

A CHRISTIAN THROUGH

GATHERING OF SUNDAY SCHOOL WORKERS IN ST. LOUIS.

Delegates Will Be Present From Every State in the Union and Almost Every Country Under the Sun—A Great Annual Festival—Interesting Data.

[Special Correspondence.] ST. LOUIS, Aug. 22.—Preparations for the three big gatherings of Sunday school workers to be held in this city during the last days of August and the first days of September have been going forward for some time and are now about completed. The dates of the coming conventions are: First International Sunday School Field Workers' conference, Wednesday, Aug. 26; seventh international Sunday school convention, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 and 2; second world's Sunday school convention, Monday, Tues-



EXPOSITION ENTERTAINMENT HALL.

day and Wednesday, Sept. 4, 5 and 6. On Sunday, Sept. 3, the delegates will be invited to attend the Sunday schools of the city, and address will be made in the various churches by the more prominent of the guests.

The delegates will come from every state and territory of the Union, from the Canadian provinces and from almost every civilized and uncivilized country in the world. It is stated by Mr. B. F. Jacobs, chairman of the executive committee of the International Sunday school convention, that 2,000 delegates are accredited from the United States and Canada, while the local committees place the additional attendance of delegates to the world's convention at 400 at least. It is expected despite the hard times that there will be a very large attendance of unaccredited persons—so large, according to present estimates, as to swell the total number of strangers likely to be here during the week to 8,000 or 10,000. The Field Workers' conference will be held in Exposition Entertainment hall. The International Sunday school convention and the world's convention will occupy Music hall. The programme of each has been prepared with great care, and it is expected that Sunday school workers who are fortunate enough to be present will derive great pleasure and profit from the proceedings.

Saturday, Sept. 2, will be given over largely to the celebration of St. Louis' annual Sunday school festival, which was postponed this year from May, the usual time of holding it, until September in order that the delegates to the convention should see what St. Louis can do in the way of a big turnout of Sunday school scholars. The festival will be held as usual on the fair grounds, and the new Sportsman's park has been engaged as overflow grounds. The most interesting features of this year's festival will be the parade and the song service. The children will begin to form for the former at 8:30 a. m. and will march from Grand avenue to the Pine and Olive streets to the fair grounds, where they will be reviewed by delegates from the conventions. The song service will consist of a chorus of 10,000 fresh young voices. It will be rendered in Sportsman's park and will be in charge of L. F. Lindsay, who will also have charge of all the musical services of the conventions.

This annual festival is a feature of Sunday school work peculiar to St. Louis as the May walk is peculiar to Brooklyn Sunday schools. Besides the procession, which is similar to the main feature of the May walk, and the out of door feast that is so popular at rural Sunday school picnics, there are athletic sports for the older boys of the Sunday schools and the young men of the Bible classes. These sports include baseball, running races, bicycle races, potato races, sack races, competitive club-swinging, etc. The attendance is so large as to be a matter of interest in the various events of the day is intense. There is no doubt that its annual recurrence and the preparations for its competitions, which necessarily begin some weeks ahead each year, add materially to the interest felt in Sunday schools by the children of St. Louis. A local rhymester has described the number and variety of youngsters annually participating in the parade in the following lines:

Fair children, dark children,
Children past reason;
Tall children, small children,
Children in season;
Rich children, poor children,
Children in classes;
Girl children, boy children,
A whole city's babies;
Black children, white children,
Children galore;
Good children, rude children,
Score upon score.

Some idea of the significance of the convention may be obtained from a brief reference to previous gatherings of the same nature. The Field Workers' convention is the first of its kind. The International convention is the evolution of the national convention and is the twelfth gathering of that body, as well as the seventh of the international. Its sessions are held once in three years, and it was organized at the sixth national convention in May 1875 at Baltimore. The sixth international convention was held at Pittsburgh in 1890, and Hon. John G. Harris of Alabama, who was then chosen president, will preside over the coming convention. The board of vice presidents includes one from each state in the Union and each of the Canadian provinces. Among the more prominent workers belonging to the international convention are Bishop J. H. Vincent, best known because of his connection with the Chautauqua summer school, and B. F. Jacobs, who is entitled to the thanks of all Sunday school workers for the International Lesson Leaf, and Dr. Meredith of Brooklyn, long identified in Sunday school work. The plan for uniform study by the world's Sunday schools was devised by him, and he had the active assistance of Dr. Edward Eggleston and Dr. Vincent in perfecting it. It was adopted by the convention of 1873, which was held in Indianapolis.

