

whole of its work is given in Harriet Finlay-Johnson's book on *The Dramatic Method of Teaching*.

Fortunately, we now have an even more concrete and convincing account of the use of dramatic methods in the religious education of children. For five years past, at the Hyde Park Church of Disciples in Chicago, Miss Elizabeth E. Miller has conducted a dramatic club of children from 6 to 14 years of age, who meet for one hour each Sunday afternoon to dramatize and act out stories from the Bible. In her book entitled *The Dramatization of Bible Stories*, Miss Miller presents a record of her work with these children, with a detailed description of her methods, and the text of their dramatizations of the stories of Joseph, David and Goliath, Moses in the Bulrushes, Ruth, Esther, Abraham and the Three Guests, Daniel in the Lion's Den, the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Great Supper, the Good Samaritan, and the Prodigal Son, besides suggestive analyses of a number of other stories. The book is clear, straightforward and practical. Both Miss Miller's work and her account constitute a most important contribution to educational method.

The fundamental point which one must keep clear, is that such dramatic work is for the sake of the education of the children who take part in it, not for the sake of the play itself as a finished artistic product, or for the enjoyment of parents, or other spectators who may from time to time be invited to witness its performance. Most of the work, indeed, is done without reference to possible public performance. It is play in the true sense,—the naturally dramatic play of children—organized, supervised and guided by an educative purpose, yet remaining play.

The children do more, then, than simply memorizing and stage a dialogue which is furnished to them readymade. There is little that is educative about amateur theatricals of the common sort. The essence of the dramatic method of teaching, on the contrary, lies in the fact that the children make the play themselves. They are the authors, as well as the actors, of the little drama. The number and form of the acts and scenes, the words of the

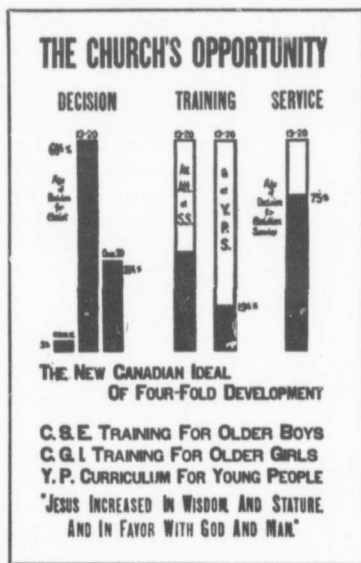
dialogue, and the character of the accompanying action, take shape slowly as a result of the cooperative effort of the children themselves, as one after another, in spontaneous play, offers his own interpretation of this or that part, subject to the criticism of the group as a whole.

The first step, of course, is for the teacher to tell the story, simply, directly, with dramatic unity and movement, emphasizing essentials, using direct discourse, and aiming to develop within the children vivid mental pictures of its outstanding events.*

The next step is to talk the story over with the children, and to have them determine the general plan which they will follow in playing it, by dividing it into the most important pictures or scenes.

Then comes the playing. After a brief discussion of what should take place in the first scene, some of the children are asked to act it out, which they do, using their own words and following their own ideas as to appropriate details of action. The teacher then, to quote Miss Miller, "raises such questions as 'Which parts did these children do best?' 'Why?' 'Where can they improve it?' 'What would you do to make the part better?' 'What do you think should have been said here?'" This leads to constructive criticism of the scene by the children themselves, rather than by the leader in charge. Each child is eager to offer suggestions at this point and is anxious for an opportunity to give his own interpretation of the part by acting it out." The scene is acted again, with different children for some or all parts, whose interpretation is in turn subjected to the criticism of the group.

Each scene is worked out in a similar way, and the story as a whole is played through many times. The teacher sees to it that every child has a chance to try out many



This is a facsimile of one of the twelve Wall and Lantern Slide Charts prepared by the Sabbath School and Y.P.S. Board for the Forward Movement of our church.

*Teachers who wish help on this point can do no better than to follow the counsels of Sara Cone Bryant's book on *How to Tell Stories to Children*. This contains a brief description, too, of the schoolroom dramatization of stories. A collection of stories, adapted for telling with this end in view, which may serve as examples of such adaptation, is to be found in Ada R. Skinner's *Dramatic Stories to Read and Tell*.