

crated our children to the living God, let us now lead them to Him all the days of their lives; let us make the preparation of their young hearts our first and most delightful duty. Then shall our own lives glorify our Father in heaven, and the little ones, like Samuel, will grow and minister before the Lord.

Mission Bands.

BY MRS. J. D. FREEMAN.

The first point upon which I wish to touch is the *Aim of the Mission Band*.

As I conceive of it, the aim of the Mission Band is a high and noble one: It is not merely to teach a number of children to recite missionary poetry and sing missionary hymns, although it includes these things within its sphere and will doubtless prove of great advantage to the young in that direction. Nor is the aim of the Mission Band simply a monetary one; its purpose has not been accomplished when it has succeeded in contributing an amount of money, however large it may be, to the funds of our various missionary societies. Of course a Mission Band rightly managed will raise money and a good deal of it, too, as our Treasurer can testify. Yet it is well-known that the money raised for any given object does not always represent love for that object on the part of those who have given it, and this is true of money raised in Mission Bands. Take for instance the case where the children are placed in competition with each other for the purpose of collecting money. I grant that you may raise a large amount in that way, perhaps a larger than in any other, yet you will be doing more thereby to feed the vanity of the children, than to stimulate their love for Missions, for the competitive spirit is essentially a selfish spirit. The children should be taught to give—there can be no doubt of that—but it is *self-giving* not merely *money-giving* that we wish them to learn; I think that little girl had the right idea, who, after listening to her pastor preach upon the subject of giving ourselves to the Lord; said to the man who passed her the collection plate, "a little lower, please, I want to put myself in."

This leads me to say that the grand aim of Mission Band work should be to arouse the missionary spirit in the hearts of the children. Let the true missionary spirit be there, and we shall have all the money to offer from the Mission Band that the Lord will own or bless. Permit me to say just here that in my estimation the missionary spirit can only be aroused by imparting missionary intelligence. We should seek continually to place before the children the actual state of the heathen world; we should strive to make them realize something of the sad condition of the Christless millions who are dying every year without a hope of heaven. We should make them acquainted with their own missionaries, their names, their fields of labor, their work, the difficulties with which they have to contend, and how they are hampered by their lack of helpers. Let them know what triumphs have been won already in the field of missionary enterprise, and how much remains to be accomplished. Missionary intelligence is the fuel of missionary ardor. Any enthusiasm aroused apart from this would be like a fire of shavings, which flames for a moment and then expires; but the fuel of missionary intelligence laid upon the altar of young hearts and set ablaze by the Holy Spirit will burn steadily and brightly to the glory of the God of Missions.

In the second place, I would like to say a few words touching upon *Prerequisites for the Work*. If you think of engaging in Mission Band work, the first thing you will need is the Mission Band fever. If you haven't got it, catch it! Associate with some one who has it, and you will be morally certain to take it, and while you are about it, get a severe attack, enough to last a lifetime, and give you some to spare for other people to. You will want this fever on your brain and heart and tongue, and to the ends of your fingers and tips of your toes. So many and so great are the discouragements in this work, that you will need to be brim-full of enthusiasm all the time. Perhaps you will meet your greatest obstacles at the beginning of the work. An organization invariably provokes opposition, frequently from those who should be its friends and helpers. There are many people in our churches who feel a pious concern for the welfare of the heathen, but when you talk of forming a Mission Band, they will have just as many pious objections against it. If you have the Mission Band fever, however, you will be able to go right along unchilled by the coldness of those around you.

The next thing necessary is associates in the Work. One cannot make a success of Mission Bands working alone. You may, perhaps, if you are a whole host in yourself. If you have executive ability and can preside at the meetings, if you have time to look up the material for the monthly programmes, if you can teach the children to recite and sing, if you can compose a dialogue or recitation, when occasion demands and to do a score of other things connected with the work, then you may get along pretty well alone, but very few are blessed with such a diversity of gifts—it takes at least, two or three ordinary people to make the work a success, and you can always find one or more in every church who would make efficient workers in this direction if they would once commit themselves to it. Search them out and divide the labor with them.

And now a word about *Organizing*. If you should ask me how to organize a Mission Band, I would say just go ahead and organize. Call the children together and take the names of those who are willing to become members, then appoint your officers, and the Mission Band is organized. There is one encouraging feature about organizing, you are almost certain to have the children with you; they are generally ready to become members of any society, and you can easily persuade them to join the Band. Your next work will be to find out who can read, recite and sing, so that they may be utilized in making the future meetings of the Mission Band successful. The great point is, of course, to give every member something to do. Don't be too hard to please! Let every child take any part he is willing to take, no matter how little ability he may have; if they make false estimates of their powers at first, time will rectify the mistakes. Remember that *willingness* will be worth far more to you than *cleverness*, and *loving hearts* than *oil tongues*.

And here I may say that you will find it possible to bring others beside the little children into the work of the Band. The Band choir will make a place for the larger boys and girls, and their presence will be an encouragement to the younger members.

I believe a larger number of our churches should have Mission Bands. It may not always be possible in country places where the children are widely separated, though we find some of our most successful Bands in connection with country churches. In every village and town, however, where children can conveniently be assembled, the Mission Band should find a place provided its work is