

THREE YEARS OF TEACHER TRAINING

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Drawing near the close of the triennium between the two International Conventions of the International Sunday School Association, a review of the Teacher Training work is full of suggestion and interest. This work does not move with the rapidity that characterizes the Organized Adult Classes. Educational work is necessarily slow. It requires much thought and care to enlist people in a year's study, and much explanation is necessary, to make the methods clear and to reveal the true value of the work. During the triennium ending June, 1908, at the Louisville Convention, 79,086 students were enrolled in 8,704 classes. The report since that time to January 1st, 1911, shows that there have been enrolled 7,675 classes with 112,079 students, and 702 individual students. The states that have enrolled the largest number of students are, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and the Inland Empire (Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho).

The states making most rapid progress for the present year, with Pennsylvania always leading, are Iowa and New York, with fine advances in some of the Southern and Western states, notably Alabama and Northern California. There is a greater progress that cannot be reported and that figures do not fully reveal. There is a deeper place in the thought of the churches, the clearer vision of religious leaders, and the attentive attitude of the religious colleges. If I mistake not, we have every reason for encouragement from these intangible sources. I have abundant evidence that there is a deep spirit of conviction that higher standards are essential, and have reason to rejoice in the finer sympathy extended to this work everywhere.

The method that seems now the most essential to lasting progress is, first, the organization of a class, at the Sunday School hour, of chosen pupils of the Senior grades, that is, sixteen to twenty years of age. This class, with a continuous life, with graduation of pupils who have completed the course, year by year, answers the teaching problem

of the School in time; and answering this problem, it meets the hardest problem which the Sunday School faces, because the greatest need everywhere is a larger number of trained, consecrated teachers. And while we are doing valuable work in enlarging the vision and increasing the efficiency of the teachers already at work by week-day classes, yet the most effective means will be found the class in the Sunday School itself, organized from these chosen young people. It will require an Educational or Teacher Training Department in each Sunday School, with a teacher or superintendent definitely set aside for that work, to secure the highest results.

Many Union classes, where groups from closely affiliated churches are studying with great profit, and Advanced Teacher Training Institutes in many of our cities, are answering the question of future leadership. Such an Institute may employ a number of instructors, taking specialists for the different studies. The Schools of Methods, of which a large number have been established in different popular religious resorts, have also been tried recently in the winter in several states with very fine results.

The attention given to the question of the college and the Sunday School, is another very helpful phase of the work. Young men and women who are not preparing to enter professional religious work, find no sphere of usefulness opening wider to them than the Sunday School. Nowhere can they invest their time and strength with more immediate return in moral and spiritual results than in the School of Religion in their own churches. And yet few of them leave college with special preparation for this work. The attitude, however, of college leaders to this problem, is very kindly. Courses of religious pedagogy are already established in many institutions, while many more will announce such courses in the near future.

All State, Provincial, and Denominational leaders are asked to cooperate in a Teacher Training campaign of two weeks in September.