

11-28-1911

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Browne, H. B., "Methodist Sunday Schools After a Hundred Years" (1911). *Historical Society Addresses*. Paper 12.
<http://digitalcommons.wofford.edu/histaddresses/12>

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Methodist Sunday Schools After a Hundred Years

An Address Delivered Before the Historical Society of the
South Carolina Annual Conference, Methodist Episcopal
Church, South, at Bennettsville, S. C., Nov.
28, 1911, Tracing a Century's
Record of Movement

By REV. H. B. BROWNE, Camden, S. C.

The wonderful development of the Sunday-school, with its various by-products of practical helpfulness, has been the marvel of the past century. Not since the days following Pentecost has the Kingdom of Christ advanced so widely and so surely in the essentials of intelligent leadership—a leadership committed to the salvation of the race. Careful students are seeking to learn the secret of this potent undercurrent in human thought and experience. From the aged grandparent to the little child the hosts of the true Israel of God seem to be drawn by some wonder-working power into the realm where earth and sky have intimate converse.

The work is of God, and has been from the beginning of the modern Sunday-school movement. Today seems to be the flowering period, and no seer among us can give estimate of the harvest of even a quarter of a century to follow. Who made all this possible? Who have gone forth into the fields to sow, and what seed were sown? The fathers and mothers of early Methodism were surely faithful to their trusts, and as teachers of the "kingdom in the cradle" they hid the Word away in the hearts of trustful children. They watched, and prayed, and followed the leading of God's hand. Wherever "ten children" could be collected together they were taught the primal lessons of the cross and of intelligent leadership. They were gathered, sometimes from the dusty streets and lanes of the city; and yet again from the

byways of the log cabin homes in the forest; but, in every place and in all circumstances, they were gathered together in His name, to be taught "the sweet story of old."

In an historical address we are supposed to deal only with the facts and incidents of the long ago, not bringing under review the very recent past. But in this address, I must be pardoned for calling attention to the great progress in all departments of Sunday-school enterprise, even in the opening days of the twentieth century. The "men behind the guns" in the recent past have learned to be more accurate. Mere sentiment no longer controls the forces of Zion. Profiting by the experience and the experiments of the past, our leaders have projected the lines of usefulness in the training schools of the Church with such precision that most gratifying results must follow. The work of the pioneer has been finished; the clearing the forests and the preparation of much of the soil has commanded the attention of manly sons of worthy sires. The past two decades embraces a period wherein work has been done on the intensive system, and with a faith in God that did not waver. Men and women of broadest culture and holiest purpose have, without affectation or pious cant, given themselves to this most sacred calling—the teaching the child the real meaning of the life hid with Christ in God. And all this they have been doing for the larger life of the youth of America before the nipping frost, or angry storm, or the beating rain got in their work of devastation and ruin.

The golden age was not in the far away days of old, but that age is just beginning to dawn; the day-gleams are so apparent that at least one seer hath proclaimed that "it is daybreak everywhere." The night has been long, and possibly with more or less fitful dreaming. Occasionally, while men slept here and there, an enemy may have sowed tares. But with the child-life of America crying like

"An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry"—

the Church of Christ has not been deaf to the piteous wail. God's call from the skies, and the baby cry from the cradle, hath not been in vain. The complete salvation of the child is the consuming thought and dominant passion of the Church of the twentieth century.

In view of the multiform interests of the Sunday-school of today, and in view of the Christly work inaugurated by the fathers of Methodism, I shall ask you to study with me some of the facts and phases of history in the forward movement of the Church for a hundred years and more ago.

REVIVAL OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND.

The practice of teaching children on the Sabbath, while not a new one, seems to have been revived in England in the latter part of the

eighteenth century. The idea of the modern Sunday-school was not conceived by Robert Raikes, as a number of historians have claimed. He accepted the Godly counsel of a pious Methodist woman and put her ideas into execution. Indeed, a Methodist woman established a Sunday-school as early as 1766, fourteen years before Mr. Raikes established his first Sabbath-school. In 1766 this young Methodist woman, Hannah Ball, established a Sunday-school at High Wycombe, in England, and was instrumental in training a large number of children in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. So reads Stevens' history of Methodism.

