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A FRUITFUL LIFE

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A FRUITFUL LIFE:

A NARRATIVE

OF THE

ADVENTURES AND MISSIONARY LABORS

OF

STEPHEN PAXSON.

BY HIS DAUGHTER,

B. PAXSON DRURY.

THIS CHEAP EDITION OMITS INTRODUCTION, TABLE OF CONTENTS, AND CHAPTER CONTAINING TESTIMONY OF FRIENDS.

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CHAPTER I.

BOYHOOD AND MARRIAGE.

A LITTLE lad accompanied his mother to a store one day, and, finding a bit of bright-colored paper on the floor, he picked it up and carried it away with him. When a little distance from the store, his mother discovered his gaudy treasure, and inquired where he had gotten it. He replied that he found it on the floor. She immediately returned and made him offer it to the merchant, who said: "Let the child have it, for it is of no value whatever." "No, sir," was the response, "he had no right to take what did not belong to him, no matter how worthless, and you must allow him to return it." That lad was Stephen Paxson. Little Stephen, though taken early away from home, was old enough to remember his mother, and how tall and queenly she looked; and this single circumstance, which happened when he was just old enough to

understand, fixed itself indelibly in his mind.

Stephen Paxson, the eminent pioneer Sunday-school missionary, was the son of Joseph and Mary Lester Paxson. He was born November 3d, 1808, in New Lisbon, Ohio. Three brothers of the Paxton family —the name was spelled originally with a *t* —came to this country at an early date from England; so Joseph Paxson, who was born in Virginia, was of English origin, as was also his wife, Mary Lester, who was a native of Maryland.

They were married in Virginia, and removed thence to Ohio. They had seven children, of whom Stephen was next to the youngest. The father died while the children were young, and circumstances forced the mother to seek homes for them among strangers. But each one became the child of Him who has made a special promise to the fatherless.

Another of the earliest of his recollections was of being taken to church by his Quaker grandmother, Sarah Paxson, the first woman who ever preached in that part

of the state. He often told in after years how his heart was stirred as his grandmother, in a great Quaker bonnet, and white kerchief crossed over her plain dress, rose and began her address in deep, mellow tones, pronouncing each word so slowly and tenderly that the opening sentence—always the same, no matter what the theme of her discourse — sounded like a benediction: "Obey the Spirit within, and be at peace with God." This sentence so deeply fastened itself in his childish memory that long afterward, when the Sunday-school had shed its benign influence upon him, it became a ruling maxim for his own conduct. The devout old lady did not live to know that the youngest of her auditors in the old Quaker meeting-house was consecrated by her earnest, fervent words to a life of remarkable usefulness.

But a lonely, struggling, suffering boyhood, and an early manhood devoted to things of time and sense, were slowly to intervene before the seed sown by such gentle, loving hands could spring up into beauty and fruitfulness.

The child soon became an inmate of the home of Harman Fagan. The conditions of his indenture required that he should be sent to school for three months in the year. The lad, whose heart was heavy with the sense of loss of mother-love, always so needful to the happy growth and expansion of tender minds, consoled himself by recalling his mother's assurance that he would have some opportunity to go to school, and perhaps some day would become educated and able to care for his mother in her old age. So he took courage, and ran barefoot over the briery hills to bring home the cows, or gather rosy apples from under the orchard trees, while waiting expectantly the winter term at school.

But all his bright anticipations of school life were ended in a day. The child had an impediment in his speech, which, under the least excitement, was fatal to any effort to make himself understood. His first appearance at school—an event looked forward to through a long summer of toil and loneliness—produced such a state of nervous trepidation that, when called upon, he could

not give his name, or age, or any intelligible account of his mental acquirements. The children all laughed—the very children the social little fellow had so longed to meet—while the teacher, the man who had occupied so many of his reverential thoughts, and whom he had expected to find as sympathetic as his mother, as serene and helpful as his Quaker grandmother, had never a placid "thee" or "thou" in his speech, stamped his foot impatiently, and harshly ordered the boy to go home, and sent by his hand a note requesting the people who had him in charge to teach him to talk before they sent him to school.

This occurrence was sufficient excuse for the farmer's subsequent failure to provide for the boy's education; so he was kept steadily at work, without even a picture-book to gladden his active mind. The only pleasure he enjoyed lay in his intense love for nature. He roamed with delight through the grassy woods where birds and insects flitted, his music-loving ear charmed by every sweet country sound.

While yet a lad, however, he was at-

tacked by a painful disease known as white swelling, which made him a helpless cripple for a long time, and partially lamed him for life. Long, weary months of suffering passed slowly away. Euphemia Fagan, his mistress, was a Quaker, and felt sympathy for the orphan boy in the loneliness of his solitary garret, and one day she kindly offered to read to him. He hailed the proposal with such gratitude that her heart was touched, and she read entirely through to him the only book she had which she thought could possibly interest a boy.

The story was an account of Oelar, a Quaker preacher, who went about doing good, exhorting beggars in the streets, and caring nothing for worldly advantage, but with eyes ever turned toward the Celestial City. Much of it was written in verse—mere doggerel—but the eager mind of the boy only caught it the more readily for the rhyme. Every word was so impressed upon his retentive memory that, though he only heard it once, and it was of considerable length, he remembered it through life, and repeated many verses of it only a few

weeks before his death at the age of seventy-three.

As the boy tossed restlessly upon his bed of suffering through the painful nights and the monotonous days, the story of this man's wandering life of self-forgetfulness was his only food for thought. He resolved that if he ever became able to walk he would travel all over the world; though as he was ignorant and now lame besides, and unable to talk well, he did not hope to be helpful to others like the good man in the story.

Later, when he heard the grander story of him who wandered with weary feet over Judea's hills, a living sacrifice, his heart was touched anew and to higher issues.

The circumstance of the boy's lameness made a change in his occupation necessary, and he was apprenticed to learn the trade of a hatter. He now entered the home and service of a certain Mr. Clapsaddle. In his master's shop he became at once the butt of ridicule on account of his stammering speech. The young apprentices showed

him little mercy, and invariably called him "Stuttering Stephen." Little did he or any of them think that there was a resolute energy in that young breast which would avail to conquer nature's infirmity; that this very voice, so slow and hesitating now, would one day stir the hearts of the people as by the call of a trumpet.

Again an intense desire to learn to read, was awakened in his mind by the sight of the various signs painted in staring letters over the shop doors, and of the posters fastened on the fences. When work hours were over, as he hobbled up the street he would ask his companions the names of this letter and of that, until he could decipher every sign in the town. He occasionally found an old castaway newspaper, and it was a proud day for him when he could read its title, printed in large letters at the top. With no help but an answer once in awhile, to the question, "What do you call this letter?" he was at last able to read, though slowly and inaccurately.

Sometimes a traveling hatter with a big covered wagon halted at the shop for a

load of hats. He would often tarry for hours, singing songs and telling stories of his adventures. Never a song was sung, but the lame youth had learned the words and caught the tune by the time the singing was ended. Never a story was told but it was treasured up in the mind of "Stuttering Stephen," who, while he could not repeat the stories well, sang like a lark, to the surprise of those who heard his stammering speech. The spirit of song seemed to subdue his infirmity, and to inspire him with the power of musical utterance.

The time at last arrived when the young apprentice could make a hat as well as his master. He had already determined to travel, though he knew he should often be obliged to walk, and his weak ankle might prove a serious drawback. But he was well and strong in other respects, and thought that with the help of a stout cane, he might accomplish many miles a day.

He walked to the Ohio river and engaged to work for a passage down the river. He had seventeen cents in his

pocket, the skill of a good trade in his hands, and a cheerful, hopeful heart, with which to face the world. If at any time he felt a dread of the unknown and untried future which he had started out to meet alone and unaided, he would console himself by listening to and learning some new song. The day he first heard "Highland Mary" and "Bruce's Address," was an epoch in his life. He learned to love the songs of Burns with an absolute devotion.

Travelers were attracted by the young fellow who was so social, so fond of song, and interested in every thing he heard said, and they took special pains to answer clearly all his hesitating questions. Thus making friends at every turn, and learning something from every one he met, he wandered from state to state. He would often stop at some hatter's shop and ply his trade until he had replenished his empty purse and secured means to supply his simple wants; then he would pass on to see new places, until at the age of twenty-one he entered the state of Tennessee.

His personal appearance was prepossessing. He was tall, well-proportioned, and had remarkably fine black eyes, raven-black hair, and complexion dark as that of an Italian.

