

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1891.

SUNDAY SCHOOL METHODS

THE REV. DR. MEREDITH INTERESTINGLY DESCRIBES THEM.

How the Largest Sunday School in the Country is Housed—Music, Teachers, the International Lessons and Chinese Pupils Discussed by Competent Authority.

NEW YORK, Feb. 20.—The Rev. Dr. R. R. Meredith is an authority on the modern Sunday school. Perhaps he is the most generally recognized authority in the country. His commanding influence in Sunday school work dates back from a dozen to fifteen years. In Boston his weekly exposition of the International lessons filled Tremont Temple winter after winter every Sunday afternoon. When he left the Hub two or three years ago for Brooklyn large offers were made to him to remain and devote himself to that work altogether.



REV. DR. R. R. MEREDITH.

Since he became pastor of the Tompkins Avenue Congregational church, in the city of churches, great audiences of Sunday school workers have gathered every Tuesday evening to hear his discussion of the lesson for the succeeding Sunday. Without regard for denominational lines, people of all creeds and of both sexes fill his enormous normal class, which thus becomes, probably, the most forceful agency in the country for the training of Sunday school teachers; Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists alike finding matter of interest in his clear-cut, luminous and intensely practical Christology. Question and answer fly fast, and persons especially interested in Sunday school work often come long distances, even from other States to attend.

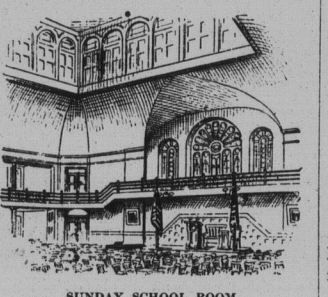
Dr. Meredith's Sunday school connected with the Tompkins Avenue church is one of the largest in the country, numbering over 2,000. With the very large branch school belonging to the Park Avenue church and presided over by an assistant pastor, there is brought under his supervision probably the greatest number of Sunday school pupils influenced by any man in any country.

These circumstances give especial interest to his opinions on Sunday school methods, the more so that the quarters occupied by his Sunday school—the success of the Tompkins Avenue church having compelled it to put up new and imposing buildings—are called the most modern, best arranged and most carefully considered with respect to their uses of any Sunday school rooms in the country; they are, indeed, the last work in Sunday school architecture.

"What is now the approved method," I found opportunity to ask him a few days ago, "of housing a Sunday school? Does experience favor one large room or a considerable number of smaller ones?"

"Both," he answered. "The well regulated modern Sunday school of any size requires the one large room for preliminary assemblage and the smaller rooms for class work in the different departments."

"In our Sunday school we have the large main hall with ante-rooms, and about it on three sides are the class rooms. These are of half the height only of the large room, so that we get two stories of tiers. All the partitions are arranged to shove up and down or to one side, and all are on a line



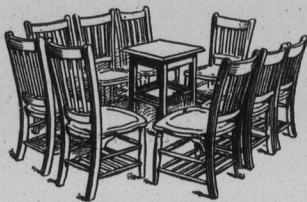
SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOM.

with the eyes of the superintendent, so that when the school opens everything is thrown into one great assembling chamber, without barriers to sight or to hearing. Afterward the partitions are drawn, and each class has full liberty for its own work, and the children can ask their questions aloud instead of whispering.

"This separation is absolutely necessary,

for the teachers ought not to have less than 45 minutes with the older pupils, while 20 or 25 minutes is enough to tire the little ones.

"In my Sunday school we have on one side, off the main floor, one large room for the primary department, which includes what people used to call the infant classes, that is, children who have not yet learned



ARRANGEMENT OF CLASSES.

to read. We throw all these into one great class and teach them together. They have rising seats arranged in concentric semi-circles, so that all may see the blackboards. We give them object teaching to interest them and call out their intelligence, and we make great use of large colored cards and pictures."

"At how early an age do you think it profitable for a child to come in?"

"Many mothers bring children of three and sit with them. I approve of this because the child's mind thus opens from the first amid the right surroundings. The Sunday school room seems home-like to it and there is a good deal of value to be attached to these first impressions on the consciousness."