In 1780 another Methodist woman who later became Mrs. Bradburn, the wife of a distinguished Wesleyan Methodist minister, gave to Mr. Raikes the initial idea of teaching children on the Holy Sabbath. While discussing the condition of the poor neglected children in the streets of Gloucester, Mr. Raikes asked her, "What can we do for them?" She replied, "Let us teach them to read, and take them to church." He adopted her suggestion, and these two devoted Christian workers shortly afterward led a company of Sunday-school children to church.

In 1784, Mr. Raikes having developed his idea more fully, published his outline of the new movement. This publication immediately attracted the attention of Mr. Wesley. He published Mr. Raikes' article in the *Arminian Magazine* in January, 1785, and urged his preachers to organize Sunday-schools. Many of them did so at once; among them was John Fletcher, who organized a school at Madelay, which bore richest fruit. Mr. Wesley declared a little later that "Sunday-schools were springing up everywhere," and called them "the nurseries of the Church."

ORGANIZATION IN AMERICA.

In 1786 Bishop Asbury began to organize Sunday-schools in America. He was a great organizer and infused this spirit into the Methodist itinerant preachers under him. From Maine to Georgia he rode on horseback into every section where he could find a few pioneer families, and preached and organized churches. All the while he was careful to look after the children. He wrote and put into the general minutes the germ idea of organized Sunday-schools in 1779, and gave his preachers minute instructions as to their care of children. It was perfectly natural for him to welcome the idea of Sunday-school instruction for the youth of America. He organized a Sunday-school in 1786 in the home of Mr. Thomas Crenshaw, in Hanover County, Virginia.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN, 1784.

I call special attention to the fact that before the matter of organizing Sunday-schools was brought to the attention of the Church in America Methodism provided for the religious instruction of children. At the "Christmas Conference," held in Baltimore, Md., in December, 1784, when the Methodist Episcopal Church was formally organized,

the following section was made a part of the organic law of the Church:

Question 5. But what shall we do for the rising generation? Who will labor for them? Let him who is jealous for God and the souls of men begin now.

1. Where there are ten children, whose parents are in society, meet them at least an hour every week.

2. Talk with them every time you see any at home.

3. Pray in earnest for them.

4. Diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses.

5. Preach expressly on education.

These instructions were practically the same that Mr. Wesley had given his preachers in England *before* the organized Sunday-school movement of Mr. Raikes had been inaugurated.

A careful study of the general minutes, and the various editions of the Discipline, (which were issued *annually* from 1784 to 1792,) together with a reprint edition of the journals of the General Conference from 1796 to 1844, enables us to trace the ever enlarging idea of the Church. We may call the idea a crude one—teaching poor children to read and write, and the simpler forms of catechetical instruction in the Holy Scriptures—but the results evidence the fact that out of it all a mighty movement grew, and kept growing with every passing decade—till now, who can furnish a full record of the fruitage of those heroic days of toil?

In addition to the action taken at the "Christmas Conference," in 1784, we find in the general minutes of 1787, in answer to the twentieth question, "What can we do for the rising generation?" the following answer:

"Let the elders, deacons and helpers class the children in proper classes, as far as it is practicable, meet them as often as possible, and commit them during their absence into the care of proper persons, who may meet them at least weekly; and if any of them be truly awakened, let them be admitted into society."

SOUTH CAROLINA IN THE LEAD.

It may be gratifying to many in South Carolina to know that this grand old Conference was about the first organized body in America to take official action concerning the organization of Sunday-schools. In recording in his journal an account of his official visit to Charleston, S. C., in February, 1790, when he held the fourth session of the South Carolina Annual Conference, Bishop Asbury says: "Our Conference resolved on establishing Sunday-schools for poor children, white and black."

This was in advance of any General Conference action. It is a fact worthy of note that many of the prudential enterprises of the Methodist Church have had their beginning in Annual Conference resolutions.

Afterward, when the movement took deep root and the preachers and the people saw the wisdom and benefit of Sabbath-school instruction, the idea took shape in definite General Conference action, and it became a part of the organic law of the Church.

SOUTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS, 1790.

The following is the resolution referred to in Bishop Asbury's journal:

At the fourth session of the South Carolina Annual Conference, held in Charleston, S. C., February 15, 1790, the following action was taken:

"Question. What can be done to instruct poor children, white and black, to read?

"Let us labor as the heart and soul of one man to establish Sunday-schools in or near the place of public worship. Let persons be appointed by the Bishops, elders, deacons, or preachers, to teach, *gratis*, all that will attend, and have a capacity to learn, from 6 o'clock in the morning until 10, and from 2 o'clock in the afternoon till 6, when it does not interfere with public worship."

