

group will want to have at least one Missionary Project during the year, or one Missionary meeting a month.

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A PARABLE OF GIRLHOOD

By Marjorie Trotter

Years ago there appeared in St. Nicholas a poem that made a deep impression on my little-girl mind, because it so nearly described experiences of my own. It told of a child who started to make a dress for her biggest doll. She had plenty of material out of which to make the garment, plenty of time in which to make it, but she had no pattern and did not know how to sew. She cut the garment far too small. She pricked her fingers. The hem puckered, the thread grew soiled and knotted. When the poor little garment was finished and she tried it on she found that, instead of a dress for her biggest doll, she had a bonnet for her littlest one!

Is not this story a parable of girlhood? In the years of adolescence every girl is fashioning for herself the garment of her womanhood. If she be a Canadian—favored among girls—she has plenty of material out of which to make the garment. Rich opportunities lie all about her. She has also plenty of time in which to make it. Though "youth flies fast on feathered foot" there are the intermediate years, twelve to fourteen, the senior years, fifteen to seventeen, and at least part of the young people's period, eighteen to twenty-four, at her disposal. What she should achieve is a womanhood strong, complete, God-centered, using its power for purposes bigger than itself. But the girl often had no pattern, and never knows much about sewing. She may, alas, cut her garment far too small. She pricks her fingers. The hem puckers. The thread grows soiled and knotted. The womanhood she achieves is hampered, it may be, by ill health; "bound by the habits of the slave, the sins of emptiness, gossip and spite and slander;" spiritually cramped; socially unadjusted. She should have worn

her womanhood as an ample, flowing robe. She wears it instead as an ill-fitting bonnet.

What can we do about it? One thing we certainly cannot do. We cannot take the material out of her hands and make the garment for her, as our fingers itch to do. Nor does it help in the least for us to stand by shaking our heads and criticizing the progress of the garment. What we can do is this: we can give her a pattern and we can teach her how to sew.

Of course this process should have been started long before the girl is twelve. She ought to come up to adolescence with a great many habits already formed—habits, for instance, of good digestion, sound sleep, correct posture, deep breathing; habits of truth telling, of honesty, of cheerfulness, of industry; habits of private and family and church worship, of reverence, of courtesy. But even granted the best of beginnings, she must now use a larger pattern than ever before and must learn many new, complicated stitches.

Canadian Girls in Training is the answer of the Protestant churches of Canada to the need of the girl.

First, it gives the girl a pattern. Jesus Christ has always been the pattern held before girlhood by the church, and to-day there is no change. But Jesus must be interpreted in the terms of the every-day life she has to lead. She needs to see that for every part of her life, physical or social as well as intellectual and spiritual. He stands as the ideal. When she does see this, it gives her a wonderful sense of freedom and power, yet of sweet security, of sure purpose.

It is concrete and simple, but how comprehensive! It brings an enriching, steadying force into the life just when it needs it most. Many young lives to-day rush about in "eddies of meaningless dust." I confess to a puzzled wonder that there are still some people in our churches, even among our leaders in the churches, who seem not to care whether girlhood is charged with the C.G.I.T. purpose or not.

Secondly, Canadian Girls in Training teaches the girl to sew; that is, to work out her ideal in daily life. She works with other girls in a little, organized group. She bumps