

[For the REVIEW.]

OPENING EXERCISES for PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The first twenty minutes of the school day seem to me most important ones. The children are fresh and full of outside interests, and it is then that the observing teacher can get a glimpse into the real nature of the child, and note the things that interest and appeal to him.

After the opening hymn, it has been my custom to have the children repeat the Lord's Prayer. It is seemly that they all assume the same attitude and that the prayer be repeated with becoming reverence. I have followed the plan of placing a suitable verse of scripture on the blackboard. The Golden Rule as found in St. Matt. 7:12 is a good one to begin with. Several children may repeat this verse after the prayer. If it remains on the board for several days, it will be memorized by most of the children.

This plan may be varied by reading or repeating a whole passage appropriate to a particular season; as, a Thanksgiving Psalm for the months of October and November, and the Christmas story for December, as told in St. Luke 2:8-14.

As in all school work, it is necessary to have a plan or outline of the subjects to be taken up in the morning talks. Every morning, have something specially planned to bring before the children; such subjects as, the weather, winds, direction, nature topics, duties and attitude of the children toward each other, and kindness to animals, lend themselves to this purpose.

Have the subject matter planned for some time ahead, but often allow the immediate interest to furnish the subject for the day. For instance:— One April morning a whole flock of fox sparrows arrived in our school yard. We all saw them. We had but to stand in the windows and keep very quiet to watch them as long as we pleased, scratching in the dead leaves. Of course we talked of fox sparrows that morning. Another morning, in May, two small boys appeared, bearing with pride some fine specimens of Jack-in-the-pulpit. My scrap-book furnished this verse,—

"In a pulpit of green
Every year may be seen
A queer little preacher named Jack.
He's a man of few words,
But the flowers and the birds
Come in crowds to welcome him back."

which we learned with appreciation. We left the "Jacks" in water for several days, when one

small boy discovered "green berries" growing inside one of the flowers. We talked about this and then memorized the following verse,—

"Jack-in-the-Pulpit preaches to-day,
Tomorrow the pulpit is faded away.
Come back to see Jack when September is nigh,
And a bunch of red berries is all you will spy."

Often our drawing, writing or composition exercises later in the day grow out of these morning talks. For example: Grade II may copy the verse on Jack-in-the-pulpit as an exercise in writing. This same class may write a story about the fox sparrow in the composition period or answer simple questions on the verse written, as,—

To whom does Jack preach?
Who plays the organ?
Who sings in the choir? etc.

Some incident of the play-ground or some complaint of a play-mate furnishes the occasion to teach kindness and consideration for others. This may be accomplished by means of a story and it is seldom necessary to point the moral. Children are particularly apt in that.

I like the plan of selecting the subject matter for morning talks by months. Each month teems with things we want to know about. Let us take the month of September. In the first Primary, the children have just entered school—forty-odd little embryo men and women with as many different conceptions of school and teacher. Some of these have been gathered from the talk of older brothers, sisters or play-mates; other alas! come from the remarks of injudicious elders, and the ideas of wilful disobedience and revengeful punishment are often given a prominent place. For the first few days, try to make the morning talks a link between home and school. Try to gain the confidence of the child. It means everything in the year to come.

This little finger-play always appeals to children just beginning school,—

(Hold up thumb, then each finger in succession.)

Little Tommy Thumbkins
Went to school to-day

(Hold up thumb.)

Sister Rose went with him
Showing him the way

(Hold up first finger.)

Mother in the doorway
Waved her hand good-bye
Little brother left at home
Then began to cry
Baby creeping on the floor
Tried to say "Bye-bye."