At the time this resolution was passed there were only three thousand Methodists in the territory embraced in the South Carolina Conference.

This official action of the Annual Conference did not have the full force of law. It was advisory, not mandatory. And yet it had the desired effect, though it may have been put into operation by slow degrees. Not until 1828 did the General Conference make it obligatory on the part of the preachers to organize Sunday-schools, and not until 1832 were they required to report Sunday-school statistics to the Annual Conference.

As to the exact date when Sunday-schools first began to organize in South Carolina, the records give but little information. It is probable that before the close of the eighteenth century a few schools were in operation in lower Carolina. For the first quarter of the nineteenth century there is but little data. In 1824 a Sunday-school was organized at Ebenezer, in the lower part of old Pendleton District, by the Rev. John Mote, the circuit preacher. The writer's father, Mr. J. M. Browne, was then a lad of 12 years of age. He recalled vividly the occasion of the opening of the school, and the circuit preacher, Mr. Mote, who took the initiative. Methodism was first planted in the coast region of Carolina and gradually extended its way into the hill country. As this school was organized in the Piedmont region in 1824, it is more than probable that a number of schools were in operation in the lower part of the State from fifteen to twenty-five years prior to that date.

The Rev. F. Asbury Mood, D. D., in his "History of Methodism in Charleston," has this to say about the Conference resolution of 1790, and the progress of the movement: "At this Conference (1790) an important movement was projected, which was the establishment of Sabbath-schools for poor children, white and black. The establishment of *any sort* of Sabbath-schools in South Carolina *has been set down to a much later date*—1819 or 1820—but the record of this movement

shows differently. It is not probable, however, that the resolutions which passed the Conference contemplated the establishment of Sabbath-schools on the present plan."

SUNDAY-SCHOOL LEGISLATION.

In addition to the sections inserted in the Discipline in 1784, and enlarged in 1787 and 1789, as previously mentioned, we note the fact that at the General Conference of 1796 an annotated edition of the Discipline was ordered published. The Bishops in their notes in this edition earnestly urged the "People in the cities, towns and villages, to establish Sabbath-schools, wherever practicable, for the benefit of the poor." This is the first mention of the term Sabbath-school that I have found in a Methodist Discipline.

The next mention of Sunday-schools I find in the proceedings of the General Conference of May 27, 1824, when the following action was taken:

Resolved, by the Annual Conferences in General Conference assembled, 1. That it shall be the duty of each traveling preacher in our connection to encourage the establishment and progress of Sunday-schools." In section 2 provision was made for the publication of a larger catechism, and in Section 3 the book agents were instructed to "keep on hand a good assortment of books suitable for the use of Sunday-schools."

In 1828 an item was added to the section on "Instruction of children," in the book of Discipline, making it the "duty of every preacher of a circuit or station to form Sunday-schools." Thus for the first time it was made obligatory on all preachers to do this work, which hitherto had been merely advisory.

These various items from the proceedings of the General Conference have been quoted in order that we may thoroughly understand the reasons for the apparently slow progress made by the fathers of early Methodism in a matter that we deem of such vital importance in our day.

In 1840 the General Conference remodeled the whole section, and inserted the following in the Discipline:

Question. What shall we do for the rising generation?

Answer. Let Sunday-schools be formed in all our congregations where ten children can be collected for that purpose. And it shall be the special duty of the preachers having charge of circuits and stations, with the aid of other preachers, to see that this is done; to engage the co-operation of as many of our members as they can; to visit the schools as often as practicable; to preach on the subject of Sunday-schools in each congregation at least once in six months; to lay before the Quarterly Conference at each quarterly meeting, to be entered on its journal, a written statement of the number and state of Sunday-schools within their respective circuits and stations, and to make a report of the same to their respective Annual Conferences. Each

Quarterly Conference shall be deemed a board of managers, having supervision of all the Sunday-school societies within its limits, and shall be auxiliary to the Sunday-school Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and each Annual Conference shall report to said Union the number of auxiliaries within its bounds, together with other facts presented in the annual reports of the preachers as above directed.

The second section provides for a Sunday-school agent, when so desired by an Annual Conference.

The third section insists that catechisms shall be used in Sunday-schools and families.

In the fourth the preachers are admonished to form Bible classes.

