

as many helpers as you need, and choose women who are "wise-hearted," and under the class system your garden of immortals will flourish, so that when

"The Lord into his garden comes"
(and he is always pacing your garden paths) he will say of you, "She hath done what she could,"

Primary Opening Exercises.

BY JULIA E. PECK.

"My children are tired of having the same set of exercises Sunday after Sunday; I wish I could get up something new," says an anxious primary teacher.

"I am so fond of variety that I change my program for opening exercises every few weeks," says an ambitious primary teacher, "for I do not want my children to grow weary from constant repetition."

They are, however, more likely to grow weary from constant change, if new plans are introduced before they grow accustomed to the old; this because they never feel themselves upon familiar ground, and are always in an unsettled state, because they never know what is coming next. Thus they do not get into the habit of holding themselves on the alert, ready for action; and if these new plans contain much new matter for them to memorize, they grow discouraged because they have on hand already too many half memorized texts, verses, etc.

Yet the children grow weary of monotony, and we need to vary our plan for opening exercises from time to time, though always within reason. We can often change our order of arrangement without introducing new material, or we can, on a stormy Sunday, when the children have been housed closely for a good many hours, allow them to march as they sing, or to stand more frequently in concert recitation. This gives some variety, and if in their responsive services and concert recitations they can recite perfectly, they have a feeling of ease and sufficiency—that is, they feel themselves equal to the occasion, because they know exactly what is expected of them, and that they can take part with credit to themselves and their teacher.

As soon as the children have acquired this feeling of ease and "at-homeness" in such recitations, it is time to introduce the change which will give them something new to learn and to do, but this need not of necessity change the entire program and leave the children all adrift on unknown seas.

Let them have the new as something which grows out of the old, which adds new meaning to it, which adds also to its attractiveness and enjoyment. In a word, give them a sense of growth, of promotion; they always like that.

Primary opening exercises are such an important part of the lesson hour, that we often spend as much time in their preparation as in our preparation of the lesson proper. Thus, for instance, we have in our classes children who need careful instruction in certain directions. Perhaps we know of some who are extremely untruthful, others who are dishonest, others who have most unhappy homes and whose only glimpse of brightness comes in the Sunday school hour. Most of us use the International Lessons, and study text and commentary carefully in our preparation. We, however, need on many an occasion a special opportunity to comfort abused children, or to teach an emphatic lesson to untruthful and dishonest members, and our lesson text for the day, though most important in itself, does not meet the peculiar needs of the hour, or the case which we feel will admit of no delay in handling. Here, then, in our opening exercises is our opportunity.

If we have an hour to ourselves in the primary room we can divide it evenly between opening exercises and International Lesson. That need not mean teaching two lessons, for we must not weary the children in our opening exercises, and exhaust their limited powers of attention so that they will be mentally unfit for the lesson. In a kindergarten teachers get very near to their children in what they call their "morning talk," which is an informal grouping of the children around their teacher, who introduces some topic especially suited for the day or occasion, and which is of such interest to the children that they join heartily in the conversation, knowing that they are perfectly free to talk and discuss this matter. They do not recognize this "talk" as a lesson; it was not intended that they should, but the seeming spontaneousness of it all attracts them, and the informality gives them freedom to ask questions and express their tiny views on the subject, and also to reach out for their teacher's sympathy. Let us have just such a "talk" as this in our opening exercises, and have it bear on the peculiar needs of our child, or children, at this particular time, and in that particular case.

Is it easy to do this? Ask a kindergartner who prepares "morning talks" every day for nine months in the year. After seven years' experience, I can say that it requires serious study.