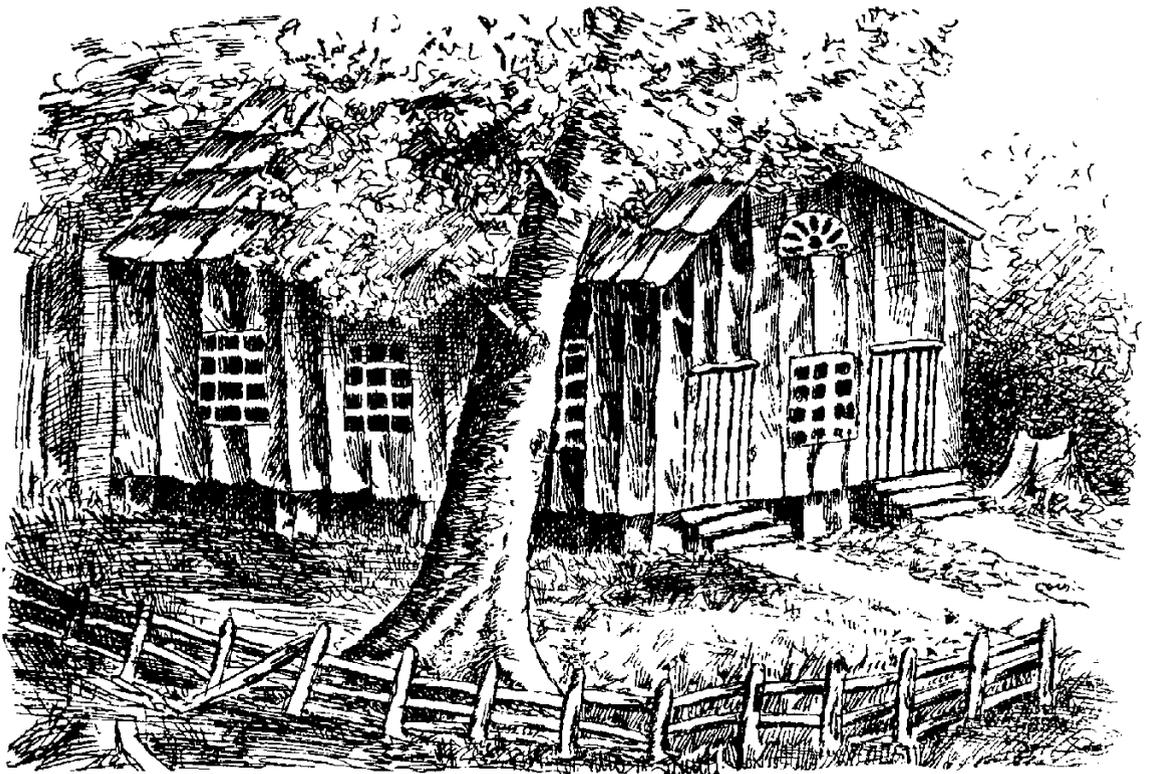


One Hundred Years
OF
PRESBYTERIANISM



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CINCINNATI, OHIO.

First House of Worship, erected 1792.

IN THE
OHIO VALLEY.

CINCINNATI, OHIO.

1890.

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THE GROWTH OF THE SABBATH-SCHOOL.

BY REV. B. W. CHIDLAW, D. D.

Growth is the order of Providence and grace. The law prevails in the realm of nature as in the kingdom of grace. First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. That is the definite arrangement in nature, and the same principle holds good in the kingdom of grace. It is equally true in natural and in spiritual things; the growth of everything connected with religion, with Christianity, has been a marked feature in the Providence of God and the kingship of Jesus Christ, the great head of the church. It was a small thing for the handful of men, untaught in the wisdom of the world, to plant the banner of the cross all over the world. It was a small matter when the cloistered monk at Erfurt received from God the light that brought Christianity as a matter of personal knowledge and experience to Luther, and belief in the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. The reformation rolled in, till to night the Christian world gives thanks to God for what he wrought. So is it true of the Sabbath-school. It was from a very small beginning that it has grown to its present gigantic proportions. When I had the honor and pleasure of attending the Robert Raikes Centennial in London ten years ago, I was invited by the chairman of arrangements with two other foreigners, as they called us, to visit the city of Gloucester, the birth-place of the Sabbath-school.

After spending two days in very interesting, and I hope very profitable, service in the city of Gloucester I heard that the same old house in which Robert Raikes held the first Sunday-school was still standing. We were entertained at the house of a gentleman in the city, and I told my friend my desire to visit the house where was started this good and pleasant

work, and the rest of the company united with me in this desire. We passed by the great Cathedral. The Sunday-school was not born within its magnificent walls. We came to a squalid part of the city. The gentleman said, "There is the house!" It was a very unpretending building. The lower story was of brick and the second of conglomerate. I walked across the street. The black pine door had a knocker, and as I lifted my hand to that knocker I thought, just one hundred years ago Robert Raikes had touched that knocker. I expressed a desire to enter the house. "Certainly," was the reply. "May I invite my other friends?" Permission was given us to enter the house and we passed through the front room to a rear room. In the back part of that room there was a winding stairway. We entered a little room in the rear where we could stand and touch the ceiling. We stood there, some eight or ten of us, in silence and thoughtfulness. "I think it would be very appropriate," I said, "if we should right here offer two prayers; one of thanksgiving to God and one of supplication for Divine favor and blessing." We bowed on that carpetless floor and two of us lifted up our hearts to God in thanksgiving and supplication. It was a small meeting, but it was a meeting that will be long remembered by all of us who participated in it.

