

THE CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, JUNE 10th, 1880

All communications for the Editorial, News of Churches, and Correspondence Columns should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Box 2648, P.O. Toronto.

Pastors and church officers are particularly requested to forward items for "News of the Churches" column.

DURING the absence of the editor in England at the Raikes Centenary, the INDEPENDENT will be in charge of the Rev. J. B. SIKOX, who has kindly consented to undertake the necessary duties. Communications for the editor can continue to be addressed as indicated above.

WE propose to give next week a full report of the Union meetings, to accomplish this the publication of the INDEPENDENT will necessarily be postponed for a couple of days. Our readers will therefore understand the cause of any delay which may occur in receipt of their paper.

DR. GIBSON AND THE MASSES.

MANY of our readers enjoy a personal acquaintance with the Rev. Dr. Gibson, for a long time pastor of Erskine Church, Montreal, and more recently of Chicago. They will hear of his contemplated removal to London, Eng., with a twofold feeling, one of pleasure over the honour done him by a call to so important a field, the other of regret at the loss to America of so promising a preacher.

There was one statement made by Dr. Gibson in his farewell sermon to his Chicago friends which is worthy of our regard. We have not the exact words, but the following is their substance: "I found in Chicago great masses of people who never entered the doors of the churches. I made it my earnest effort to win them to attendance upon the ministry of the Word. My people sanctioned my attempt, and gave up their pews in the evening, so that there might be free seats for all. But I failed to attract the masses to attend, though we did all we could to make them feel they would be welcome." This is, so far as we remember, the heart of his declaration.

Now this has an important signification. The churches are not infrequently lectured by the press for not reaching the masses in our cities, and it is more than hinted that the churches themselves are to be blamed for this repulsion of the masses. Rented pews, and ministerial broadcloth and starch, and lace and diamonds, awaken a prejudice in the minds of the masses against the house of God. The fustian and the alpaca are kept out by the better clothing of the church members, and by their tenure of sittings, say these hasty scribes. And in their estimation the churches are to bear all the blame for the churchlessness of the many.

Dr. Gibson's manly effort to reach the masses of Chicago throws a new light on this matter. Here was a man who laid himself out specially and untiringly to meet them. He was genial, approachable, simple, earnest. His church seconded his effort by giving up their sittings to the masses. And yet it all failed in any appreciable measure to realize its object. The kindness was not reciprocated. The masses did not come. And why? Is it uncharitable to say, because they would not? They were assured of a hearty welcome from both minister and people. Starch was cast aside, and yet these people for whom the feast had been provided did not come to partake of it. Were they not left without excuse?

It has long been our fear that one of the most potent reasons for the non-attendance at church of the masses is their own irreligiousness. They love their beer and their stroll and the parks and their carelessness better than their souls and the Gospel which could gladden those souls. The churches would gladly welcome them; ministers would gladly speak helpful words to them; but they have, they must have a deep antipathy to the Gospel, or else they

would embrace the welcome extended them. No other fair explanation of the case, in our judgment, can be given, in view of Dr. Gibson's Christian but futile attempt to reach them. And perhaps when the critics next read a lesson to the churches, they will be kind enough to remember that the masses need a lesson too, of not ungraciously refusing the warm welcome which the churches extend.

THE RAIKES CENTENARY.

IT is very desirable that this matter should be intelligently understood by our superintendents and teachers, that they may be able, in like manner, to lay the matter before their scholars and so interest them thoroughly in this important celebration.

Who was Robert Raikes and what had he to do with Sunday schools? are questions which no doubt will be asked by many during the next few weeks or months while the centenary thought is uppermost. Let us endeavour to assume, in as few words as is possible, to convey the main facts.

Robert Raikes was born in Gloucester, England, on September 14th, 1735. He was the son of a noble father, and by noble we do not mean titled nobility, but that which comes from character and righteousness. Thirteen years before the birth of his son, whose great work we celebrate, he had established in the city of Gloucester a newspaper, which was characterized by such good sound sense and earnest philanthropic views, as to win the confidence of the people and obtain for it what was in those days an extensive circulation. We chafe sometimes at the smallness of the INDEPENDENT; it contains fully four times as much matter as Raikes' paper did. The mother of Robert too was, there is little doubt from what is known of her, an excellent woman. On the death of his father Raikes succeeded to his business and his editorial duties, which he continued until the year 1802. It is not, however, with these that we have to do, but to trace the beginning of his Sunday school work. His early philanthropic labours appear to have been in the gaols of his native city. The gaols of 150 years ago were horrible places, as any know who have read the life of John Howard, and the two gaols of Gloucester do not appear to have been exceptions to the general rule. Filthiness, want of ventilation, over-crowding, and starvation, produced their usual result of a harvest of death, while the immorality that prevailed was fearful. Raikes, through his paper, drew attention to these things, and endeavoured, in some degree, to mitigate the evils, setting himself first of all to supply food to the famishing wretches who were not allowed anything by prison regulations and were not permitted to earn anything. In pursuit of his prison labours he soon found out a truth that has become thoroughly understood in these days, that ignorance is the parent of crime, and that if the latter was to be lessened it was by imparting knowledge, especially the knowledge of Divine truth to the masses. Perhaps we cannot do better than give the inception of the Sunday school idea in Raikes' own words, from a letter in reply to one asking for information on this very subject. He says:

