

THE ASSEMBLY HERALD

VOL. XV

MAY, 1909

No. 5

Four Phases of Sabbath-school Work



Seeking the children in the back country settlements



Gathering for the first session of the Sabbath school



Church organized and chapel erected, developed from the mission school



Work for the improvement of Sabbath schools. A Sabbath-school Institute

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.

THE ASSEMBLY HERALD

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PRESBYTERIAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL WORK

THE growing estimation of the work of the Sunday-school must have impressed every one who is familiar with the facts.

On every hand the Sunday-school is being recognized as the most useful and influential agency of the local church.

It must never be regarded as an organization apart from the church, but as the church itself engaged in earnest and definite work.

Through the Sunday-school, the church is leading men and women to read and study the Bible as was never done before.

More than three-fourths of the additions to our churches are of Sunday-school scholars; more than nine-tenths of our church workers are trained in the Sunday-school.

The Cradle Roll, the Home Department, the organized Bible Class bring the church into sympathetic relations with the homes of those who are not church members, and open the doors of these homes to the pastor and Sunday-school visitor.

No wonder the Sunday-school is being called by some "The church's best field for work and best force for service."

It is a notable fact that pastors who at one time felt that they were too busy to have a part in the work of the Sunday-school are now devoting themselves to their Sunday-schools first of all, and allowing other interests to take their proper places.

It is one of the signs of the times that there are in some of our Sunday-schools more men connected with the men's organized Bible class than are to be found in the average Sunday congregation of those churches.

The pastors of these churches are finding that the Sunday-school is the best place to reach the men.

The Sunday-school Board's Interest

This is all of the deepest interest

to the Sunday-school Board. We realize that our opportunities and responsibilities are ever enlarging. It is our desire, on the one hand, to be of service to all of our Presbyterian schools; and, on the other hand, to carry the Sunday-school, with its opportunities for religious education, to the thousands of boys and girls throughout our land who are now without these privileges.

When we consider the fact that the religious education of the majority of the boys and girls of America depends upon the Sunday-school, we feel that no expense or effort can be too

great in order to improve the work now being done in our present schools, or to multiply the number of these schools.

Readers of the ASSEMBLY HERALD, especially those who are engaged in Sunday-school work, may be wondering how the Board is going to be able to help our Presbyterian Sunday-school workers. Speaking generally, there are three ways in which this can be done:



TWO MOUNTAIN BOYS IN ONE OF OUR TENNESSEE SCHOOLS.

polluting contact with the street populations. You, fathers and mothers, who have enjoyed and are enjoying refined and beautiful homes, you who have lived for generations amid noble restraints and in a careful segregation and separation from vicious companions, you who watch over the grammatical accuracy of your growing child more carefully than thousands do over the health of theirs, you who shudder at the thought of your dear, sweet daughter walking unattended after nightfall, can you not realize the dangers which surround the children of the negroes in the streets into which they so readily and surely stray?

If the Presbyterian Church had done nothing more than develop such parochial and boarding schools it would have done a mighty work for this race in purity and

true living. And to-day, if we had a hundred such seminaries, each with its ten-score of pupils, taught by such earnest men and women as are now devoting their lives to this great task, we should be doing no more than is needed, but we should be certain of more hearts won to Christ, more lives made complete, more homes made pure and true, more children rescued from evil, and more young men and maidens made clean and useful and influential guides and leaders for their people. And you, traveler in the South, be not surprised if you see unkempt, dull-eyed, rude girls loitering along the streets. Think of their homes. Think of the need of true pastors and Christian training. Think how few have parents alert to their need or wise to give them the protection at life's critical time.

HOPEFUL VIEWS OF THE NEGRO PROBLEM

By REV. S. J. FISHER, D.D.