When I was in Gloucester I saw a piece of paper on which was written the reasons why he organized the Sunday-school. On that paper three things were laid down showing his purpose in opening that Sunday-school. "First," he said, "it was to teach good manners." That is a good idea for Sunday-school work. "Second, to teach letters, reading and writing, and if possible reckoning and casting accounts. But," he said, "the chief idea is to teach them religious truth, that those whom you teach may become Christian men and women." That was the beginning of this glorious work, which has spread over the land and the world.

The growth of the Sunday-school is really marvelous. We have overwhelming evidence that the work is of God. In the first decade of the second centennial of the Sunday-school work, more than nineteen millions are gathered into the Sun-

day-school fold and supplied with Divine text-books; and about half of these millions are in our own country. Let us then take courage and give thanks unto God, who has already given such a proof of His favor and blessing upon the work.

The growth of the Sunday-school work is marvelous in the confidence and support of the Church of Jesus Christ. In my early life as missionary to the American Sunday-school Union, when Sunday-schools were few in the field, scattered over Ohio and Indiana, I encountered serious difficulties, not from unbelievers so much as from men who professed faith in Christ. But thanks be to God, for the last thirty years I have not encountered that opposition. There has been growth in that direction, with more confidence of God-fearing men and with the earnest co-operation of the ministry and laymen, men and women that love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there has been a remarkable growth in the facilities and appliances by which we carry on our Sunday-school work. When I went down last Sabbath into the Sabbath-school room of this church, what a blessed sight met my eyes. What a mighty change in the place of meeting. There was no longer the log cabin with light paper for windows. There were no longer split log benches for seats. The meetings of the Sunday-schools are no longer held under the shade of forest trees. They have very comfortable and desirable homes. That is all right. This growth is the fruitage of Christian labor and enlightened ideas of the Sunday-school.

There has been a wonderful growth not only numerically, but also a wonderful growth in the literature of the Sunday-school. How well do I remember the time when I had only the Welsh Bible and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress to study. Blessed literature. What food for thought was there in that immortal production of the tinker in the jail at Bedford. The first juvenile book I ever read so as to be interested in it, in the English language, was one I found at Kenyon college. It was called "The Dairyman's Daughter." Then there were but few books written and published for the Sunday-school. It is not so now. Now the Sunday-school has an immense literature, the production of the best intellects and hearts in the

world. There is a vast amount of frivolous, soul-destroying literature afloat. Our young people are fed with a literature that poisons the soul, and such a literature gets into our Sunday-school libraries. If the Sunday-school officers and committee on the library are faithful and competent, they have a wide range to choose from in the American Tract Society and in the American Sunday-school Union. It is said of the American Sunday-school Union, that it has eighteen hundred books breathing the spirit of the gospel of Christ. Let us make use of it, my friends, to the promotion of our Sunday-school work.

Then there has been and there is now a wonderful growth in the ingathering of converted children, youth and adults from the world to the church. What a grand feature of Sunday-school work it is. What a wonderful power there is in Bible teaching through the intellect to reach the heart of the scholar and bring him to an enlightened confession of sin, and upon bended knees to pray to God to "be merciful to me, a sinner." May the spirit of God rest upon our Sunday-school work more than ever, that the growth may be greater now than ever before.

But, my friends, great as the growth of the Sunday-school has been, it is not yet complete. Some of you will see a growth that the old missionary has not seen. Our brother said this old church had thirteen missionary Sunday-schools in this city. What a blessed work. My soul has been filled with joy and hope, but the growth is not yet complete. One-half of the juvenile population of our country are not educated around the Christian altar at home. They never come into our Sunday-schools. They never hear from the pulpit the ministry of salvation. They are growing up ignorant of the way of salvation. Oh, that God would put it into our hearts from this hour to do more work in the ingathering of souls into the Sabbath-school fold. Our juvenile population should be taught to revere and study and believe the word of God. The Sunday-school has much to do in this direction.

Some time ago in one of our stations waiting for a train was a family of emigrants going West. I asked one of the children whether he had ever gone to school. "Not much," he

said. I said, "Did you ever go to Sunday-school?" "Yes sir, some." "What book did you read?" "It was a small black book about as big as your hand." "Was it a testament?" "Oh, yes." Would that there were greater reverence for the word of God. Would that the people would look at it as an infallible rule of faith and practice. My friends, we want greater growth in the Sunday-school, not only in gathering the ignorant and neglected within its folds, for giving our youth right ideas of the Divine text-book, that they may reverence it and believe in it, but also we want growth in holding on to our Sunday-school scholars. Oh, what a terrible shrinkage we suffer in the falling away of the great number of our young people. At the time when the teaching would do them the most good they break ranks. We want growth in this direction so as to continue them in the line of Sabbath observance and that they may attend the singing and the preaching of God's word. When I used to saddle my horse with my saddle-bags full of testaments and Bibles, I little dreamed that I would stand on this platform; and when I recall the past and my eyes behold the present condition of the Sunday-school, my heart rejoices that the growth of the Sunday-school work has been full of encouragement, full of hope and full of inspiration.

THE SABBATH-SCHOOL AN AGGRESSIVE FORCE IN CHURCH WORK.

BY ROBERT S. FULTON.

The church has a mission to the unevangelized. There is a mighty emphasis upon that in the Scripture and in history. It is foreshadowed in prophecy; taught by parables and illustrated by types and miracles; stimulated by promises and commanded in the very plainest terms of inspiration. Look back over the history of the church in those periods. When the hearts of God's people were most tender, and they most active in their great duty toward the unsaved masses, how all their