The fifth is as follows: It shall be the duty of every preacher of a circuit or station to obtain the names of the children belonging to his congregations, and to leave a list of such names for his successor; and in his pastoral visits he shall pay special attention to the children, speak to them personally and kindly, on experimental and practical Godliness, according to their capacity; pray for them, and diligently instruct and exhort all parents to dedicate their children to the Lord in baptism as early as convenient; and let all baptized children be faithfully instructed in the nature, design, privileges and obligations of their baptism. Those of them who are well disposed may be admitted to our class meetings and love feasts, and such as are truly serious and manifest a desire to flee the wrath to come, shall be advised to join society as probationers.

The General Conference of 1840, framing the foregoing statute, seems to have fixed the status of the Sunday-school for well-nigh a half century. Indeed, most of this chapter remains in the Discipline to this day.

LEGISLATION OF METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

When the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, began its distinctive work at its first session, in 1846, no change was made in the chapter on Sunday-schools as enacted in 1840. In 1854 a "Sunday-school Society" was authorized, but in 1866 it was abolished, having been found to be an "inoperative and cumbersome piece of machinery." In 1874 a line was inserted insisting that all our Sunday-schools "be under the control of our Church."

In 1878 the College of Bishops, in their quadrennial address to the General Conference, expressed their appreciation of the great value of Methodist Sunday-schools: "It has replenished our membership with its largest and best material and has assumed proportions prophetic of yet grander results." As one of the results of the Bishops' forceful address, several important additions were made to the chapter on Sunday-schools by that General Conference. The clause requiring Sunday-schools to be formed "wherever ten *children* could be gathered" was changed to "ten *persons*." A section was also added providing for the election by the General Conference of a Sunday-school committee of five and of a Sunday-school editor, who should be chairman of said committee. This committee has since been changed to Sunday-

school board. Provision was also made for organizing all Sunday-schools into missionary societies. The same General Conference also fixed the status of the Sunday-school superintendents by making it the duty of Quarterly Conference to elect them, on nomination of pastors. This act also made the superintendent a member of the Quarterly Conference, provided he was a Methodist. The College of Bishops afterward (1898) decided that a woman might be elected superintendent—"but is not thereby a member of the Quarterly Conference"—and their decision has the force of law.

Four years after this (1882) our lawmakers continued to carry on the good work by making some important additions. They provided for the quadrennial appointment of Annual Conference Sunday-school boards; also for district and annual Sunday-school conferences. The term "Sunday-school Conference" was afterward (1902) changed so as to read, "Sunday-school Conference or Institute."

"Children's Day" was authorized in 1890, and the contributions of same were directed.

In 1902 provision was made for organizing and conducting "Bible Teachers' Study Circles" and also for the employment of a superintendent of training work. Nothing of greater importance has been written into the chapter on Sunday-schools for a half century. As in so many other lines of improvement, this work had already been projected by the Sunday-school board, before being put into the form of law by the General Conference.

In 1906 another important feature was added—the establishment in Vanderbilt University of a "Chair of religious pedagogy and Sunday-schools"—the Sunday-schools of the Church to raise fifty thousand dollars for its endowment. To this date about one-half of this amount has been paid in, and the balance will surely be gladly contributed in the near future.

Our last General Conference (1910) made provision for the organization of "Wesley Adult Bible Classes—for the development of Christian character by means of systematic religious instruction, Christian fellowship, and mutual helpfulness and training in Christian service." The Sunday-school board was empowered to employ a superintendent for this department. Authority was also given to Annual Conference Sunday-school boards to employ field secretaries, and, with the consent of the Annual Conference, to provide by assessment for support of the same.

By a careful study of the foregoing it will be found that all items of Sunday-school legislation worthy of note have been quoted—from the sitting of the "Christmas Conference" in Baltimore in 1784 to the last General Conference in Asheville, N. C., in May, 1910, covering a period of 126 years.

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

When Robert Raikes and John Wesley and John Fletcher projected their work in England it was "denominated in the bond" that the pupils

should be taught to read, and they were also instructed in the catechism. The work was especially for the poor.

