

THE RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER



And Bible Society, Missionary, and Sabbath School Advocate.

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Religious Intelligence.

JUBILEE OF THE LONDON SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.

On Wednesday morning last there was a public breakfast at London Tavern, Bishopsgate-street, which was very numerously attended. Precisely at seven o'clock, the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, M. P., entered the crowded room, and took the chair, amidst loud cheers. He was supported on the right and left by Thomas Thompson, Esq., and James Nisbet, Esq., the only two gentlemen now living, besides the founder, W. B. Gurney, Esq., who were present at the formation of the society, fifty years ago. After prayer by the Rev. Dr. Cox, the Lord Mayor, who was for many years engaged in the work of Sabbath-school teaching, addressed the meeting in an appropriate speech, in the course of which he adverted to the magnitude of the Sunday-school movement—there being more than two millions of scholars, taught by not less than 250,000 voluntary teachers. Mr. Ball, M. P. in the course of an impressive address, said:—

"I shall never have a recollection half so pleasurable as this, that when a youth I was a Sabbath-school teacher. And now that I have passed among the commoners and the peers of England, name alone I am ambitious to retain—the name of a Christian man (loud cheers). My gratitude, sir, will be never told; it can be never told,—never at least, till we meet where the service will be all song, and where the congregation will be all saints. It will never be told till there be a Sunday Union in an eternal Sabbath, till there be a Sunday Union in which men of all classes and every colour, not only sprung from one blood, as God made them, but endeared to each other in that blessed union, by the blood of Christ, which must save us all."

He enlarged upon the importance of the connexion between religion and education, giving the following illustration on the subject:

"In Great Smith street, Westminster, there is, as you may be aware, an Association for the Reclamation of Felons, under the care of a number of Christian philanthropists, and more especially, that of the Rev. Samuel Martin, the minister of Westminster Chapel—one of the best and holiest men I know. The object of that association is to take felons as they come from the prison doors, with a view to reclaim them from their vicious courses. They must not starve; nobody will employ them; these good men, therefore, take them from the prison doors, and lead them to this asylum. They say to these poor outcasts, if you desire to be reformed, and occupy respectable positions in society, come here, submit to our discipline, and receive our instructions. Love softens down their hearts; scarcely one of those lads so invited turn away. This week no less than seventeen were sent abroad, not as convicts—as they would in all probability have been but for this refuge—but with the elements of Christianity playing round their hearts, and with the blessed truths of the word of God stamped upon their memories; with the prayers of their benefactors following

them; and, in some cases at least, with the hopes of a blessed immortality gladdening them on their voyage. How is this blessed change effected?—Not by threats, not by fear of punishment, but by love, and the teaching them the fear of the Lord. But the purpose for which I referred to this institution was to tell you that out of one hundred felons and thieves who passed through that establishment, 83 could read, and had been otherwise instructed. I gather from that fact, that education, which is not religious, is of little or no value to the people in relation to their moral character; and that, therefore, we are bound to maintain that the children of our land shall be taught in God's most Holy Word.

The Rev. Charles Stovel told the following anecdote of William Knibb:

"In a village in Northamptonshire there was once a thin stripling of a boy, who sat upon the Sunday-school class seat, and learned there the first lessons of scripture truth. That little boy grew, and left his mother, and became employed at Bristol, and there advanced still further, until at length he volunteered to take the teaching of a school in Jamaica, which his own brother had undertaken, and where his brother had died. That youth was William Knibb, (cheers.) He won't hear; never mind, (laughter.) Now, sir, a thought comes to my mind—the circumstance and the illustration is this. I have in my study three rusty slave-irons, manacles made to be worn as punishment. When Knibb was over here appealing to the British public, he dashed those slave-irons before that chair, and thrilled the nation. That Sunday-school boy emancipated the slaves in Jamaica. He appealed to me; his manly form rises before me now, when, nineteen, if not twenty years ago, he stepped on shore here, after the great outbreaks in Jamaica. He stood in my study, and I felt afraid to join with him. He said, 'You must help me.' But I said, 'Stop! you must have broken the laws, or the magistrates would not have gone so far; and I had to feel the ground with great care. I pursued my enquiries—and, at last, Knibb rose before me like a hero. He said, 'Stovel, I would do any thing for your help that conscience would allow; but if I cannot have it, then well; but know this—I can assure you I came not to risk my union with that society—the Baptist Missionary Society, of which he was then in danger—but I came to risk my life; I will die, but they shall be free.' Now if, in fifty years, you should have had only one such fruit of Sabbath-schools, if there had been only one such spirit walking upon this earth, or stamping the age, or leaving the impulse of his passion and judgment behind him, it would be much; but it is only one—this is only a specimen of a class, and many of the individuals that have risen from its ranks and walked forth where Providence led them."

