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WORLD'S FIFTH SUNDAY SCHOOL CONVENTION.

Held in the Methodist Building, Rome, Italy, May 18-20, 1907.

REPORTED BY GEORGE T. B. DAVIS, FOR (N. Y.) CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

The successive World's Sunday School Conventions have been held as follows: London, 1889; Saint Louis, 1893; London, 1898; Jerusalem, 1904; Rome, 1907. The fifth was at all points the greatest. For five days the 1,500 delegates representing 26,000,000 Sunday-school scholars in thirty-seven lands, met to hear reports and discuss plans. The key-note of the Convention was "The Sunday School as a Missionary Force."

Near the close of the Convention there occurred the most epoch-making event since the inauguration of the International System of Sunday School Lessons a generation ago. There was formed the World's Sunday School Association to rapidly develop and promote Sunday-school work throughout the entire world. Bishop Hartzell was chairman of the committee which brought this action before the Convention and, in moving its adoption, he declared it was the most important movement he had ever been privileged to endorse. Without doubt it will mean an unparalleled advance of Sunday-schools during the next few years. The lot fell to England to have the first president of the World Association, the Rev. F. B. Meyer, of London; but to America was given the chairman of the Executive Committee, Dr. George W. Bailey, of Philadelphia.

The Convention may almost be said to have begun when two specially chartered ships sailed from New York and Boston on April 27th, carrying nearly 500 American delegates to Rome. Stops were made at the Azores, Gibraltar and Algiers where missionary Conferences were held and large sums of money raised for missionary work. In all, nearly \$20,000 was raised for missionary and Sunday-school work as the two ships journeyed toward Rome.

The Convention in Rome was held in the beautiful hall of the Methodist Episcopal Church building, a big structure in the heart of the city, resembling an Italian palace and containing not only the church with two auditoriums, but a college as well. The hall seated about 1,200 people and was fittingly decorated with flags of all nations. President E. K. Warren, of Michigan, presided.

A strange and impressive scene was presented at the opening meeting. The representatives of many lands made a polyglot company as on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, and as then all were one accord in one place praying and praising God in divers tongues. There were seen in the audience dark-skinned men of Egypt, with their red fezes; native delegates from Palestine; a dark-faced college president from India; swarthy men and women from Spain, Bulgaria, and other countries of Southern Europe; fair-haired delegates from Sweden; considerable delegations from France and Germany; over 300 delegates from Great Britain; about 500 from the United States and Canada, and as many as could crowd in the building from Italy.

The opening hymn of the Convention, under the direction of Carey Bonner, secretary of the London Sunday School Union, who had charge of the music throughout the gathering, was that grand old hymn of Isaac Watts: "O God our help in ages past."

Following a greeting to the Convention by the Rev. Enrico Piggott, president of the Italian National Committee, came a thrilling scene. An Italian young lady advanced toward the platform. It was announced that she was Italia Garibaldi, the grand-daughter of the liberator of Italy, and as a teacher in the Methodist Sunday-school, would welcome the Convention to Rome. As she stepped upon the platform, the Convention went

wild. Amid vociferous applause and the waving of handkerchiefs, the audience rose en masse and cheered continuously. Tears coursed down almost every cheek. The speaker was so overcome by emotion that she could scarcely utter her greeting. At last, in tremulous tones, she gave a brief and fitting welcome. Her opening sentence revealed her full-fledged loyalty as she said:

"Dear Friends: It is with the greatest pleasure that I fulfill a duty which has been given to me to welcome to this great city of Rome the members of the World's Fifth Sunday School Convention, and this pleasure I feel, not only as an Italian, but as a member of the Rome Sunday-school in which I have always worked since I have been a little girl, and in which I have always been greatly interested."

Calls were now made for General Ricciotti Garibaldi, the young lady's father, and amid continued enthusiasm he said, in part:

"In seeing this wonderful gathering from all parts of the earth, it is to me, the old soldier for the freedom of my country, a source of profound satisfaction, because we have changed the bullet into the Bible. We men have formed the unity of our country politically and geographically; it is to you to form the unity of Italy morally."

As he concluded three cheers were given for the Garibaldi.

At the opening session there was also present the American ambassador to Italy, the Hon. Lloyd Griscom, of Philadelphia. He, too, heartily welcomed the Congress to the Eternal City. A message of greeting was sent to the King of Italy, and a cordial and stirring letter to the Convention from President Roosevelt was read.