He came one day, in the course of his travels in that state, to the bank of a stream. He wished to cross to the other side, but found that the man who kept the ferry-boat was absent from his post. On the opposite side of the small river sat a comely girl in a skiff. He beckoned and called to her to row toward him. She did so, and then paused for his message. It was of course an apology for interrupting her, and a request to be carried over the stream in her boat. She hesitated, looked up into his expectant face, and consented. Gallantry compelled him to take the oars, but as he was entirely inexperienced in boating, the frail bark went round and round, and at last darted recklessly down the current. The young lady resumed the oars, and soon the boat was deftly landed.

The blue eyes and golden curls of his fair boatwoman—above all her quiet com-

posure when in danger—impressed the heart of the stranger. Both were young and romantic, and believed:

"He never loved, who loved not at first sight."

Rapid in every mental decision, the young man was equally prompt in carrying his plans into execution. He discovered, upon further acquaintance, that his new-found friend was the much-loved daughter of 'Squire Pryor, an English gentleman, and a man of importance in that community. Nothing daunted by the superiority of her social position to his own, he won her for himself in a few short months. Though the portly squire talked of disinheritance in true English style, in vain was every effort to win back her affections from the black-eyed stranger, whose stammering question with its tinge of Quaker accent: "Sa-a-rah, dost thou love me?" had its own quaint charm.

They were married October 18, 1830, and went at once to live in Virginia. Here a little daughter was born to them, who was destined in after years to lead the feet of her father into paths of blessedness and

peace. Soon the family removed to Alabama. In the course of a few years a son was added to the family circle, whose future mission it was to make many returns to the sunny land of his birth, on embassies of love tending to the religious culture of the young.

CHAPTER II.

BROUGHT INTO SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

In the year 1838, Mr. Paxson moved with his family to Winchester, Illinois. Here he continued to ply his trade with industry and success. He secured a pleasant home, and provided his growing family with the best educational advantages the place afforded, though he took no time for self-improvement.

The thought of God was not in his heart. He was fond of worldly pleasures, and especially of dancing. Despite his lameness, he became very proficient in this art, and was proud of being called the best dancer on the floor. He employed a fiddler, giving him a yearly salary to be ready at any time to supply him with music. He never entered a church, or paid the least regard to religious observances.

About four years previous to Mr. Pax-

son's removal to Illinois, an event occurred in Philadelphia, which was to affect the whole future life of this obscure man in a far-away western village.

At the sixth anniversary of the American Sunday-School Union, held in the Washington Square Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, it was resolved, "That the Union, in reliance upon divine aid, will, within two years, establish a Sunday-school in every destitute place where it is practicable, throughout the Valley of the Mississippi."

The persons who passed this resolution did not realize the magnitude of such an undertaking, and how many years it would require to accomplish the desired result. Nevertheless, that resolution was destined to work great good.* The next morning

* This "Mississippi Valley Enterprise" was one of the most important events in the history of the planting of Mission Sunday-schools in America. It created a wave of popular enthusiasm which swept over the whole country, and was felt even in Great Britain. Prominent ministers of all denominations, able statesmen, and noted merchants, vied with each other in promoting the grand scheme. Their masterly addresses and liberal gifts indicate that some of them, at least, had some conception of the magnitude of the enterprise, and its important bearing upon the moral character of the people speedily to fill that vast valley.

after the meeting, Mr. Tappan came to the rooms of the Society and said: "I was very

The reader must remember that their plans and ideas are not to be judged by the population and christian wealth of 1887, but of 1830. Then the population of the whole United States was less than 13,000,000, and of the great Mississippi Valley, including Ohio and Louisiana, was hardly 3,000,000. Michigan and Arkansas were mere territories, Missouri had barely 160,000 people, Wisconsin and Iowa were unknown even as territories until half a dozen years later, Chicago was a mud hamlet, not then having attained the dignity of a Western village, and most of Illinois was a wild prairie, or a "howling wilderness." For their day, these men of 1830 had wonderful foresight, magnificent plans for God and our country, and they gave and worked upon a scale corresponding with the grandeur of their scheme. A record of their noble doing is worthy of the attention of the generation of to-day, and ought to inspire us to plan and execute mission enterprises of similar magnitude.

The sixth anniversary sermon of the American Sunday-School Union in 1830 was preached by the Rev. Francis Wayland, D. D. (Baptist), President of Brown University, R. I.; the "Mississippi Valley Resolution" was presented to the annual meeting by the Rev. Thomas McAuley, D. D., LL. D. (Presbyterian), of Philadelphia, and warmly advocated by him, and by the Rev. Lyman Beecher, D. D. (Congregationalist), then of Massachusetts, and the Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, Sr. (not then a D. D., Protestant Episcopal), of Philadelphia; by the Hon. William Milnor, Mayor of Philadelphia; the Rev. G. G. Cookman (Methodist Episcopal), of Philadelphia, and many others. Three or four additional meetings were held in the same city in that and the week following the anniversary. At one of them, pledges for the organization of 150 new schools, and for the supply of 32 counties (exclusive of the 150 schools), and subscriptions of over $12,000 in money were received.

In New York, similar meetings were promptly called. At one

much interested last night, and I would like to go to the Valley of the Mississippi as

held in Masonic Hall, June 9th, 1830, Chancellor Walworth presiding, the crowds were so great that hundreds were unable to gain admission; the subscriptions at the meeting exceeded $11,000.

The popular enthusiasm swept into New England, and a large meeting was held in Boston at which the Hon. William Reed, the Rev. Dr. Wisner, the Rev. J. D. Knowles, the Rev. Dr. Cornelius, the Rev. Robert Baird, and others, advocated the measure with signal ability.

Early in 1831, a large and representative meeting was held in Washington, attended by the most distinguished statesmen of that day. Senator Grundy, of Tennessee, presided over the assembly, and St. Clair Clark, Clerk of the House of Representatives, acted as Secretary.

The "Mississippi Valley Enterprise," as proposed by the American Sunday-School Union, was eloquently and ably advocated on the broadest principles of christian statesmanship, by the Rev. John Breckenridge, Hon. William Wirt, Hon. Elisha Whittlesey of Ohio, Hon. N. D. Coleman of Ky., Hon. C. E. Haynes of Ga., Hon. Theodore Frelinghuysen of N. J., Hon. Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, and other members of Congress and prominent statesmen. The Hon. Thomas S. Grimke, South Carolina's most eloquent orator, earnestly advocated the vast importance of the plan before a brilliant audience in Charleston.

Nor did those christian statesmen of half a century ago, nor the Sunday-School Union, let this scheme end in speech-making and empty enthusiasm. Within the first year after the adoption of the resolution, the Society, then be it remembered only six years old, received nearly $25,000 in cash for the Mississippi enterprise alone, while it expended in supporting missionaries, and planting schools in the great Valley, nearly $39,000. Within two years, the contributions to the "Valley Fund" exceeded $60,000. These may not seem large sums now, but they were princely gifts

one of your missionaries; but as I can not go myself, here are a thousand dollars with which to employ some man who can go."

The person chosen was B. J. Seward, a cousin of the late Secretary of State, the Hon. Wm. H. Seward. He made his way to Illinois, and organized a number of schools. He found Rev. John M. Peck, and had him also employed as a missionary of the American Sunday-School Union. Mr. Peck organized, among others, a union Sunday-school at Winchester, Illinois, as the different church organizations in that place were not strong enough to sustain schools of their own. After a time the school declined, but was revived and re-organized by Dr. John Adams, of Jacksonville, Illinois, who was also in the employ of the Union. Dr. Adams had been a teacher at Phillips Academy for thirty years, and it was said that he had prepared more men for the ministry than any other person then

then. The total contributions to the Union for mission work, the year previous, 1829, were less than $2,500. Hence the benevolent contributions were increased ten-fold in a single year. If this should be done now, it would receive upward of $1,000,000 for its Mission work next year.—*Editor American S. S. Union.*

living. But he declared that he thought he had done more good by means of the two hundred Sunday-schools he had organized after he was seventy years old, than in all his previous life.*

In this school, organized by Mr. Peck and revived by Dr. Adams, little Mary Paxson became a pupil, sent quietly thither by her mother.

One Sabbath the superintendent said: "There are not as many children in Sunday-school as there should be. Won't each scholar here to-day bring a new scholar next Sunday?" One of the teachers, Mrs. Elvira Summers, urged her pupils to comply with the request of the superintendent. Little Mary promised to do so. She tried to find a new scholar among her associates, but not a playmate would consent to go. On Sunday morning she went to her father and told him she had promised to bring a new scholar to the school, but no one would go, and added persuasively: "Father, won't you go?"

"Well, Mary, what kind of a school do

* See note in Chapter III., p. 47.

you have on Sunday? What do you do there?"

"Oh! it's not like week-day school, for we read in the Bible, and sing such pretty songs."

He loved his little girl, and thought he would gratify her enough to walk down to the house with her.

On reaching the door, he was about to pass on, when the spirited singing of the children within caught his ear, and he hesitated. Probably no other human being could have induced him to enter that room, but Mary said, hopefully: "Come in, papa! I know you will like it."

