

The Child and the Bible.

One of the problems of child life in New York which is a source of much thought and worry on the part of mothers is that of the Sunday school. Churchmen have been facing a steady decline in Sunday school attendance for the past ten years and now there is to be a systematic investigation of the whole subject by a number of women's organizations connected with churches.

A paid teaching corps is one of the suggestions offered as likely to improve the attractiveness of the Sunday school and several churches have lately employed specially trained teachers for the older children.

Fortunately for the women interested in the general betterment of Sunday schools in this city, there is a unique opportunity to study methods of teaching and observe the work of women who are making Sunday school work a profession. This is at the model Sunday school held every Sunday morning at 11 o'clock in teachers' college, Columbia university. This school is undenominational, and has an attendance of about 150 children of ages from the kindergarten to the high school grades. A tuition fee of \$15 is paid by the pupils, although there are also a number of free scholarships. The teachers are paid, and are women who are working out new systems of teaching Bible history and ethics in a way to hold the attention of their classes and instill a thorough knowledge of the Christian religion.

Four years ago the first class was formed as a private family affair, and about twenty children were enrolled. Arrangements were made to use the chapel and some classrooms at teachers' college, and as the idea grew in favor some of the members of the university and of the college became interested and a regular model Sunday school, under the direction of Prof. B. R. Andrews, was organized. There are twelve teachers employed, and although their salaries are small, the expenses, rent of rooms, music, etc., are not met by the income. The deficit is paid by subscriptions from those interested in the development of a modern system to strengthen this means of religious instruction.

Grading of The Classes.

At the model school the children are graded as in the weekday school, and the course of study is arranged so that children proceed from the kindergarten grade until they reach the high school grades, which boys and girls of 14 to 18 years of age attend. This method appeals to children, and induces them to attend regularly in order to complete the course. There are, however, no examinations, marks or awards in the Sunday school course. Such a system permits the teachers to specialize in her particular grade; with the youngest children, kindergarten methods are applied and religious instruction given by means of Bible stories and Sunday school songs the elementary grade studies, the patriarchal period beginning with Abraham. Next in order comes the study of the Music period, which includes the history of the exodus and the conquest of Canaan. Then the period of the Judges, from the time of David and Solomon down to the division of the Kings, and Old Testament history to its completion comprise the next grades, followed by two grades of the life of Christ, and the high school continues the New Testament study. Interspersed with this ground work of Bible history are accounts of modern religious leaders, and practical illustrations are given out the application of Christianity to everyday life.

Each grade has a separate classroom which is equipped with maps, blackboard and pictures to illustrate the county and period which is being studied. Before the classroom study begins the whole school meets in the chapel for general religious service of prayers, hymns and a short address on some religious topic with reference to home or school life, or some one connected with missionary work gives an account of his labors. There is no requirement for preparation of lessons or references at home, but pupils are asked to repeat the Sunday lesson story to some one at home, or to a friend, as this has been found to be an excellent incentive for attention and to the means of fixing the lesson in the memory.

Children and Bible Study.

One of the teachers, whose class of boys and girls of 12 and 15 years of age evinced decided reluctance to stop their discussion of the lesson when their time was up, said:

"There is no question that Bible study appeals to the imagination of children when properly presented. Mothers appreciate the advantage it is to children in after life to have an acquaintance with the Bible, even when they are not members of any church. Last Sunday three young mothers came to visit my class, and they admitted that neither they nor their husbands attended church, but in each case they wanted their children to go to Sunday school. They said they had no right to deprive a child of an opportunity to receive religious instruction which they did not feel competent to give, and at the same time acquire a knowledge of Bible history that is a necessity for general culture.

"These young women represented a certain type of modern mothers, quite indifferent to religious teaching and church attendance for themselves, but sufficiently impressed with the rights of a child to give him a chance to go through the Sunday school and be in a position to decide for himself on religious matters. There is a great need of trained teachers for Sunday schools, in order to bring back the children who lose interest through the haphazard method of instruction given them. The decline in attendance of the better class children is much greater than the total figures show, for there is a large increase of slum children who attend Sunday school for the sake of personal advantage which so many churches offer in the way of social clubs, libraries, entertainments and personal aid. There is abundant evidence that women of the well-to-do class are interested in the Sunday school question, and they will demand a higher grade of instruction for their children, and that will mean a greater expansion of the field for trained and paid women to teach Sunday school classes."

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M. E. Church.

The following services next Sabbath:
9:45 Sunday school.
10:45 preaching.
2:00 p. m. Junior league.
7:00 p. m. Epworth league.
8:00 p. m., Preaching.
Prayer meeting 8:00 p. m. on Wednesday evening.
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Ministers in the Slums.

Periodically the newspapers contain accounts of ministerial expeditions into city slums based on a desire of men of the cloth to gain information at first hand that may be useful in the divine calling. Recently a Kansas City minister penetrated the tainted purlieus of the "North end," and emerged with a conviction that the locality needed more lights. Up in Chicago the pastor of the Pilgrim Congregational church has discovered that 55 per cent of the women who patronize first-class restaurants in that city take alcoholic drinks. He knows this to be true, for he counted them in nine restaurants at the noon hour.

What is this Chicago minister going to do in the way of reforming the condition which he has discovered? In all probability he will go into his pulpit this morning and talk earnestly to his congregation about the evils of intemperance. And his congregation will be in thorough accord with his views. But it must be perfectly obvious to any thinking person that the pastor of the Pilgrim Congregational church will accomplish very little by this sort of work. To begin with, the members of his flock to whom he talks two or three times a week are not, as a rule, people who drink in public restaurants. They are not the offenders, and about the only effect of a ministerial campaign against public drinking is the arousal of more or less sentiment that may accomplish some good results.

The great problem that confronts the church today is the need of applied religion. Mere academic discussion of moral truths is uplifting to the participants, but in most cases the participants are not the ones who need moral regeneration. Our churches are occupied each Sabbath by good men and women, who hear the Word expounded in much the same way from one year's end to another. A minister who tells them of the evils of the slums gains sympathetic attention, but what are they going to do about it? There should be no necessity for a visit of a minister to the disreputable district of a city to learn that evils exist. All he can find out at most is that these notorious evils abound, and any man of observation and experience knows this just as he knows that poverty and crime are part of city life.

The churches of our large cities are recognizing the necessity of mission work and of going into the byways and spreading the blessings of the gospel through the dark places. Those ministers who make infrequent excursions into the slums and return to tell their fashionable congregations about their experiences are well within their moral rights, but without systematic effort to take religion to the blind men and women who infest the slums little can be accomplished. Slumming for the mere sake of slumming is unprofitable employment for anybody.—Kansas City Journal.

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St. Thomas Episcopal Church.

Services:
Holy Eucharist, 7:30 a. m.
Morning prayer and sermon, 10:45 a. m.
Evening service and sermon, 7:45 p. m.
Sunday school, 9:45 a. m.
Evensong, Fridays, 7:45 p. m.
Choir rehearsal every Friday night after the service.
Rev. Geo. Neide, Rector at St. Thomas Episcopal church.

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