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THE APOSTLE OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

ROBERT RAIKES.

IN his valuable book on the Sunday-school, Dr. Trumbull shows that this institution is not so modern as is generally supposed. He contends that the Sunday-school is the lineal descendant of the ancient Bible-school, which was the teaching department of the Church in the time of the patriarchs. His book should be read by all who are interested in this subject.

Robert Raikes is, however, generally regarded as the originator of the Sunday-school, in its modern form. While he may not have been actually the first to gather children together for instruction on the Lord's Day, he deserves to be known as "The Apostle of the Sunday-school," as he did more than any one else to bring it before the attention of the public.

The son of a Gloucester printer, and himself the editor of a paper, Robert Raikes occupied a comparatively humble position, but he inaugurated a movement which has made his name immortal. He was born in the city of Gloucester, England, in 1736, and died in 1811. Of his early life there is nothing recorded that is of any special importance.

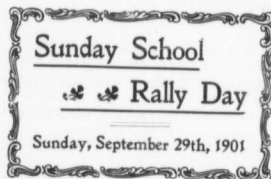
His public work commenced in 1780. At that time the streets of Gloucester on Sunday were full of riot and disorder. Men and women, on that day released from toil, spent the time drinking, swearing, and carousing. As a matter of course the children were neglected, and soon began to develop all kinds of evil tendencies. Criminal propensities manifested themselves on all sides, and the jails were full of youthful offenders.

Robert Raikes recognized these evils, and determined that something should be done to remedy them. He himself gives the following account of his first steps:

"I inquired of one of the women if there were any decent, well-disposed women in the neighborhood who kept schools for teaching to read. I presently was directed to four. To these I applied, and made an agreement with them to receive as many children as I should send them upon the Sunday, whom they were to instruct in reading and in the Church catechism. For this I engaged to pay them each a shilling for their day's employment. The women seemed pleased with the proposal. I then waited on Rev. Thomas Stock, and imparted to him my plan. He was so satisfied with the idea that he engaged to lend his assistance by going around to the schools on a Sunday afternoon to examine the progress that was made, and to enforce order and decorum among such a set of little heathens.

"This, sir, was the commencement of the plan. It is now about three years since we began, and I wish you were here to make inquiry into the effect. A woman who lives in a lane where I had fixed a school, told me, some time ago, that the place was quite a heaven upon Sundays, compared to what it used to be. The numbers who have learned to read and say their catechism are so great that I am astonished at it. Upon the Sunday afternoon the mistresses take their scholars to church, a place into which neither they nor their ancestors ever entered with a view to the glory of God. But what is yet more extraordinary, within this month these little ragamuffins have, in great numbers, taken it into their heads to attend the early morning prayers, which are held every morning at the cathedral at 7 o'clock. I believe there were nearly fifty this morning. They assemble at the house of one of the mistresses and walk before her to church, two and two, in as much order as a company of soldiers.

"I am generally at service," the good man adds, with great simplicity, "and



after service they all come round to me to make their bow, and, if any animosities have arisen, to make their complaint. The great principle I inculcate is to be kind and good-natured to each other; not to provoke one another; to be dutiful to their parents; not to offend God by cursing and swearing, and such little plain precepts as all may comprehend."

It seems that corporal punishment was a part of Mr. Raikes' method of discipline. An old man, in giving some reminiscences of the school, said: "When a boy was very bad, Mr. Raikes would take him out of the school and march him home, and get his parents to 'wallop' him. *He'd stop and see it done*, and then bring the young urchin back, rubbing his eyes, and other places." Sometimes Mr. Raikes would do the caning himself.

He made stringent rules against swearing, and tried to teach the boys and girls some sense of reverence. He insisted that all scholars should come clean, washed and combed. Through the influence of his school a wonderful change came over the streets and homes of Gloucester.

He did not think it wise to take children over fourteen, as he thought them too refractory for the order of the schools. He visited the parents and urged them to send their boys and girls, and soon 300 pupils were thus enrolled.

He used his paper, the *Journal*, to promulgate his ideas, and before long a number of other towns were trying similar experiments. One paragraph in the *Journal* records the result of his labor thus: "Two hundred children of the lower class have been taught to read in the Painswick Sunday-school, and they who were conspicuous for their brutality and profaneness, have now become quiet, and have a sense of respect and subordination to their superiors."

In May of 1784, there was a quotation from the *London Chronicle* to the effect that in Leeds two thousand poor children had been admitted into Sunday-schools. Previous to his work among the children, Robert Raikes had labored hard among the adult population of his town; he had interceded for prisoners and got their sentences commuted, he had paid the debts of small debtors, he had urged the people to quit their vices, but with small success. To deal with the criminal adult was discouraging work, and at last he came to the conclusion that the only possible solution was to prevent criminals being made. Henceforth all his efforts were directed toward the children. For years he preached and illustrated in his paper the old truth that the way to prevent the manufacture of criminals was to "train up the child in the way he should go."

As a man, Mr. Raikes appears to have been very energetic in his business, and of a kindly and benevolent disposition. He loved his home and family. In his personal habits he was exceedingly neat and clean, and was frequently thought to be somewhat vain. He was a liberal master, and paid good wages to his employees.

A Sunday-school building, known as "The Raikes' Memorial Hall," has been erected to his memory in Gloucester, and the head of Raikes appears on the outside as a medallion.

It has frequently been stated that all Robert Raikes attempted or accomplished was to get the boys and girls off the street, and impart to them a little secular education. This is certainly not fair to the founder of Sunday-schools. In the schools over which Mr. Raikes had control, neither arithmetic nor writing was taught on Sundays. His biographer says: "So far as we can piece his design together, it was to have week-day and evening schools, in which technical knowledge could be acquired, and the Sunday-school was to be devoted entirely to religious instruction."