He followed her in, and the influence of a little child gave to the Valley of the Mississippi one of the most useful men of this generation.

The superintendent, Mr. Haynie, though much surprised to see him, was careful not to manifest this. He welcomed him cordially, saying: "I am glad to see you here; your little daughter is one of our best scholars."

This remark, showing appreciation of his

child's efforts, pleased him, and when Mr. Kilpatrick, the librarian, had added his warmest greetings, Mr. Paxson said: "Gentlemen, now tell me what you do here."

"We have," said the superintendent, "a union Sunday-school. I'm a Methodist, Mr. Carter is a Presbyterian, Mr. Miner here a Baptist, but we all unite to study the Bible."

This remark pleased him also, for he had heard very little about churches except their quarrels and dissensions. Mr. Haynie then said to him: "Here is a class of boys, from ten to fifteen years of age, whose teacher is absent; and I want you to take charge of it and teach it."

Mr. Paxson replied, "No, indeed, Haynie; those boys know more than I do; I'll join a class, but I won't teach one."

One of the boys in the class spoke up and said: "I'll tell you what we will do, Mr. Paxson; we'll make a bargain; you tell us all you know, and we will tell you all we know."

"Enough said," was the response, "I'll go in on those terms."

He took his seat with them, and the boys proceeded to read a chapter, helping their teacher to pronounce, whenever he came to a hard word in his verse.

After the chapter was read, he supposed that was all there was to be done, and closed his book. But his little teacher said, "Mr. Paxson, you must now ask us some questions on the lesson."

He glanced over the chapter, and not perceiving any questions there, he replied: "Boys, I guess there are no questions in this chapter."

"Oh!" said Wesley Knox, who was spokesman for the class, "you must go to the library and get a book which will show you what questions to ask."

"What do you call a library?" said Mr. Paxson, for a man who had confined his reading to newspapers had small use for books.

Wesley replied: "Do you see that dry-goods box nailed up in the corner? Well, *that's* the library."

He went to it and said, "Mr. Librarian, have you a book here that asks questions?"

He was given a "Union Consecutive Question Book," and returned to the class.

A new difficulty now arose, for none of the questions he propounded were on the right chapter. However, the boys soon set him right by finding the proper place. Then there arose another trouble. The book was of the old-fashioned kind, without Bible references; so, when he would look from the Question Book to the Bible to see if the answers were correct, he would lose his place. Finally he gave it up, saying, "Boys, let's adjourn."

Right here, he was in the habit of saying, he realized the importance of preparation for teaching. He proposed to take the same lesson again for the next Sunday, so as to give himself opportunity to study it.

By this time the perspiration covered his forehead, and he felt that he had never done such hard work in his life before; but he thought it was now over. Just then little Wesley Knox exclaimed, "Mr. Paxson, won't you hear me recite my verses?"

He handed his teacher the book, and repeated quite a number that he had learned

during the week. He was congratulated upon what he had done by Mr. Paxson, and told that if he continued to study thus, by the time he was as old as himself he would know the New Testament by heart.

"But," said the boy, "I want some tickets for memorizing these verses."

"Tickets! What are they?"

"You'll see, if you go to the librarian. He will give them to you," said the anxious boy.

He went at once, and said to the librarian, "I've got one of the smartest boys in my class that there is in this school. He has learned a lot of verses, and wants some tickets."

Mr. Kilpatrick inquired, "How many do you want, Mr. Paxson?"

"Oh, I don't care! give me a handful or two," was the reply.

The librarian smiled and responded, "We don't give them out in that way. Go back and find out how many verses the boy knows, and then I will tell you how many tickets he is entitled to."

So he returned to the class, and said,

"Wesley, it's no go; you'll have to say 'em all over again." He did so, and then wrote down the number with a pencil, and his teacher returned with the requisite number of tickets.

None of the actors in this little Sunday-school drama could foresee that, years hence, its chief personage would, in his own original and altogether inimitable style, picture this scene, this first day's experience in Sunday-school, to enthusiastic audiences from Maine to the Gulf, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains; and that, moved by its drollery and touched by its pathos, a rich harvest would be poured by willing hearts into the Sunday-school treasury in consequence.

For four years he attended this school, never missing a Sabbath. He was converted, and united with the church of which his wife had long been a consistent member. From the hour he entered the Sunday-school old things passed away and all things became new. His youthful yearnings for intellectual culture returned with renewed force. Life took on new meaning. He began to study

with diligence and success. So great became his enthusiasm for Sunday-school work, and so desirous was he that others should share in what had become such a blessing to him, that it became his custom, after the hard labors of the week were ended, and he had attended his own school in the morning, to hire a conveyance and go out in the afternoon to visit the various school-houses within reach in the country. If he found the people unprovided with such an organization, he would help them to start a school, or would assist in reviving any feeble one that needed encouragement.

In such volunteer work he never wearied. For miles around his influence extended, until he was known and called upon for assistance in Sunday-school work all over his own and the adjoining counties. With great executive ability and much practical sense he converted to his use and enlisted in his service every possible extrinsic influence.

A little experience soon taught him that he had more power to arouse enthusiastic

interest in the cause than knowledge to direct its course, as a consequence of his lack of familiarity with Sunday-school methods. In passing over the county he found a diversified population. In one part the people were from England and the Eastern States, and he found the teachers better informed than those in another part of the county, where the people, coming from Kentucky and the South, were unfamiliar with the details of the work. These would come to him for information in regard to the best way of teaching the Word of God. He felt his own ignorance so deeply that he was perplexed as to what to do. He thought earnestly upon the subject, and laid it before his heavenly Father in prayer.

He first held a few mass-meetings of various schools within reach of each other, in the woods, where speeches were made, songs sung, and the teachers encouraged and instructed by one another. At last the idea occurred to him that the standard of Sunday-school teaching might be elevated by calling all the teachers of the county to-

gether in convention, that those who had received superior advantages might instruct and help those who knew less. Thus he thought he might secure a great diversity of experience and information, which could be made available in the work.

April 20, 1846, having made due preparation therefor, he summoned the teachers of the county to meet in convention in the old Presbyterian church in Winchester.

This was the first County Sunday-School Convention ever held.* From it has sprung

* By this statement Mr. Paxson's biographer does not mean to assert that similar meetings for a similar purpose had never been known, but only that this convention was the beginning of that system of county, state and district Sunday-school conventions which has been so popular in the last twenty years. Similar local organizations and meetings of teachers and Sabbath-school workers were not unknown nearly a quarter of a century earlier than this convention in Scott county, Illinois. The conception was none the less original and creditable to Father Paxson, however, since it is quite evident that he had no knowledge of these earlier meetings in other parts of the country. Hartford county, Conn., had a County Sunday-School Union, and held meetings for a purpose similar to that proposed in Scott county, Ill., nearly a quarter of a century before the one at Winchester. The annual reports of the American Sunday-School Union from 1825 to 1830 show that there were about four hundred such local organizations in active operation at that time. And the interest and profit derived from this local form of conference led to the National Sunday-School Conventions of 1832 and 1833 in New York and

up the system of county, state, and district conventions—agencies which have now assumed national and international proportions. It was the desire for knowledge that gave the impulse to his zeal and inventive powers, which led to a result so beneficent and far-reaching in its influences. It was a singular and providential overruling of ignorance and inexperience in aid of the diffusion of knowledge.

He found that the beneficial influences of such a meeting were manifold. New interest was awakened among teachers, public sentiment aroused, the best thoughts of the best teachers on the subjects connected with their work was secured.

There was present at the meeting the Rev. William Carter, from a neighboring

Philadelphia. The weekly issues of *The Sunday School Journal*, published by the American Sunday-School Union, contain abundant evidence of the enthusiasm awakened by these national and local conventions of that period. Later this method of increasing the enthusiasm and the teaching power of those engaged in Sunday-schools appears to have been little used, especially in the west. Father Paxson hit upon the same expedient, thus reproducing a comparatively forgotten agency, and made it more widely popular than in former days.—*Editor American Sunday-School Union.*

county, who became interested in Mr. Paxson, and suggested that he should hold a convention in Pike county, urging as a reason that the people there would highly appreciate it. In the fall of 1846 this convention was held at Pittsfield.

The great trial of Mr. Paxson's life—his stammering speech—had now become almost unendurable to him. He wanted to speak fluently and with effect in behalf of the work so dear to his heart. He began to think of attempting a cure. He had never heard of such a thing being accomplished in modern times; but there was a story to the effect that Demosthenes was willing to hold pebbles in his mouth in order to overcome some impediment in his speech. He reflected that though unable to heal his lame ankle, he had yet learned to use it, and had been able to walk twenty miles a day, even while the blood oozed from it; that, when it was better, he had learned to dance with every appearance of ease. Could he not, he questioned himself, invent some plan to release his bound tongue, when his object was so much higher and holier?

