

Guarding and Guiding the Children Our School Homes in the West



Mary.

LIKE everything else the work in our School Homes was sadly interrupted and interfered with by the "flu" epidemic. In Vegreville, the schools were closed, most of our children had to be sent home and our Girls' Home and the "Fortune" Boys' Home were used as emergency hospitals. One of our boys and one on whom his matron depends much, had a hard time, all his people were ill with "flu" and there was no one but him to look after them and do all the work inside and out. One little sister died after terrible suffering. At Ethelbert, Dr. Gilbert reports that in no other year since we started work was so much time lost by the children from their school work—for weeks all the schools were closed. Five of our girls volunteered to work in the hospital, four of them contracted the disease, but as soon as they were better they began work again. In Teulon also the school was closed during November and December. What all this has meant to our matrons we will never know; especially at Vegreville, where they had to nurse day and night. The epidemic has certainly demonstrated to those for whom they are laboring, the unselfish devotion of our workers.

In spite of these apparent discouragements, however, there has perhaps never been a year when there have been such evidences of appreciation of these homes by the children themselves, nor when so many stories have come to the Board of how the lessons taught there by our matrons are bearing fruit. In one of our homes, a few years ago, the matron was reading to the boys the life of "Mackay, of Formosa." She asked them, "Boys, why am I reading this to you?" The answer came, "That it might inspire us to be men like him." A year or so passed and the war came; these boys went to enlist and fearing lest their nationality might be against them, they enlisted as Irishmen. They went to the front, and writing home to their matron, they told her that if God spared them to return they would like to be missionaries, for they felt that if all had been obedient to the last command of Christ, this war would never have occurred.

A little Greek Catholic girl, who was attending one of our school homes, united with the church. On going home for her holidays great pressure was brought to bear on her to go back to the old faith, but, thanks to being well drilled in the Truth for some years by our matron, the girl stood bravely by her convictions.

In our home the children take turns in leading in prayer, morning and evening, and a visitor there speaks of the wonderful simplicity and directness of these prayers. One little lassie was thanking God for bringing her to this home, and prayed that all the other little children around, who were not in such happy homes, might soon have them. Miss Mitchell was visiting a home and was speaking to the children in the evening and used the words "guard" and guide." When the children went up to bed one little girl, who had only been a very short time in residence, asked the matron, "What did Miss Mitchell mean by guard and guide?" The matron told her. Next morning it was the turn of this little girl to lead in prayer and to the astonishment of the matron she prayed "that God would guard them on their way to school and guide them in their work."

Some of the girls in Miss Johnson's home, who had been born in the old land, were contrasting conditions there and here. There they said they were ruled by fear, but here they were ruled by love. There they did not have the Bible to read for themselves, but here they had, and they could read for themselves of the wonderful love of Christ. They also contrasted their own homes and the School Home. Their mothers did not try to make a home, but when they had homes of their own they were going to try and be real home makers. One of our matrons says, "We feel that the Homes are ideal places for these children, for they need so much to be taught to be home