

## The Elementary Department in the Sunday School

BY MRS. W. C. MATTHEWS, ST. JOHN, N.B.

There seems to be some uncertainty in the minds of many people just what is meant by the Elementary Department of the Sunday School. It is quite a modern term. For many years those who have had the Sunday School work at heart, felt we were not doing our work in the very best way. We lacked system, and in that lack we missed many of the blessings that might have been ours.

After much thought and many prayers, a committee was appointed to study the situation, with the result that now we have the Sunday School divided into Elementary, Junior, Intermediate, Senior and Adult Departments, each of these having its own peculiarities (if such we may call them) which cannot be ignored. The Elementary, of which we wish to speak briefly, consists of children from birth to the age of thirteen years.

In dividing the school as above, the idea was to so grade the pupils that the teaching done should be in accordance with that followed in the public schools, regarding age and development. In former years the Primary Department of a Sunday School consisted of children ranging in age all the way from four to thirteen years.

Picture such a class. Try to imagine yourself the teacher. You are tired before beginning to teach and so are the children. We are so glad that the Father gave a seed thought to some one of the great importance of doing the Sunday School work well, especially among the younger children. For out of that nightmare of a class has evolved three well-defined classes, viz: *Beginners*, three to five years; *Primary*, six to nine years; *Junior*, nine to thirteen years.

The idea of grading has always been a difficult one, until we were given the Graded Supplemental Lessons, and now we have the new Graded International Lessons. So our work will be much easier in future. As we study these new lessons we wonder how and why we taught so long over the heads of our little ones. We had no consideration for the character, the interests and requirements of the pupils at different ages, nor did we stop to think of the teaching that would minister to the spiritual life at different stages, so that the development might be normal and continuous.

In the day school we find that the amount and character of the material are decided by the pupils' capacity. Simple concrete lessons give place gradually to more complex and abstract instruction, the progression being always indicated by the advance in the child's powers and changing needs. Realizing that the child has the same brains on Sunday as on Monday, the Committee appointed worked out a series of lessons suited to the three classes mentioned. The purpose is to meet the spiritual need of the pupil in each stage of his development.

In the Beginners' Class we have the truths presented through stories from the Bible. We who have to do with children know how they ask over and over again for a story. When we come to the Primary we find it is the stage where the child's brain is growing rapidly and is very susceptible to impressions. This is also the school age, but as yet the pupil is only able for the tiny truths, as his powers of sustained attention are limited. The lesson selected for this class cannot help but appeal to the teacher who is awake to the importance of early impressions. The Juniors are so different from either of the others that we feel almost in despair as we think of

the importance of our task. Here we find habits being formed and strengthened. In this class of all classes, we must deal gently but firmly with the pupil. The Junior teacher has a privilege as perhaps no other has for obtaining results in helping boys and girls to know God's Word, to obey His Commandments, and to love both the hearing and doing of His Word.

To any one who will sit down prayerfully and study the Elementary Department of our school as outlined for today, I am sure there will come the conviction that this Department demands our most earnest and consecrated efforts. It is the foundation of the Sunday School; of the Church, yes even of the State. Here are being formed habits which will be carried throughout the future stages, and if we can do anything to help strengthen these for good, should we not use every Heaven-directed means given?

Never before has the Christian world so felt the need of solid work being done in this Department of the Sunday School. Today when we are so enthusiastic over the Adult Bible Class, let us not forget



"OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM."

one moment forget "The Child in the Midst," and the importance placed upon him by the dear Master.

Teachers in the Elementary Department, we are favored above many. We have been entrusted with humanity at its most impressionable stage. Yet with the privilege comes our responsibility.

"Up to us sweet childhood locketh,  
Heart and mind and soul awake,  
Touch us of Thy ways, Oh Father  
For sweet childhood sake.

Father, order all our footsteps,  
So direct our way,  
That, in following us the children  
May not go astray."

### Baby's Skies

BY MARY C. BARTLETT.

Would you know the baby's skies?  
Baby's skies are mother's eyes.  
Mother's eyes and smile together  
Make the baby's pleasant weather.  
Mother keep your eyes from tears,  
Keep your heart from foolish fears,  
Keep your lips from dull complaining,  
Lest the baby think 'tis raining.

## The Cradle Roll

BY MRS. PETER BRYCE, TORONTO, ONT.

"Buds and bells! Sweet April treasures,  
Springing all around.  
White and gold and crimson treasures,  
From the cold, unlovely ground.  
He who gave them grace and hue  
Made the little children, too.

"When the weary little flowers  
Close their starry eyes  
By the dawn and dewy hours,  
Strength and freshness God supplies.  
He who sends the gentle dew  
Cares for little children, too."

F. R. H.

In these days of many organizations, one of the latest, most interesting, and most justifiable, is the Cradle Roll Department of the Sunday School.

When first this organization was brought to our notice, it seemed to be but another burden about to be added to the already heavily taxed shoulders of the faithful workers; but upon looking more deeply into the subject we were led to feel that this part of the work may indeed, if properly carried on, become to a great source of help and blessing to a church.

1. Why should we have a Cradle Roll Department in connection with the Sunday School?

(a) Because, thus provision is made that the children belong to Christ; redeemed by Him, they form part of His Kingdom, and that at no time should they depart therefrom.

(b) Because, thus provision is made for the children, which grants them, from earliest infancy, a home and a welcome in the church, which was named by Jesus "My Father's House."

(c) Because, through the children, we reach the hearts of the parents and may thus interest them greatly in the church.

2. How may the work of the Cradle Roll be carried on? First, we need a superintendent, earnest, energetic, and in whose heart there is love and sympathy both for the mothers and the babies.

From the minister the superintendent receives the names of all little ones under five years of age belonging to his charge, or the names of the families in which these children are to be found.

Now the superintendent must choose the helpers. The district may be divided into wards, each worker being responsible for one ward.

Each visitor calls at the homes of the children, explains the object of the visit, and asks that the baby may become a member. The name is inscribed on a beautiful certificate, and on each succeeding birthday the child receives a pretty card or little gift.

The superintendent, obtaining the names from all the workers, places them upon a large and beautiful roll which is hung in the Sunday School room.

Now these little ones form part of the Sunday School, and are in evidence on special days. On the glad summer day when the bigger children have their annual picnic, with them will come the mothers and their babies; and again when Santa comes to visit the school at Christmas time, the little ones will be remembered by that kindly old gentleman.

Thus the home and the church are bound more closely together, and we feel that we are all members of the Father's one great family, and are reminded of the words of the Master when He said—"For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

This department of the Sunday School has been working with great success at Bloor Avenue Methodist Church, Eglaricourt, Toronto, and now we have an enrollment of over three hundred little