He determined to study himself and the impediment that repressed the utterance of thoughts which smothered his heart, in their restless throbbing for expression. Surely he would find some way! For the resolute soul there is ever a path opened. He would watch and pray. He discovered at last, almost by accident, that, whenever he filled his lungs with air and expelled it slowly, accompanying his speech with certain gestures, the nerves seemed to relax, and the words came with greater fluency and ease. He acted at once upon this hint, and practiced every day. He found to his joy and amazement that the key to the combination lock set upon his speech lay in his own hands.

He felt himself a new man, now he need no longer hesitate about his fitness for the work of the Master. A heart aglow with zeal and a loosened tongue—were not these sufficient for the work whereunto he was called?

True, he had little education, but this very want made him sympathetic with those denied, like himself, all opportunities of

culture. He remembered that there were thousands of children in lowly destitute regions, hungering for the bread of life and longing for books, as he had longed in his boyhood. To carry books to such children, to gather them into Sunday-schools—for this he would give up everything. He determined to persevere in his self-appointed task. He only wished he could give to it all the days in the week instead of one.

"I will follow the leadings of providence," he would say, "and I shall not go amiss." And providence called him from his humble work-shop, as of old incarnate love called Peter, James, and John, from their fishing nets by the sacred sea.

CHAPTER III.

MISSION WORK IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE venerable John Adams, LL. D., the father of the late Rev. Dr. William Adams, of New York City, became interested in Mr. Paxson and in his volunteer service for the Sunday-school cause. "Father Adams" was the kind of man likely to discover his longing to be employed in christian work, and his burning desire to save the children of the land from ignorance and vice, for he was himself of like mind.* When death

* C. F. P. Bancroft, Principal of Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass., writes:

"John Adams, LL. D., was of the same ancestry as the Presidents, John and John Quincy Adams; born at Canterbury, Ct., in 1772, graduated at Yale in 1795, and a teacher nearly forty years, being the principal of Phillips Academy at Andover, Mass., from 1810 to 1833. This admirable teacher, by his high social connections, his scholarship, his rare teaching power, and above all, by his profound, earnest, and sympathetic religious character, imparted an impulse which will never die to the institution into which he came as a new moral force. Literally *hundreds* of young men in the academy were directed by him into the christian ministry. He held prayer-meetings with his pupils at his home, and revivals were frequent and powerful. From 1833 till

was near, this good man said: "Do not place LL. D., nor any title upon my tombstone, but write—

"A lover of children,
A guide of youth,
A sinner saved by grace."

This excellent man recommended Mr. Paxson to the American Sunday-School Union, and was instrumental in procuring for him a commission in that Society in the year 1848.

Mr. A. W. Corey, then Superintendent of Missions in the Valley of the Mississippi, was instructed by the Society to employ one Stephen Paxson, if upon inquiry he was found to be a suitable person to act as a missionary. Mr. Corey had never heard of such a man, but meeting Mr. Knapp, a

his death in 1863, he was equally active in Illinois in religious work, traveling all over the state and planting more than five hundred Sunday-schools, till it was said that he was more useful even in his old age than he had been in his prime. He was a handsome man, elegant in his manners, and of commanding presence."

The picture of him on another page is from a photograph of a portrait now in possession of Phillips Academy, presented to it by the more "famous, but not more gifted son," the late Rev. William Adams, D. D., LL. D., President of Union Theological Seminary, New York.—*Editor American S. S. Union.*

lawyer, whose home was in Winchester, Ill., he asked him if he could give him any information concerning this Mr. Paxson, who had been recommended to the Society as a missionary.

Mr. Knapp replied very promptly, "Rest assured, sir, that if Stephen Paxson undertakes to organize Sunday-schools or anything else, he will do it."

The salary offered him by the Society was one dollar for every day he worked—less than three hundred and sixty-five dollars a year—as he must necessarily lose some days. This amount did not appear to him sufficient to support a family of six children in a village, so he determined at once to move to the country.

Where to go was the great question; money, the result of years of labor, had been lost in consequence of his kind-heartedness in going security for a friend. The sale of his town property was not sufficient to purchase a farm and provide the necessary outfit. He had faith to think the way would be opened—and it was.

At this undecided moment a relative of

his wife offered him land, to be paid for in his own time. It was a forest entirely unimproved; but no undertaking seemed too great, if thereby he could place himself in a position which would enable him to continue his chosen work.

The offer was accepted. A sad farewell was taken of pleasant home and kind friends. In large covered wagons the family proceeded to a wilderness in Pike county, Illinois, where no home was ready to receive them.

But soon a rude log cabin, formed of trees felled in the forest, was raised for them on Hickory Hill. Its immense fireplace, its rough exterior, the fact that as yet it had no doors or windows, made it a place of wonderful interest to the children.

Yet the first night spent in it was for them a time of fear. Blankets were hung over windows and doorway. Owls hooted upon the roof in dismal terrifying tones. The wolves barked fiercely as they passed, and nothing prevented them from entering but the presence of a dog who, had they known it, was afraid of them, and added his

whine to the boding voices of the forest. In the middle of the night the dog crept stealthily under the blanket hanging over the doorway, and longing for companionship in his fear, laid his cold nose on the hand of a sleeping child.

"A wolf! a wolf! A wolf is eating us up!" was the alarming shriek that rang out on the startled ears of the parents.

A light was struck and the dog discovered. "I am afraid he hasn't the true missionary spirit," said his master; "if he has, he will soon get accustomed to his new life, and be your protector when I am far away." The thought of what such nights would be, and father absent, was sufficiently dreadful to keep open the sleepiest eyes.

Men were employed to clear the woods and make rails for fencing. Soon everything was in progress and the missionary started out upon his journey. With horse and buggy he traversed the places destitute of all religious instruction. He usually avoided towns, and sought out the lonely cabin on the hill-side, the solitary schoolhouse in the woods or on the prairie.

His wife was left in this wild habitation, where the wolf could look in at the open door, and the noise of the wild-cat was frequently heard, with no companions but her children, and no guard save the eye of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

But the thoughts of the lonely traveler were often with them as he wandered day after day through scenes as wild, or rested beneath roofs which seemed even humbler than his own, because no dear ones welcomed him there; finding instead strangers, whose acquaintance must be made, whose friendship must be won, if he would succeed in his mission to them.

He met all kinds of people, as a few days' ride would sometimes bring him from the door of the woodman's hut to the home of wealth and refinement. At each place he was equally at his ease, for he had the power of adapting himself to circumstances. The educated forgave him his blunders in grammar and pronunciation on account of his fresh and original ideas, while the uncultivated were fascinated by his songs, and won by his racy anecdotes.

It was his business as missionary to visit all the people in a neighborhood where there was no Sunday-school; to invite them to hold a meeting for purposes of organization; to address them at this meeting; to instruct them in the best methods of conducting a school, and to provide them with necessary books and papers. The ignorance and the eagerness, the opposition and encouragement, which constantly met him, furnished him with matter for reflection upon his long rides.

The weariness of the way was often relieved by little incidents and adventures, which he could narrate so well that more than half the interest of the story was in the graphic style of its portrayal; indeed, it is a hopeless task to write out anecdotes and give them half the force and vividness they possessed when, electrified by his magnetism, they came warm from his heart as illustrations of his experiences in his chosen work.

The little incidents of his travels could always be used with effect in his speeches. A story to the point was far more convincing to the country people than any amount

of abstract reasoning. He was a shrewd judge of human nature. By the time he had canvassed a neighborhood, he knew just the story he could relate that would tell upon his audience.

He would go early to the place of meeting, and light up the rude house with tallow candles. As the people came in the gathering twilight, on horseback and in wagons from various directions, they would hearken to his clear, sweet, pathetic voice in the old house, singing:

> "I'm a pilgrim and I'm a stranger,
> I can tarry, I can tarry but a night."

They had come to hear him speak, because he had interested them in their homes; but often they felt that his singing repaid them for coming before he began his address.

If the object he aimed at in that particular neighborhood was to show them the ignorance which existed among the young, and hence the necessity for religious instruction, he would illustrate his remarks by some such story as the following:

"I met a boy on the road one day. I

stopped my horse and inquired of him the way to Mr. Brown's house. The lad was walking, so I asked him to get into my buggy and ride. As we jogged along I asked him some questions, as is always my custom, in the hope of awakening some interest in his young mind for something above the sordid affairs of time. I began by asking him his age. 'Fourteen,' was the reply. I then inquired if he could tell me who died to save sinners. He responded promptly: '*Nobody* has died for sinners in our neighborhood; leastways, if anybody has, I never hearn tell of it.'