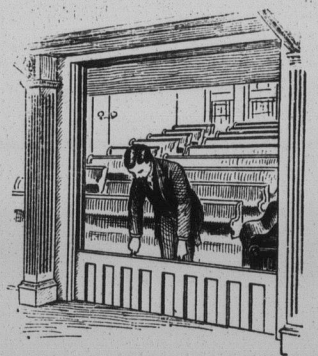
"The room above the primary department belongs to the juvenile department. Children are transferred to this at as soon as they can read. They remain in it until they are about twelve or thirteen years old. The juvenile department occupies one room only, but it is divided into 35 different classes under as many teachers. It is the aim to keep the classes small so that each pupil may get individual attention. Some classes include as many as twelve children but the most not above nine. For my part, I think eight about the best number."

"The room is furnished with 35 tables, and each class gathers with the teacher about one of these."

"The floor of the main Sunday school hall is given to the intermediate department, broken into 74 classes of young people from twelve to seventeen or eighteen years old. This also is furnished with tables supplied with maps, reference books, etc., and about these sit classes and teachers."

"All the work of the Sunday school library is attended to outside the session. We do not allow any running about of librarians to distract attention."

"One side of the Sunday school hall opens, as I said, upon the ante-rooms, and about the other two sides are the Bible class rooms. There are two stories of



LIFTING THE DOOR OF THE INFANT CLASS ROOM.

these, 28 in all. The rooms vary in size, accommodating from 40 down. Some of the classes are mixed, in others the sexes are separated; this is as circumstances dictate; we have no rule. Some of the classes are taught by men, others by women; the largest mixed class is taught very successfully by a young man."

"The large majority of Sunday school teachers are women?"

"No, a full half of mine are men; I have just about as many men as women right through the school."

"But before we drop Sunday school architecture, let me say that the present general arrangement of Sunday school rooms was originated by a Dutch architect of Akron, Ohio, whose name was Snyder. He planned the first modern Sunday school for Lewis Miller, of the Chautauque Circle, when Miller was settled at Akron about 20 years ago. Snyder's ideas have been greatly developed and modified, and I myself have introduced conveniences he never thought of, but for the main outline now followed by all progressive city schools the credit belongs to him."

"Many Sunday school workers do not agree with me, you understand, as to the advisability of keeping the primary department all in one great class or as to having

the little ones present with the older scholars at the opening of the school. Some would divide them for more individual teaching and would have their rooms wholly separated and would almost make of them a separate school with separate administration. But I believe in getting for a short time all pupils together, for the sake of the esprit de corps, and to let the little ones fully realize that they belong to a great body."

"What do you regard as a Sunday school teacher's most essential qualifications?"

"A teacher must have average intelligence and common sense; more than this is desirable but not necessary. The one thing that cannot be dispensed with is the consecration to do something for God. It is not that you do it for your own soul's sake or even that you do it for the good of the children, but that you do it for God. This carries everything else with it; whatever you do for Him you must do well, and so the consecration carries with it the study, the constant effort, the concentration of the powers."

"You do not attach importance, then, to the 'higher education' of Sunday school teachers?"

"I have had in my school at the same time a comparatively uneducated working woman and a brilliant young man fresh from college, and the woman went far beyond the other in the results she obtained, because her heart was warmer to the work; if the college man had had her fervor and had then added to it his education he would, of course, have been more efficient than, as things stood, was either of them."

"You can't stand out for classical scholarship; I've got to have 280 teachers and if I have that number of classical scholars in my congregation I don't know where to lay hands on them."

"But Sunday school teaching is growing all the time more and more intelligent. The Sunday schools have fully purged themselves, I think, of the complaints that used to be lodged, and in some cases with justice, against them. I attribute this largely to the public schools. Such a public school system as that of this country trains a body of clear-headed, intelligent citizens."

"The International Lessons, against which so much has been said, have also a good deal to do with it. With all their disadvantages, the lesson sheets give the average teacher far more than she would be in any way likely to get for herself. They do such preliminary work of study and exposition that she has no excuse for going before her class without full, intelligent comprehension."

"The International series has won its way. Not a religious paper in the country would dare ignore it, and the secular press finds itself obliged to give it progressively more and more attention."

"In your Tuesday evening normal class do you mark out courses of reading for teachers in Oriental history and customs?"

"No; some of the teachers do so themselves for their pupils. My aim in popular exposition is to make the Bible practical. It is not worth the paper it is written on except for what it can do for us today. I don't care any more about what happened to Jesus than I do about what happened to Julius Caesar, except so far as Jesus is a living force to enter into our lives now; boys and girls must take him home and have him with them Monday morning."

"What do you think of the present methods of teaching the Chinese in Sunday schools?"