The first world's Sunday school convention was held in London in 1889 and was the outgrowth of the international convention, as the latter was of the national. It was projected during the fifth international convention held in Chicago in 1887. The details of the organization were given into the hands of an able committee, of which Mr. Jacobs was one. The Sunday school workers of the other lands entered cordially into the work, and the delegates were welcomed to the world's metropolis on July 2 of the year named by the Lord mayor, and the Earl and Countess of Aberdeen and other titled and untitled English men and women united to make it pleasant for them. The American delegates numbered over 300, and they went to England on board the Cunard steamer Bothnia, which they chartered for the voyage.

Many conflicting claims as to who originated the Sunday school idea have been put forth, and it is hard in the light of the facts that have been disclosed of late years to decide as to whom the credit is due. Robert Raikes, a printer and publisher of a small newspaper in Gloucester, England, was undoubtedly the first whose work attracted general attention and imitation. He got his idea, however, from a Mrs. Bradburn, who had been a teacher in a Sunday school established in 1709 by Hannah Ball. Raikes started his first school in 1780, and in 1783, 210 years ago, it had become sufficiently successful in his eyes to warrant the publication of an article concerning it in his paper, the Gloucester Journal. He also

wrote an article about the school which was published in The Gentlemen's Magazine, and once the plan and its success as conducted by him were made known to the churches in general it was extended with marvelous rapidity.

It is a fact, however, that as early as 1599 schools somewhat similar to that of Mr. Raikes were established by the kirk of Scotland, and a somewhat similar form of school was authorized by the church of England in 1603. Among the earliest Sunday schools in America were those established at Roxbury, Mass., in 1674; Norwich, Conn., in 1696; Plymouth, Mass., in 1699; Newtown, N. Y., in 1698; Berks county, Pa., in 1734; Ephrata, Pa., in 1740; Bethlehem, Penn., in 1740; Philadelphia, in 1774, and Hanover county, Va., in 1782. But the work of these schools not being published to the world, as was that of Raikes, their influence was only local.

The teaching in Raikes' school, and in early Sunday schools generally, was not altogether religious. Indeed it was necessary, owing to the ignorance of the scholars who were induced to attend, to teach them to read before they could comprehend the Bible's printed page. Writing was also taught, and the teachers received pecuniary compensation for their labors, the English seminary fund being drawn upon until 1798. When this was discontinued, the Sunday school received a severe blow, and it was then that the work was taken up by volunteers from the ranks of ladies of wealth and position. It does not appear that wages were ever paid to Sunday school teachers in this country. Bishop Asbury of the Methodist Episcopal church, Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield were among the men of prominence who early engaged in the work of fostering Sunday school work here.

The Sunday school is now the strongest institution auxiliary to the work of the churches. Its efficiency was vastly increased when the London Sunday School union was organized in 1800, and fresh impetus to the work was given by the organization of the New York union a little later. The union idea spread rapidly to other cities, towns and counties both in England and in America, and the Sunday school unions so generally formed have had a great deal to do with the breaking down of the old lines of denominational prejudice. The social influence of the Sunday school today cannot be overestimated. It is the one place in thousands of rural communities where the young people of the church meet once a week. Its books form the only circulating library in the place. It is there that the young folks get all the musical instruction they ever receive, and it is there that the bright farmer's boy with a ready tongue first learns to talk upon his feet.

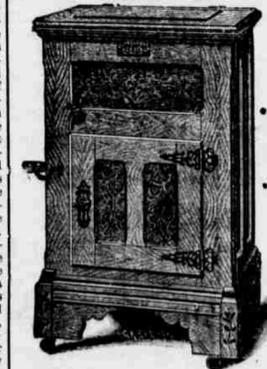


REV. DR. MEREDITH.

The total number of Sunday school teachers in the world, not including those of the Roman Catholic church, whose statistics are not available, nor the entire total of the Protestant Episcopal, is 3,051,679. They teach in 190,575 schools, which are attended by 18,026,916 pupils, making a total of 20,078,595 teachers and pupils. There are now organized Sunday schools in every country of Europe save Turkey, Greece and a few of the small southeastern principalities, in nearly every country of South America, in nearly all the isles of the sea, in Africa, in China, India, Japan and Persia. The United States leads all countries in number of schools, teachers and pupils, its totals being: Schools, 108,990; teachers, 1,131,340; pupils, 8,649,131. England and Wales come next with 39,983 schools, 666,941 teachers and 5,789,835 pupils. M. I. DEXTER.

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To support the cause of Annexation of Hawaii to the United States and assist all other movements, political, social or religious, which are of benefit to these Islands and their people.

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