When the South Carolina Conference resolved (1790) to establish Sunday-schools within its territory the movement was also for the benefit of "poor children, white and black," and the simpler forms of catechetical instruction in the Holy Scriptures accompanied the spelling book and the readers—similar methods to those being used at the same period by Mr. Wesley in England. South Carolina was sparsely settled at this period. The smoke of the battles of the Revolutionary war had cleared away but a few brief years prior to that time, and so the people were in straitened circumstances. Many of the "people called Methodists" were very poor. How natural that Methodism should make the best of the situation. Its flexibility and its power of adaptation have made it ever potential for the benefit of the people. It is not surprising, therefore, that Sunday-school teaching looked to the making of an intelligent citizenship, as well as trustful Christians and loyal Methodists. The opportunities for obtaining even a primary education were very limited in the common schools of the State. Especially was this true in the rural districts. Many felt the need of better educational facilities, and especially was the need felt among the poor people. The South Carolina Conference heard the cry of the poor, and proceeded to supply that need. The Sunday-school teachers were to "teach *gratis*, all that will attend, and have a capacity to learn," and for eight hours every Sabbath day this benevolent work was to be carried on, "when it did not interfere with public worship."

I cannot agree with certain historians who claim that the original practice of teaching the ordinary branches of an English education in Sunday-schools quickly passed away. Some assert that as soon as the paid teachers of England were succeeded by voluntary and consecrated teachers in America, that then this practice was discontinued. The facts of history lead to a different conclusion. The practice was continued far into the nineteenth century. It is a fact of which no one should be ashamed now. Many good men obtained much of their primary education in Sunday-school and some of these are yet in our midst, and express their gratitude for the work done for them by the Church. Large numbers of persons now living can recall the use of the old "blue back (Webster's) spelling book" in Sunday-school. This is ancient history, is it? Let me give you an incident:

In a District Conference in our Piedmont section, held in 1880, a rather spare-made young strip of a preacher, laboring to sprout a light mustache, when his report on schools was called for, said: "Mister President, I have been making war on the blue-back spelling book in the Sunday-schools in my circuit." Whereupon the saints then and there assembled proceeded to make war on him. That young preacher survived, however, and his manly claim for progress in the class of work done in Sunday-schools has been maintained. He now sits in the assistant editor's chair at Nashville, and annually presides over the Sunday-school board of the South Carolina Conference.

SUNDAY-SCHOOLS FOR NEGROES.

I have not space to give an account of Sunday-school work among the negroes, wrought by our fathers in the good old days "befo' de war." Dr. Leroy F. Beaty, in his admirable address in 1901, gave this Historical Society a full account of this gracious movement, which covered this whole Southland, and especially every nook and corner of South Carolina. Suffice it to say that in the ages to come the sons of Ham will have ever increasing cause for rejoicing because of the seed corn dropped by the untiring itinerant Methodist preachers. These faithful missionaries to the blacks, of whom Bishop William Capers was the leader, preached the glorious gospel of the Son of God to these negroes, catechised and instructed their children, and led many thousand souls to Christ.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL LITERATURE.

The greatest achievement of the Church in modern times has been the marvelous development of its literature. The printing press of the Church runs day and night, turning out the greatest amount of the cleanest, purest and strongest reading matter in all written languages, for all classes of the children of men in every corner of the earth. While the heralds of the Cross and teachers of righteousness may, at times, from sheer force of overwork, be unable to proclaim the needful message, the printed word silently yet surely tells a hungry world of Jesus and His love.

In no department of Church literature has there been such wonderful advance as in the Sunday-school department. Indeed, it has created a literature distinctly its own. Men and women of purest lives and ripest scholarship, and with a wonderful insight into the deep things of God, have consecrated every power God has given them to this work.

In our own Church our leaders—editors, publishers and a host of contributors—have brought our book and periodical literature to a very high stage of development, and their productions have commanded the highest endorsement of the literary world.

A half century and more ago the literary equipment of Sunday-schools was very meagre. In many schools the lack of suitable literature was indeed pitiable. But the faithful men and women of that period were true to their trusts. They studied the Word of God and hid that Word away in their hearts. They were "known and read" of their children, and God gave them rich fruitage.

The improvement in our Sunday-schools within the last three decades has been gratifying indeed. Better houses of worship and modern Sunday-school buildings, with other modern facilities for teaching, have added greatly to the quality of the work done. But in no respect has the improvement been so marked as in the character of the literature furnished by the Church. We can give only a mere outline of the more progressive steps of the upbuilding process in making this literature.

In addition to the standard catechisms published in recent years by order of the General Conference, quite a number of similar publications of great merit have had wide sale.