I asked him if he would like to have a book which would tell him all about who died to save sinners.

"'Oh! yes,' was the response. 'I'd give a heap for a book, for I've been wanting something besides my old speller for a long time.'

"How much would you give?" I inquired.

"He pulled out a handful of marbles and an old knife from his pocket, saying:

"'All I've got, these 'ere.'

"I explained to him that if he would attend the Sunday-school I was about to organize near his home, he could get a new book to read every Sunday, and for nothing. He was delighted at the prospect, and said if his father would let him off from the fishing and hunting trips on that day, he would come 'certain.'"

When years had passed by, Mr. Paxson learned the sequel to this story—to the effect that this ignorant boy was awakened to a new life in that Sunday-school, and was diligently pursuing a course of study in a distant college preparatory to entering the ministry.

Another incident, which occurred in his work, he used to draw attention to the wants of a school as regarded books and the superior advantages these afford the scholar in mastering the lesson. It is given as nearly as possible in his own words:

"I was once organizing a Sunday-school, and, in the course of my remarks, I made the assertion that a child who had had the advantages of a Sunday-school education knew more of the Scriptures at ten years

of age than a young man of twenty did when I was young. After the meeting was over, a man said to me: 'Did I understand you to say that a boy of ten knows more now than a man of twenty used to?'

"'No, my friend; I said a boy who has had the *advantages* of a Sunday-school knows more at ten about his Bible, than a young man of twenty knew when I was young.'

"'Well, I don't believe it, anyhow.'

"'I am sorry,' I replied, 'that there is no Sunday-school scholar present to test it.'

"A lady standing by said: 'There is a Sunday-school scholar over at my house; he came just before the meeting.'

"'Come,' I said, 'we will find this boy and see.'

"He agreed to the proposal, and on our way over I inquired how old he was. He said, "Fifty years."

"'How long have you been a professor of religion?'

"'Thirty years,' he replied.

"'Now, my friend, if we find this boy, I will ask you some questions; and, if you

don't answer them, have you any objection to the boy's answering?'

"'None, if they are fair questions.'

"'You need not answer them, if they are not.'

"Upon reaching the house we found a bright-eyed boy some ten years of age. I asked him how long he had been a member of a Sunday-school?

"'Eighteen months,' was the reply.

"'Did you have a book in your Sunday-school called the "Child's Scripture Question Book?"'

"'Oh, yes! that was the first book I studied.'

"I knew then what questions to ask him. I said to the gentleman: 'How many books are contained in the Old Testament?'

"He studied awhile, and then said: 'I give it up.'

"'Can you tell?' I asked the boy. He replied correctly.

"I said to the gentleman, 'Perhaps you have been a New Testament scholar; tell me how many books are contained in the New Testament?'

"He began counting on his fingers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and so on. He made the number twenty-six.

"'Is he right, my son?' I inquired of the boy.

"'No, sir; there are twenty-seven.'

"What is the first book in the Bible?' I asked the man. He responded 'Genesis.' I said:

"'Right; you have answered one to the boy's two. Now please give the definition of Genesis?'

"He replied, gruffly, 'I never studied Dictionary.'

"I asked the boy. He replied, 'I think it means "creation" or "beginning."'

"I took a Bible Dictionary from my satchel and showed him that the boy was right; for otherwise he would not have believed either of us.

"He sprang to his feet, exclaiming—

"'I understand you, sir; you have had this little shaver out in the hazel brush, training him to answer these questions.'

"I soon proved by the lady that I had never seen the child before. Then I

handed him the Bible, and told him to ask the boy any question he saw fit. He soon threw down the book, saying:

"'Why, he knows more than I do at fifty!'

"I responded, 'He is, perhaps, no smarter naturally than you were, but he has had advantages of which you and I never dreamed. There was no "Child's Scripture Question Book" in our school-days. Truth had not been simplified to the comprehension of a child; your sole literature was "Dilworth's Spelling Book" and "Sindbad the Sailor," while I had even less.'" It is needless to add that the man was in favor of buying a Sunday-school library, and so were all the audiences to whom the story was told.

CHAPTER IV.

SUNDAY-SCHOOLS ON THE FRONTIER.

After weeks, sometimes months of absence, during which our Sunday-school missionary faced the winter's storm or the summer's sun, never hearing once during all the time from the loved ones at home—as it was before railroads covered the west, and it was impossible for him to foretell his route, or know just when he would reach or pass a given point where a letter might reach him—the return was indeed joyous. But for a long time after the removal, what mountains of work he found awaiting his tireless energy! Reports must be made out of his monthly labors. Letters must be written and books ordered for needy schools. Besides, there were fences still to build, as hired help worked slowly without a master's presence; brush-piles to be burned, and ground to be plowed.

The young people from some distant

farm would hear that the missionary had come home and spent his evenings burning brush-piles and log-heaps. Attracted by his cheery ways, they would come to lend helping hands. He would meet them with a glad greeting: "I knew I should get through in some way; for God always helps him who helps himself."

The hill-side was all aglow with burning brush-piles and great fiery logs, among which the young people flitted, adding fresh fuel to the flames, the girls throwing on brush, the young men with long spikes rolling up the logs and piling them upon each other, while the voice of the missionary led in some familiar hymn which rang out fresh and free over the surrounding woods, to the astonishment of wild beast and bird. Such descriptions as:

> "My heavenly home is bright and fair,
> No sin or sorrow enter there;
> Its glittering towers the sun outshine;
> That heavenly mansion shall be mine,"

furnished a fitting and impressive contrast to the rudeness of present surroundings.

Only a few short days could be spent at

home—and these were by no means days of rest—when again he must go forth upon his broader and more fruitful fields.

The burden of responsibility resting on his wife was great. There was no school within reach of the younger children. The older ones could attend a very poor one at a distance; but some one must carry a gun for protection against the possible attack of a hungry wolf. On one occasion they broke through the ice in attempting to cross the numerous and unbridged streams, and upon reaching home frozen boots and shoes had to be cut away from their weary feet. After several similar disasters the children at last gave up the difficult undertaking, and read and re-read the few books in their father's small library, one which he had collected since his conversion in the Sunday-school. He had organized a Sunday-school at the nearest house as soon as possible, but its small library was soon exhausted.

It was an epoch in the lives of these children, when Mr. Corey, of St. Louis, sent to this cabin on the hill-side a book entitled

"Old James, the Irish Pedlar." Brave in its blue covers, absorbing in its thrilling story, it was a treasure whose worth could only be estimated by the amount of pleasure it caused.

"I wanted to buy it for you children," the father explained, "and I was casting the subject over in my mind as to whether I could afford to do so, when Mr. Corey said: 'Do take this book to your children as a present from me. They must be very lonely during the long winter evenings when you are away.'"

There was one feature connected with this frontier missionary life which was a great puzzle to the children, and in the solution of which even wiser heads might not agree. The extent and duration of Mr. Paxson's tours were seldom uniform, yet his wife predicted the day of his return with never-failing certainty. So often had she made special preparation for his coming on a certain day, and so invariably had he arrived at the expected time, although no message or letter had heralded his approach, that the children felt sure of seeing

him whenever she answered their query, "Will father come to-day?" in the affirmative.

But upon one occasion she had told them several days in advance that he would come at a certain date; yet when the morning came she said, "No, children; he *was* coming, but he will not get here for some time, for he is very sick." When asked how she knew, she said she must have had a dream, for she saw him, and he was sick. The result proved that her fears were well founded, for he had intended reaching home at that time, but was detained in southern Illinois by a severe illness.

At another time he was anxiously expected. The forenoon passed slowly by; the afternoon still more slowly. Supper was over, and still no sign of an approaching traveler. The waiting family gathered about the hearth-stone. A slightly troubled look was in the mother's eye, but she said hopefully still, "He will surely come." Hours passed away; the fire burned low; the night was dark and stormy. At eleven o'clock the sound of some one approaching

was heard, and in a few moments a cold, muddy traveler, with dripping coat and hat, stood upon the warm hearth-stone. "I thought I'd come on," he said, "in spite of wind and weather, for I was sure mother would be expecting me."

Mr. Paxson became more and more convinced, as he traversed still wider regions, of the importance of the work he had undertaken. With an enthusiasm which nothing daunted, he gave his best energies to it. His description on one occasion of an attempt to find the right man to act as Sunday-school superintendent, evinces the determination which characterized all his actions.

"In a certain settlement in Illinois," said he, "I found some seventy or eighty children needing a Sunday-school. In canvassing to find the right man to act as superintendent, I discovered, from what the people said, that there was but one available man for this place. I heard that he was an eastern man, and so felt sure that he would serve, as, in my experience, I have usually found eastern people willing to co-operate

readily with me in my Sunday-school efforts. But when I came to see this man, he objected. He said he was a justice of the peace, and held some other offices of trust, and that the people must not expect to pile everything upon him. He added, that he was obliged to go at once to meet a person four miles away, but that I might put up my horse and remain until he returned.

