

## METHODS OF WORK FOR MISSION BAND LEADERS.

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Some months ago, in the course of a conversation on Circles and Bands, a lady made the following statement: "Mission Bands are not nearly as successful at the present time as they were a few years ago. We do not hear of as many being organized and those already organized are not doing such good work." The remark was made by one who knew whereof she spoke, so that I could not doubt its truth, but I was filled with sadness at the thought and immediately began to look for the reason. Whose must be the fault for this sad declension in mission work among the young? Can it be with the boys and girls themselves or is it with their leaders?

On the first Sunday in August I was teaching a large class of boys of from twelve to sixteen years of age; at the close of the lesson I remarked, "The Mission Band is having a holiday, is it not?" "Yes," one lad replied, "we are not going to have any more meetings until the hot weather is over." "Not for a whole month," said another, while a third affirmed the Mission Band to be a good thing, we'll all be glad when it starts again, and every boy in the class, with the exception of two who were not members of the Band, looked as if he too considered that institution a "good thing."

That little incident settled the first query and convinced me that in that Band at least, it would not be the fault of the young people if the work were allowed to flag. And this I believe would be the universal verdict of the young people wherever a good Band has been in existence. They may be ever so trying and indifferent, irregular in their attendance and hard to control, yet in their hearts they love the Band, and the fact that it is their own meeting gives them a sort of pride in it.

Is it then the leader who has failed? Too often it is to be feared this is the case. From various causes she may have been forced to resign her work. Perhaps to be married, or she may have become discouraged or left the neighborhood. It is found difficult to fill her place, and perhaps one quite incapable is placed in charge.

Not long ago it was my privilege to visit a large and flourishing "Circle." The president of the Band was present. I asked her about the work they were doing. It was practically *nil*. Their large membership had dwindled down to a low number in the teens, and for months they had not had a meeting. On enquiring into the nature of their exercises, I was told that they sewed, and made useful and fancy articles for sale. When I suggested that the true work of the Band was not so much the gaining of a dollar or two for the society, as to educate the young, to kindle in them a missionary spirit, a love for the work itself, the lady acquiesced, but admitted that she could not do this, as she knew so little about missions herself. Another young lady who prided herself on her influence in society, when asked about her Band said "Oh, I have no influence with the boys at all, I can do nothing with them"—and she evidently did not see how humiliating was the confession, as it was made without a blush, and apparently without a pang of regret. Here certainly are two sufficient causes for the failure of any Band. In the first instance she who is supposed to interest and in-

struct the children in the cause of missions, acknowledges her almost total ignorance on the very object for which the meeting is held. The second confesses she has no influence with those whose training in this line is of the utmost importance. Is it any wonder the Bands over which they preside, and which were once well-known for numbers, giving and general enthusiastic work, have become well-nigh extinct?

But the fault does not all lie with the Leaders. Many of these have toiled so nobly and under such discouraging circumstances, that their health has become impaired, and they have only relinquished the work for lack of physical strength. A Band of which I once was president was afterwards conducted by a young lady formerly a member of the Band and who lived at some distance from the town. This dear girl told me that for the winter during which she was president she drove into town, got the key from the sexton, lit the fire, and waited in the cold church till the children gathered from school. And even then, it was not because of any lack of enthusiasm or love for the cause that she gave it up.

Dear Sisters of the Mission Circles, this work of training the boys and girls ought not to be neglected by us, or be delegated to one who may be quite incompetent for it. Considering the number of years that Circles and Bands have been in existence ought we not now to have a whole army of trained workers? Can we come to any other conclusion than that our work has been one-sided, that while our thoughts and prayers have been given to the work in far-off lands our own young people have been neglected? Ought not every Circle to become responsible for the Band in their own church? To remember it in their prayers, to assist the leader in preparing studies, programs, music, etc., to talk it up in their own homes among their own children, to visit the Band occasionally, and speak a few encouraging words if opportunity offers? Surely all the toil and responsibility of the Band should not be left to the Leader. Why is it her duty any more than yours, to provide a warm, comfortable and attractive place in which to meet? You cannot manage a lot of boys and girls but you *can* make arrangements that the Sunday School will be always comfortable for the hour, or you could offer your warm, cosy dining-room for the use of the brave girl who is undertaking the work you fear to face. The children will soil your carpet and the furniture become worn all too soon! Yes, but what of that? Does not your house belong to the Lord, and would He not be pleased if you were to use it in this way for Him occasionally?

A lady once said to me, "I can do very little in the way of Christian work publicly myself, but while my daughters are engaged in this way, I can think and plan, and make suggestions at home which the girls sometimes find helpful. This same lady has for years made a practice of giving the boys and girls of the Band a treat, either a sleigh-ride, a picnic, an evening's entertainment with refreshments at the close, or something equally enjoyable. And who shall say that a large part of the credit of this most successful Band is not due to the woman who has sometimes sighed because her work has to be done principally by proxy?

But while the Circle should consider itself responsible for the Mission Band (at least in churches where the Band is not showing satisfactory signs of progress) there must be one