"Of the making of books there is no end," and consequently our young people have been the recipients of the freshest and most wholesome books from the pens of the best writers. A number of Sunday-school hymnals have been issued, and these have become familiar to the whole Church.

But the great bulk of Sunday-school supplies now comes in the form of periodical literature—weekly, monthly and quarterly. The increase in the circulation of these periodicals has been marvelous, especially within the last decade. They are twelve in number, viz: The Magazine, Adult Student, Senior Quarterly, Home Department Quarterly, Intermediate Quarterly, Junior Lessons, Our Little People, Primary Teacher, Olivet Picture Cards, The Visitor, Boys and Girls, and Picture Rolls. The combined circulation of these periodicals is 1,747,700, an increase in the past ten years of 596,187.

The most forceful way in which I can give a proper estimate of the literature for the past forty or fifty years is to mention some of the men who made it.

Dr. Thomas O. Summers was the first Sunday-school editor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He began his work in Charleston, S. C., in 1851, on the Sunday-school Advocate, afterward changed to the Visitor. In 1854 the Methodist Publishing House was established in Nashville, Tenn., whither the erudite Englishman removed with the said Visitor, the only periodical of that day for the Sunday-schools. Dr. Summers had reprinted a number of English books for the young people. While a few of them were of real value, the major portion of them were not suited to the young life of the South. His catechisms were extensively used, and also his "Southern Methodist Primers." The catechism written by Bishop William Capers primarily for colored children, but used even to this day in white schools, had large circulation.

Dr. Charles Taylor, our first missionary to China, on his return from that field, served a short while in the Sunday-school department in the late fifties.

Dr. Summers continued his faithful work till 1870, when Dr. Atticus G. Haygood (afterward Bishop) was elected by the General Conference. He began the publication of Sunday-school Lesson Leaves for adults, and Our Little People for the young folk, and the Magazine for teachers.

Dr. Haygood resigned in 1875, and was succeeded by the Rev. Dr. W. G. E. Cunningham. About this time the International Lesson system was adopted, and Dr. Cunningham at once conformed our literature to it—the Quarterlies one by one taking the place of the Lesson Leaves. Sunday-school libraries were arranged for on an enlarged and improved scale over all that the Church had hitherto used. Mr. J. L. Kirby (now assistant to the book editor) was associated with Dr. Cunningham

during his whole term of service, and to him was due in large measure the formulation of the work and the improvement in our literature at that period. It was during Dr. Cunningham's term of office (in 1883) that the Rev. James A. Lyons, of the Holston Conference, was called into the work of classifying and arranging the libraries for the use of Sunday-schools. He did a splendid work for the Church during the three years he remained in the department of library work, and by publishing his valuable work on Sunday-schools.

Dr. Cunningham gradually developed the varied lines of our Sunday-school department, and by his untiring energy brought the whole system to a high state of efficiency.

The Rev. W. D. Kirkland, D. D., of the South Carolina Conference, was elected Sunday-school editor by the General Conference in 1894. He was a great organizer and an editor of the highest type. In the very beginning of his term of office he began to plan for larger things. Our periodicals took on larger shape and improved appearance. Several new features were introduced to meet the growing demands of the work. The Magazine was enlarged from 50 to 64 pages: the Senior and Intermediate Quarterlies and the Illustrated Lesson Paper were all improved in appearance, as was also the Visitor, and at the same time the reading matter was kept up to the highest mark. How splendidly Dr. Kirkland did his work the whole Church attests. He made stronger the periodical literature by calling to his assistance the best writers of the Church.

Dr. Kirkland died ere it was yet noon, and in 1896 was succeeded by Dr. James Atkins. Dr. Atkins enlarged the Visitor from 4 to 8 pages, and added the Home Department and the Teachers' Training Department, and in various ways added to the interest and efficiency of the whole Sunday-school department. By his painstaking care, and by his untiring devotion to the highest interests of the multiplied thousands of children of our Southland, he placed the Sunday-school interests of our Church in the very forefront.

When in 1906 Dr. Atkins was elected Bishop he was succeeded by the Rev. Dr. E. B. Chappell, who at this time is rendering the Church most valuable service as Sunday-school editor. Since Dr. Chappell entered upon his career as editor a number of improvements have been made. A superintendent of supplies, Mr. E. E. French, and a superintendent of Wesley Adult Bible Class department, the Rev. C. D. Bulla, have been added to the efficient working force of the department. The Adult Student, a live monthly publication for Wesley Bible classes, and Boys and Girls, a four-page weekly for the little folk, have been added to our periodical literature. Besides, the necessary literature for the newly inaugurated "Graded Lesson System" has been provided for the use of the wide-awake and more progressive schools of the South.

