

# Sunday School

## The Cradle Roll

BY REV. S. HOWARD, B.D.

The Cradle Roll Department is proving a great success in the Portland Street Methodist Church, St. John, N.B. It has now an enrolment of one hundred and twenty. It was organized in January, 1903, with Mrs. R. A. Sinclair as superintendent. To her tact and untiring efforts the splendid results achieved are principally due. She has planned and conducted an annual social gathering, which some call a "reception" for the mothers and members of the Cradle Roll Department. Others prefer to call it a Cradle Roll "At-Home." It has certainly done much to enlist the interest of many parents in her work.

The first "At-Home" was held in the school-room of the church from 3 to 5 p.m., October 27th, 1904. By a personal visit the superintendent invited to this gathering every mother who had a member of her family on the Cradle Roll. Of course, the babies of the Roll were also invited! To this invitation there was a very general response. At the second reception, held October 24th, 1905, only two or three families were unrepresented. One hundred babies, from three years old and under, were present. Some of these were literally "infants of days."

While much labor is involved in preparing for this reception, the programme itself is a very simple one. There is nothing formal about it—just a glad, social time is spent. The mothers have a grand opportunity to compare babies, etc. The little tots seem the happiest of all. Light refreshments are served and some bright music furnished—all in a "free and easy" way. One delightful feature of the "At-Home" is the presence of ladies of the congregation, who come largely for the purpose of helping the weary mothers to take care of the babies. To many of those mothers it is the brightest social event of the year, and they look forward to it with keen expectation.

The personal visits of the superintendent to the homes of the children do much to awaken and sustain interest in her department. During those visits she distributes neat cards to indicate birthdays or promotion. New members are being steadily added to a roll already large. Every year a number graduate into the primary department of the school. This means a great deal of work for the superintendent, but she keeps cheerfully "pegging away."

There are sceptics abroad in the land who still ask, "What is the good of it all?" To which the truly apostolic reply may be given, "Much every way." It will readily be seen that an efficient Cradle Roll superintendent helps the pastor in his work very much. To some extent she acts the part of a deaconess. This is especially true in cases of sickness. When he goes to the home where a little one is sick, he often finds that the Cradle Roll superintendent has been there before him. Not unfrequently, too, she brings him the news of sickness, or something worse than sickness, in some home. It is not difficult to understand how much this means to the pastor, and to the church as well.

Properly operated, the Cradle Roll Department assists in keeping the parents in touch and sympathy with the Sunday-school. The parents naturally encourage their children to graduate from the Cradle Roll Department into the regular sessions of the school. This is only what we might expect. It is actually what has happened in the Portland Street school.

Since inaugurating the Cradle Roll there has been a very perceptible increase in the numbers attending the Sunday-school, not only in the beginner's class, but also in some of the more advanced grades. It is written, "A little child shall lead them." We may well believe that the good influence of the Cradle Roll, through its members and faithful workers, upon the homes represented therein, is not the least among the many desirable results produced.

The Cradle Roll is no longer in the experimental stage. Those Sunday-schools which are zealously and intelligently working it are finding it an unqualified success in achieving the purpose for which it was instituted. The testimony of the Portland Street school is only one of many given to this fact. This school further testifies that, in the development of its work, the Cradle Roll "At Home" has proved a valuable factor. St. John, N.B.

## The International Lessons for 1906 and Teacher-Training

The Teacher Training Committee of the Ontario Sunday-school Association desire to call the attention of Sunday-school workers throughout the province to the fact that there is especial opportunity for teacher-training in connection with the International Lessons for 1906. The lessons for the current year are on the life of Christ, based on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John. The committee suggest that one or more of the Bible Classes in each Sunday-school make a systematic study of the life of Christ for the first three or six months, using some suitable text-book as a basis. The latter part of the year could be devoted to a study of the remaining lessons of the International System. This would provide a general outline study for the first part of the year, any detailed study of parts of Christ's life for the balance of the year. Suitable texts would be: Falconer and Ballantyne, "The Life and Times of our Lord Jesus Christ," 10 cents; Sell, "Bible Studies in the Life of Christ," 25 cents; Bowditch, "Studies in the Life of Christ," 60 cents. The Ontario Sunday-school Association will give an examination on any of these text-books whenever a class is ready, and it would count as equivalent to New Testament outlines for the Teacher Training Diploma. Write for any further information, and kindly report organization of class, to the Teacher Training Secretary, E. A. Hardy, Confederation Life Building, Toronto.

## Capturing a Whole Department

There are communities where a change in the time of holding the Sunday-school session has been known to work wonders in emptying the homes into the Sunday-school. Here is an instance. The Rev. W. T. Dowdall, pastor of the Sletton, New Jersey, Baptist Church, one Sunday morning announced that the Sunday-school would be held immediately at the close of the morning preaching service instead of at the usual hour in the afternoon. "This will be tried for a few weeks," said he, "as an experiment." So well did it work that at the close of a month's trial it was arranged to permanently meet at the close of the morning preaching service. When that announcement was made, the superintendent of the Home Department approached the pastor with consternation depicted on her countenance.

"Pastor, what is to become of the Home Department?"

"Well, what is the matter with it?"

"Why," said she, "all but two of them have joined the school, and the two who have not are invalids."

This worker did not realize that so well had her Home Department accomplished its purpose that the highest aim had been reached—so deeply interesting its members in the study of the Scriptures that they will attend the sessions of the school.—A New Jersey Pastor.

## Pledge Signing Campaign

At the temperance meeting held by the members of the Durham League on Tuesday evening, two pledges were presented; the first against alcohol, tobacco, and impure speech, the second against alcohol only; we were much encouraged when seventeen names were written underneath the tripled pledge, and twelve signatures followed the promise not to use alcoholic drinks. In our Sunday School the pledge book has been used, but it has never been used in our League before, so we have reason to be glad that God has sealed the first effort made in a practical manner.

## Pledge Signing

The "World's Temperance Sunday" was strictly and duly observed in the School at Port Hope, and indeed we should have been surprised had it been otherwise, knowing the persistency and zeal of the Superintendent and his helpers in dealing with the rum question. Although pledge-signing is an all-the-year-around subject here, it was made a special work on Sunday, and the signatures received, together with the names pledged during the year, total about 300.

## Manual Methods in the Sunday-School

"Manual Methods of Sunday-school Teaching," by Richard Morse Dodge, D.D., is a little book devoted to a feature of Sunday-school instruction which is quite new, but will be found to be intensely interesting and impressive, especially with young scholars. It explains the uses that can be made of the sand table, and tells how maps may be constructed by the scholars themselves. The price is 35 cents, and it can be procured from the Woman's Missionary Society, Room 20, Wesley Buildings, Toronto.

## A Unique Map

"The Stated Relief Map of the Holy Land," is an outline of Palestine printed on a blackboard surface, so that cities, villages, mountains, etc., can be marked by chalk, and the journeys of our Lord traced, so that the map can really be made in the presence of the Sunday-school class. It is a most excellent device, which may be used to fine advantage in securing the attention of scholars and impressing geographical and historical facts. It is published by The Stated Relief Map Co., of Toronto.

O, the little birds sang east,  
And the little birds sang west,  
And I said in underbreath—  
All our life is mixed with death,  
And who knoweth which is best?  
O, the little birds sang east,  
And the little birds sang west,  
And I said to think God's greatness  
Flowed around our incompleteness—  
Round our restlessness, His rest.

—E. B. Browning.