

Sunday School Origin and Growth

(NOTE—In his admirable address at the Sunday School Anniversary in the British Columbia Conference meeting at Fair, E. S. Learn, who is Superintendent of the Sixth Avenue Sunday School, Vancouver, gave the following outline of the early organization of the Sunday School. In preparation for our forthcoming Rally Day, this article will be of value and will open up the way for a much more elaborate treatment of Robert Raikes and his work, which will appear in our next issue.—Ed.)

The development of the Sunday School in the closing years of the eighteenth century is supremely the record of a divine movement. Like all other great religious movements, it is the result of a life inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit. Robert Raikes, to whom rightly belongs the honor of founding the Sunday School, was born in the year 1736, in the old town of Gloucester, England. He developed into a man with many of the sterling qualities that go to make a successful business man, and with a tenacity of purpose that meant success in most of his undertakings. He is pictured as "a fair, well-looking man," about medium height, and comfortably stout and stylish in appearance. He was accustomed to carry a stick in his hand when it was not occupied with his gold snuff-box, or plain horn one for common use. He was a man of "gay and joyous temperament," kindly and benevolent, but not without a touch of the vanity that often marks the "self-made" man.

He was a man like "The Man of Nazareth," with a big, loving heart that was moved with compassion at the sight of the filthy, degraded condition of the children of the poorer classes of his native town. These children were employed, many of them, in the pin factories of Gloucester during the week-days, and on Sunday were turned loose to riot in all sorts of sin and vice.

Raikes began his work first among the prisons of England, but soon came to the conclusion that the wretched, degraded conditions in which the children, especially of the poorer classes, were reared was in a very large measure responsible for the ever-increasing multitude of criminals that were being gathered into the prisons of the land. He also concluded that "it is far better to save a child from a life of sin and misery than to try to reform a life after it has been wasted and ruined by years of evil doing."

In 1786 he began an experiment which he pursued for a year or two without publicity. He gathered a few of the little street waifs in a room in "Sooty Alley," and engaged a woman at a shilling a day to teach them. Thus was started the movement that was destined to become one of the greatest agencies in the building up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth.

He did not receive very much encouragement, but enough to warrant him in undertaking a larger scheme of education, which seemed to have become very popular and to have had a very rapid growth; for, by the end of 1794, there were about 250,000 scholars in the schools that grew out of the movement, the meetings of which were held on Sunday so as not to interfere with the wage-earning of the children.

This new movement was not to go on without opposition. The cry was raised that "the education of the masses made them restless and dissatisfied." That, "the masses must be kept in their place." That "this scheme would destroy all family religion." Many of the clergy were opposed to it, such as the Bishop of Rochester and the Archbishop of Canterbury. These men attacked the movement, and even called

a conference of the bishops to consider plans to stop the movement. Men were even persecuted for the "crime" of conducting a Sunday school. A historian, writing of Sunday School work in England in 1798 records: "The opposition which Sunday School workers encountered was dreadful. Every species of insult was heaped upon them. They were pelted with filth and dirt of every description, and filthy water was frequently thrown out of windows upon their heads."

Raikes, in writing to a friend, said: "It seems as if I had discovered a new country where no other adventurer chooses to follow." But the Sunday School had many friends, among others the founder of our beloved Methodism, John Wesley, who, with prophetic vision, wrote as early as 1784, "Perhaps God may have a deeper end thereto than men are aware of. Who knows but what some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians."

Robert Raikes retired from business in 1802; in 1804 the "freedom of the city" was conferred upon him. He died



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In 1811, after a very brief illness, and as the children of his own Sunday School followed his body to the grave they sang Sunday School hymns.

He had seen his first Sunday School grow to an army of a quarter of a million and it spread in Wales, Scotland, Ireland and America, and which has now grown into a gigantic movement that has given to the nineteenth century and the world the most potent instrument for moral and religious advancement to be passed on to the twentieth century for a development beyond the dreams of the most sanguine.

Do you know that your sponge was an animal once? It was. It grew on the bottom of the sea. While it was alive it was covered with a sort of jelly. It was a dark red when taken from the water, then it was buried in the sand until the jelly decayed, and afterwards it was washed and bleached until it was all clean; then it was put on board a vessel with many other sponges and travelled over the waters to you.

What Is Life?

"What is life?" I asked a child,
Care-free, happy all the day.
"What is life?" the child replied,
"Lady, life is play."

Next I turned to a maiden fair,
Sweet and lovely beyond measure,
"What is life?" I questioned her;
"Life," she murmured, "Life is pleasure."

Turning to a soldier brave,
Like to those oft sung in story:
"Just a moment's time I crave,
What is life?" "Why, life is glory."

Mother, tolling all the day
For the child whose radiant beauty
Brightens all the weary way—
"What is life?" "Ah, life is duty."

Father, sailing o'er the sea,
Where the angry waters foam,
"What is life?" I asked, and he
Quickly answered, "Life is home."

Then I whispered to my heart,
"What is life where'er we rove?"
Soft and sweet my heart replied:
"Life? Ah, life is only Love."

—Golden Age.

Getting Ready for Somewhere

Bro. R. H. Smith, writing from South, Mass., records the following incident and makes the accompanying application and appeal. Both are timely. He writes:

"As a young man was passing by me the other day I said to him, 'I suppose you are getting ready for camp.' He came back a few steps and said these words, 'I am gettin' ready for hell!' I have been thinking much since how true it is that we are getting ready for somewhere. And now, at the beginning of a new year in our leagues, I wish that every leaguer would ask themselves the question, 'What am I getting ready for?' There is much to be done in the different departments, and we are getting ready to run in the same old rut or we are getting ready to make this year the best one in the history of the league in which our young people for Christ and the Church. This can only be accomplished by every leaguer, from the presidents and vice-presidents down to every member, getting ready for personal work now. And the letter for which every one means places. To get ready for one means work, to prepare for the other just drift. And we are getting ready for somewhere."

Trained Teachers

A Sunday School in Wilkensburg, Pennsylvania, has had a permanent teacher-training department for five years. The following results have been noted. The first line reading crosswise reads "Trained Teachers." The first column reading downward reads "Trained Teachers."

T—rained Teachers.
R—egular Preparation.
A—dapted Teaching.
I—ncreased Spirituality.
N—ew Inspiration.
E—nlarged Vision.
D—irected Energy.
T—eaching to a Purpose.
E—fficient Workmanship.
A—dditional Zeal.
C—onsecrated Effort.
H—igher Ideals.
E—nthusiastic Service.
R—esponsibilities Met.
S—econd Timothy, Two, Fifteen.

—Pennsylvania Herald.