"The beginning of this scheme was entirely owing to accident. Some business leading me one morning into the lower suburbs of the city, where the lowest of people (who are principally employed in the pin manufactory) chiefly reside, I was struck with concern at seeing a group of children, wretchedly ragged, at play in the streets. I asked an inhabitant whether those children belonged to that part of the town, and lamented their misery and idleness. 'Ah, sir,' said the woman to whom I was speaking, 'could you take a view of this part of the town on a Sunday, you would be shocked indeed; for then the street is filled with multitudes of these wretches, who, released on that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, playing at "chuck" and cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell rather than of any other place. . . . This conversation suggested to me that it would be at least a harmless attempt, if it were productive of no good, should some little plan be formed to check the deplorable profanation of the Sabbath. I then inquired of the woman if there were any decent, well-disposed women in the neighbourhood 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 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 the clergyman and imparted to him my plan. He was so much satisfied with the idea that he engaged to lend his assistance by going round 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 heathen."

As connecting the date with its centenary observance, it is interesting to note that the first Sunday school established by Raikes was at the house of a Mr. King, Mrs. King being the teacher; but Mr. King, who appears to have entered heartily into the work and carried it on for many years after her death, had a Bible given to him at the commencement (possibly for use in the school), which bore as the date of its presentation, July 1780.

For three years the movement was confined to Gloucester and its immediate neighbourhood, but after that Raikes began to speak of the work in his paper, and attention thus having been called to it, the idea took, and rapidly spread. It was soon found that the happiest results followed the introduction of Sunday schools. The day had before been prominent for its riots and lawlessness; it was the day of feasting, sports, revels, fights, and no end of disorders; but a change came with the Sunday school right through the country—judges, magistrates, quarter sessions, and ministers of the Gospel united their testimony to this fact, and so the institution became one of the facts of the age, and has exerted a most powerful influence in moulding the thought and life of the English people.

Were we writing the history of Sunday schools, it would be interesting to trace the successive developments which have made our schools what we see them to-day. In the universal spread of popular education, and with the admirable systems of the principal Protestant countries, ignorance, the one thing Raikes sought to remedy, has largely passed away; but the deeper necessity which is also felt, for spiritual instruction still remains, and although the horn-book, the slate, and the copy-book have ceased to be required in our Sunday school, the Bible more than ever is felt to be *the Book, our Book*, that upon which all our teaching must be based, and in proportion as we reverently study and use it will our work be the power of God to everlasting life.

SENSUOUS CHRISTIANITY.

WE have no desire to interfere with the sincere convictions and practice of those who read their Bible differently to ourselves, and whose practice, based upon a different faith, is different to our own. But there are circumstances sometimes in such practice which demand at any rate a passing note of condemnation, not only that we may see the error as therein exhibited, but that we may take warning if there is anything in our own belief and practice which tends in the same direction.

There is, it appears, in Toronto a society, "order," we ought to have said, of the "Sister Adorers of the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are further told that "the life of the sisters of the order is a continual prayer, and they are entirely secluded from the world, never going outside the walls of their convent. They occupy the moments not employed in devotion in making church vestments, scapulars, and burial habits, the covering of Agnus Dei, and the like." The first feeling is to ridicule such a life—secluded from the world to make man-millinery and the like! but there is a sadder side to this before which the absurd fades away. We ask ourselves, is this Christianity? Is this one of the outworkings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? a Gospel that is to raise and bless the world—this? We do not wonder that one speaking of this order, and the circumstances under which its existence has been brought before the public, should say, "If this is Christianity I would rather have nothing to do with it."

The circumstances are these. In Toronto a few weeks since, a young lady was admitted into the order, by the ceremony called "Taking the Veil." In that there were all the usual attractions which Rome