house of the last named and play at being railroad manipulators. The clergyman made a call at a time when the three boys were together, manifested his interest in their railroad schemes, got them to talking about themselves, learned at first hand of their day-dreams, sympathized with them in these dreams, became their friend, and got them back to Sunday-school.

Many boys are dreaming on a much

lower level than any of those named. A boy, for example, may be dreaming that he is a prize-fighter, or that he is a pirate. However much one may deprecate the form assumed by his dreams, the fact that he is dreaming must be recognized if any good is to be done him.

Of one fact we may be quite certain, namely, the teacher appears very small in the sight of the boy, whose very being is filled with the dreams of the greatness that he is to achieve in the future or which is already his in imagination. The teacher who realizes his littleness as compared with the boy's bigness, has already gained a point in dealing with the boy, for he will not be put out at any manifestation of disrespect, knowing that it is based largely on the boy's thought of his own greatness as compared with his teacher's lack of greatness.

One other fact must be reckoned with, namely, it is very difficult for the teacher

to learn just what the big boy's day-dreams are, for he is very loath to talk about them, being afraid that he will be ridiculed if he exposes the secrets of his heart. Difficult as the task may be, it will pay large dividends to the teacher who sets himself quietly to work to discover his boys' day-dreams, in order that he may sympathize with them in their imaginings, and thus obtain that hold upon them which may be used to their advantage.

The very best method to be pursued in the endeavour to discover the boy's dreams, is to get him alone, somewhere, and talk with him on general subjects. Little by little, he may be led to talk about himself, and, after some time, if he is assured of a sympathetic listener, he will reveal that which occupies his thoughts and his listener may infer his dreams.

Three questions are generally asked

when the subject of day-dreams is discussed :

1. Should an attempt be made to get the boy to give up his day-dreams? The answer is a most emphatic no. Indirectly, he may be led to think of other things, but if an effort is made to laugh him out of his dreams, or argue him away from them, he will only hold to them all the more.

2. Should he be encouraged in his day-dreams, if they are not in the line of the high ideal? For example, suppose he is dreaming that he is going to become a prize-fighter. There will be no use to ridicule this dream, but persistently he may be led to think of fighting other things than men, and then he may be encouraged to fight evil in its various forms, and thus his dream, which is on the lower level, turned into the reality, which is higher.

3. Should a boy be allowed to neglect

present duties because he has day-dreams? Most likely he will, unless he is very wisely dealt with. His day-dreams should be made use of to get him to engage in present duties. For example, if a boy is dreaming that he is a great physician, he may be encouraged in his dreams, but shown the impossibility of his becoming such as he desires to be unless he engages in hard study.

The difficulty of laying down any positive directions, we acknowledge. The great point to be borne in mind is that the boy does dream day-dreams, and that he must be very patiently handled while they have their hold on him.

XIV

THEIR LOVE AFFAIRS

“**I**’VE lost my baby.”

“What do you mean by your baby? I did not know that you had one.”

“Oh, I mean Charlie.”

“But Charlie is no baby; how old is he?”

“He is thirteen years old, but he is still my baby.”

“The very best way to lose him by making him think less of you, is to call him a baby and treat him as such. Do you not know that in his own estimation Charlie is a very big boy and that he dislikes to be called a baby? But tell me why you say you have lost him.”

“Well, he used to kiss me good-night when he went to bed and he would kiss

me when he went to school and come back home, but now he does not seem to care for me at all. If I attempt to kiss him or manifest any affection for him, he turns away from me, and I feel that I have lost him," saying which, the mother burst out weeping.

Her pastor, to whom she was telling her troubles, hastened to assure her that she had not lost her boy, that he was simply going through a natural development, and had now reached that stage of it in which he did not care for any demonstration of affection. His love for his mother was just as great as ever, but he did not manifest it. The mother was informed further that Charlie was not now in the kissing age, that he did not want at present to kiss any one, but that in three or four years from now he would kiss, not only his mother, but others, upon whom she would not care to have him lavish any affection. The pastor en-

deavoured to console the good lady with the thought that by and by her boy, if she did not alienate his affection by urging upon him those things for which he had no liking, would return her love with tenfold interest.

The above illustration recalls a principle that is now being recognized, namely : Boys, in the early adolescent period, do not wish any demonstration of affection. One may show one's love for the big boy in other ways than by kissing or employing endearing epithets. The boy, while resenting manifestations of affection, knows who loves him, appreciates the love, and will repay it some day.

