

## THE FIRST JUNIOR LEAGUE.

BY REV. W. F. FERGUSON, D.D.

THE first Junior League was established in the old rectory of Epworth Parish, Lincolnshire, Eng. It was composed of "the most remarkable family group in the history of English households," the roll of membership being the largest in 1711, when there were ten boys and girls in its chapter: Samuel, Emilia, Susannah, Mary, Mehetabel, Anne, John, Martha, Charles, Kezia.

The President was Mrs. Susannah Wesley, one of the most saintly and useful women in the history of Christianity. Into this home League she introduced all the features of work from which have been modelled the departments of the present Junior League; viz., Spiritual, Mercy and Help, Literary, and Social. Pre-eminence was given the Spiritual Department. Not only were the children gathered in family worship, but were appointed regular times for private prayer. Each child was taken

healthful recreations, in which both parents joined. And under this department the president enforced a rule in regard to social amusements that is worthy of being emblazoned upon every League banner: "Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish for spiritual things, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself." Another department, having Mercy and Help in view, sent its members forth into the parish to instruct the ignorant, and to minister relief and comfort to many sad and needy homes. Of its president in this line of work the poetic husband wrote thus:

"Rarely abroad, or never but with me,  
Or when by pity called, or charity."

Thus we have found in the Epworth directory, all the departments of the Junior League—Spiritual, Mercy and Help, Literary, Social—not merely adopted, but adopted and worked with such method that those young Epworthians

and desirable, it is the thing we ought to expect; it ought to be as common for young children to be born into the kingdom of God as to be born into the world. It is possible and natural for children to be converted at their mother's knee, and never know the time when they did not love the Saviour. And this should not be something rare, occasional, remarkable, a phenomenon, a thing to excite remark, like a comet or a meteor. It should be the usual, expected thing, that children of religious parents should choose to live for the Saviour as early as they are able to make any choice, and should be received into the Church and receive its nurturing, fostering care. The churches and Christian parents at large have had their eyes blinded to this matter. The Church has often said to the children, "You cannot come in here: stand out there in the vestibule until you are grown up"; and a very cold, cheerless vestibule it has often been. Or else it has said, "Go to the Sunday-school: that will do for you while you are young." Devout parents have prayed earnestly that their



THREE LITTLE MAIDS.

aside once a week, in the evening, to enjoy a conversation with mother on the Christian life—a prophecy of the Methodist class-meeting system. Then a devotional meeting was held every Sunday afternoon, beginning in the kitchen, but for ample space soon transferred into the parish chapel, where it became the centre of a wide-spread revival. The Literary Department was also developed, not merely in the six hours daily of exacting study and instruction, but in teaching the Creed, the Commandments, and the Catechism, and, further, in assigning interesting books to each member for wholesome reading.

In the Social Department a certain portion of each day was set aside for

slept, ate, studied, played, prayed, and even cried, according to rule—a method sternly rigorous, and yet instinct with burning and loving enthusiasm—a method which gave birth to Methodism. —From "Practical Hints on Junior League Work."

## THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

BY REV. F. E. CLARK, D.D.

IT is natural, it is possible, it is desirable for children to grow up into Christian manhood and womanhood without experiencing any sharp and sudden transition from an evil life to a good life. Nay, it is not only possible

children might become Christian men and women, but they have forgotten to pray that they might become Christian boys and girls; and the men and women have too often remained what the boys and girls were. It has been considered almost a necessity that they should become somewhat bad before becoming very good. Hence the sad lapses from virtue in the children of Christian parents; hence the drunken boys and ruined girls who have brought shame into Christian homes; hence the facts which have given rise to the old saw about ministers' sons and deacons' daughters.

The doctrines of conversion, conviction of sin, and regeneration have been