The second day of the Convention was memorable. It was not forgotten that it was the anniversary of the day of Pentecost. The delegates began it by spending a half hour in prayer in their rooms. During the morning they attended the various Protestant churches in Rome where communion services followed by preaching; and in the afternoon the Convention sermon was preached at the Methodist church by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, of London. It was a masterly exposition of the familiar passage in Mark 10: 13, 14, 15. Here is a bit of his stirring message:

"There are two soul qualifications in dealing with children: be Christ's, be the child's—absolutely His, absolutely devoted to the child. And if you will find me the Sunday-school teacher, the father (I never lecture mothers), that is wholly Christ's and wholly the child's, then I will find you a worker, an apostle, a co-worker with Christ who will lead the little ones to Him.

"May God give us, my brethren and sisters, when this Convention is over, to go back to look once again into the faces of the children and see a new light and a new glory, and hear a new appeal for Christ's sake."

The five days of the Convention were crowded with addresses by famous Christian leaders; reports of Sunday-school progress in all lands; Conferences in Italian and German and English; and committee meetings of the widest import by the prominent business men who had charge of the Convention and the world-wide Sunday-school movement. Among the speakers who stirred the Convention by their messages were the Rev. F. B. Meyer, Bishop J. C. Hartzell, Marion Lawrence, Dr. B. B. Tyler, and numerous other, including Madame Bieler, of Paris, the daughter of Professor D'Aubigne, the historian of the Reformation.

Not the least impressive feature of the Convention was the sight of a number of prominent business men of America and England throwing

all their great energy into the task of making the gathering an epoch-making affair; for example: E. K. Warren, of Three Oaks, Mich.; William N. Hartshorn, of Botson; Dr. George W. Bailey, of Philadelphia; H. J. Heinz, of Pittsburg; F. A. Wells, of Chicago, and F. L. Brown, of Brooklyn.

A large part of the Convention was taken up with reports giving a bird's-eye view of Sunday-school conditions throughout the world. For example, in Belgium there are only 2,300 scholars enrolled in the schools; in Tuis, 200; in Bulgaria, 3,000; in Spain, 6,500; in Egypt, 11,391. In many other countries the number in the Sunday-schools is large and the work is growing and developing at an astonishing rate. In Japan there are 64,000 in the schools; in France, 67,000; in India, 300,000; in Germany, 900,000; in Great Britain, 2,250,000 in Free Church schools, and 7,000,000 altogether, but not all are affiliated with the association. Last—and first!—comes America with about 14,000,000. In making his report, Chairman Hartshorn, of the International Executive Committee, said in part:

"I speak for the army of Sunday-school workers in the United States. Our God whom we worship is none other than the Lord God of Israel. Our creed the Sermon on the Mount. Our practice the twelfth of Romans. Our spirit that of the Christ. Our purpose that of service.

"The estimated population of the United States is about 85,000,000; children of school age, five to eighteen, 23,000,000; number of Sabbath schools, 150,000; number of officers and teachers, 1,500,000; number of scholars, 13,000,000; total enrollment, about 14,000,000; per cent of population enrolled in the Sunday-schools, seven-teen."

A unique gathering was held in the ruins of the famous Colosseum at 4 p. m., on the last day. There, where Christians were thrown to the lions, in the fullness of time assembled Christians from all the world to praise the God whose worship the Caesars thought they were destroying forever. The exercises at the Colosseum, included the reading of selections from God's Word by Marion Lawrence; the singing of "All hail the power of Jesus' name;" the reading of a poem by the Rev. F. B. Meyer; prayer by Dr. M. Rhodes, of Saint Louis; the singing of "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," and the apostolic benediction by Bishop Hartzell.

The closing meeting of the Convention was one long to be remembered, for personal testimonies and the closing address by Dr. B. B. Tyler from the text: "Arise, let us go hence."

The next Convention will be held in 1910, at a place to be fixed by the Executive Committee. Previous to this it is planned to have a specially chartered ship sail from New York in December, 1908, carrying nearly or quite 500 Christian leaders to make a Sunday-school cruise around the world. It is expected that the English delegates will board the ship as it passes through the Mediterranean and numerous conferences and conventions will be held in Egypt, India, China, Japan, and other countries.

IMMORTALITY.

We have once before referred to what were nearly the last words spoken to a semi-public audience by Benjamin Pierce, one of the first mathematicians of his time. Speaking of immortality in his old age, he said that, as he stood near the limit of his life, he had no doubt whatever of continuance. He said: "I have studied the stars at long range, and there are questions which I cannot answer, problems which I cannot solve; but I have no doubt that some day I shall study the stars at short range, and be able to see what now I cannot discover." In such a statement there is no proof, but such an assurance of faith comes out of sane, well-ordered mind, conversant with the thought that the divine intelligence is infinite and eternal, that it pervades all space and time, and that everything is ordered according to the laws of that intelligence.—Selected.