"I cannot say anything about them, except as I have seen them in one city, Boston. There I was told some time familiar with the work of Miss Carter who had been about among the laundries and so entered into the lives of the poor creatures that they felt towards her as to a mother, and they came to her with every trouble. She did infinite good, but she was a very judicious woman and very careful in her selection of teachers."

"I do not believe the present system of assigning a teacher to every Chinese pupil can be changed; the Chinese cannot be taught in classes. But the teachers should be mature women, not young girls. When a Chinaman makes love to his teacher, in a ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it's the teacher's fault. She could have inspired him, and ought to have inspired him, with very different feelings. She needs tact and—years."

"Has there not been a marked advance of late in Sunday school music?"

"Indeed, yes; off in the wilderness some where there may be schools still singing 'Hold the Fort' and other such jingle music matched with nonsense words, but all the new music is of a much higher order. In our school we use the 'Laudes Domini,' teaching the children the same hymns that are sung in church and prayer meeting."

"The Superintendent's position must be becoming, in the larger schools, of more and more importance?"

"In no long time the Superintendent will be engaged at a high salary to give his entire time. There instead of assistant pastors we shall have pastors' assistants. The Superintendent will be such an assistant, and if he is, as he ought to be, the best business man in the parish, \$5,000 or \$6,000 will not be too much to pay him. He will work throughout the week among the congregation for the Sunday-school. The South Church in New Britain, Conn., has a salaried Superintendent, and the practice is sure to be followed. City Sunday-schools are becoming great and complicated organizations."

ELIZA PUTNAM HEATON.

Deceased.
I opened the morning paper,
And the first thing that met my eyes
Was a picture, the head and shoulders
Of a man most wondrous wise,
On the well turned nose and chin;
And I said, "Now here's a statesman
And I'm not acquainted with him."
So I read his name and the cut—
It was Isaac Newton Pitts;
He had taken a patent medicine
And was cured of falling sick.
—Dayton Sunday World.

TWENTY WIVES EACH.

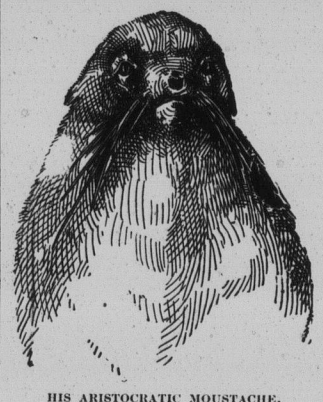
THE PERCH OF PINNIPEDS ON PRIBYLOFF ISLANDS.

First Wearers of the Seal Skin Sack—The Grounds of Contentment—How Seals Behave—The Worst Polygamists in the World—The Mormon Habits of Sealing Wives.

The war with England is a war of words to date. Premier Salisbury and Premier Blaine are having it.

"How dare you assault our vessels in Behring Sea?" asks Salisbury.

"We own that sea," replies Blaine, "and your folks must not fish there."



HIS ARISTOCRATIC MOUSTACHE.

"How do you happen to own a sea that is a thousand miles square and a part of the Pacific Ocean?" asks Salisbury, "when you insist that we own only three miles from shore in the Gulf of St. Lawrence?"

"We bought it of Russia," says Blaine, "when we bought Alaska 'with the waters thereof.'"

"Do 'the waters thereof' cover the sea 200 miles from shore under any law or custom that nations have ever recognized?" asks Salisbury; "and did not the United States forty years ago send an ambassador to Russia to protest against the Czar's claim that this very sea belonged exclusively to him?"

"I am not bound by the eccentricities of any predecessors," answers Blaine; "and if a nation can dominate the ocean only three miles from shore, how does it happen that Great Britain commanded the sea for thirty miles around St. Helena when Napoleon was a prisoner there, and now prevents poaching on her pearl reefs of Ceylon that are twenty miles from shore and fifty feet deep?"

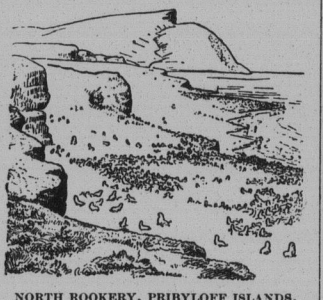
"The protection of St. Helena," says Salisbury, "was the concurrent action of the nations; and our right to the pearl fisheries is enforced only against Englishmen."

So the controversy stands and waits, while Canadians appeal to our Supreme Court. At this there is much wrath, but Salisbury laughs and inquires with much feeling, "What's the matter, Jonathan? Can't you trust your own Supreme Court, if we are willing to?"

