

children were taught in the Sunday School of his society at Bolton, and the next year he found there eight hundred, taught by eighty "masters."

Richard Rodda, one of Wesley's preachers, records that, in 1786, he formed a Sunday School in Chester, and soon had nearly seven hundred children "under regular masters." Wesley wrote to him in the beginning of 1787: "I am glad you have taken in hand that blessed work of setting up Sunday Schools. It seems these will be one of the great means of reviving religion throughout the nation. I wonder Satan has not yet sent out some able champion against them."

In 1788, Wesley preached at Wigan "a sermon for the Sunday Schools," and "the people flocked from all quarters in a manner that never was seen before." The year before his death he wrote to Charles Atmore, an intelligent preacher: "I am glad you have set up Sunday Schools at Newcastle. This is one of the best institutions which has been seen in Europe for some centuries."

"Thus," says Dr. Abel Stevens, "is Methodism historically connected with both the initiation and outspread of this important institution. Under the impulse of its zeal the Sunday School was soon almost universally established in its societies. A similar interest for it prevailed among other religious bodies; and in three years after Ralikes' published account of it, more than two hundred thousand children were receiving instruction from its thousands of teachers. The Irish Conference of 1794 voted: 'Let Sunday Schools be established, as far as possible, in all the towns of this kingdom where we have societies;' and in March, 1798, a 'Methodist Sunday School Society' was formed at City Road Chapel, London."

As early as 1785 a society was organized for promoting Sunday Schools throughout the British Dominions. This society in fifteen years expended about four thousand pounds for teachers' wages. It met with strong support from several of the bishops and clergymen of the Established Church, but, strange as it may seem, the Bishop of Rochester violently attacked the movement, and the Archbishop of Canterbury called the bishops together to see what could be done to stop it. In Scotland Sabbath School teaching by laymen was declared to be an innovation, and a breach of the fourth commandment.

Sunday Schools rapidly multiplied, notwithstanding opposition in Great Britain and Ireland, and on the Continent. They were introduced into America by Francis Asbury, First Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1786. In 1791 a society was established in Philadelphia "for promoting the religious instruction of poor children on Sunday." It employed paid teachers, in ten years expending about four thousand dollars. This society still continues its operations.

These schools all employed paid teachers. Their purpose was to reach chiefly the children of the poor and neglected classes. They were, in fact, simply mission schools, or "ragged schools." The system of payment made their maintenance expensive, and greatly limited their usefulness, as well as deprived them of their grandest characteristic of voluntary service. Gradually this principle was introduced. John Wesley, in 1787, speaks of Sunday Schools at Bolton, England, "having eighty masters, who received no pay, but what they received from the great Master." This method touched fountains of consecrated zeal before unknown. The system of voluntary instruction gave a new impulse to this great movement by adapting it to the needs of the poorest community in town or country.

At the End of Two Hundred Years.

Probably the spirit of John Wesley's preaching and example was never more powerfully present in the Connexion he established, or in the Church of which he was a minister, or in the world surrounding all the churches, than it is to-day. He being dead yet speaketh. The death of John Wesley is an exceptional memory. It was a triumph. It set a seal upon a strangely noble life. It demonstrated, invested with a radiant halo, inspired with new force the Gospel which he lived and proclaimed. It left the Connexion with its one great motto—"the best of all is, God is with us." And God has been with us, as he was with our fathers in the Gospel. From decade to decade, even to the present hour, through all storm and darkness and in every springtide of revival, the death-bed legacy has become more and more manifest. It is to-day the most deeply cherished conviction of every loyal Methodist.

Thirty millions of Methodists gather in spirit around the grave of the greatest