The Rev. Leroy F. Beaty, D. D., of the South Carolina Conference, was called to Nashville as assistant editor January, 1895, a few months after Dr. Kirkland began his work as editor. Dr. Beaty very quickly got the hang of the house, and caught the spirit of the department, and

at once began making large contribution in every line of service. How well he has done his work in the hundred and one details of all our periodical literature his brethren of this Conference attest and appreciate. The Visitor is his especial pet, and no church prints a superior paper of its class. Dr. Beaty has also served for several quadrenniums as the efficient president of the Sunday-school board of the South Carolina Conference.

No man has added more to the real upbuilding force in the great Sunday-school movement in the past twenty years than has the Rev. Dr. H. M. Hamill. His work is far-reaching, and he has added strength to the working force of the department. In the home land, and in the land beyond the seas, his voice has gone forth, even into the nations that have been sitting in pagan darkness.

SOUTH CAROLINA'S CONTRIBUTIONS.

In addition to Dr. Summers, Taylor, Kirkland and Beaty, already mentioned, it is worthy of note that our own Conference has contributed very largely in advancing the interests of the Sunday-school department by furnishing men who have been recognized as writers of great strength.

Bishop William Capers was the author of the catechism that bears his name, as has already been mentioned. It has been "learned by heart" by more children, "white and black," than anything of its kind in Southern Methodism.

Dr. James H. Carlisle, the greatest layman our Church has produced, made contribution of the very highest order to our Church and Sunday-school periodical literature. His expository writings were quoted and circulated far and wide. Up to a short while before he died he made regular contribution to the Magazine and Quarterlies, and his articles were read and studied and appreciated by the largest numbers.

The Rev. Dr. Samuel A. Weber for a number of years wrote the expository notes for the monthly and quarterly publications. How well the learned Doctor did his work, as he has done all tasks allotted him, his brethren of this Conference know full well.

Mr. Charles A. David, the talented artist, for a number of years furnished the "Lessons Illustrated" for our periodicals at Nashville, and his object lessons were of real value, and were much appreciated.

Bishop A. Coke Smith made brighter the pages of our Sunday-school periodical literature by his regular contributions up to the time of his last illness. He wrote very much like he used to preach in his native State—always helpful, never on a low plane. His literary work added greatly to the permanent upbuilding of our literature.

For a number of years the Rev. Dr. John O. Willson furnished a catechetical addenda to each lesson in the Magazine and Quarterlies. These were of such value that the department has put them into permanent form, and they are now issued as senior and junior catechisms. Like all Dr. Willson's writings, they bear the imprint of a

Christly man, and a strong versatile writer. Dr. Willson has also rendered the Church most valuable service as a member of the general Sunday-school board for several terms.

Mrs. William T. Capers conducted the "Letter Box" department of the Visitor for several years. She loved little children, and the hundreds of thousands who read her cheery writings for the wee-wee folk will cherish her memory.

Dr. H. N. Snyder, president of Wofford College, has for some time been a regular contributor to the monthly and quarterly publications at Nashville. His scholarly work is not only of the first order, but breathes forth the real life of the Christ—even the life that is more abundant.

There may have been other writers from South Carolina whose names I cannot now recall. We are grateful to God who inspired these servants of the Church. We rejoice that this old Conference, wherein Sunday-schools were first officially inaugurated, has furnished such a splendid line of great thinkers and versatile writers, whose work counted for so much in the permanent advancement of the "kingdom of the cradle."

MODEL SUNDAY-SCHOOL BUILDING.

To better equip our Sunday-school forces for more efficient work a great forward step has been taken within the past year. The general Sunday-school board has determined to erect a great model Sunday-school building, and to have the schools of the South contribute funds for the erection of the same. Concerning this advanced twentieth century enterprise Mr. J. R. Pepper has this to say: "Nothing perhaps in all our Sunday-school enterprises during the past decade will have a more far-reaching influence for good than the determination to erect a model Sunday-school building at Lake Junaluska, one whose plans will be adaptable to the needs of the large city or the small country church. It is proposed to make this building the great rallying place of the hosts of our Sunday-schools in all our Southern country. Conventions, conferences, institutes and model Sunday-school sessions will be carried on there every summer, giving larger inspiration and suggestion to thousands of superintendents and other Sunday-school workers, who will take home with them the new ideas and plans to be used in their own schools."