"But," rejoins the sapient Blaine, "will you agree to abide by the finding of the court whose decision you invoke?"

"Well," says Salisbury, "let's try it and see. We can keep up the diplomatic contention, and if your court decides wrong, then will be time enough to enquire about the next step, don't you know?"

For twenty years the exclusive right to kill seals has vested in the Alaska Commercial Company, but last year a new company came to the front and made a better offer for the privilege, which was accepted by Secretary Windom. The agent of the government is Charles J. Goff, and he allowed the new company to kill only 23,000 seals, on the plea that if it killed 100,000, as formerly, the seals would soon be exterminated. But as no females are ever killed, and as the surviving males are polygamists to an astonishing extent, and as more competent experts than Goff is declare that seals are rapidly increasing,



NORTH ROOKERY, PRIBYLOFF ISLANDS.

this opinion and the reason given for reducing the harvest must be taken with a good deal of salt.

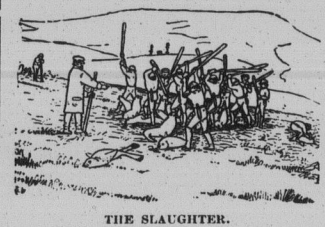
Most of the seals are killed on the Pribyloff Islands, but they winter further south and spend much of the year going and coming on the surface of the great intervening ocean. So it is easy for poaching vessels to intercept them and slay them by wholesale, and if all who wish are permitted to club the silky mammals while swimming in Behring Sea to and from their

northern breeding-grounds, the whole of the interesting race will soon be exterminated.

Hall of the seal skin sacques in the world come from these Pribyloff Islands, lying in Behring's sea, two hundred miles from the main land. The two principal ones are mere islets—St. Paul and St. George—each ten or twelve miles long and half as broad. For two months in the summer of each year, the Aleuts, or natives, kill seals, and skin them; the other ten they lie around in the twilight, never going to bed or taking off their clothes, night or day, gossiping, eating and getting drunk on quass. They eat ravenously, averaging two pounds of seal meat per day, for every man, woman and child, in addition to vast quantities of other food.

Up to last year they took about 100,000 skins a year, and the United States treasury received three dollars for each skin. The net result is that the government has received from the Commercial Company during the last twenty years, nearly as much as was paid to Russia for the whole of Alaska in 1868. So Seward's purchase is vindicated: it was unquestionably a good bargain to pay \$7,200,000 for this vast peninsula whose sources of wealth are not yet even guessed at, much less developed.

In the beneficent or malevolent economy of nature and commerce there are twice as many females as males in the seal community; so polygamy flourishes. If there ever could be an excuse for plural marriages in human society it would be in New England, where there is a surplus of

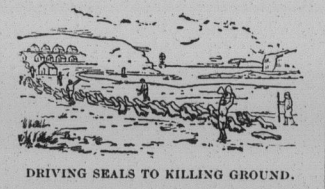


THE SLAUGHTER.

180,000 women; there certainly is none in the middle of the Alkaline plains in Utah, where there are two men to one woman everywhere.

In the Spring the adult seals come swimming back from their mysterious tropical visit, accompanied by a million of the young pups of the previous Summer, and the Pribyloff Islands are very lively once more—lively and reverberant with roars of anger and of friendly greeting.

Mostly roars of anger, for every male seal is the foreordained enemy of all other male seals, and must defend with his strength and often with his life the position he has assumed on the rocks as his particular seraglio. Here he gathers his harem, one by one, and here, in a few weeks, the young are born. Some of these bulls exhibit the same desperate courage and insensibility to pain as is shown by the Indian brave who is hamstrung and hauled up a tree top by the quivering sinews. One was pointed out to the government agent who had survived 40 or 50 pitched battles with as many antagonists and still held his place, covered with scars and frightfully gashed, raw, festering and bloody, one eye



DRIVING SEALS TO KILLING GROUND.

gouged out and a fore flapper torn to ribbons, but yet lording it stubbornly over his harem of 15 or 20 females, huddled admiringly around him. The fighting is mostly done with the mouth. They seize each other with their canine teeth, always leaving ugly, and sometimes fatal wounds.

