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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AS AN EDUCATIONAL FORCE IN SOCIAL DUTY.

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One of the most hopeful features in the Sunday-school situation is in the fact that we are making fresh discoveries of its possibilities both in the line of its development and in that of its serviceableness. It is not a spent force, an effete institution, a moribund organization. On the contrary, it is only just coming to its own, its future promises to be even more satisfactory in attainments and achievements than its past.

This awakening of interest in the possibilities of the Sunday-school is accompanied by the real peril that the school will be exploited in the interests of many ends not wholly legitimate, or that it will become the laboratory for interesting but bootless experiments. It becomes us neither to be frightened from a sympathetic consideration of the proper expansion of the Sunday-school by the impracticable suggestions so frequently made by expansionists, nor to be led into unwise suggestion because of a laudable zeal in some other worthy project or human interest.

The social value of the Sunday-school is worthy of consideration and emphasis, but limitations are set, not by the vastness of the social field nor the imperativeness of social duty, but by conditions found in the Sunday-school itself. We will discuss our theme more wisely and helpfully if we observe carefully these limitations.

There are three aspects of the educational function of the Sunday-school in the interest of social duty.

I. *The instruction the Sunday school gives in the direction of social duty.*

1. There is much of this social instruction.

There are few schools in which there is not frequent and ample instruction in the duty of honesty, truthfulness, kindness, benevolence. These are all social virtues and are fundamental to social well-being. The value to society of this Sunday-school instruction is simply incalculable. All praise is due even the most inefficient school and the lamest teaching for the fidelity and insistence with which these and other social virtues have been inculcated and the social vices have been exposed.

This teaching must be stimulated, and brought to its highest efficiency. It may be that it has been inspired by the individualistic motive and that in many schools it will continue to be thus inspired, but even so it is immensely valuable for social well-

being. Whatever may be the motive or the point of view of this teaching it is socially indispensable.

2. In the teaching of the school the social note must be emphasized.

Not only should the social virtues be insisted on, but they should be enforced with illustration drawn from social conditions and applied to them. Modern business methods furnish ample illustrations of the sin and crime of dishonesty and buying and selling, swapping knives, playing marbles, watering stock, squeezing corporations, poor workmanship, offer a present field for the application of instruction concerning honesty and fair-dealing. The illustration and application will vary with the needs and capacity of the scholar, but the social emphasis can best be made in every case by recognition of present day social, political, industrial conditions.

This social note can be best struck by the teacher who has the best knowledge of social conditions, problems, remedies, and the keenest sympathy with the social aspect of life. Sociology on the side of principles and on the side of practice is, therefore, of high value to the teacher, not that he may teach it to his class, but that he may bring his class to the best social development.

3. The instruction of the school must include the social ideals. Individualistic ideals have informed too exclusively the Sunday-school instruction. The social ideals have a place, should have a large place, in the school. By setting before the pupils ideals of a perfect social character, a complete social service, the school can vastly increase its social efficiency. To make children and youth understand that no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, that he must be not only good, but good for something, to inspire them to give their life for the service of their fellow men, to set up these standards in the market, on the street, in school, in the social circle, is to render a service, the extent and potency of which are immeasurable. This the Sunday-school may be.

II. *The influence of the Sunday school as a social force.*

1. No consideration of the social function of the church is adequate that fails to recognize the Sunday-school as the most extensive and, on the whole, the most significant social service the church is rendering the community. The mere fact that the church is enlisted in this social service, not in a small, mean way, but at great sacrifice and cost of effort, time and money bulks large in any evaluation of the social forces for betterment. The Sunday-school is a strong-hand for the uplift of society, and with all its defects and failure it, nevertheless, is most effective.

As illustrating this social influence of the Sunday-school, mention may be made of its democratizing power. It gathers the

children, youth and adults of all classes on one level, in the intimacy of its free and easy fellowship. In the adult classes are found the physician, the lawyer, the banker, the mechanic, the barkeeper, and these men for an hour discuss the topics of moral and social significance with frankness, and their organization brings them into the fellowship of common worship, common purpose, common responsibility, and common service. The influence of the Sunday-school as an organization is larger than we suspect.

III. *The social service rendered by the Sunday school.*

1. It is always to be borne in mind that inspiration to service may still be real and vital even if it does not issue in immediate service. The slowness with which reforms move from the beginning of agitation to the final victory is sufficient indication that we should not expect the Sunday-school scholar to do on Monday what he is taught on Sunday, even if he always had the opportunity, which he does not always have. Here as elsewhere the law is, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." In view of this fact, we are encouraged to believe that much social service is due directly to the inspiration of the Sunday school—a remote but effective inspiration.

2. The school furnishes a channel for much immediate service:

Fruit and flower distribution to the sick and shut-ins; the weekly visits of the Class Committee to those needing them; the Dime Savings Fund and the Relief Fund for saving and help; the Civic Committee, the Reform Committee, the Social Committee beautifying the town, prosecuting violators of the law, promoting fellowship among neighbors;—these are some of the services the Sunday-school is performing in many places.

It ought to be the aim and endeavor of every school to carry forward as much of this service as possible. It is too true that multitudes of schools are utterly neglectful of this service. Some attention to the matter on the part of those in charge of the school would discover opportunities for immediate expression of social inspiration and possibilities for usefulness to others and the community. There is so much to be done in every neighborhood and community and the Sunday-school scholars may do so much as individuals and through organization that it is difficult to justify the neglect or indifference of pastor, superintendents, or teachers to stimulate and lead their scholars to this service.

In encouraging and performing this service fitness must be consulted. It is not enough that it is service we are about, but that service must be a service adapted to the community, performed by those reasonably well adapted to perform it, and

somewhat adapted to the social effectiveness of the scholar. For example, it is hardly wise to organize a sewing class for boys, or to send the girls to promote a political reform, or to organize the men's class of a city school into a farmer's club, or to encourage a purely rural school to promote savings or relief funds.

It requires, therefore, not only zeal for social service on the part of the leaders, but also wisdom in the choice of the particular service needed in their own community and fitted to the capacity of the pupils by whom it is to be performed.

Considered in these three aspects of instruction, influence and actual service the Sunday-school is an agency for the performance of social duty and the promotion of social well-being unrivaled by any agency now available. Those in control of this agency in the nation, the denomination, the congregation must be alert to its possibilities in this direction and forward to bring them to a progressive realization.

THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

ELIZABETH HARRISON,

President of the Chicago Kindergarten College.

The best definition that I have ever heard of Religion, is that given by Frederick Froebel in his "Education of Man." "Religion is the endeavor to raise into clear knowledge the feeling that originally the spiritual self of man is one with God, to realize the unity with God which is founded on this clear knowledge and to continue to live in this unity with God, serene and strong in every condition and relation of life."

It is of this "Vital Piety" that I wish to talk and of how it can be awakened in the child. I say *awakened*, not imparted. That is too often the mistake made by many good people. If the possibility of feeling a unity with God, were not in the child at birth, it could not be implanted in him. We can develop and strengthen the spiritual nature of man, just as we can develop and strengthen the physical body of man, but we can no more add a new faculty to the child's soul, than we can add a new organ to his body. I do not mean by this that the human being cannot have sometimes a terrific awakening to his needs of divine aid, or "conscious conversion" as it is often called, but the possibility of such an awakening must lay dormant in him. It cannot be implanted there. This is why Froebel would give to each young mother a definite and conscious training for her vocation, that this spiritual life of her child may be nourished, protected and developed from the very beginning. He states that we