

MISS FENSOM AND HER BOYS

Practical Sunday School Work in the Slums of Toronto.

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MISS FENSOM is a Toronto lady who is doing Sunday School work on scientific principles. The influence which she has exerted during her brief career as a Sabbath School teacher has not been wide in its scope, but her methods are worthy of emulation.

One Sunday afternoon, a couple of years ago, Miss Fensom and a friend conceived the idea of doing a little "slumming"—just to see what it was like. They determined to drop in and inspect the Fred Victor Mission Sunday School, where once a week Toronto's street boys receive instruction in the way they should go. Now Fate seemed to have arranged it that on the very day of their visit one of the staff of teachers should be absent. The superintendent was in a quandary. A class of the most violent of young ruffians were shuffling their feet and articulating strange noises calculated to embarrass him and create general disturbance. The situation demanded instant action. In desperation he summoned the nerve to ask Miss Fensom if she would take the class for the afternoon. In a moment of impulse she consented. Then she was sorry, for she had not even a vague idea of what the lesson might be about. Of what good a teacher who knew not the golden text? But when she sat down and began to talk to those boys just as she would to a caller in the drawing-room at home, her worries about the golden text departed. She interested herself in the work and prospects of them all. She found out that one boy delivered telegrams for a living, and she asked him how many passed through his hands in a year. She told them stories and they all laughed whether they saw the joke or not. The afternoon passed rapidly. At last, when the class was being dismissed for the day and Miss Fensom was leaving, a howl arose from ten lusty throats—"We want that lady back, we want that lady back!" The strange lady smiled with pleasure. She had "made good"—and she came back.

That was the accidental way in which Miss

Fensom began her Sunday School career. She has come back to those same boys Sunday after Sunday since. She has the satisfaction of feeling that her efforts have been rewarded in a measure. Her boys have no longer the appearance of Arab dishevelment which formerly characterised them. They are boys of ideals—first-class citizens in the making, though they do come from homes of squalour where soap is a scarce commodity. Miss Fensom is succeeding because she is chiefly studying her boys and not wearying herself too much picking out the fine points of the Sunday School lesson.

An instance of the solicitude which she has for the welfare of those entrusted to her care is the little outings she plans for them every year. These

outings take the form of picnics. What is a Sunday School nowadays without its annual picnic? But Miss Fensom's picnics are not like other Sunday School picnics when hundreds of irresponsible children are crammed into stuffy railroad coaches and whirled a hundred miles from home, and then whirled back again at all hours of the night. Hers are simple affairs, but none the less events of import to those concerned. The boys are notified to congregate at a certain time and then all are off on their little jaunt which leads them just beyond the limits of the city. Do they have a good time? On the last occasion the hour of the excursion was set for one o'clock and at ten-thirty several sturdy young men were straggling into Miss Fensom's Sherbourne Street residence with flushed faces and dancing, expectant eyes. The illustrations which accompany this sketch tell their own tale of the afternoon's jollification.

The gladsome vacation season is now in full swing. We are off to the Thousand Islands, up to Muskoka or to Georgian Bay that we may recuperate—the most of us just because it is the fashion. Back in our sweltering cities are hundreds of our Canadian children who know not the scent of new-mown hay, whose limitations are the cess-pool of the street. Could not some of us who have returned to town pick up a few of these wilting youngsters some day, and take them off for a little excursion after the manner of Miss Fensom, that they may breathe the air of God's country? It would cost only a few car tickets and it might do dollars' worth of good.

But we must be practical. Some Toronto society girls followed up this suggestion not long ago and provided an elaborate spread. Among the delicacies were "devilled eggs," which were beyond the comprehension of the guests. It is recorded that the party broke up almost in a riot, much to the consternation and discouragement of the fair philanthropists who were congratulating themselves on the excellence of the bill-of-fare.