"I said, 'No; I am going your way.'

"I had just at that moment decided to do so, feeling that unless I succeeded in winning him as superintendent, my efforts to organize a school would not succeed. As we rode on at a rapid pace I urged him to accept the office When I had run him about three miles I asked him to hold up a little. He checked his horse, and I said,

"'Some eighty children want you to take charge of a Sunday-school for them. You say you will not. Now, my friend, can you meet these children at the judgment-seat, and feel acquitted?'

"This brought him to a full stop. He reflected a moment, his hand resting on the

pommel of his saddle, and his eyes fixed on the distant prairie. Finally the answer came:

"'Well, if they *all* want me, I will serve.'

"I then said, 'Now I will return, and make preparations for a meeting to-night.'

"He looked at me in astonishment, and said, 'Did you come all this way just to get my consent?'

"On my return, his wife, who had heard our conversation at the wood-pile before we started, asked me if I had obtained her husband's consent. I told her that I had. She exclaimed, 'How glad I am! My husband used to be an officer in the church when we lived in the east; but since he came west, to this place remote from churches, he has grown cold. I am so glad we can once more have our children in the Sunday-school!'

"Three months after the establishment of this school I visited it one Sunday, and conducted the exercises. At the close we held a prayer-meeting. I called upon any one who chose to do so to make a few remarks. The superintendent arose and said

he thanked God for that Sunday-school and me for my persistence in getting him to serve as superintendent; for in the past three months he had enjoyed life more than in all the eight years he had lived there previous to its establishment; in short, that the proper observance of the Sabbath had lent a new charm, an added beauty, to the six days of the week.

"A church soon grew out of this Sunday-school, as a fair flower out of a brown and insignificant seed, and its influence was widely felt over all that section of country. The superintendent became a leading member and officer in this church."

It was an accustomed saying with Mr. Paxson, that "He is a fool who neglects an opportunity." Acting on this maxim, he labored in season and out of season with equal success. Upon one occasion he came upon an immense Fourth of July mass-meeting. He was soon called upon for a patriotic speech.

"That is not in my line," he responded; "but if you really wish to hear me, I will give you a Sunday-school talk."

He was urged to proceed. Mounting the platform, he soon had the crowd cheering as lustily for Sunday-schools, as they had before done for the old Declaration of Independence, although he did not ignore this, but used it as a foundation upon which to base his Sunday-school superstructure. Intensely practical in all his methods, he could not let such an occasion pass with only a harvest of words — deeds must follow; so he requested some one person present from each district of the neighboring country, where there was no Sunday-school, to come forward and give him his name and the name of his school-house. Thirty men responded, and he soon had a list of such school-house names as "Cracker Bend," "Mosquito Creek," "Big Muddy," "Hoosier Prairie," "Loafer Grove," "Stringtown," and "Buckhorn." In a few short weeks he had a flourishing school in each of these thirty school-houses, the outcome of his unpremeditated Fourth of July oration.

In his wildest days he had never acquired any bad habits save that of using tobacco,

of which he was inordinately fond. After he began his Sunday-school work, he would cut the tobacco into little bits in order that he might slip one into his mouth unperceived, after finishing a speech. One evening he was holding a Sunday-school meeting in a small town, when he noticed a boy apparently about twelve years old watching him very closely. After the meeting was over, and he had come down from the pulpit, this boy came up to him and said, in free western fashion: "Brother Paxson, give us a chaw of tobacker!"

"What! do you use tobacco?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy, "I have used it ever since I was a little fellow."

A bystander explained, "That boy looks like he was scarcely twelve years old—he is really past eighteen; he has been stunted in his growth by tobacco."

Immediately the missionary emptied his pocket of tobacco, throwing it all away, saying, "By the grace of God I will never use another bit of tobacco while I live." And he never did.

The following story he used to tell as an

illustration of how the most persistent opposition to what is good may be overcome by equally persevering efforts in its behalf. He always enjoyed the ludicrous element in the tale, its strong flavor of backwoods life:

"In a log school-house, on the banks of the 'Grand Chariton,' in Missouri, after I had finished making a speech in favor of establishing a Sunday-school, a plainly dressed farmer arose and said he would like to make a few remarks. I said, 'Speak on, sir.'

"He said to the audience, pointing across the room at me, 'I've seen that chap before. I used to live in Macoupin county, Illinois, and that man came there to start a school. I told my wife that when Sunday-schools came around game got scarce, and that I would not go to his school or let any of my folks go. It was not long before a railroad came along, so I sold out my farm for a good price and moved to Pike county. I hadn't been there more than six months before that same chap came to start a Sunday-school.

"'I said to my wife, "That Sunday-school fellow is about; so I guess we'd better move to Missouri." Land was cheaper in Missouri, so I came and bought me a farm and went back for my family. I told them Missouri was a fine state, game plenty, and better than all, no Sunday-school there.

"'Day before yesterday I heard that there was to be a Sunday-school lecture at the school-house by some stranger. Says I to my wife, "I wonder if it can be possible that it is that Illinoisan!" I came here myself on purpose to see, and, neighbors, *It's the very same chap!*

"'Now, if what he says about Sunday-school is true, it's a better thing than I thought. If he has learned so much in Sunday-school, I can learn a little, so I've just concluded to come to Sunday-school and to bring my seven boys.'

"Putting his hand in his pocket, he pulled out a dollar, and coming to the stand where I was, laid it down, saying, 'That'll help buy a library. For, neighbors,' he added, 'if I should go to Oregon or California, I'd expect to see that chap there in less than a year.'

"Some one in the audience spoke up—'You are treed.'

"'Yes,' he said, 'I *am* treed at last. Now I am going to see this thing through, for if there is any good in it, I am going to have it.'"

One of the missionary's returns to the new-made home on Hickory Hill was very sad. He had labored for weeks, finding some encouragement, but also many obstacles in his way. The roads he traversed were bad; the storms he encountered unusually violent. In some cases he had to work with great care and diligence to awaken any interest in the minds of the people he had come to serve. Now, weary and worn, he was returning home, wondering what events might have passed, what changes might have occurred in the family circle during his prolonged absence. He noticed, as he neared the house, that there were no merry children perched upon the high gate, their favorite out-look, from whence they were wont to watch for his possible return. Everything was still. Even the dog moved slowly and quietly to

meet him. Fear sat at his heart, dread blanched his cheek, as he pushed aside the half-open door, and looked in upon a group gathered in tears about the cradle.

"She cannot live," was the whispered greeting of his wife's pale lips as he joined the mournful circle.

And she did not. A few days later a solitary wagon, containing the stricken family and a little coffin, moved slowly along the wood-path to a lonely grave in the forest. Startled by the noise of approaching steps, several wolves sped wildly down the hollow, the sound of their sharp bark striking harshly upon the ears of the mourners. The children were heart-broken at the idea of laying the youngest darling in her dark, narrow bed, amidst such surroundings, with wild beasts about her, and the hoot of the solitary owl for her nightly lullaby.

With saddened heart the father brushed the tears from his eyes, and prepared to go forth upon his next journey. He felt a renewed consecration to his work, the consecration of sorrow. He was more tender than ever to the children for whose salva-

tion he labored, and he talked to them as never before. His experience was an illustration of a favorite truth with him:

"Thy soul must overflow, if thou
Another soul wouldst reach;
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech."

People began to call him the "Children's Preacher," and the "Apostle to the Children," and he labored humbly but earnestly to be worthy of the titles.

His addresses were entirely extemporaneous. They came direct from the heart, and seldom missed their aim, but lodged in the hearts of his hearers and were treasured there. They had also the merit of brevity.

"If I were a superintendent," he said one day, "I would rarely permit any one to make an address to my school. Speakers are apt to take time that ought to be employed in the study of the Bible. I never want to hinder for one moment the opportunity of these *half-hour preachers*."

And he carried out this idea. A friend, who was present at the time, says: "He

made a few more good earnest remarks, and, just at the right time, stopped in the face of the temptation of an invitation from both superintendent and pastor to say on a little longer. Good for you, Father Paxson! my heart exclaimed jubilantly, as he resolutely shook his white head and marched off the platform. Though every eye was sparkling with attention, every ear attuned to listen, every countenance radiant with interest, yet he had the rare prudence to know when to stop!"

But while he appreciated the shadow-side of life's experiences, and was so moved by the pathetic that, as he expressed it, "the tear-cups in his eyes were constantly getting upset," he had also a rich vein of humor in his nature, and enjoyed the amusing to the full.

