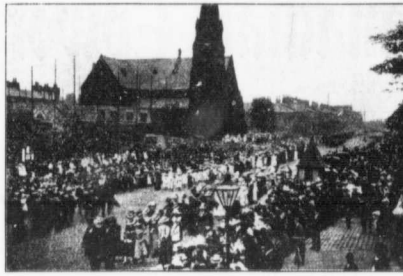
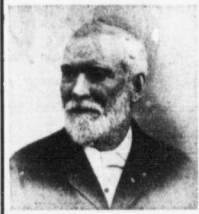




CHARLES CROSSLEY  
Fifty-three years a teacher and walked in annual procession without missing for sixty-eight years.



ANNUAL PROCESSION OF STOCKPORT SUNDAY-SCHOOL.



THOMAS WEATHERED  
Has crossed the Atlantic thirty-five times to participate in the annual exercises.

## The Largest Sunday-School in the World.

### STOCKPORT SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

BY W. B. TOWLER, M.D.

Superintendent Methodist Sunday-school, Wingham, Ont.

THE old town of Stockport is situated seven miles south of Manchester, England. Its present population is over 81,000. In commercial circles it is noted as a great hat manufacturing centre, and to thousands of persons all over the civilized world it is known, and gratefully remembered, because in it is situated, if not the largest, one of the largest Sunday-schools in the world—known as "The Stockport Sunday-school." The writer of this article has before him a copy of the "first circular issued by the Stockport Sunday-school," dated August, 1805, and which commences as follows: "It is now upwards of fifty years since Sunday-schools were proposed to the attention of the public. . . . The benevolence and cheapness of the scheme excited a general wish for its prosperity."

It appears, therefore, from this that the Sunday-schools in Stockport date back to A. D. 1784, and Stockport Sunday-school, as a separate institution, to 1805. The foundation of the present building was laid on the 15th of August, 1805, and the trust deed, bearing date of September 23, 1808, and enrolled in Her Majesty's High Court of Chancery, contains in part the following statement: "In order to promote, carry on, and conduct the same on a more general and enlarged scale, an edifice or building has been lately erected and denominated 'The Stockport Sunday-school,' for the purpose of the education of the poor children residing in the township of Stockport." In the early history of this school, all the children of the poor who were not receiving secular education, or religious Bible training from any source, were thus welcome to this institution. There were no charges made to anyone admitted as a pupil, and the expenses, heavy as they were, for teaching, management and building, were met by voluntary contributions. At this period the teaching, as a matter of necessity, was, to quite an extent, of a secular nature, but of late years it has been almost altogether religious.

It is very interesting to note some of the early events connected with the old school, as can be seen in a little pamphlet published last year, entitled "The S. S. S. Walking Day Souvenir," a few of which I have selected, as follows:

1784, Sunday-schools were first established in Stockport.

1793, voluntary Sunday-school teaching was introduced.

1794 marked the establishment of a Stockport Sunday school as a separate institution, then known as the Methodist S. S.

1796, the register showed 1,358 children in attendance.

1798, the first hymn-book was published.

1801, two auxiliary schools were established.

1805, laying the foundation stone of the S. S. S.

1812, commencement of the Stockport Sunday-school annual procession.

1816, the numerical strength of the school was 3,000.

1838, coronation procession on June 25th in honor of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837. Numerical strength of the school, 5,633.

1884, Centennial celebration.

1897, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebration.

1899 marked many very interesting events—the unveiling of portraits of old workers in the school, the presentation of long service medals to teachers of twenty years' service and upwards. (The medals being the gift of the Editor of the *Quiver*, a few names are of interest: Charles Crossley, 52 years a teacher; Hannah Burtinshaw, 50 years; William Coburn, 48 years; Mary H. Walker, 47 years; and eighty-one others who had been continuously engaged in this grand work of teaching God's Word for periods ranging from 20 to 47 years.)

The last grand annual procession took place in June of this year. This procession, like all former ones, started from the main building and proceeded in classes with their teachers and officers, and with many former members of the school, in measured steps, marching in perfect order, four or five thousand strong, singing

gospel hymns, until St. Peter's Square was reached, when the whole assembly united in singing the hymn, "King of Kings, we bow before Thee," followed by the National Anthem; and then quietly disbanded for their homes.

This "S. S. S. Walking Day" is a day of days, and is honored and observed by the citizens of Stockport, from His Worship the Mayor and chief magistrates to the humblest resident of the town. All grades and ranks of local life are represented in the procession. At the annual meeting of the board of management, held in June a year ago, the last report presented then shows the last registered teacher's number to be 6,085. The total number of registered scholars is 105,900. The same report gives the number of scholars in the main building as 3,328, and the number in the four branch schools at 1,304; the total being 4,632. Teachers, male 223, female 216; making a grand total of 5,071 members of the school.

Monthly public meetings are held regularly, when special sermons are preached by notable clergymen of the different Protestant denominations. In November of each year the great anniversary is held, when such men as the Revs. Rowland Hill, John Angel James, Thomas Chalmers, Norman MacLeod, Newman Hall, J. Monro Gibson, Archdeacon Farrar, Mark Guy Pearce, F. B. Meyer and Dean Stanley, have preached the annual sermon in the auditorium of the main building to audiences of from three to four thousand persons. These are grand services, and the singing, led by a large orchestra of trained musicians, is something really inspiring.

In connection with the Stockport Sunday-school there is a sick and burial society, established for the benefit of teachers who may possibly need help in this way. There is also a general library, a first, second and a teachers' library. Two Sunday-school sessions are held—forenoon and afternoon—every Sunday, in fifty different class-rooms, one large room being devoted to the use of a teachers' normal or training class, from which all temporary and permanent supplies are obtained to fill vacancies in the teaching