

Memories of the Old Kitchen.

FAR back in my musings, my thoughts have been cast
To the cot where the hours of my childhood were passed.
I loved all its rooms, to the pantry and hall,
But that blessed old kitchen was dearer than all.
Its chairs and its table, none brighter could be,
For all its surroundings were sacred to me,
To the nail in the ceiling, the latch on the door;
And I loved every crack of that old kitchen floor.

I remember the fire-place with mouth high and wide,
The old-fashioned oven that stood by its side,
Out of which, each Thanksgiving, came puddings and pies,
And then, too, St. Nicholas, slyly and still,
Came down every Christmas, our stockings to fill;
But the dearest of memories I've laid up in store,
Is the mother that trod that old kitchen floor.

Day in and day out, from morning till night,
Her footsteps were busy, her heart always light;
For it seemed to me then that she knew not a care,
The smile was so gentle her face used to wear.
I remember with pleasure what joy filled our eyes
When she told us the stories that children so prize,
They were new every night, though we'd heard them before
From her lips, at the wheel, on the old kitchen floor.

I remember the window where mornings I'd run,
As soon as the daybreak, to watch for the sun;
And I thought, when my head scarcely reached to the sill,
That it slept through the night, in the trees of the hill.
And the small tract of ground that my eyes there could view
Was to me a great world of which little I knew;
Indeed I cared not to know of it more,
For a world in itself was that old kitchen floor.

To-night those old visions came back at their will,
But the wheel and its music forever are still;
The band is moth-eaten, the wheel laid away,
And the fingers that turned it lie mouldering in clay;
The hearthstone, so sacred, is just as 'twas then,
And the voices of children ring out there again;
The sun through the window looks in as of yore,
But it sees stranger feet on the old kitchen floor.

I ask not for honour, but for this I would crave,
That when the lips speaking are hushed in the grave,
My children will gather theirs round at their side,
And tell of the mother that long ago died.
'T would be more enduring, far dearer to me
Than inscription on marble or granite could be,
To have them tell often, as I did of yore,
Of the mother that trod the old kitchen floor.

—Selected.

John Wesley and Sunday-Schools.

AN article on Sunday-schools in the *Southern Quarterly* shows that forty years before Raikes gathered the children at Gloucester, John Wesley had organized a Sunday-school at Savannah, in Georgia. And fourteen years before Raikes' schools, Miss Hannah Ball, a young Methodist, had a Sunday school at High Wycombe.

It is a familiar story how Raikes, seeing a lot of ragged children in the street, said to a young woman, what

can we do for them? To this she replied, "Let us teach them to read and take them to Church." That young woman was a Methodist, by name Sophia Cooke, an humble and pious Christian, and a true follower of John Wesley. She was afterwards well known in the history of Methodism as the devoted wife of Joseph Bradburn, one of Wesley's ablest and most useful itinerant preachers. On the Sabbath, when Raikes' Sunday-school was first opened, Sophia Cooke walked to the Parish Church, alongside of Robert Raikes, at the head of the ragged children, whom they had gathered from the slums of Gloucester. And thus we see that even Raikes was indebted for his plan to Methodism. His Sunday-school scheme had a Methodist origin, and it received a Methodist baptism at its birth.

The plan of Raikes was a noble one, and gave an immense impetus to Sunday-school instruction. From the time he published his first account of it, the great movement was fairly inaugurated. But to John Wesley, Robert Raikes himself was mainly indebted for his success. Wesley immediately published Raikes' account of it in his own *Arminian Magazine*, gave to the plan his unqualified approval, and urged its adoption upon his preachers and societies. The saintly Fletcher, at Madeley, and many other Methodists elsewhere, at once established Sunday-schools in their respective charges, and forwarded the good work. While many of the Established Church, and particularly Bishop Horsley, wrote and spoke against Sunday-schools, Wesley and his itinerants, with voice and pen, seconded the movement, and assured its success. Nothing could withstand the Methodist fire and the Methodist zeal, which were thrown into the movement. Wesley was the first to see that God had "a deeper end therein than men are aware of," and to speak of them as "nurseries for Christians." To his itinerants he spoke and wrote, encouraging the work with the same fiery zeal with which he preached to the felons at Newgate, and the carriers at Kingswood. To Richard Rodda, in 1787, he wrote: "It seems these (Sunday-schools) will be one great means of reviving religion throughout the nation;" to Duncan Wright, in 1788: "I verily believe these Sunday-schools are the noblest specimens of charity which have been set on foot in England since the time of William the Conqueror;" and to Charles Atmore, in 1890: "I am glad you have set up Sunday-schools in New Castle. It is one of the noblest institutions which has been seen in Europe for centuries, and will increase more and more, provided the teachers and inspectors do their duty. Therefore, be sure to watch over these with great care, that they may not grow weary in well doing." And now, to give some idea of the impetus which John Wesley gave to Sunday-schools in England, it is estimated that, in 1787, only three years after Wesley wrote them up in his *Arminian Magazine*, there were more than two hundred thousand children already in them.

