

Playgrounds' power to prevent delinquency has been easier to measure than their power to build constructive qualities. But the lessons of health, fair play, team work and patriotism being learned through community recreation leadership will show their effects on tomorrow's citizenship.

PUBLIC SCHOOL PEDAGOGY FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

EDUCATORS interested in the teaching work of the church have for some time recognized that no "subject" lends itself so readily to the problem teaching methods as religion. One's religion is his way of life, and as such is the very tissue and fiber of character, inseparable from one's motives, habits, attitudes, and judgments; expressing itself, but also forming and fixing itself, by means of one's daily choices and acts.

In the past two years problem-teaching methods have been tested in intermediate, senior, and adult classes of the Sunday School with very satisfactory results. More recently, experiments on a large scale have been conducted with primary and junior classes, special adaptations being made to each age-group. Four or five thousand primary classes have tried the plan, with results unexpectedly good. The lesson story, based upon the Bible text chosen for the regular course, was prepared so as not only to form an accurate and interesting narrative for the children, but also to follow and develop a lesson theme. Seven thought-provoking problems were worked out, each on the theme chosen. The lesson story was divided into seven parts, each part ending with a question to arouse thought and lead directly up to one of the seven problems. Thus, in each portion of the story the child's interest was piqued, and a minor climax was reached, followed immediately by brief pupil discussion of the problem raised. By interspersing the problems with the story, the natural interest in the latter was utilized to create eagerness to think about the former. The alternation also gave opportunity for obtaining a maximum amount of problem thinking without tiring the young minds, as would have

been the result had all the problems been assembled at the close of the story.

Teachers are furnished with a specially prepared teaching program of simple child-life questions, to help the children recall their own observations and experiences for use in thinking about the problems. Freedom, of course, was given the teachers to substitute child-life questions of their own, when they desired. The teachers were asked to use only enough of the teaching program to stimulate thought, and to obtain pupil discussion on the problems themselves. The latter were of a practical nature, helping the children to discern the lesson teaching in terms of their own world and apply it to their own choices and actions. Mothers of the children were also furnished a home teaching program similar to the one used by the teacher.

Two illustrations were used with each lesson, one to interest the child in the lesson story, and the other to pique his curiosity about the first of the lesson problems, so as to obtain the requisite interest in home preparation and class discussion.

More than 10,000 Junior Sunday-school teachers tried a plan similar in technique to the one just described, but with these changes: Instead of a mother's home teaching program, the child himself was provided with a number of "Thought Starters" to use in his own home thinking. He was encouraged to do his own thinking, but also to propound the problems and Thought Starters to older folks at home, and then weigh their answers for himself. The teacher made use of a class Teaching Program keyed to the Thought Starters. The use of this, however, was more sparing than in the Primary classes, the material provided for the children being so stimulating and well-adapted to them that they needed no coaxing to prepare it at home. Owing to their greater capacity, this home preparation seemed to equip them for thinking and talking on the problems in class without help to a greater extent than was the case with the Primary children. It should be said, however, that an unexpected amount of home preparation was secured from the Primary children, also.

The writer has been in touch with a large proportion of these classes, through questionnaires and correspondence. It is

almost unbelievably true that hardly a Junior teacher had any criticisms to offer, and there was practical unanimity in the reports that the children responded as they never had before in class work; their thinking on the problems was good, and showed quick improvement in the course of the test; parents were interested and in some cases voluntarily reported noticeable results in thoughtful behavior in their children during the short thirteen-weeks period of the test; attendance was much more regular and averaged higher in proportion to enrollment, except in a few rural schools. (The test was made in January-March, during the worst weather of the year.)

Reports from the Primary teachers lacked the degree of unanimity noticeable in those from the Junior teachers, and a number of minor difficulties were mentioned. Some of these were traceable to lack of grading—beginners were mixed into the Primary classes, and were too young to benefit much by the teaching program. Other troubles were traced to failure of teachers accustomed to other methods to adjust themselves to the new method; many of the teachers lacked pedagogical training, and attempted to "mix" their methods, instead of following the test as outlined. A portion of the difficulty was due to imperfections in the materials offered—which imperfections have since been largely remedied. Even with all this, a large portion of the teachers felt that the plan was much superior to anything ever used before; and these were almost invariably the better-trained teachers.

The tests proved that the trained teachers, or those who can adapt themselves to the new method, problem teaching is the "best thing yet" for the Primary class; and that it is so well suited to Junior needs that even untrained teachers can hardly help making a success of it if they try.

These courses, revised upon the basis of the tests made, are now in print, and will be eagerly sought and widely used, no doubt, as the intelligent Sunday-school teachers become acquainted with their sound, sensible method. It seems not too much to say that problem-teaching methods promise a most important advance in religious education.

DAVID R. PIPER

ENVIRONMENT CANNOT MOLD SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING, SAYS BIOLOGIST

SPEAKING on "What Biology Says to the Man of Today," Dr. Ivey F. Lewis, Professor of Biology at the University of Virginia, is reported as follows in *The New York Times*:

In introducing his subject Dr. Lewis traced the growth of the interest of the average American in the biological aspects of human problems. He showed also that the scientist and the layman alike had come to see that the racial survival was no longer that of the fittest, but was becoming confined to the less successful. He gave figures to demonstrate that the birth rate among the intelligent members of the commonwealth was on the decrease at an alarming rate, while that of the lower groups of the population was on the increase.

"The one clear message that biological investigation has brought as its gift to the thought of the twentieth century is that the idea of environment molding something out of nothing is sheer nonsense," said Dr. Lewis. "What goes into the heredity mill is what comes out of it. Education and opportunity can do great things. They can bring out the best in a man, but what is in him to be brought out is a matter of heredity.

No Such Thing as a Melting Pot

"This disproved theory of the creative environment has been put forth in siren tones until the idea of the great American melting pot, into which one can put the refuse of three continents and draw out good, sound American citizens, has reached wide acceptance. It is simply and perilously false. There is no such thing as a melting pot.

"The qualities of mind and body, good or bad, do not fuse and melt in the mixed breed. They may be shuffled and recombined, but they all come out in the wash unchanged.

"The citizen of tomorrow! Is there any problem facing our statesmen to compare in importance with this? Our country will be what it is tomorrow because of the citizen of today. We have undertaken the direction of human evolution. At the present moment we are bungling the job. What is happening in the United States is insuring with tragic finality that the next generation will be less capable of bearing its burdens than the present one. Since 1875 we have been doing nearly everything possible to insure racial decay. The falling birthrate has been accomplished among the better classes. Unrestricted immigration has diluted our stock with millions of unassimilated aliens."