

effectively taught, and their meaning sufficiently grasped by the scholars as a whole.

These then are broadly the lines on which a Sunday school may be effectively worked. It only remains to consider how far the Sunday-school system has fulfilled the intention of its founder. It is admitted by all who have had an opportunity of judging of its work that it has conferred benefits on the country which could have been conferred by no other organization. It has brought religious teaching within the reach of every child in England, it has supplemented the ministerial work of the parish priest by instructing under his superintendence the little ones of his flock, it has repaired the negligence of parents who have been too often indifferent with regard to the religious training of their children, and if we admit, as we are compelled to do, that, even after a century of work, much remains for it still to do, it is only a recognition of the fact that the Sunday-school is, after all, but a human organization, and lacking in the completeness and perfection which characterizes a divine institution. But year by year it is making good its deficiencies, and adapting itself more and more to the needs of the children committed to its care.

The courses of lessons published by the Church of England Sunday-school Institute and other Church societies are all that can be desired to assist the teachers in their responsible work; in many parishes normal classes are held to teach them how to teach; preparation classes are part of the machinery of every well organized parish; and a vigorous effort is now being made to provide for a systematic visitation and inspection of Sunday schools. All along the line there is energy, activity, and reality. Spurred on by the secularizing tendency of modern educational legislation, the Church of England is endeavouring by promoting the efficiency of her Sunday-school to supply the want of that definite dogmatic religious teaching which is no longer permitted to be given in many of the day-schools of this country. The helpers in this work may not in all cases be highly-trained teachers, but their common motive for undertaking the work is the constraining love of Christ, and what is wanting in technical knowledge is made up for in enthusiasm, so that we cannot doubt that this great Sunday-school system inaugurated in such a humble spirit by Robert Raikes a century ago, is destined to do an even greater work in the future than it has accomplished in the past, and be an instrument in God's hands for preserving our dear motherland from the indifference, the agnosticism, the scepticism, and atheism which has stained the national life and marred the prosperity of some other nations.

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

THE BLESSED BROOD.

Gather them close to your loving heart,
Cradle them close to your breast;
They will soon enough leave your brooding
care,
Soon enough ascend youth's topmost stair—
Little ones in the nest.

Fret not that the children's hearts are gay,
That their restless feet will run;
There may come a time in the by and by
When you'll sit in your lonely room and sigh
For a sound of childish fun;

When you'll long for a repetition sweet,
That sounded through each room,
Of "Mother! mother!" the dear love-calls
That will echo long through the silent halls,
And add to their stately gloom.

There may come a time when you'll long to
hear

The eager, boyish tread,
The tuneless whistle, the clear, shrill shout,
The busy bustle in and out,
And pattering overhead.

When the boys and girls are all grown up,
And scattered far and wide,
Or gone to the undiscovered shore,
Where youth and age come never more,
You will miss them from your side.

Then gather them to your loving heart;
Cradle them on your breast;
They will soon enough leave your brooding
care,
Soon enough ascend youth's topmost stair—
Little ones in the nest.

—Good Housekeeping.

A MISERABLE CHRISTMAS

AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR.

[Continued.]

It was a very little kitchen, but quite large enough for the furniture it contained. There was an old box under the window, and one shelf against the wall, holding all Mrs. Duffy's china and plate. The only chair, and a tiny table standing on three thick legs, were drawn up to the fireplace, in which a few coals were burning. Two old tin candlesticks and a flat-iron adorned the chimney piece, and Kate saw, with a slight prick of her conscience, for she had not cared to decorate the house at home, that a bit of holly had been stuck into each candlestick, as well as into every other pane of the little window. Mrs. Duffy herself was seated in the chair, apparently amusing herself with a pantomime of taking tea, for there was a black teapot and a cracked cup and saucer on the table, but there was no food upon it, and when she held the teapot almost perpendicularly only a few drops fell from the spout. She put it down, and looked placidly into the embers, shaking her head a little from time to time, but gently, as if more in remembrance of the past than in reproach of the present. She was a clean, fresh looking old woman, with no teeth, and her cheeks formed a little ball, like a withered rosy apple, between her hollow eyes and sunken mouth.

