

## MISSIONARY WORK IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

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**I**N dealing with this subject, I shall confine myself to an attempt at answering three questions, beginning respectively with the words,

"WHAT?" "HOW?" "WHY?"

1. What is the general position of the Sunday school towards the Church? Out of this general relationship will arise the relationship towards any specific branch of church work. "The Sunday school is the nursery of the Church." This is a very old and trite saying; yet it is not so old as to be decrepit, nor so trite as to have had all its truth worn away or utilized. So far is this from being the case, so far are the power and application of this adage from being exhausted, that I find in it the clue to the maze in which I became involved when I began to consider earnestly the important subject of missionary work in Sunday schools. In this adage is implied the scriptural fact that "The Church is the family or household of God;" and, as in the natural household, the whole training of the nursery should be arranged and carried on with a view to the enabling of the children at a very early age to undertake their due share in the duties of the household, and ultimately to be fitted for citizenship in the social and political world; so the training in the Sunday school should be such as to enable its inmates very soon to become active partners in all branches of work pertaining to the spiritual household, and finally to become citizens of the Kingdom above. This is the great object of the Sunday school:—not merely that we may have systematic organizations, and excellent machinery, and pleasant pic-nics, and agreeable tea-meetings; but that we may, under God's blessing, so enlighten the minds, touch the hearts and mould the lives of our pupils as to lead them to become good citizens, and intelligent, earnest and devout Christians, ready and willing to enter with spirit and understanding into all beneficent and philanthropic enterprises.

To every right-minded teacher, this is the one object of his labors; for this he lives and works and prays. Whatever else is accomplished by means of the Sunday school; if this is not done, the school is a failure: what else fails; if this is done, the school is a success. Now, among the many enterprises in which the Church is called to engage, none is more important than the *Missionary Enterprise*, and, therefore, there is none in which it is more necessary that the children of "The Church Nursery" should be taught at an early age to take an interest and bear a hand. All are well aware that impressions made upon the mind of a young child are seldom, if ever, effaced, and that habits formed in childhood con-

tinue to mould the life and guide the heart long after the removal or extinction of the causes which produced them. How important then is it that our children should early learn to take a practical interest in missionary work; for the spirit of mission is the spirit of Christ, and that Sunday school in which the scholars are not taught by precept, by example and by practice, to aid in sending the Gospel to the heathen, at home or abroad, is not obeying the Master's express command, is not teaching the Christ of the Scriptures;—nay, more, is robbing its scholars of the high and holy privilege of being co-workers with God in the extension and edification of His kingdom.

2. How, then, shall we proceed in order to bring about a consummation so devoutly to be wished? How shall we get the Sunday school to take its proper position of practical interest in missionary work?

1. *By giving information.* Beginning with the infant class, and continuing through the different grades, teach the scholars in proportion to their ability to comprehend it. *The great Fundamental Principle* that all true life consists in giving—that the sun gives its light and heat to cheer and warm the earth—that the ocean gives its vapor to form the clouds—that the clouds give their moisture in rain to water the plants and animals upon the earth, and to form springs and rivers—that the springs and rivers give their waters back to the ocean—that the mother gives her child the rearing and caring for her child—that God gives us all things richly to enjoy—that He gave His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to save us—and that he asks us to give Him our hearts and to tell others of His loving gifts, so that they too may be led to give themselves to His service and for His glory.

2. *By provoking sympathy for missionary objects.* This is inseparably connected with the giving of information, and results from it. There is scarcely anything that will prove more interesting to the child-mind, or that will more effectively touch the child-heart than will the stories of heathen darkness and misery as contrasted with the light and happiness enjoyed by those who are surrounded by Christian influence. The account of the position which women and girls occupy in heathen lands—of how the Hindoo mother frequently throws her infant girls to the crocodiles of the Ganges; set over against the Christian mother's loving care—of how in heathen lands woman is the slave, the drudge, at best the mere toy of man, having no experience of love here or hope of happiness hereafter; in contrast with the lot of the Christian woman, as the friend, the companion, the adviser, the equal of man, loved and respected here and with him sharing the same hope of the future—the account of these contrasts, and of others such as these, can be easily made to fill the young hearts with gratitude, and to cause the