

PRIMARY TEACHERS' DEPARTMENT.

The Aim of the Concert Exercise.

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"SUNDAY school concerts—are they improving?"

This question is asked not only by the editor of the *Sunday School Superintendent*, but by many friends of children everywhere.

The monthly concerts of the past, with their Scripture readings, chorus singing, and addresses, have given place to the four stated observances: Easter, Children's Day (often combined with Anniversary), Harvest Concert, and Christmas.

It remains to decide the important question concerning their improvement.

Let us ask: What is our aim in preparing a concert service? What is our thought as we look forward to the work it involves, the time and strength it may require?

Are we asking, as a teacher was heard to inquire, for "something novel, bright, and sparkling?" or do we reverently seek for wisdom, guidance, and the spirit of the Master as we draw nigh to the festival, and remember that the children look to us to inspire them with its meaning, and that our Father will hold us responsible for the impressions that shall remain upon the plastic minds.

If we are to prepare a "show off" entertainment, bringing forward the brightest and most confident of our pupils, then is our time expended in vain, our children receive no spiritual good, and the audience may as well have spent their time at any secular place of amusement. Far better the concert of the past!

There are teachers who consider the preparation for a concert as wasted time. Indeed, it is so if we look upon it in that light; but if we realize what its influence may be upon our pupils' lives through its teachings, then it becomes a message from Christ, and we who bear the message cannot esteem the honor too highly, asking ever that the gift of the Holy Spirit may guide us to teach the truth aright.

We must first select material—a very simple thing, one might say, with the shelves of our publishing houses filled with exercises adapted to each festal day. We need to choose wisely, and not only from these, for the earnest teacher has been watchful all the year for the best thoughts upon the subject. The pages of our choice maga-

zines and our favorite poets, with many a cutting from the daily papers, have constantly added to our treasures. Also let child voices tell the whole Bible story—learned, not read.

Let Bible selections form a prominent part of the exercises.

Do not plan too long a service. An hour and a quarter is as long as the children should be held or the audience will care to listen.

The selection of the children is an important matter. Surely the bright and attractive pupils should have their part, but remember the dull and uninteresting. They may answer a question or recite one line, and be made happy for weeks, because they have been "in a concert" as the "other children" were.

Have many children and short parts; thus more lives and more homes are reached, and more blessing is the reward.

Never select a nervous or sensitive child, and let no mother urge upon such a child the delights of "speaking in a concert," as is too often done, even by the promise of a gift.

We are now ready for rehearsals, which (save the singing, yet taking but a few minutes longer than the usual time) should never be permitted during the sessions of the school. In so far as this is done we believe the influence is harmful. Let nothing interfere with the teaching of that hour. Concerts are important and have their honored place, but they should be supplemental.

At the first meeting teach the children that they have come to prepare for their part in the coming service for Jesus; that the Saviour accepts their love and praise. If we keep this thought before our boys and girls, think you not it will largely counteract the admiration of unwise friends?

Can a little heart be turned by flattery who firmly believes, "This is my part for Jesus, and all I do or say or sing is for his glory?"

Aim for thoroughness in teaching, many times repeated, for a child learns easily and forgets quickly. How many Bible words and poetic truths are implanted in child-minds to bless all their lives, because learned so faithfully for a Sunday school concert!

Aim that these rehearsal hours shall be seasons when you "enter in" to the life of your pupils.

Notice how they linger after the study hour; how they group about you, rejoicing in the free-