"The Lord love you, my dear," said Mrs. Duffy, when Kate went in and delivered her message, "and the good doctor too. It isn't everybody as has such friends as me—on a Christmas Eve, too, when a body feels so lonesome wi'out friends. I don't mind so much on working days, my dear, but one wants friends on a holiday like Christmas. One can work wi'out friends; but one can't live wi'out friends."

"No, indeed!" said Kate, with a profound sigh.

"And I've got such good friends!" continued Mrs. Duffy, triumphantly; "there's one as gave me sixpence, and another threepence, and another twopence, only this morning. That came up to elevenpence; so I've bought my Christmas joint, just like other folks, shouldn't you, my dear?"

"I should, very much," answered Kate.

The Christmas joint was evidently a very precious possession, for it had been laid carefully between a plate and a basin, and these were well tied up in a ragged cloth, and put out of the way of any marauding cat. Kate's eyebrows went up a good deal, and her eyelids smarted a little as if with coming tears, when she saw it. It was a morsel of coarse beef, which she regarded with unconcealed satisfaction and delight.

"That cost sevenpence," she said, "and I bought twopennyworth of greens and a twopennyworth loaf to eat with it—me and a friend of mine, as is coming to dine with me. It's a very poor lame girl as lives down the court; very poor indeed, so I asked her to

come and help to eat my Christmas joint, which is exceedingly pleasant. The neighbor next door has promised to lend me a chair; we're all so friendly with one another."

"Then if you have a visitor, you must bring her with you to tea," said Kate, "and any children you have. Haven't you got any sons or daughters? You'd enjoy yourself more with them there."

"Bless your kind heart, all the same," answered Mrs. Duffy, her cheerful face overcast for a moment; "I never had more than one bonny boy, and he went off to Australy nigh upon thirty years ago. My Johnny he was. Sometimes I think as I shall never see him again. I was thinking of him when your knook came to the door. He was going on for twenty; and I was a strong woman of forty then. I doubt whether Johnny 'ud know his poor old mother again, if he did come back."

"How long is it since you heard from him?" enquired Kate.

"I never heard from him at all," said Mrs. Duffy, in a matter of course tone; "he couldn't write, and I couldn't write. But he went to Australy, and he is in Australy now, if he hasn't tumbled off. I can't help thinking at times he must 'a tumbled off, though the flies never do tumble off the ceiling. I've watched 'em for hours and hours together, thinking of my Johnney, and no fly never tumbled off yet. They have to walk with their heads downwards in Australy, like them flies; but my Johnny wasn't brought up to it, and I'm afeared for him at times."

"Oh, no, he couldn't tumble off," said Kate, laughing a little; "but are you sure you would know him yourself, Mrs. Duffy, after thirty years?"

"Can a mother forget her own boy?" asked the old woman. "Ay, ay, I should know my Johnny among a thousand, or tens of thousands. I'll be glad to bring my friend with me to-morrow, and many thanks to you for asking her. I've got to go out into the country to sing a carril or two at a fair house, where they're always very good to me; but that'll be afore dinner; and we'll be punctual to your house at five o'clock, me and my friend; and a merry Christmas and a happy New Year to every one of us, and you above all, my dear."

"A miserable Christmas, and an unhappy New Year it will be for me," thought Kate; but she did not say it. Mrs. Duffy insisted upon lighting her down the court with her only candle, which guttered and wasted terribly in the night wind; and the last glance she had of the kindly, withered old face was lit up by its flickering flame at the entrance of the dark passage.

Very early in the morning long before the Christmas sun was ready to show itself, Mrs. Duffy roused up to the fact that if she was to sing a "carril" a mile and a half away in the country, it was time to set out.—Even her hard heap of rags and straw, with the thin, scanty blanket she had been shivering under all night, were more attractive to her at seventy years of age than the long, lonely walk, through lanes deep down between high hedgerows, with cart ruts filled with mingled mud and ice. But she was of a brave and grateful heart, and after a short prayer for herself and everybody, uttered before quitting the feeble warmth of her bed, she sallied out into the chill frostiness of the coming dawn. Up and down the street she heard the shrill voices of children chanting some Christmas ditty; and she thought of Johnny when he was a boy, with his yellow hair, and round, red face, turning out all eagerness and hope on a Christmas morning, and singing in a voice which could not fail to rouse the most determined sleeper.

"He came home once with three shillings and twopence-halfpenny, all in ha'pence," thought Mrs. Duffy, wiping away a tear from the sunken corner of her eye.