

**PICTURE-WORK.  
[1896]**

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Picture-Work. [1896] by Walter L. Hervey

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**WALTER L. HERVEY**

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# Picture-Work

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## Picture-Work.

### I.

#### THE PROBLEM AND ONE OF ITS SOLUTIONS.

A FRIEND of the writer, who has since attained to the dignity of a teacher of teachers, relates to the honor of his wise mother that when he was a boy she did not make him promise not to smoke or chew or play cards—probably compassing these ends in other ways—but she did exert her influence to lead him not to read Sunday-school books. For this warning, he says, he has never ceased to be thankful. In these days of supervising committees and selected lists, when standard literature, undiluted, has found its way into the Sunday-school library, such a course would not be warranted. But there are still thoughtful persons who do not feel that in the matter of Sunday-schools they are out of the woods yet.

“Do you know anything about Sunday-schools?” was asked of one of these, a representative woman.

"I'm sorry to say that I do," was the reply.

And there are other signs that the number is increasing of those who believe that in the choice of a Sunday-school the greatest care must be exercised. Some there are, who, it may be through over-conscientiousness, are fain to give up the search in despair, preferring to teach their children at home.

There is probably no other Sunday-school that, in point of order, quiet seclusion of classes, professional preparation of (paid) teachers, can compare with the "Religious School" of Temple Emanuel in New York City. But there is no intrinsic reason why the mechanical and pedagogical difficulties might not one day be as successfully removed everywhere as in this model school; and why they may not be removed in every grade. In the infant classes, through the beneficent influence of the kindergarten, there are already signs of promise. In the senior departments the problem is less complicated. But in the classes where is found "the restless, wide-awake, active, intense, ingenious, irrepressible boy," or "the girl who is just beyond girlhood and yet can scarcely be regarded as a woman," and her awkward, self-conscious,



misunderstood brother—here the problem remains, and no one denies that it is a hard one. Who cannot at this moment see with his mind's eye a picture of such a class—on the one side a vision of inattention, insubordination, irreverence, on the other, incompetence, blindly, consecratedly, painfully doing his—or her—best?

In all things relating to the common schools there is a quickening of popular interest and of professional spirit. The time is at hand when none but trained experts will be allowed to teach. Is the instruction and guidance of young minds in matters pertaining to the Heavenly Father and the things of the unseen world a task less difficult, delicate, important, than the teaching of arithmetic and geography? The question answers itself. It follows that the religious and moral instruction of our children will one day be put on a firmer and more scientific basis.

In this reform there are three steps: the securing of proper external conditions for thought and feeling—in blunter words, the banishment of hubbub; the systematic training of the teacher; the enrichment of the lesson by giving to it reality, meaning, and life. The last of these ends is the only one

here under consideration. To this end there are doubtless several ways. "Picture-work" is one of these, and, it is believed, one of high importance. That it is neglected is beyond question. To point out its value and set forth its method are the aims of this little book.

## II.

### TYPES OF PICTURE-WORK.

IN THE Dresden Gallery, the writer once saw two children, brother and sister, one ten and the other twelve, looking at the Sistine Madonna. They entered the room, and without heeding the crowd there gathered, almost instantly fixed their gaze upon the picture. For many minutes they seemed to be under a spell. They were drinking in something. The great picture was speaking to them—to their very souls. And they understood something of its message. At all events they felt its influence—which is much better than merely to understand.

More striking, because more unexpected, was the influence of a large copy of the same picture upon a little boy not two years and a half old. Although this child was passionately fond of pictures, no other picture ever seemed to appeal to him as this one did. As soon as it was brought into the house he instantly began to examine it, and pass judg-