

Home Department of the Sabbath-School.*

BY REV. G. B. F. HALLOCK.

A FEW years since God inspired one of his servants, Dr. William A. Duncan, of Syracuse, to originate what is known as the Home Department of the Sunday-school, a new and important method for the promotion of the study of His life-giving word. The Sunday-school Home Department is no longer an experiment. It has been tried and proven, and found to be a most helpful method of promoting our cause. It is certain of wide and wider acceptance, meeting, as it does, a recognized need. The arrangement does not, strictly speaking, involve a new organization, but simply an *expansion* of Sunday-school work. Its purpose, as we know, is to encourage Bible study among all those who, for any reason, cannot attend the regular sessions of any school; such, for example, as the aged and the infirm; invalids and their nurses; mothers, whose duties require their presence in the home; those engaged in domestic work; any living at too great a distance, or in isolated families or communities where there is no school; any away visiting, and all those who must be absent from home much of the time—as railroad men, those employed in mail and postal service, commercial travellers and agents, students in academies, seminaries and colleges, physicians, druggists' clerks, telegraph and telephone operators, and those who are employed in many departments of Government work. There are many in all these classes who are not willingly absent from the Sunday-school.

HOW TO ORGANIZE.

First, we solicited a few representative people in the congregation of the Brick Church Sunday-school to become members. We then issued a circular letter setting forth the plan, the purpose, the methods and the benefits of this proposed new feature in our Sunday-school work, the circular bearing, in addition, the names of those who had already agreed to join us, and also a detachable blank application for membership. This circular was freely distributed in the congregation one Sabbath morning, and the people not attending Sunday-school invited to sign the application and put it upon the collection plate. Our next step was to send personal invitations to such members of the church as it was thought would make suitable visitors, calling them to meet.

We then went over the printed roll of the church, and omitting those already in Sunday-

school, permitted the visitors to choose, as their names were read, those they would agree to see and solicit. Those under each visitor's care we called a "class." At present we have twenty-eight classes, with a total membership of over two hundred and fourteen. We furnish free to every member a "Question Book," costing thirteen cents, with the lessons for a year.

We have found that the success of every class depends almost entirely upon the interest and faithfulness of the visitor. If the visitor shows enthusiasm, and goes regularly and promptly at the end of each quarter, the class is sure to prosper. If not, it is likely to fail, be the class large or small; and our classes are both large and small, the largest having twenty-six scholars, and the smallest, one.

Two weeks after the close of the quarter the report is made up by the secretary and treasurer, and we send it, with some words of good cheer, in printed form to each member. This is designed to serve as a living chord through which the scattered members may feel, if never so slightly, their spiritual union with their unseen companions who are pursuing the same course of study.

Doubtless, if it could be known, we should be surprised at the number of professing Christians who almost totally

NEGLECT THE BIBLE.

And multitudes who are not Christians who scarcely ever open its lids. Another fact; they are utterly unconscious of the neglect. Just here comes in the advantage of the Home Department method, with its call and pledge to regular, habitual, systematic work. I believe it to be admirably adapted not only to the awakening of interest in Bible study, but to holding its members to it regularly, thus forming a valuable habit. This of itself is enough to commend it. Not only so, but further, it kindles a new interest in the Sunday-school. It turns many thoughts toward it. It greatly increases the number of its friends, and from time to time it brings many of the Home Department members or their children into it. It cannot fail to have this effect. I believe that, for the sake of the Sunday-school itself, it will pay any church to start a Home Department.

Another way in which it is a very noticeable help is in the

PROMOTION OF SOCIABILITY IN THE CHURCH.

It is no small gain in any church to have a band of visitors start out every three months and make a round of calls. The visitors are likely to be from the best and most influential people in the church, and their calls upon the very persons who will most appreciate them. Think, too, how much these calls kindle loyalty to the church itself. A new tie is formed, a new interest awakened, and in the very individuals in the congregation most likely to be neglected and to feel the neglect. This fact

* An address given in the Elm Street Church, Toronto.