We are beginning to learn also that the big boy's love affairs are not those of the adult. For example, he is not deeply in love with the prayer-meeting, with the study of the Bible or with religious conversation. These things, for the present are, as a rule, without the pale of his af-

fection. This does not mean, however, that he is not in love.

Did you ever notice a poor, miserable boy living in a hovel on the outskirts of a village or city? His surroundings are wretched and he is the last one in the world that the superficial observer would imagine to be in love. But do you see that yellow dog? You call the animal a cur, but that big boy yonder is deeply in love with that dog, and the dog loves him with an unselfishness that is beautiful to behold. Watch the boy as he shares his food with him and makes a companion of him. See the dog as he follows his master, and, should occasion require it, is prepared to yield his life in defense of him or in helpfulness to him.

Look at that other boy, who lives in an entirely different environment. He is in love with his pony. One morning he goes out to the barn, to find that his favourite is very ill. Those tears which

he sheds are as genuine as ever dropped from the eyes of one in love with another. That shout of exultation which escapes him when he realizes that his beloved pony is out of danger, is a genuine expression of the unadulterated joy which fills his heart.

It has been found in the crowded quarters of our cities that in some cases the one redeeming quality in the young adolescent is his love for some pet or for something upon which he could lavish his otherwise pent-up emotions. Strange to say, to many boys, the pigeons they house upon the roof of the tenement in which they exist are the objects of their affection.

The big boy is in love with his gang. He would stand any kind of punishment, even death itself, before he would betray one of its members. This is one of the reasons why it is so necessary to take into consideration the influence of the

gang instinct in dealing with the young adolescent.

To help us in dealing with our big boys we must remember that in the age under consideration, the sexes repel each other. The boy who played with the girl when he was ten years old, now avoids her, and seeks the company of the gang. In a few years he will separate from the gang for the girl's sake, but just at present he has no use for her. This helps us in assigning our big boys to classes. In the first place, boys and girls of this age should be in separate classes. In the second place, they should, wherever possible, have teachers of the same sex. Towards the end of this period the sexual instinct will take another direction, and then the big boy, who has entered the middle adolescent stage, will require a different consideration.

XV

CONCLUSION

A BLACKSMITH was accustomed to come to his pastor several times during the month for a friendly chat. Invariably, during these conversations, he would tell how difficult his work was, as he attempted to make various articles of iron. After this had gone on for about three years, and the ironworker had come to know something of the difficulties of a Sunday-school teacher, he sought out his pastor and said, "I still do think my work is very hard, but I am beginning to realize that your work is more difficult than mine. It is easier to weld iron than to mould people. I shall never complain of my work again." This philosophy of

the blacksmith should be heeded by the Sunday-school worker. The most difficult thing one can attempt is to endeavour to train persons. This is especially true of those going through the trials of adolescence. The work is hard, but it must never be forgotten that it is a blessed one; it is discouraging, but it pays large dividends to the patient labourer.

The writer has learned a number of lessons from his friend, the peach-raiser. This gentleman has been wonderfully successful in his attempts to cultivate certain brands of peaches, which sell for large prices in the markets of the great cities. He declares that three things, at least, are essential for the successful peach-raiser, namely, knowledge, common sense, and perseverance. If they are needed for the peach-grower, much more are they necessary to the one who handles big boys in the Sunday-school.

So far as knowledge is concerned, it has been the aim of the writer to give it to the reader. We have looked at the boy in his varied relationships, and considered his different characteristics. The knowledge thus acquired ought to be invaluable to the one who wishes to hold the big boy to the Sunday-school and train him for future usefulness in the kingdom of God. The peach-grower, however, is not satisfied with present attainments, however great they may be; he is always on the lookout for new facts; he is ever reading the records of the successes and failures of others; he is constantly questioning those engaged in a like occupation with himself. So should it be with the one who hopes to be a successful teacher of big boys; the knowledge he has should be but the stepping-stone to more knowledge. In order to obtain this, he should read, converse with others, and prize as a privi-

lege every opportunity afforded him of becoming better acquainted with boys in general, for the larger his knowledge in this respect, the better will he be able to deal with the individuals in his class.