A recent number of the *Nation* contains an article on the Negro Problem which has so much that is encouraging that we quote a portion. The writer says: "Although Abraham Lincoln the emancipator is now less spoken of than Lincoln the man of the people, the statesman and the President, there must be many thousands of people whose minds have turned to the extraordinary progress of the American negro since Lincoln struck the shackles from his limbs. An illiteracy cut from 95 per cent. in 1865 to 87 in 1870, and in the three decades between 1870 and 1900 to something over 40; the ownership of vast tracts of land; the invasion of the industries and professions—these things would strike with amazement those who gave their lives for the liberty of the slave, could they but see the results of that great sacrifice. For to most Northerners in 1860 the negro was a mere beast of burden; often, as in the case of the Sea Island blacks among whom the first negro regiment was formed, but little changed from African

habits of thought and life; always pitifully ignorant and ragged; and, often enough, with lash-torn flesh and mutilated face." Then alluding to Lincoln's great hopefulness under discouragement, and quoting his words in 1856, when there was much to cause faintheartedness, "Under all this seeming want of life and motion the world does move, nevertheless," the writer goes on to say: "Not even Lincoln himself, however, would be so optimistic as the latest student of our negro problem, Sir Harry Johnston, the African traveler and historian of African colonization, who has just contributed six articles on 'The Negro in America' to the *London Times*. In his summary of our perplexity he says, 'While we are theorizing on this side and on that, predicting one extreme solution or another, in all probability the difficulty is gradually thinning out. In twenty years' time there may be no more need to discuss the color question in the United States.' If this view seems almost fantastic the standing of the writer, and

the fact that many of the most truthful pictures of the underlying evils of slavery came from the pens of such gifted foreigners as Harriet Martineau, Fanny Kemble and George Thompson, forbid the curt dismissal of his hopes." It is also suggestive that while Sir Harry Johnston was able to find twenty-four cases of attacks by black men on white women in 1907, he has learned, on good authority, that the charges of rape on white and black women by white men in the Southern States would "double the misdeeds of the negroes."

Sir Harry Johnston's hopefulness has this restraint, that while it would be abundantly justified if the true intelligent and Christian men in the South were in absolute control, it is, as President Taft says, clear that the lower white classes in the South need elevation and education as much as the negro. It is this numerous class that renders progress and the best treatment of this problem so difficult.

It is a great advance from a 95 per centage of illiteracy in 1865 to 40 in 1900—only 35 years! But then this percentage means about 4,000,000 untaught people. What a mass! Scatter them over the Southland, mix them, ignorant, often vicious, often idlers, with the earnest, refined, intelligent, industrious negroes, and we have a picture of an appalling destitution, intellectual and spiritual—a vision of much land to be occupied by Christ and American civilization. More than every third negro unable to read and write! Is it a wonder that many are idle, ragged and worse, or that false religion thrives, and a true marriage and a true home are comparatively rare? And let us remember that not the common school nor the industrial school can alone make true men and women. The Christian minister, the moral teacher, the Bible truly read and followed are fundamental and necessary.

BELLS, HYMNALS AND ORGANS

The following letter is only one of many of its kind, and it serves to illustrate the fact that very often what one person in one

condition of life is willing to throw away, another person differently situated is quite willing to accept. The letter reads thus:

"I write to ask a favor of you, though I hate to do so, but am forced by circumstances to do it.

"Ours is the only church in town without a bell, and we oftentimes experience a bit of inconvenience because of this lack. We are not in a position to buy a good new bell, and will not be able to do so for some time to come.

"Can you not help us to secure a second-hand bell of some congregation that has decided to discard the old one for a new? Please assist us in securing one if you can.

"We can make good use of some hymnals—old Presbyterian hymnals; or the more recent hymnals if you know of any congregation that wishes to be rid of their old books."

The colored people are musical, and the frequent request comes to us to know if somebody has not an organ that has served them so long that they are ready to displace it with a new one. Second-hand organs that have been thought by their original owners to have outlived their usefulness have been known to rejuvenate themselves by a change of climate, and have afterwards done good service in some little colored church or school, to the delight and profit of both young and old. Save your second-hand bells, hymnals and organs, and do not dispose of them until you make inquiry from the Freedmen's Board as to where they can still be used and be welcomed.

In a recent book Mr. H. H. Wells of England says after a journey through the United States:

"Whatever America has to show in heroic living to-day, I doubt if she can show anything finer than the quality of the resolve, the steadfast effort, which hundreds of black and colored men are making to-day to live blamelessly, honorably, and patiently, getting for themselves what scraps of refinement, learning and beauty they may, keeping their hold on a civilization they are grudging and denied."