

The Abingdon Religious Education Texts
David G. Downey, General Editor

COMMUNITY TRAINING SCHOOL SERIES NORMAN E. RICHARDSON, Editor

Kindergarten Method in the Church School

BY
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THERE are three relationships which Miss Edna Dean Baker holds and which suggest the importance and value of this book. As superintendent of the elementary division and having direct personal charge of the Beginners' Department of the church school of the First Methodist Episcopal Church at Evanston, Illinois, the superiority of Miss Baker's work is recognized by observers who come from all parts of our country. As president of the National Kindergarten and Elementary College, succeeding Elizabeth Harrison, Miss Baker stands in the foremost rank as a professional kindergartner. Either directly or indirectly, through graduates of the National Kindergarten and Elementary College, Miss Baker has maintained supervisory relationships to very successful week-day kindergartens conducted under church auspices.

And the reader's anticipations are fully realized when he begins to read these chapters. Whether it is a stenographic report of a conversation with the children, a study of individual differences among them, an analysis of instinctive behavior, or the art of praying with Beginners, the material is vividly suggestive of both sound principles and masterful technique. It has been said that Miss Baker can tell a story so skillfully that the children really smell the gingerbread and taste the honey. Perhaps it is this power that has made her so successful in picturing for teachers a wonderful Be-

ginners' Department in action, with the little children in their own inimitable way, learning to love God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Teachers of Beginners in the church school, of little children in the public kindergarten, and of those who attend the week-day church kindergarten will find this book to be the work of a master in this field. Those who are familiar with the work of the Cradle Roll or Font Roll Department consider the term *Beginners' Department* a misnomer. In keeping with the best usage, the title of this book is *Kindergarten Method in the Church School*, though in deference to current phraseology, the term Beginners' Department is adopted in some places in the text.

NORMAN E. RICHARDSON.

PART I
THE CHILD

CHAPTER I

STUDYING THE CHILD

THERE are at least four essential factors in the making of any school, whether it be a church school or a day school, a mission school or a private school. There must be a child, a teacher, activities or subject matter, and the physical environment and equipment. The greatest of these is the child. "All teaching has two objectives," says George H. Betts in *How to Teach Religion*, "the subject taught and the person taught. Anyone of fair intelligence can master a given amount of subject matter and present it to a class, but it is a far more difficult thing to understand the child—to master the inner secrets of the mind, the heart, and the springs of action of the learner."

Difficulty in understanding.—It is especially difficult and especially important that the teacher of Beginners shall understand the child. The child of four or five is so different from the adult, not only in bodily structure and size but in ways of behaving, that he is a source of constant amusement, bewilderment, and irritation to the average grown-up. A little lad of four was riding on the train one day with his father. There were some three or four cars between the one in which they rode and the engine. Nevertheless, the boy leaning eagerly forward tugged at his father's sleeve, "Daddy, see the engine, come—see the engine!" The father obediently dropped his paper and looked ahead,

then turned reprovingly to his son: "You can't see the engine from here. There are cars in front of us." The father read his paper; the child still looked eagerly down the aisle. Again he addressed his father, "Oh, yes, daddy, but you can see the engine. There it goes puffing and blowing." This time father was not in a good humor at the interruption: "Look here, son, don't tell me that story about the engine again. You can't see it and I can't see it. There are too many cars ahead." The little lad waited a short time and then remarked with conviction, "Daddy, your eyes is different from mine." And they were. At this moment the four-year-old was using the eyes of the imagination; he was in the make-believe period of his existence when wishes are horses and beggars may ride. Father in his matter-of-fact world had no conception of the wonders that his son could see.

Danger in misunderstanding.—If the failure to understand the child ended in the discomfiture of the adult, the results would not be serious perhaps; but, unfortunately, lack of understanding means lack of opportunity for the child. He does not get what he needs when he needs it. The development which this stage of growth demands is imperfectly provided, and the loss sustained by the child cannot be made up to him later. A child had a defect of vision—one eye was out of focus. When attention was given at seven by an expert oculist, he said that three quarters of the vision of that eye had been forever lost because of delay in treatment, while if the case had been brought to him when the child was three, he could have prevented the loss in large part.