The male seals arrive from the south first, and are followed by the pretty little females some weeks thereafter. Hon. George Wardman, the treasury agent at the Pribyloff Island, expresses no opinion about the question of *mors clausum*, leaving that to be settled by the secretary of state and the British premier, but he describes this polygamy in a very lively manner: "The matured male seal, when he draws up out of the ocean after a six or eight months' cruise in waters to us unknown, is a magnificent animal. Bold, bad and beautiful, he takes a position in May among the basaltic rocks which are washed by the surf in storms, braces his broad chest upon his fore flippers, stretches his heavily-maned, glossy, undulating neck, throws his tapering head aloft, and roars forth a hoarse bellow of defiance to the world. He closes with a guttural growl that sounds like two quarts of pebbles rattling in his throat, while down the corners of his threatening mouth, stockaded with ivory fangs, droop the long, grey lines of his aristocratic moustache. Here he takes his stand, and here he will meet his expected family or death."

In June comes his multitudinous bride. The male fur seal is a huge but symmetrical brownish bulk of six or eight hundred pounds. The female is a meek, modest, submissive looking little creature, averaging about a hundred weight. She creeps up out of the water with a demure, down-cast countenance, the shining hair neatly brushed back from her pretty little head, and—arrayed in a brown sacque, think you? Not at all. She is a Quakerish looking matron in an unpretending steel gray, but sleek and tidy without a wrinkle in her dress.

"There could not," says Mr. Wardman, "be a greater contrast; he, aggressive, fierce and bloodthirsty; she, meek and lowly, but, as rumors go, sly withal, and were she sole mistress of her lord's affections would, no doubt, exhibit a temper of her own. Competition keeps her spirit down, poor thing. The old bulls occupy their pre-emption for weeks without going into the water, awaiting the arrival of the females, sleeping on the ground and neither eating or drinking from week to week. This, however, is but preliminary to the longer vigil and fast, which continues for three months after the arrival of the females. When they depart they are weak and lean."

There are two or three classes of male seals which are deprived of the delights and refining influences of female society. There are young bachelors who have never yet had the courage to go in and fight for a claim, being apparently awed into remaining at a respectful and safe distance from the potent brown and tawny seniors. These young fellows haul out in crowds of thousands close to the water and not far from the seragios. They are from one to four or five years old and they alternate their pastimes between lying on their backs among the rocks (where they fan their heated bodies with a hind flipper if it is a warm day) and getting down into the water in front of the old Turks' summer residences and endeavoring with varying success to draw the females into sly flirtations. Notwithstanding the fierce jealousy with which these wives are watched and guarded, and contrary to what would be expected from their meek and sanctified appearance, there are breaches of decorum occasionally which no conscientious person would attempt to defend.

In cases of elopement the gay Lothario is generally handled generously according to the custom of the world in such cases and his guilty partner treated with great severity. Her lord and master will gallop through the family, knocking his other wives right and left, bouncing over the babies in his anger, and, overtaking the fugitive female, thrashes her so soundly with his flippers that she puts up her little nose to his, kisses him in token of submission and reformation, and creeps back apparently subdued and penitent.

Although these males abstain from food and water absolutely for three months or more, and must be faint and weak, they are always ready for a fight. They approach with heads averted and furtive eye, as it comically deprecating the row, but when near enough they reach for each other as quick as a flash and utter as they join battle a continuous shrill, piping whistle; their eyes gleam wickedly, their teeth gnash, their hair flies and their blood flows. It is one of the most extraordinary contests in which brutes can indulge.

The breeding season is July; the females bear their first young when three years old, never bringing forth but one pup at a time and the period of gestation is nearly twelve months. The pups cannot swim during the first six weeks, and will drown at once if thrown into the water. They learn to swim deliberately and systematically, as boys do.

A good many of the seals never take but one mate, like certain monogamous birds, but this abstinence generally seems to result from a conscious lack of physical prowess. All that are tough and strong practice polygamy and endure with more or less fortitude and patience, any quantity of mothers-in-law. Senator Sherman insists that the habit which the Mormons have of "sealing" wives originated in L-S-ka—The place of the seal.

W. A. CROFFUT.

Awkward, Wasn't It?

A Parisian countess paid a visit to Gounod at his villa in St. Cloud. She passed through the dining-room just as the remains of the breakfast were being cleared away.

She saw several cherry stones lying on a plate before the master's chair and took one, carefully concealing it in her glove. Some time after Gounod repaid the visit. The lady, smiling and blushing, showed him a brooch containing the cherry stone set in brilliant and related the origin of the stone.

"I must tell my servant that," replied Gounod, smilingly. "It will please him highly. Jean loves cherries so much, but I never eat them myself."

The lady never wore the brooch again.—Ex.