

sible of the seats, always being careful that it shall be tidy and that each child shall be in a position to see all that is done.



"Thorns and Thistles"

By M. Florence Brown

It is everlasting, this battle between good and evil. It is the theme of very many of the stories in God's Word. It forms the worthwhile part of every life. Instinctively the child knows this when very young, and he is naturally interested in the struggle with which he himself is so intimately connected. I think this is a very important fact for all Sunday School teachers to recognize, and I believe a clearer realization of the fact would lead many of us to make some changes in the way we present our stories.

We assume that it is the right and pedagogical thing to present the positive in our teaching, that in order to create a love for the good and the beautiful, we must present ideals of the good and beautiful. This is pre-eminently so; yet do not let it blind us to the fact that the end of a struggle with the powers of darkness, if the result is glorious, even though there have been falterings and failures during the strife, is the most beautiful of all ideals.

Do you remember the account of the reputed childhood of Buddha as given in *The Light of Asia*, by Sir Edwin Arnold? Do you remember how the shielded child realized the fact that there is evil, that there is pain and suffering? Adam and Eve found that the world was filled with "thorns and thistles," and their children have had to cope with them ever since. An instinctive recognition of these facts is what leads the small boy, who is a bundle of life, to turn in disgust from the story which a teacher tells of children who see only the good, who have only the beautiful, who have no struggle in attaining.

Some teachers believe in keeping too much of the picture of sin and evil and pain from their stories; they subtract many of the word pictures of punishments which are given in the Bible for fear of wounding the oversensitive. I believe that this can be carried too far.

I know of a child who often spent Sunday afternoons in reading a book which she found on the shelves of her father's library. Some of the stories were reeking with horrors of burnings and cruelties; yet the more horrible the tortures the more desirable the story; the very shivering over the horrors was a peculiar pleasure. There was a psychological reason for this: a healthy child's real understanding of pain is very crude; it is but a name till much pain is suffered.

Now I think that a positive result may be obtained by telling a story of a little boy who

disobeyed his mother and ate a large piece of pie which she had forbidden, and a description of the inevitable punishment, his suffering, and his consequent resisting of temptation, his sorrow for untruthfulness and petty theft. The result may, indeed, be more effective than the telling of the little Pharisee who turned away without temptation. I know from experience which story grips attention and which passes unnoticed and often actually despised.

Do not take all the "punch" out of the story of the flood, or the story of Pharaoh and the Israelites, or of the stories of the various old kings who received the punishments which they so richly deserved. God never failed to give his warnings when necessary.



Training the Imagination

By Mrs. C. M. Hincks, B.A.

Poets, novelists, historians, explorers, inventors,—what a barren and primitive world ours would be without them! What is the greatest of their gifts which makes them of such importance to us? Surely, it is the gift of imagination and the power to put into words or to carry out in deeds those things which they imagine.

But these exceptional people have no "corner in imagination." More ordinary mortals come in for their goodly share. We all know some one to whom we are eager to run with all our joys and sorrows. Now, the secret of that person's attraction for us is her ability to put herself in our place, her power to imagine our feelings of happiness or pain so vividly that she can say or do just the right thing for us. She has imagination. Then there is another person whose company we seek because she has a fund of good tales, an appreciation of the humorous side of every situation, an eye for the beautiful. She, too, has imagination.

Unfortunate, indeed, is that poor soul who lacks this gift, who sees no further than the four walls which bound his horizon, who looks no higher than his own head, whose thoughts are never lifted above the every-day things of this work-a-day world. Such a person is a humdrum, uninspiring companion to himself and to others.

Imagination is a gift, but it can, to some extent, be cultivated, and it is the duty and privilege of all those brought into contact with children to help in its cultivation. We Sunday School teachers see so little of our children that our opportunity is small, but we must make the most of it.

Amongst our children we probably find three classes: those who need restraint, those who need encouragement, and those who need guidance in their imaginings.