Some of the most marked failures in every walk of life have arisen, not because of lack of knowledge, but because of the failure to apply what was known. To his knowledge the instructor of big boys must add common sense. There is no use in declaring that common sense is a rare commodity, or in asserting that if one has it not, it is impossible to get it. Peter was a rash, impetuous follower of Jesus. He was lacking in common sense. The Holy Spirit, however, transformed Peter into a skilled workman for the Master, and a successful leader in the kingdom of God. What was Peter's part? Was it not to love? Cannot the worker love—love Christ supremely and love his boys for Christ's sake? Where

there is this love there will be a constant turning to the Master for help. He, through His Holy Spirit, will give that which is needed. In saying this, it is understood, perfectly, that the Lord uses those agents who are best fitted for His work. Hence, the need for the study suggested so frequently. To him, however, who does his part, the Lord grants whatever is needed to make up his deficiency. Among the all things promised is common sense. If one has a sincere love for Jesus Christ, and an earnest desire to be a skilled workman, and does his part to the utmost of his ability, the Lord will give him the power to do all that is needed. Is it not amazing, the number of persons we know who display great common sense in the every-day affairs of life, who seem to be devoid of it in connection with Sunday-school work? Is it uncharitable to suppose that they love their daily occupa-

tions more than their work for the Master?

To knowledge and common sense must be added perseverance, in dealing with big boys. One may know much and be helped by the Holy Spirit, and yet not have immediate success. This is a difficult lesson for workers in the Lord's vineyard to learn. Many imagine that if they are properly equipped for their work, and have the blessing of the Almighty in it, success must come at once. This, however, is not the case. There is need of perseverance here, as elsewhere. He who lacks it will have little power over big boys, who will try him to the utmost.

The writer recently met a gentleman who changed his occupation several times because of drawbacks connected with each business in which he engaged. After losing much time, and going from place to place, he finally settled down at

a business that requires large knowledge, great tact, and endless perseverance. In it he is most successful, simply because he has learned, by experience, that these things are necessary to success in any undertaking. He might have known this truth years ago, if he were not so foolish as to fancy that by changing his occupation he could get rid of the difficulties connected with all endeavours in life. From him the teacher of big boys should learn a lesson. His work is no more difficult than any other work for the Master. His boys are not harder to handle than other boys. If he were to change either his line of work or the boys he is endeavouring to benefit, he would be face to face with other difficulties. What he should do is to resolve that just where God has placed him, with just the material that he has at hand, he will give diligence to present himself approved unto God, a workman

that needeth not to be ashamed (2 Tim. 2 : 15). This will be by studying as we have suggested, by coming so to know Jesus Christ that he will love Him supremely, and by praying for the perseverance necessary to hold on to his boys until they are brought to know and love Christ.

The conclusion of the whole matter, therefore, is this : Study the boy at first hand, in order to become acquainted with him as an individual differing from all other boys ; study books about boys in general, in order to know their various characteristics and what to do under different circumstances ; apply what has been learned in the every-day work of the class, being always willing to make modifications and changes, according to circumstances. Above all, do not be discouraged if results do not come at once. Remember how patiently and perseveringly Jesus Christ laboured for three

years, with little apparent fruitage. Do not forget how patient the Lord is with us all, even at those times when we seem to be at our worst. In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

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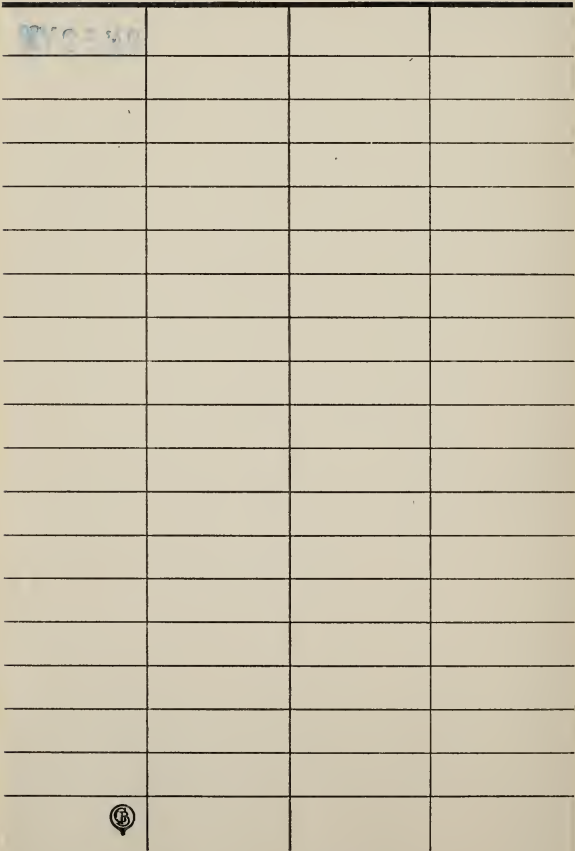
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