

## THE STARVED LITTLE INFANT SCHOOL.

SOME years since a very fine church was built in an American city, in exact imitation of one which was erected in England several centuries ago. The architect was particular in copying all the details of the model church, from steeple to coloured glass, and the building committee faithfully carried out his directions. But when the expensive pile was nearly finished it was discovered, to the great embarrassment of all concerned, that there was no door by which to reach the coal cellar! Whose fault was it? The carpenters and masons had done all the building committee had told them; the committee had followed the directions of the architect; and the architect had drawn his plans in exact copy of the church which was to be imitated, adding only the cellar itself. The fault was with the ancient persons who built the mediæval church; no coal being used in those days, there was no necessity for a coal cellar, and consequently none for a cellar door. The omission was quietly made good, and the architect has since made it a rule not to copy an ancient structure with such Chinese exactness.

A common omission, of similar character, yet involving more important interests, is often made in the erection and furnishing of our churches. The people who built the Christian churches of several hundred years ago, made but slight provision in them for the care and instruction of their little children. And we, though we may provide in abundance for the larger ones, too often neglect to provide for the babes such things as suit the wants of their tender years. A good infant school is more important to some of the interests of the Church than even a good coal cellar. Spiritual life and warmth are often kindled into a flame in the hearts of the lambs, while the old and hardened sinners refuse to be moved by the preaching of the word, which they have heard all their lives. We must not neglect our babes, even if it was the fashion to do so several hundred years ago.

The Starved Little Infant School is held in a far corner of the gallery, or in a small and unventilated room, which is considered to be good enough for little children. Pews, hard benches, or second-hand chairs, are furnished for the young disciples to sit on. Some of them are so high that the children have to be pushed up, to them, or lifted on them. It is as if grown persons were made to sit on pianos or mantel-pieces, with their lower extremities dangling in the air. Somebody says that would be ridiculous, and somebody else says it would be uncomfortable. It would be both; and it is both ridiculous and uncomfortable to let little children's feet dangle and kick between bench and floor. And the more negligent the Church is in providing suitable seats for the little ones, the more unreasonable we often find the teacher, in requiring that they should sit with the grave solemnity and perfect silence maintained by elderly persons who are comfortably seated. If we were made to sit on a piano, or something the height of a piano, during a sermon an hour long, would not these heels knock together?

The singing in the Hungry Little School is lean enough. Only a few children are present (the teacher tells us that there are not many children in the neighbourhood, but we know better), and these children are without the wholesome stimulus which a good crowd imparts. They sing somewhat as the grown-up people in many congregations do, that is to say, with a very feeble sound, and with perfect gentility and finished propriety. There is no soul to the singing. It does not make anybody feel *good* to hear it. It does not act as bait to bring the children of the neighbourhood to the school.

The children know but little. Some say that is because they are little children. But there is another reason, namely, that they have not been taught much. It has been considered that teaching has been thrown away on people under sixteen years old. The main object of the enterprise has been to keep the children quiet. That has been a success, to a reasonable extent. If the teacher will try a little energetic communication of Scriptural knowledge to them, she will be astonished to find how much they can take in, and how quickly they will take it. If she will tell them how Jesus Christ died to save their souls, she will find that they can comprehend the story of salvation as readily as their grandmothers and grandfathers.

The library of this little school is a "peculiar institution." As many of the children wear the cast-off clothing of their parents, cut down and altered to suit them, so the cast-off

library of the larger school has been presented to the infants. But no adaptation of it to their want has been made, as is generally made in the case of the clothing. It comprises a miscellaneous selection of back-broken and dog-eared books, principally to be valued according to the waste paper in them. Among the lot are "A Treatise on Parental Training," and "Butler's Analogy." Economy which is praiseworthy as to clothing, is reprehensible as to books. The bookcase may be sold for firewood, and its contents, at three-halfpence a pound, delivered to a dealer in waste paper; and the money invested in a nice library would be found to be well spent.

Keep a good heart, little children. You will grow up some of these days, and be as big as anybody. Make the best of it now, and hope for better when you are strong enough to push for yourselves, and to make the Church and the world acquainted with your wants.

## WAR.

BY ARTHUR MURSELL.

"WHAT a colossal curse is war! It is a hoary giant, grown grisly with the rime of ages, throned among a million tombs, impatient of 'the common lot,' and precipitating death upon the noblest and the bravest of mankind. It is a never-tiring sexton, digging graves for myriads in unconsecrated soil, and hurling their uncoffined dust to the carion vulture, or into the hungry sea. It is a hireling priest, lusting for burial-fees and despatching his minions with grit to his great charnel-house, without the boom of passing-bell, the cadence of a requiem, or the flutter of a shroud. It is a hot-lipped salamander, drunk with the fever-flame of passion and the molten lava of unholly hate. It is the vampire fiend whose beverage is blood, and whose daintiest draughts are drawn from the 'dearest veins' of brothers, fathers, sons. It is the demon-mocker who laughs at orphanhood and flaunts the widow's weeds as his flag of choicest triumph. It is the delirious hulk-babe who dances gleefully amidst bleaching dead, paddling his feet in slippery gore, brandishing the bones of patriots as his *bâton* to the diapason of the death-groan, and snuffing the thick and sickly death-reek from a battle plain, as though it were the fragrance of a garden, or of some Pactolian stream. It is the stalwart labourer who stalks into the fields to mow down human flesh as if it verily were grass indeed, and gambols amidst the fresh-cut harvest as children gambol in the new-mown hay. It is the pale despoiler who darts in between a lover and his bride, or a mother and her son, and tears away the fondest hope of a household, snapping his flaccid fingers at the tears he causes, gloating at the sweet melody of a young widow's wail, and shaking his matted locks in maniac ecstacy at every moan of misery and every pang of pain. Yes, such is war. The blight that mildews the whole earth, and preys upon the liberties, the laws, the loves of every nation of the world by turns. Belching paralysis upon the commerce of the globe, and binding the willing hands of industry in a coerced inaction, it becomes the hand-maid of famine, the minister of starvation and of want. It speaks its sardonic fiat, and a fatal numbness falls upon our nimble machinery in its liberal work of grinding food for the hungry myriads around us. Oh, verily, there is no fire out of hell which flames with a more cruel fierceness than the fire-brand of war. What, then, shall quench that brand, except the gospel of love? What shall cause its lurid torch to hiss away to flaky ashes save a baptism in the Lethe of universal love? When *this* gospel's conquests shall be achieved, and not till then, the conquests of the sword shall be at an end, the gory scroll of martial victories shall be folded up for ever, and the contending kingdoms of this world shall become the harmonious kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

Beware of making for your love only certain formal tests or emotional tests. Give it room to grow. It is not enough that you find delight in feeding a hungry beggar; an atheist might do as much. It is not enough that you shall be always at church; a sinner may do as much. Your whole heart, soul, might, mind, are to be in the service of Jesus. Putting them there is the first duty. An act of will does not suffice; an act of faith falls short—both are but beginnings. Work out your salvation. Renew the consecration every day, and make, if possible, some sacrifice, or do some work, as a sign to yourself that your consecration cuts to the quick, and binds to the bone.—*Methodist*.