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The Possibilities of a Sunday School Library

By **FREDERICA BEARD**

Oak Park, Illinois

The Sunday-school library known to the present adult generation in its childhood is very largely a thing of the past. It has served its purpose, and other agencies are meeting the need which in part it used to fill. Where children have no opportunity in a good public library the Sunday school may well provide standard literature for their reading. In these generally remote places, a reading-room open on certain week-days, together with the circulation of books worth reading, would be a means of blessing if carried on by the Sunday school of the town or village.

But what about the majority of Sunday schools? Is there not a need for these of a library of a specific nature and one, very different in character from that which was formerly to be found? Much good might be accomplished by such a plan and provision. First of all, let us have a library of reference and of circulation for the teachers, even if it be one of only a dozen books. Better work would often be done if the eager and earnest teacher, who has few books of his own, could refer to a Bible dictionary, a complete Concordance, a simple but strong work such as Stalker's "Life of Christ" or his "Life of Paul," and a dozen others that might be selected. Different versions and translations of the Bible, e. g. "The Twentieth Century New Testament" would be illuminating. Two or three standard books on Oriental life and customs, and such a book as "The Holy Land in History and Geography," by MacCoun, would be most helpful. Some of the books would be of value for the older pupils of the school; others should be added for their especial use in connection with their studies. If a class of ten to twelve years of age were studying the life of Jesus, the reading by the pupils of "Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth," by Bird, either in parts or as a whole would add to the interest of the study. Or, for older pupils, Lyman Abbot's "Life of Christ" would be a good reading book. If children of ten to twelve years were studying Old Testament characters, Beale's "Old Testament Stories" would be a delightful illustrated story book to put into their hands. Literary masterpieces that refer to the subjects

of Bible study should also be on the book shelves. Milton's "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained," Wallace's "Ben Hur," Van Dyke's "The Other Wise Man," and Byron's "The Assyrian Came Down Like A Wolf On The Fold," will serve as illustrations of these. The writer has proven the interest of fourth grade children in the last two after hearing in the one case, the Bible Christmas story, and in the other, the Bible account of "The Destruction of Sennacherib."

Two other departments should be included in a modern Sunday-school library, one for teachers and one for use with the children. The former should have in it books on child life and development, with others on the best methods of teaching. There are now so many fine books on these subjects which offer what has never been possible until now. There are also many Sunday-school teachers who by the reading of one of the best of these books would work afterwards in a different spirit and with a deeper insight as to what is needed. Much is being said to-day in regard to the training of teachers. If a course of training is not as yet feasible in many schools, ten dollars would supply a dozen books, and if even a part of these were read, a step towards training would surely have been taken. A little expenditure of this kind would be truly a donation to home missionary service.

Additional help which a Sunday-school library may give in the actual work with the children is in the line of pictures and maps. Classified collections of pictures have been made, and the pictures mounted, in some of the best Public libraries for use in the children's department. Is it not possible to follow such a plan in our Sunday schools so that pictures in relation to a particular subject may be at hand where a teacher might make use of them in teaching a lesson? These collections may be often without expense. Pictures may be cut from many old magazines that would have connection with the Bible stories and lessons, e. g. we note a series of pictures on Jerusalem accompanying Van Dyke's articles on "Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land" in the Ladies Home Journal of the current year. We need to get the interest and co-operation of a few people for work to this end.

The Sunday-school library of the future may well include a small collection of the best Sunday-school song books and sheet music available. At present it is impossible to get the right kind of songs and hymns from any one song book, and even when we get such a book it will soon wear itself out if it is not kept fresh by a variety of good music selected from other sources. The supply of good Sunday-school music should be replenished from time to time, for variety, is a necessity in this part of the service as much as in any other.