One of his most difficult tasks was to convince ignorant country farmers that they were neglecting their families by their habit of paying more attention to the improvement of their stock than to the culture of their children. He would prove his position by a story from his own experience; for, he would

say, "Facts are God's arguments, and I have always found them most available in producing conviction upon any subject."

The story was as follows: "Upon one occasion I called upon a Mr. Allen, to ascertain his views in reference to organizing a Sunday-school in his vicinity. I found him engaged in peeling peaches upon the back porch. He asked me to take a chair and help myself to the fruit. While we were eating the peaches, I began the conversation by asking him if there was a Sunday-school in his neighborhood.

"'No!' was the reply, 'and, as for me, I am down on edication! it only makes thieves and rascals of people.'

"I tried to show him that while a merely intellectual education might sometimes result in that way, such could never be the case were the education complete or threefold in its nature—physical, intellectual, and moral; that as his children's physical powers would be developed in consequence of their work upon their farm, their mental capacity would be enlarged and strengthened in the common schools. What they needed besides was a

moral and religious culture in the Sunday-school, where they would learn their duty to God and their obligations to man—that the moral education was of the utmost importance, and was what the Sunday-school undertook to do for the child. I inquired how his children spent Sundays.

"'Climb trees and wear out their duds,' was the response.

"'But,' I inquired, 'would it not be better, simply on the score of economy, for them to be in Sunday-school instead of tearing out their clothes?'

"'Well, p'r'aps it would,' was the response. 'How much will it cost to run it?'

"'Nothing,' I replied.

"'What! are you coming here to teach school for nothing?'

"'No,' I explained, 'you know Mr. Green and wife, who live above here; they have consented to take classes. How many children have you old enough to attend school?'

"'Wall! let me see.' He began counting on his fingers. He made a mis-count. 'Kitty! Kitty!' he called, 'come here, wife, and name over the children while I count; this

man wants to know how many children we have old enough to go to Sunday-school.'

"They made the number thirteen. I looked off to the meadow, and saw a drove of hogs feeding upon the clover.

"'How many hogs have you over there?' I inquired.

"'Eighty-three fine, fat fellows,' he promptly responded.

"'Now, see here, my friend; when I ask you how many children you have over five years of age, you are obliged to call your wife to help you count them; but when I ask you how many hogs you have, you answer without hesitation. Where, now, is your mind? Upon your children or upon your hogs?'

"He looked up at me with a laugh and said, 'I acknowledge, old hoss, you've got me; it's too much on the hogs!"

"Two years afterward I called upon this farmer again. I found that he had joined the church, as had also two of his sons. He thanked me warmly for the change that had been wrought in his family by what he called my 'peach-basket speech.'"

CHAPTER V.

"ROBERT RAIKES," THE MISSIONARY HORSE.

MR. PAXSON knew intuitively how to approach the rudest and most uncultivated person, in order to win him to his own way of thinking. Upon one occasion, in attempting to organize a school in a heathenish district, he was, while addressing an audience in a school-house, called upon to fight by a man who was determined to disturb the meeting. He assured the man that if he would keep still he would attend to his case at the close of the services. The man took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and prepared to "square off." When the address was finished, the speaker told the man he was now ready to satisfy him. But lifting up his hand, he called the attention of the pugilist to the strong, muscular arm which God had given him. He then remonstrated with the fellow, asking him if he was not a democrat, and if he

did not remember that freedom of speech was a democratic principle, and that it was a most undemocratic proceeding to disturb a meeting where the only object was to do good by starting a Sunday-school. The man hesitated a moment, for the desire to fight was strong in him, and then said, "I believe you are right, 'old hoss;' let's go over to Bob's and take a horn!"

While his labors as a missionary were becoming more and more effective, the state of financial affairs at home was by no means prosperous. Much labor had been necessary to reduce the stumpy ground to agricultural order, while the money to hire necessary help was lacking. It was absolutely necessary that he should have a stronger horse for his travels; no money was in the purse wherewith to purchase one; yet he never allowed his anxious cares to overcloud the family, but carried them all to Him whom he trusted as a sympathizing brother. Though he knew not from whence the necessary means would come, he had faith that, in his own way, the Lord would provide, and that the needed horse would

be secured in time for his next long journey. So he gathered the children in his arms, and sang for them the old Scotch songs he loved so well, or joined them in a mad game of blind man's buff with all the joyous abandon of the children themselves.

And the horse came, as if in obedience to the call of faith abiding in this man's heart. He received a message from Rev. Wm. Carter, pastor of the Congregational Church of Pittsfield, to appear before his people one Sabbath morning to deliver an address on his work, as they were all desirous to hear how he was succeeding in his Sunday-school efforts. He went, and at the conclusion of his remarks a collection was taken up, which Mr. Carter proposed should be expended in the purchase of a missionary horse, as a testimonial of their appreciation of the work he was accomplishing, and as the best method they could adopt to assist him in carrying it forward. To his surprise and joy the money was placed in his hands, with the suggestion that he might now turn his old horse out to grass.

A grateful letter was sent to his wife, containing a message to the children that they should watch for his return upon a certain evening, and they would see a man weighing two hundred pounds come riding home on a sheep. Great was the excitement and various the speculations as to what this curious message could mean. The older ones guessed at once that he meant a small horse, possibly a pony, but they were non-committal to the younger.

At last he came, riding upon a small horse, and a shout of joy and admiration hailed the arrival. All gathered about to hear the horse named; and he tossed his mane as if in satisfaction when "Robert Raikes" was selected as the most appropriate name a Sunday-school horse could have.*

* "Robert Raikes" was a small bay horse, left hind foot white, white or blaze face. He had a rather long neck and lengthy, compact round body, clean limbs, small bones, heavy muscle, and full, expressive eye. He was very sagacious, active, and spirited, but withal gentle and kind. One peculiarity, especially in his old age, was the great length of his hair, which was from three to four inches long, giving him a peculiar appearance, so the children would call him "Fremont's woolly horse." When spring came, with warm weather and green tender grass, he would shed his old coat and look like a new horse, a bright, beautiful bay.

No one guessed, as he was led in triumph to the stable, what a work lay before him, what a history he would achieve; how he would help organize more Sunday-schools than any other horse in the world —over seven hundred in number—how he would travel a distance nearly as great as thrice around the world in carrying his master about his chosen work; that he would become so familiar to the children of several states, as to be known by them as "dear old Bob," and would be the means of distributing among them thousands of books and papers. Finally, that he would become known not only in the west, but also at the north and south, and in the far east; that in such great cities as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, his history would be appreciated and his picture recognized and prized; that at last, after twenty-five years of labor, he would die, and the newspapers and Sunday-school circulars of the land would publish this letter containing an account of his death, which sorrowful eyes in every state in the Union would read:

ILLINOIS, *October* 18, 1868.

Dear Father:—I sit down this pleasant afternoon to tell you of the death of your faithful old servant, "Robert Raikes." He had been declining gradually for the last six months. We have not had him harnessed more than once all summer. He ate two ears of corn on Friday last, and on Saturday night died in the clover lot. If, as some believe, horses have souls, "old Bob" will certainly occupy some better fields in the green pastures than those of the common herd.

While looking at the remains of this faithful creature, I could not but ask myself this question, am I as faithful to my heavenly Master as he has been to his earthly one?

Your affectionate daughter, MARY.

"How sad I felt," said Mr. Paxson, "when I heard that dear old Bob was dead. I felt as though I had lost a member of my family, and found the big tears rolling down my face. His quarter of a century in the Sunday-school work has left its mark upon the religious interests of a wide region. He was always faithful and obedient. When I bade him come he came, when I bade him go he went, and cheerfully, too. He never held back except when he met a child; then he would always stop, and would never pass a church or school-house without trying to go up to it."

Once a young man borrowed Bob to take a young lady out riding. He moved along

in good style till he met the children coming home from school, then he stopped. The driver told him to "get up," but Bob would not move a peg. The young man flourished a whip, but Bob was evidently going to be obstinate. The children gathered around, much to the young man's discomfiture, but all at once he suspected what Bob was waiting for, so he made a little speech to the children, bade them "good-evening," shook the lines, and passed on.

"In that day," says Zechariah, "shall there be upon the bells of the horses HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD:" surely this might have been inscribed on old Bob's harness, for he was worn out carrying the Gospel.

The following incident is given here as connected with the career of "Robert Raikes." It was written originally by Mr. Paxson to a Sunday-school in an eastern city, and was published in the New York *Independent* and other leading religious papers.

A SCENE IN A BLACKSMITH'S SHOP.

"I drove up to a blacksmith's shop a few days since to get my horse shod. The

blacksmith walked up to the horse and looked him square in the face, then turning to the people about said, 'I have shod hundreds of horses, and have seen thousands, but there' (pointing to my horse) 'is the best countenance and best shaped head I ever saw!'

