

PRIMARY TEACHERS' DEPARTMENT.

The Reasonableness of a Rhythmic Teaching.

BY MRS. WILBUR F. CRAFTS.

"MOTHER GOOSE" is a great deal wiser than her name! She certainly understood that the rhythmic instinct of childhood must be fed. Her ingenuity in discovering the rhythmic instinct and adapting material to it should be emulated by all teachers of little children, beginning with the mother in the home, and not excepting the Sunday school teachers. Children are not generally born poets, but they might almost be called born rhymesters, for they no sooner begin to talk a little than they begin to rhyme. Notice them in their play, and you will hear them chattering about it in rhyme. Possibly they will look up into your face and ask, "Did you hear the music?" Occasionally a born poet manifests himself in childhood, and sometimes rhyming will strike a school. If we do not stop to reason about it we will be sorely vexed by the same jingle repeated not only in the playground and street, but in our homes as well. Child study specialists have taken note of the rhythmic instinct, and have spared no pains to make collections of rhymes which have for each succeeding generation formed the basis for ring plays, such as "Oats, peas, beans, and barley grows," etc., or "Ring around a rosy," etc. This has been done by way of pointing out a wise line of teaching. It shows that the rhyming period will surely develop, and that plans should be laid to feed it just as we try to satisfy any other natural craving of a child. Mothers in the home should read choice poems to their very little children, such as, "The Brook," "The Village Blacksmith," etc. They will soon learn their meaning and enjoy them. A child who loves poetry, and is familiar with it, particularly religious poetry, will be almost innocuous to surroundings which might otherwise corrupt and degrade him. There should be more memorizing of hymns in our Sunday schools; in fact little or nothing is at present done in this line. It is true that many beautiful hymns are sung in the Sunday school, but, save in the primary department,

it is always done with books in hand. The singing book is really a barrier to the memorizing of hymns. I would not urge that therefore the hymn book should be banished from the Sunday school, but rather that scholars should be trained to sing some hymns without it, in order that they may memorize them.

But my special plea for the little people is that truth shall largely be given to them in rhythmic form. The lesson should be sprinkled all through with bits of rhyme and song; to be given, on the other hand, all in prose would be prosy indeed to the children. In the beginning let the commandments be taught in rhyme.

"Thou shalt have no Gods but me.
Before no idol bend the knee.
Take not the name of God in vain.
Dare not the Sabbath day profane.
Give both thy parents honor due.
Hate not, that thou no murder do.
Abstain from words and deeds unclean.
Steal not, for thou of God art seen.
Make not a sinful lie, nor love it.
What is thy neighbor's dare not covet."

When they reach seven or eight years of age they can learn the commandments in proper form.

Let prayer be made in rhythmic form as well. What could be sweeter and more appropriate than

"We bow our heads as we draw near
The King of kings, our Father dear.
We fold our hands that we may be
From all our play and work set free.
We close our eyes that we may see
Nothing to take our thoughts from thee.
Into our hearts we pray thee come,
And may they each become thy home.
Cast out the sin and make them free,
More like the Christ-child may we be.
This is the prayer we bring to thee,
Then open our eyes thy light to see;
Lift up our head to praise thee still,
Open our hands to do thy will. Amen."

Let teachers be on the lookout for little