

Twelve to Sixteen

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The Intermediate Department is the section of the Sunday School about which many large words are used and little known.

It is gratifying, however, that pupils of this age are just about to come to their own. Other ages have had specialized treatment for years, but the Intermediate Department has been neglected until recently.

A few things are the result of experience, however. At this age the sexes should be taught separately, and as a rule by teachers of their own sex, and they should be live, virile, sympathetic teachers at that. It is here that the largest proportion of pupils are lost to the school.

This is also the age when the largest number should be won for Christ. All human wisdom aided by the Divine is needed to capture these pupils, especially the boys. The task seems all the more difficult when we remember that they are at that period experiencing the sensations and inspirations of constant new discovery in all fields of observation with every nerve and brain cell tingling with a prophecy of achievement, and with the superabundant life of the child almost beyond personal control. Added to this the reactionary effect of five days of school discipline each week.

What shall be done with such impossible and contradictory elements on Sunday?

If these boys and girls are worth saving, the Church must spend some money on them. They must have proper equipment. In the study hour they must have their energies absorbed in activities of thought which they enjoy.

The teacher should do as little as possible, and plan that the pupils do everything they can. Manual work is most helpful at this point. Questions on the lesson given the Sunday before will be answered most faithfully and will create many points of contact for the teacher to use.

These pupils can easily be inspired with the class spirit, and healthy rivalry is easily promoted. But remember, at this age, if at the end of the year or term there be no promotion, recognition, or reward, they will say, if not to you, among themselves, "What's the good?" A certain amount of class organization is helpful.

Attention must be paid them in the week. Organize the class or classes and have them meet in the week. They will listen to a short talk or even do a little study on a certain day in the week if there be some "fun" attached to it afterward, say twenty minutes of work and forty minutes of what they might call fun. It can be well directed fun that means helpfulness to them.

In Brunswick Street Methodist Church, Halifax, we are trying some experiments which are proving helpful. The last year has been the first we know of in which the Intermediate Department did not lose in average attendance and enrolment. It has increased. Why the change? Teachers have studied methods more carefully. We have a boys' organization which we call the Brunswick Club. The girls in the same way have been made members of a Sunshine Band, each meeting weekly in the afternoon for twenty minutes under the leadership of the pastor. Then for forty minutes they are taken in charge by the Physical Director in the Gymnasium, given a good setting up and a game of basket ball. During the winter a sleigh drive and in summer a boating trip or woods tramp on Saturday afternoons.

Our aim is to make the Church the

centre of their best thought and memories, never forgetting that God made them restless, nervous and optimistic, and it is the Church's business to train all these forces that go to make men and women. When God says "wiggle" it is not our business to say, "be still," but direct the wiggle in proper channels. We must open our churches and make them centres of intellectual, social and physical as well as religious interest, for the boys and girls and the whole community.

Teacher Training

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The great, crying need of the Sunday School world to-day is teachers who can teach. How can they be had? They do not come ready-made. They must be trained. It is a fact none too well known and only too little appreciated, that for the past six or seven years the Provincial Sunday School Association has maintained a department of teacher training, and a secretary, the first charge upon



THREE BROTHERS.

One a Medical Missionary in China. Who is he and who supports him?

whose time is to look after this work. I would be slow to write thus if it were not that within the past few months I have met a number of active Sunday School workers who had never heard of such a thing until the matter was presented to them by the writer.

Men have told me that they did not see any need of teacher training, and in defence of their position have pointed to the good work done by the Sunday School in the past. I would not for a moment disparage the work done by the consecrated men and women in the days gone by. But they would be the first to admit that they did this work under great difficulties. I hope we are honest enough to confess that a serious injustice is being done our Sunday School teachers in many cases. We expect of them high grade results, while we neglect to furnish either the proper tools for the work or proper training in its technical phases. They have been required to make bricks without straw.

Every true teacher is a vision-giver and a vision-giver. In order that he may get and give his vision effectively, he

should be trained in (1) The general principles of education with sufficient general psychology to make them clear. (2) Special Sunday School Methods, and (3) General Biblical Introduction including Bible History and Bible Geography.

It must be admitted that the Church is not doing half what it ought to do to prepare men and women for one of the most responsible of all positions. The best talented, the best trained, the most influential men and women in the Church ought to be doing this work, not untutored boys and girls still in their teens. Good they may be, but experienced and trained they are not. Men spend thousands of dollars to qualify themselves to teach in our public schools and we pay them thousands of dollars for doing it. We do it that our boys and girls may learn history, geography, and other branches of desirable knowledge, but when it comes to the question of training men and women that they might be able to effectively teach the essential spiritual truths of God's word, we fall down.

It may be that some who read this article may not know just what is implied in a teacher training course. There is a "First Standard Course" and an "Advanced Course." It is supposed to take two years to cover the first of these, and three years the second. Of the advanced course we will say nothing. You can get

any information you need from our editor and general secretary.

The first course covers the ground outlined in the paragraph above. It is true that these subjects are not dealt with exhaustively, but in such a way that it is not too difficult for any, and at the same time cannot fail to be helpful to all who take up the work.

The text-books used are Hamill's *Legion of Honor Teacher Training Course* (new edition); Hurlbut's "Teacher Training Lessons," "Training the Teacher," by five of the best known Sunday School workers in America, and a distinctively Canadian course known as "Canadian First Standard Teacher Training Course." The latter comprises five little books of thirty-two pages each that sell at 5 cents apiece, and published by our Book Room, Toronto.

But is a teacher training class practicable? Without hesitation I say it is. But is it practicable in a small rural school? Again, without hesitation, I say it is. I speak from experience and observation. What has been done can be done again. I know a little country Sunday School, with an average attendance of about thirty, with a teacher training class of fourteen, eight of whom write regularly in examinations, and four of whom have already secured their diplomas. Most of the members of the class have to drive miles over country roads to be in attendance. I know a class in a village of less than a thousand people with a membership of twenty-two, fourteen of whom wrote an examination in "Bible History," and an average mark taken was ninety-eight per cent. Nine of that same class wrote an examination on "Bible Institutions," and each of the nine took 100 per cent.

How is it done? Take the text-book with you to your teacher's meeting and