

SATURDAY NIGHT TALKS

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NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL.

International Bible Lesson for
Sept. 19, '09.



The Sunday School of the future will be in many respects as much of an improvement over present methods as to-day is better than yesterday. For if there is any thing about the modern Sunday school in which there is practical agreement, it is the failure everywhere to measure up to the ideal of teacher and pupil concerning Bible study.

No one doubts that the present systematic study of the Book is a vast improvement over the catechism, and question and answer "helps," of half a century ago. Nevertheless the present is but the chrysalis stage of the study, and the Christian world is beginning to stir uneasily in its shell preparatory to breaking forth into new and larger life. Since the International lesson system was inaugurated teachers and pupils have worn a rat of so-called study through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, so that if the teachers' library has been equipped with lesson "help" he finds himself to-day going over precisely the same ground that he has traveled three or four times previously, chapter for chapter and verse for verse. He follows a well-beaten trail blazed for him thirty or forty years ago, and recks not of the vast unexplored world of enlightenment, instruction and pleasure lying all around him. It is a world in which the traveler clings to the stage coach in preference to the Pullman car, preferring crude and primitive ways of living to habitations of modern improvements.

Of course, it is practically impossible for individual schools, or teachers of individual classes to break away from the procession and start on a new path of exploration for themselves. To do that would break up uniformity of study, in many ways most desirable and introduce a chaotic state generally. But the protest, long and loud and insistent can, at least, be made until the international committee is compelled to heed popular opinion and provide for it. We may not refuse to keep step longer in the endless belt line to the same old times that were ground out in our childhood, we owe something of reverence to antiquities and to customs that have long become obsolete, but we can march under protest and be ready to hail deliverance from whatever quarter it comes.

Brighter Outlook.

Meanwhile evidences accumulate that things are brightening to a better day. Theological seminaries are taking up the training of ministers for Sunday school leadership; universities are offering Bible courses, and extensions; training schools for Sunday school teachers have been opened and summer schools multiply; correspondence systems have been evolved; a plan of graded lessons has been approved and a committee is at work preparing them. This is the most hopeful sign of the times in Sunday school work. If these graded lessons are prepared by men instead of fossils, if those who are engaged in the task are more interested in the warm-blooded youth of to-day than the mummies of Egyptian and Assyrian catacombs, if they do not insist upon the use of portions of the Bible for children of any age absolutely incomprehensible to the maturest minds, then we shall have a renaissance of Bible study epochal and prophetic of future good.

New Methods Needed.

It is in this sense that we need a new Bible, new teachers and new methods. Given these conditions the Sunday school of the future will be a vast improvement over the past. The teachers of the future will not be callow boys and girls, whose ignorance is dense, whose ability to instruct is a minus quantity. They will be trained instructors, qualified to bring forth from the treasury of the word, things new and old. We shall no more think of putting an ignorant person to teach a Sunday school class than we should set a blind man to lead the blind. The Sunday school will be a school, not an aggregation of classes. Classes will be composed of students, not a mutual admiration society. Attendance will be regular, not haphazard. Teachers, possibly will be paid for their work, not drafted on account of their good looks or influence or connection with the best families. We shall imitate nature which grades children by age, capacity, home environment, future prospects. There will be classes in good citizenship and social service. In a word, the Sunday school of the future will be the church at study, being trained to rightly divide the word of life, that each may have his portion in due season.

Such a Sunday school will have no need for doubtful measures to draw pupils. They will come to it as hungry men to a banquet when there is enough and to spare.

A CRYING NEED.

What is really wanted at the present time is a standard of misconduct. We are constantly doing things in doubt, as if we hadn't a right to do them.

The confusion caused by people doing things which in their circumstances we had no right to expect is the principal cause of our troubles. It ought to be definitely settled, for example, that any millionaire who has, say, over a hundred millions, will thereafter lead an honest life. If he has only fifty millions his life should be semi-honest, and if he has only a paltry ten millions, then it ought to be conceded that he can loot a few railroads or so until he gets on his feet.

Up to, say, ten thousand a year no man can afford to be dishonest. He ought to get up in the cars and give up his seat to women under thirty-five at least, and of course he will not take the chance of robbing any safe. From ten thousand up to one hundred thousand he can engage in little dishonest flyers by making one of a pool or putting through a land deal or so for variety.

When he gets fifty millions or more together, however, every man ought to ask himself plainly the question whether from now on he ought not to be a philanthropist. Doesn't he owe this to his fellow-men?

A DREAM OF A BETTER CHINA.

Sir Robert Hart, after spending forty years in China in charge of business carried on through the Custom House, probably knows the country and its people as well as any European can. He says that China is to have a great future. He says the Chinese are a strangely reasonable people; that they have hated the idea of having soldiers or becoming soldiers, saying, "If right is right, it ought to be recognized by everybody, and we ought not to be required to fight to support it." But in our time foreign nations have forced upon China the necessity of arming itself, and some day out of the four hundred millions of Chinese a great army may be formed and then instead of fighting, China will turn around to face the rest of the world and say, "Gentlemen, there must be no more fighting." If a country should be attacked, they would defend it, and so, with their vast momentum and great numbers, make for the peace of the whole world. This is the reverse of the "yellow peril" that so terrified the German kaiser.

A SAILING SHIP SANITARIUM.

The sailing-ship sanitarium for consumptives projected in England and described by the British Medical Journal seems an admirable scheme. If a patient is to be sequestered and kept in a long chair out of doors, why not alleviate his lot by the interest of sea life and glimpses of pleasant coasts? The ship projected would be of about 2000 tons, with ample deck space for cots in the open air. The plan would be to cruise in the neighborhood of the Canaries, taking advantage of trade winds and an equable climate, and seeking port in bad weather. The cost to each patient is not stated, but there must be a good many invalids who could afford to pay handsomely, and with fifty patients it might be possible to keep a 2000-ton schooner in commission.

EATING UP SHEEP.

The world is eating up its sheep. The number on foot is steadily being diminished and the same is true of cattle and poultry, says the London Meat Trades Journal. From the available statistics it is said that in three years should there be no increase, at the present rate of consumption every head of cattle, every hog, every sheep and every chicken in the barnyards would be eaten up. It has been noticeable for several years that the number of food animals raised throughout the world was steadily decreasing. The question is, unless conditions are modified, and that shortly, from where are the meats of the future to come?

"LETTER" GRAMS.

The French government has definitely adopted the scheme of "letter telegrams" which has been under discussion in France for some time. The new system provides that letters may be telegraphed between any two points in France at night at a cost of one-fifth of a cent a word, and that they will be delivered the next morning.

LUXURY AND POVERTY.

A thoughtful clergyman has remarked that "luxury is as great a curse to the human race as is abject poverty." This is dreadfully true when the two go together. For where they go together the luxury of some spells poverty for the rest. But the luxury that all might have by earning it, would that be a curse?

Colorado has the best laws for the protection of women and children of any state in the Union. Colorado has undoubtedly the best juvenile court in the world, and it is the only court holding the parents responsible for the deeds of their children. And the women vote in Colorado.

Grievous wrong is committed when society surrounds children with such influences that by the age of sixteen boys and girls almost thoughtlessly commit crimes such as ought to be impossible except to deliberate villains of the most hardened type.

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