

## CHILDREN AS CHURCH MEMBERS.

"Tell me what to do about my boy," said a mother to the Sunday-school teacher; "he wants to join the church and I am afraid to encourage him."

"Do you think he is a Christian?" asked the teacher.

"I cannot tell, but I know he prays often, and loves his Bible and his Sunday-school lessons, and he always has some verse to say on all occasions. He is more afraid of doing wrong than of anything in the world. I am so anxious about him I want you to help me, for his father says he is only a child, and we would better keep him out of the church awhile. Tell me honestly, now, just what you think."

"My dear friend," said the teacher, "I am far more anxious for you and your husband than for your child. I advise you to get your boy to help you both to see what Jesus said and what he meant about those who offend one of those little ones who believe in him."

There are many objections urged against receiving the very young into church membership. Some one says, "I am afraid it is a passing excitement and will not last. Perhaps it is only because other children have joined."

A sudden interest in some improving game or study you would gladly encourage and strive to make permanent. Why not try wisely to develop and deepen an interest in religion, to extend even to another life than this? If the desire is first prompted by the action of others, see that it is genuine, and bless God, and pray and help that such examples may be multiplied.

"I am afraid the child does not know what he is doing; he is too young to realize the importance of such a step."

Does he know right from wrong? Has he power of reasoning and exercising choice in other matters? Are mental and moral faculties developed in proportion to his age and opportunities? Could he answer, understandingly and truthfully, such questions as these: Do you love Jesus Christ? Do you take him for your Saviour? Do you believe the Bible is God's word to you?

"I am afraid my child will not live as a Christian ought; he will not hold out."

Jesus warned the man who might look back,

having put his hand to the plow; but did he say anything about the children falling away? It was not the least among his listeners who called his word a hard saying, who "went back, and walked no more with him." Nor was it the children that he asked that wonderful question, "Will ye also go astray?" Those who we are told "will not depart from it" are the ones trained in "the way they should go." In these days of defaulting and overwhelming temptations to men of reputation, have you any forebodings for any fathers, brothers, sons, in responsible places of trust? any fears for yourself? Do you not peacefully trust them all with One "able to keep that which is committed unto him," and does not that include the children whom he loves?

"But," you say, "there are so many hard things in creed and doctrine a child could not understand, mysteries too deep for us all."

True, and all eternity is given for their unfolding when, in the presence of the Lord, once made flesh, his perfect light shall make the mysteries plain. Has the child begun to go to school? Can he comprehend now the sciences taught in the university? His inability to do so did not prevent your having him taught taught the rudiments of education nor your trying to make him thorough in fundamental knowledge on which all the super-structure of a finished course must rest.

Your little daughter is already taking music lessons, for you realize that little fingers must practice while they are flexible and pliant or she could never be proficient in instrumental performance. Did you hesitate because she cannot now comprehend the principles of harmony? Your boy is taught arithmetic orally, can do a little mental reckoning, and has he begun to sing-song the multiplication table? but you would not discourage him because he cannot solve an algebraic problem or explain the rules of geometrical progression. Ah! how many are pushed and crowded into the labyrinths of the temples of human learning but kept from the very threshold of the spiritual edifice where they might become polished stones in the temple of which Christ himself is the chief corner stone.

For no earthly wisdom, no merely intellectual acquirements have we assurance of perfect knowledge except this, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."