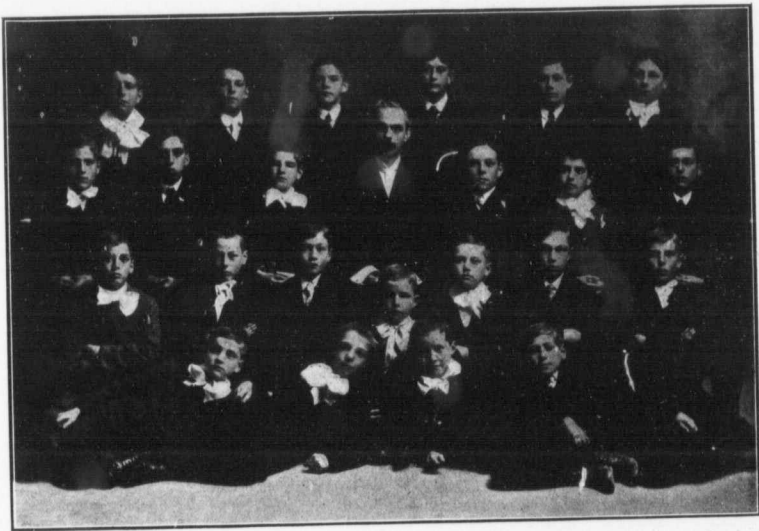


Primary Teaching

ALL our Primary and Junior teachers should read Dickens' "Hard Times." The opening chapters describe the teaching of children as it was practised in his day. The opening chapter introduces "Gradgrind" the owner of the Academy in which the pupils are to be brought up on Facts and only Facts. His directions to "M'Choosumchild," the teacher, are: "Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of any service to them. . . . Stick to Facts, sir!" Then Dickens described the scene, closing the chapter by picturing to the reader the assembled children as an "inclined plane of little vessels then and the arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim." The Primary methods of Dickens' day were very crude, but have we entirely outgrown them? What a triumph it was, as the great novelist describes in the second chapter, when poor Sissy Jupe so ignominiously failed to give a definition of a horse, and Bitzer rattled off almost

of memorizing facts. Whether he knew the meaning of them or not was not a vital matter. Haven't we taught the catechism in the same way? What a triumph when some modern Bitzer has rattled it off so smoothly that he has been the admiration of parent or teacher, and the envy of the other pupils in the class! Froebel held that the mission of the educator was to develop the faculties of the child by arousing voluntary activity on his part. Are we loyal to this principle? How many of our children can ask an intelligent question about the Bible, even after they have learned a number of facts concerning it? Try, and you will be surprised at their failure. It is a good practical plan to encourage your juniors to ask questions covering the ground you have gone over. Awaken their thought, arouse their curiosity, stimulate their desire to understand, repeat, restate in their own words. The cultivation of this ability to make intelligent restatement of what has been read or studied is a practical test of the teaching.

Not what your child memorizes; but what he understands is the measure of what he has learned. Simply telling is not



THE BOYS' CHOIR, BRIDGE ST. CHURCH, BELLEVILLE

in a breath, "Quadruped, Gramnivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth!" Evidently he knew all about a horse, and poor Sissy deserved the ignominy that fell upon her by reason of Bitzer's wonderful definition.

Don't laugh, please. You have taught your Primaries to run off the Books of the Bible in pretty much the same way. From Genesis to Revelation they have glibly and parrot-like run on without a break. But how many of them, if interrupted, could answer the question, "What book comes just before Nehemiah?" Do you know yourself, without gabbling through the whole list? We have not outgrown the methods of Dickens' age yet. He wrote to expose the false educational methods of England in his day, and was contemporaneous with the great German educationalist, Froebel, who planned the Kindergarten idea in 1837. Dickens described the teacher of his day as a living encyclopedia, and the culture of the pupil was in proportion to his power

teaching. Neither is recitation. By direct statement, by simile, by illustration, by questioning to discover what he has learned, by enabling him to restate in his own language what you have told him, you will assist him to assimilate the truth and know. You do not teach until you have passed the truth you know, through some suitable channel, to the understanding of your child that he may know it, too. Anything less than this is of little benefit to him or of little credit to you.

S. T. B.

ONE of the most popular features in the young people's work in the Bridge Street Methodist Church, Belleville, is represented in the above picture, and the sweet singing of the boys as occasionally heard in public services will long be remembered by those who have been privileged to hear it. Such organizations among the boys might profitably be made in many other places and the good example of Bridge Street Church followed throughout the connection. This would mean much of profit to the boys themselves and add greatly to the pleasure of the services in which they participate.