GROWTH OF THE MOVEMENT.

Statistics may appear to be uninteresting, but they are of great value in determining results. Is the movement stronger today than yesterday? We can best judge when we know the number in school yesterday as compared with the enrollment of today.

We shall give the grand total for North America, and the figures of the Southern Methodist schools, and also the evidences of progress in South Carolina Methodism.

NUMBERS IN NORTH AMERICA.

The total enrollment in all Sunday-schools in North America in June, 1911, was 16,617,330, a net gain in three years of 1,507,178—this being a daily increase of 1,376. There were 1,193,422 conversions during the same period, which means that over 1,000 souls were brought to Christ each day. All this is the direct fruitage of the Sunday-school.

SOUTHERN METHODIST SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

In Southern Methodism the enlargement of our borders has been very gratifying.

In April, 1911, the Sunday-school enrollment was 1,464,869; in April, 1901, the Sunday-school enrollment was 955,149; net gain in ten years of 509,720.

For the past ten years there has been an annual increase of nearly 51,000, and during the same period nearly 1,000 were added to the rolls of Southern Methodist schools for every week.

PROGRESS IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

Although Sunday-schools were enterprised by the South Carolina Conference as early as 1790, yet it was not until 1835 that the statistics were published. Even after that date the returns were irregular and unsatisfactory up to 1840. Beginning, therefore, with the latter date, the following summary is given by decades:

Decade ending 1850 the enrollment was 10,338, increase 75 per cent.

Decade ending 1860 the enrollment was 20,446, increase 97 per cent.

*Decade ending 1870 the enrollment was 18,339, decrease 11 per cent.

Decade ending 1880 the enrollment was 27,124, increase 47 per cent.

Decade ending 1890 the enrollment was 43,403, increase 60 per cent.

Decade ending 1900 the enrollment was 46,849, increase 7 per cent.

Decade ending 1910 the enrollment was 60,226, increase 28 per cent.

During these seventy years there was an average net gain, each decade, of 43 per cent. in the Sunday-school enrollment. During the same period there was an average net gain, each decade, in church membership of 19 per cent.

In 1900 the Sunday-school enrollment was a fraction over 62 per cent. of the church membership.

In 1910 the Sunday-school enrollment was a fraction over 66 per cent. of the church membership—a net gain of 4 per cent. in ten years.

The Sunday-school Board of the South Carolina Conference has a live field agent at work—Mr. J. M. Way—and his excellent work in holding institutes and infusing the finest working spirit into the hearts of the Sunday-school forces will not only add greatly to the efficiency

*This decrease was result of transfer, in 1869, of a large territory to the North Carolina Conference, with the loss of over 10,000 church members, and with a proportionate loss to the Sunday-schools.

of the actual school room work, but will be a mighty factor in increasing the enrollment.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL FINANCES.

Sunday-schools were originally organized and conducted for the benefit of the poor. Today our young people are, in turn, being trained in the vital matter of systematic benevolence. Methodism has discovered that unless her people are faithfully indoctrinated in the "grace of liberality" in their youth, they are not likely to "abound" in this grace in maturer years. Consequently our Sunday-school forces are becoming more actively and intelligently identified with the benevolent enterprises of the Church than formerly.

In South Carolina our schools have been contributing to home and foreign missions and other benevolent objects. The cry of the orphan has especially appealed to the children of our Conference, and for over ten years they have been maintaining scores of homeless little ones at the Epworth Orphanage.

Considerably over three-quarters of a million dollars was raised by the Sunday-schools of Southern Methodism during the past fiscal year, and the money was appropriated for self-support, for home and foreign missions and various other objects. In the same year, for similar purposes, the Sunday-schools of our own Conference raised over \$33,000.

Such is the rapid survey of the Christly work that Methodism has done for her children in her providential sphere for a century and more agone. Such a survey can at best be only suggestive. We note our progress and our present equipment. We rejoice that Christ is the educational force of the present and the future, as He has been in the past. To Him our fathers looked for wisdom and guidance, and from Him must come all needful power in the years to follow.