The Rev. Mr. Gill, of Raratonga, who has only returned from the South Seas three weeks, then addressed the meeting in an interesting speech, in the course of which he mentioned the benefit he had derived from Sabbath-schools, in which he had been a teacher before leaving this country; and stated that it was sixteen years ago since he and some nine or ten other missionaries were set apart to their work on that platform in presence of 'that prince of enterprising missionaries, the Rev. John Williams, the martyr of Erromanga.' He rejoiced in the unexpected honour of being present on that platform on that, the Jubilee year of the Sunday-School Union. He wished to acknowledge the obligations they in the South Seas were under, for their missionary ship, 'the "John Williams"'—for which they were mainly indebted to the Sunday-school teachers of the United Kingdom.

"That vessel is now ploughing the deep, from island to island, carrying the blessings of salvation, conveying the missionaries and the native teachers who have been educated first in our infant schools, then in our Sabbath schools, then in our native college at Raratonga, from place to place, where these simple minded natives have been made the instruments of pulling down the strongholds of sin, and Satan, and idolatry, till the last victory they have achieved has been the introduction of the gospel into the island of Erromanga. Let me tell you that that vessel annually touches at no less than thirty-four islands, from the extreme east of the Pacific to the far west, and it makes no less than sixty four visits a year to these islands, carrying abroad the blessing of salvation, and there representing the children and the teachers connected with the Sunday-schools of this great country. It will encourage you, I am sure, to go away from this meeting knowing that the children are rising up from our heathen schools there to assist you in the work. I had the honour to go as one of a deputation to the New Zealand islands in your missionary ship, when the children connected with the schools in the island of Samoa subscribed their native mats and cloth, and other property, to pay the workmen to make canoes; and no less than twenty of those canoes were put on board the "John Williams," and taken by us to the West Samoas, and given to the chiefs of those islands. They do appreciate your kindness; and I am sure that, had all the missionaries in the South Sea Islands known that this was to be the Jubilee year of the Sunday-school Union, they would have sent either oil or arrowroot, or something else, and claimed a niche in the edifice which you are about to erect as a monument in future generations of the success of this institution; and if I be spared, as I hope I may be, in two or three years to go back, I do pledge myself to you, Sir, and to this assembly, that I will get some stone in that building to be erected which shall be dedicated to the South Sea missionaries [cheers]."

Mr. Gill stated that one of his objects in coming to England was to obtain some elementary books and commentaries to print in the native language of the South Seas, but especially was it urgent to send forth more men to occupy the hundreds of the western Polynesian Islands that still remained unblest. In the group of Islands from which he came, which thirty years ago was sunk in the lowest depths of degradation and cannibalism, there was no more heathenism than in this country. The children in the Sunday-schools did not even know what it was. They wanted help for a little time longer. Their native teachers had been in some of the islands five, or six, or seven years, and now the teachers who were engaged there, and a whole host of half-civilized natives, called on England to send out men to their assistance. He had obtained some £600 from Sydney for that object, but was grieved when he was told at the Mission-house the other day—"Well, your claim shall be presented to the Board; I am sure they will be glad to do it when the 'John Williams' comes here; but I fear we shall not get the men; I only know one man we can send this year."

Christian friends, teachers of our Sabbath-schools, you who are experienced, and you who have made some advances in educational experience; what shall we do with these opening fields of labour? They are ours—our dead are buried there; Williams died there, and there our native teachers, too, have been buried; we have an inheritance in those islands, and we call upon the churches, and we call upon you, to follow the example of others who have gone out before you.—*London Nonconformist.*