"Wesley's primary object in all his Sunday-school work, was to bring the children to Christ. Never did he allow himself, or his preachers, to delegate to others the duty expressed and implied in the Master's command to Peter, "Feed my lambs." His

Sunday-schools were indeed "nurseries for Christians." Thousands were converted to God in them; and from them many were called of God to preach the gospel. In his Sunday-school plans Wesley was powerfully seconded by John Fletcher, whose very last public work was in behalf of the Sunday-schools which he had set up in and around Madeley. No one knew better how to interest children, and fix their attention, than that great and good man. Any incident that occurred he seized upon for this purpose. Once a robin flew into the house; the eyes of all the children were intent upon watching the movements of the little bird. "Now," said Fletcher, "I see you can attend to that robin. Well, I will take that robin for my text." "He then," says Wesley, "gave them a useful lecture on the harmlessness of that little creature, and the tender care of its Creator." The result was, many children in Fletcher's Parish were led to Christ by the faithful and godly instruction received in his Sunday-schools.

But no one impressed children more profoundly, or led more of them to Christ, than John Wesley. They gathered around him wherever he went; they often blocked up the entrance to the Church where he was to preach, and even hung upon the skirts of his garments, that they might receive his blessing. Robert Southey, who became poet laureate of England, and Wesley's biographer, tells us, that when he was a boy at Bristol, John Wesley laid his hand upon his head in blessing, and that he felt that touch as a benediction through all his subsequent life.

Robert Raikes, as we have also seen, kept up his Sunday-schools by paid teachers; John Wesley conducted his by teachers, who gave willidg and conducted service, free of charge. The love of souls for whom Jesus died, solely actuated John Wesley, his preachers and his teachers. The latter taught reading, and when it was necessary, even writing, but they taught gratuitously. Listen to Wesley's account of his Schools at Boston:

"From Mr. Peel's we went to Boston. Here are eight hundred poor children, taught in our Sunday-schools, by about eight masters, who receive no pay but what they are to receive from their great Master. About a hundred of them, part boys and part girls, are taught to sing, and they sang so true, that all singing together, seemed to be but one voice. The house was thoroughly filled, while I explained and applied the first commandment. . . . In the evening, many of the children still hovering round the house, I desired forty or fifty to come in and sing, 'Vital spark of heavenly flame.' Although some of them were silent, not being able to sing for tears, yet the harmony was such as I believe, could not be equalled in the king's chapel."

Of another visit to Boston, he writes:

"This I must avow, there is not such another set of singers in any of the Methodist congregations in the three kingdoms as there is at Boston. There cannot be; for we have near a hundred such thobles—boys and girls, selected out of our Sunday-schools, and accurately taught—as are not to be found together in any chapel, cathedral, or music room, within the four seas. Besides, the spirit with which they all

sing, and the beauty of many of them so suits the melody, that I dofy any to exceed it; except the singing of angels in our Father's house."

Now, there was a better judge of music, and good singing, in the three Kingdoms, than John Wesley. He not only revived vital godliness, but he gave to the Churches a pure hymnology, and pure church music. It is well known that his brother Charles' immortal lyrics, before they were adapted to Church worship, received the finishing touch of his more exquisite taste; and it is well known that the influence of this many-sided man upon Church music was as great as his influence upon hymnology. But let us conclude his account of his Boston Sunday-schools with one more extract from his *Journal*. Sunday, April 20, 1778, he was again there, and thus wrote:

"At eight, and at one, the house was thoroughly filled. About three, I met between nine hundred and a thousand of the children, belonging to our Sunday-schools. I never saw such a sight before. They were all exactly clean, as well as plain in their apparel. All were serious and well behaved. Many, both boys and girls, had as beautiful faces as, I believe, England or Europe can afford. When they all sang together, and none of them out of tune, the melody was beyond that of any theater; and, what is best of all, many of them truly fear God, and some rejoice in his salvation. These are a pattern to all the town. Their *diversion* (italics ours) is to visit the poor that are sick, (sometimes six, or eight, or ten together,) to exhort, comfort, and pray with them. Frequently, ten or more of them, got together to sing and pray by themselves; sometimes, thirty or forty; and are so earnestly engaged, eternately singing, praying, and crying, that they know not how to part."

Such was John Wesley's Sunday-schools! Where is there one like them? What improvements has been made on them? Oh! for Wesley's spirit in the preachers and in the teachers! We hear a great deal, in this day, about new methods. They are too often, we fear, but substitutes for Wesley's spirit, and Wesley's consecration. Would to God we could, in this Centennial year of American Methodism, go back to his methods, and catch the spirit which made his Sunday-schools such "nurseries for Christians."

A CANTON missionary says that many of the heathen families whom he knew spent two-fifths of their income for idolatrous purposes. The editor of the *Indian Methodist Watchman* reports the same fact of natives of the Deccan and Southern India.

In Syria the magistrates refuse to put the oath to a convert of the missionaries. They say: "He is a Protestant; he will not lie, he does not need an oath."

A DECREE of toleration has just been granted by the Czar, Alexander III., to Russian dissenters from the Greek Churches, who number from twelve to fifteen millions.

DURING the past year the foreign missionary societies of the world report a gain of 308,643 communicants.

In Morocco, with its six or seven millions of people, there is but one Christian missionary, who labours among the Jews at Mogador, and but one mission school.