

dian children are well grounded in mathematics and English, and history and the languages, and various sciences, for they study these in splendid institutions, under carefully trained and highly qualified teachers, who follow the very best methods. But of the Bible they know next to nothing. For the study of Scripture they are thrown upon the home and the Sunday-school. The parents are too often very ignorant of Scripture themselves, and often still they have no desire to instruct their children in it. Good, kind fathers and mothers see their children growing up round about them, and yet have scarcely a care about their knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. If they learn to be honest and truth-telling and kind-hearted, the parents are satisfied. For a knowledge of the Bible they are left to the Sunday-school.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL OF THE DAY.—Is the Sunday-school of to-day an institution from which great results may be expected? Can we place it alongside of our common schools as qualified to do a similar work in its department? Can it, for instance, make children as proficient in Bible history as they are in the secular history taught in the common schools? The purpose of the Sunday-school is a noble one, and all will agree that, in lieu of something better, it is a most necessary institution. Nay, more, there is much to admire and commend in its plan of volunteer teachers and gratuitous services. But, judged solely as an institution for doing a certain work, it must appear very weak and defective. This inadequacy is not merely accidental, it follows of necessity.

In the first place, the Sunday-school is a purely voluntary institution. The teachers give their services gratuitously. They undergo no proper training, and as often as not have few or no qualifications for their work. They are employed simply because they give their services willingly. It is quite impossible to adopt a standard of qualification. There is very little opportunity for choice. We are glad to take all who offer their services, and even then teachers are continually lacking. It's not as in the common schools, where, for a living, hundreds of excellently trained and qualified teachers offer themselves annually and can hardly be supplied with pieces. The teaching, therefore, in Sunday-schools is and must be of a very poor average. The methods are very poor—sometimes wretched. The voluntary principle, moreover, applies to the scholars as well. They understand this perfectly, and in the ma-

majority of cases they learn their lessons or not, as it pleases them. Comparatively few parents make it a point to see whether children learn their Sunday lessons. For an unprepared lesson there is no punishment or discipline, and a child's neglect may, and often does, ripen into a habit. Possibly nearly half the scholars never look at a lesson before entering the school.

In the second place, the ORDER in a Sunday-school is generally rather questionable. Certainly it is far below that in the common schools. In some Sunday-schools it is bedlam. The children know that there is no punishment for idleness, inattention, and mischief. A very bad child may be reported to his parents, but every little breach cannot be taken so seriously, and it's the many little things incessantly kept up by a number of scholars that really combine to make bad order. From the superintendent's desk the order may be very fair, but in many classes for the teacher it is distressing. Yet without order no proper instruction can be given. No teacher—not even the most skilful—can do anything without strict attention and silence from a class. The personal power or magnetism of a teacher in Sunday-school may do much for order, but perhaps three out of four teachers have no magnetism.

Again, the time is terribly restricted. Every week for five days of over five hours the children are learning at school, but in Sunday-school it is about forty minutes once a week. Twenty-five or thirty hours per week for secular studies, two-thirds of an hour per week for religious teaching. And when to this we add the voluntary plan, bad teaching, and bad order, it is evident that the results must be very unsatisfactory.

Further, in the common schools, there is proper inspection by qualified inspectors. Defective teaching or bad order are pointed out, and the teacher must improve then or his livelihood is in jeopardy. But point out mistakes to the average teacher in Sunday-school, and it might mean resignation on the spot.

SHOULD NOT PARENTS BE MORE ANXIOUS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN?—If the facts referred to be correct, is it right that parents should leave the religious education of their children to the Sunday-school? For utterly outcast or neglected children, or the children of very ignorant parents, it is a necessity; but should educated, self-respecting Christian parents send their children there, and

consider their full duty done? No wonder the results of the Scripture examinations in the American college referred to were bad. Could we expect anything better from such a system? If the children are not rescued in some way, such results will happen on every hand, and things will go from bad to worse. It is, above all, the urgent duty of Christian parents to take into their own charge the little children whom they love, and not merely speak to them occasionally and in a general way of God and Jesus Christ, but regularly and systematically to teach them. Give them Bible history, and Bible teaching, and church catechism, and see that they become familiar with the words of Scripture itself. The home was the very earliest place of religious instruction for the young, and no institution can ever effectually take its place.

But cannot something be done for the Sunday-school itself? If the teachers are badly qualified, cannot they be gradually trained? In many parishes teachers' meetings are held weekly. Could not these be held in every parish? At these meetings it is customary to take up the lesson with a view to a proper understanding of it. But surely in this day of lesson helps that is the least important part of a teachers' meeting. It should be with a view to teaching and not merely to understanding that a lesson should be taken up there. The capacity and the needs of the children should control it. Methods ought to be discussed. What points should be dwelt upon with younger scholars, and what with the older? What may be omitted? How should a difficult lesson be attacked? Rightly conducted, a teachers' meeting should give even to a poor teacher the lesson *in the very form in which it ought to be presented to a class.*

Our teachers need this. They make sad mistakes. They don't teach the right things. They often try to do too much. A really interesting lesson they make very dry. Difficult passages they try to explain to young scholars, instead of letting them go. The very simple parts of a lesson they are apt to pass over, instead of dwelling long upon them. Little children cannot assimilate principles or profound truths. The epistles and even the sermon on the mount are above them. But they have a grand capacity for remembering facts and names and events. Bible history and Bible stories they need and enjoy, and if deep moral or spiritual teaching cannot be driven home—and very often we shouldn't attempt it—facts and events always can.