"While he was shoeing him, I made some inquiries concerning a Sabbath-school, and told him my horse and myself were both missionaries. He immediately dropped the horse's foot, and, seating himself on the ground, said:

"'Stranger, let me give you a little of my history. I was an orphan boy, bound out to learn the blacksmith's trade. My master would not send me to school, but kept me hammering hot iron day and night until I was nineteen years old. About that time a Sunday-school man came to the settlement, and went around, telling the people to come out, and he would start a Sunday-school. So I got my day's work done and went to hear him. He told me a heap of good things, and among others that he himself first went to Sunday-school when about

thirty years old, and how much he learned and what a blessing it was to him. "Now," thinks I,' continued the blacksmith, '"that's just my fix, and if he starts a school, I'll go." A school was started, and I went for two years. I soon learned to read my Bible, and the very day I was twenty-one I joined the church of Christ. For seven years I have been trying to serve Him. Last Sunday I was made the superintendent of a school here.'

"I asked him where the school was, in which he learned to read and was converted to Christ.

"'Oh! more than a hundred miles from here,' he replied.

"He gave me the name and all the particulars of its organization. I then asked him if he would know the man who organized that school. He did not know as he would, it had been so long ago, but recollected that he was large, almost as large as myself. I then informed him that I was the person, and that that horse was along too. He sprang to his feet, exclaiming, 'Blessed father, is it possible?'

"While my hand rested in his, the tears rolled down his cheeks like rain. He said: 'All that I am I owe under God to that school. There I learned to read and to love my blessed Saviour.' He took me to his house and introduced me to his wife, a good Christian woman, the mother of two children.

"When I offered to pay him, he said, 'No; never a cent for shoeing the missionary horse! I will shoe him all his life for nothing, if you will bring him to me.'

"To you this may not be particularly interesting, but to me it was one of the most pleasing incidents in my life. I felt that the starting of that one school was worth a lifetime of toil."

CHAPTER VI.

A MISSIONARY'S EXPERIENCES.

THE heart of the missionary was troubled about a subject very dear to him, the education of his children. They were growing up in ignorance. There seemed little possibility that the situation of things, as regarded educational advantages, would improve, as the farm was remote from any town. Again he determined to await some providential indication of what he was to do. He was ready to lose the fruit of all these years of improvement upon the farm, if he could thereby secure better educational facilities for his family.

The way was at last opened by the Society offering to increase his salary, so he moved to Summer Hill, in the same county, in 1854. This little village had one long street running its entire length, and bordered on each side by neat white cottages embowered in trees. It also had a church,

school-house, store, and post-office. The stage came through twice a week, and the driver heralded his approach by blasts upon a horn heard all over the village. Well-tilled farms lay all around, while here and there were lovely groves of forest trees. Exclamations of surprise at the beauty of the place often fell from the lips of passing travelers. As the family alighted at the door of their new home, its members felt as if transported to some earthly paradise.

It was a settlement of eastern people, and the younger book-hungry children found, to their unspeakable delight, that there were books and papers in the house of every neighbor. The schoolmaster, perhaps, thought he had an undisciplined set of pupils added to his charge, when he discovered that they had studied "A Child's Philosophy of Natural Objects" all by themselves, but had never looked at a line of the multiplication table. But their father was interested in their new studies. Though he had never in his life studied an arithmetic, when fractions puzzled their childish brains, he would take the slate and work a

refractory example, saying, "I don't know what your book says, but this is my way of figuring. I learned it myself." So helpful was he to them that the teacher would sometimes call and explain to him what the book had to say as regarded certain principles, in order that he might be still better able to assist them.

His active mind never tired of trying to assimilate new ideas. He would say, "I don't know much; but it is a characteristic of my family, as far back as I can trace them, that they never became too old to learn."

This was eminently true of himself. No subject, religious, political, or scientific, attracted public attention but he attempted to grasp it in all its bearings. He had taught himself to write, and his monthly reports and missionary letters which, whenever he was at home at the proper time, were written there, could now be mailed without taking a journey to the post-office, while his family enjoyed the arrival of a weekly newspaper.

The following, though written later, is an example of his monthly missionary letters.

It will furnish some idea of the work he was accomplishing.

To the Rev. Mr. Willetts' Church, Philadelphia:*

Dear Young Friends:—I will now tell you something of what I have been doing for the last month.

I have organized six new Sunday-schools, containing two hundred and ten scholars and thirty-eight teachers. I have aided thirteen others, containing five hundred and eighty-five scholars and one hundred and three teachers, making in all nineteen schools organized and aided, containing seven hundred and ninety scholars and one hundred and forty-one teachers. I have raised $82.40 for books and papers, and have donated $26.13, making in all $108.53 worth of books and papers. I have distributed over one thousand bound volumes, besides papers, hymn-books, Bibles and Testaments, dictionaries, and maps.

These schools are scattered over four counties in Central Illinois. I have delivered twenty-three public addresses and over forty-six private ones. "Robert Raikes" has hauled me four hundred and thirty-five miles in the three weeks, through mud and mud holes, sloughs and rain, such as I have never seen before. We have come home tired and muddy. I have had a wonderful time getting through the sloughs.

Perhaps you would like to hear the particulars of one of these adventures.

I came to a slough the other day, drove up to the edge, and stopped. "Raikes" looked at it, looked all around, then looked at me as much as to say, "It's going to be hard work to get through here." I got out of the buggy, and told "Raikes" if he would take the buggy through, I would wade through; so he started first, and I after him.

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* The Rev. A. A. Willetts, D. D., pastor of the West Arch Street Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

When we got about to the middle of the slough, we came to a dead ox that had "mired down" a week before. This alarmed "Robert Raikes," and he got off the track. He jumped and tried to run, but the mud was so deep he could not. I tried to overtake him, but got into mud so deep that my boots came off, and I had to reach my arm down in the water and mud to find them. After I succeeded in finding my boots, I looked to see what had become of "Raikes." Don't you think he had got out of the mud and had turned around and was looking at me and making a kind of noise! Whether he was laughing at me or trying to say, "Come on, old missionary, I have got through," I can not say. He certainly was trying to tell me something, for he seemed to be so glad when I got through.

And now, my young friends, if you could have seen me when I got out of that slough, you would not have known me. I washed the mud and dirt out of my eyes and out of my boots as well as I could, got into my buggy, and started off. Shortly after I met a boy, and he began to laugh at me. Said he, "Stranger, you are in a bad fix; you must have come from *under* the ground. I would like to know what the color of your horse is?" I told him that before I got into that slough back yonder he was a bay horse, but that now he was black. He gave a hearty laugh and went on.

That night I slept in a log cabin, where there was only one room, in which all the family cook, eat, and sleep. A storm came up during the night, and the sheep came up to the door; so the old lady let them in, saying she was afraid the hail would kill the lambs. There we were—grown folks, children, missionary, sheep, and all together. When the family found out who I was, they were glad to see me. They had heard of me, but had never met me before. They treated *me* very kindly, but they had no corn for "Robert Raikes;" so I turned him out to graze. Next morning he was clean and nice. The rain had washed all the mud off him.

My dear friends, these are incidents of but one day and night. I give them to you that you may have correct views of mission ary life in the west. I got home very weary. Oh, what a luxury

two weeks' rest with my family would be! but I dare not stop to rest. When I stop, the work stops on my field! I allow myself four days at home, and in these I have my reports to make out and letters to write, so that every moment of time is taken up.

While I am writing this letter my family are all asleep, except one little girl, nine years old. She is lying on a pallet near me, and is quite unwell. She has just said to me, "Father, how long will you stay at home this time?"

"Two days more," I answered.

"Only two?" said she. "I do wish you would stay longer; we are so lonesome when you are gone!"

The hardships, trials, and difficulties, my dear friends, which I meet with away from home are nothing when compared to the tender ties that bind the missionary's heart to the loved ones at home. But why should I dwell on this? The Lord has called me to this work, and I dare not shrink from it. Bless His holy name for having made me the instrument in His hands of doing some good!

But oh what a work there is yet to be done! When I look over this mighty field, the little I can do seems like "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." There are hundreds of thousands of children in this state that were never in a Sunday-school, and the American Sunday-School Union is the only institution that can reach this large number of children.

May the Lord bless you all, is my prayer!

STEPHEN PAXSON,
Missionary of the American Sunday-School Union.
Summer Hill, Ills., June, 1859.

Mr. Paxson often repeated the saying: "Analyze it as you will, human nature is a curious compound." His experiences with so many different people had fully demonstrated this to his own mind. He used the

following occurrence as an example of people who are thoroughly in favor of every good thing in their talk, but who will never work in any good cause.

"I was once traveling in northern Missouri, when I met a talkative old lady. When I told her I was a missionary, I could scarcely get a word in 'edgeways' for her praise of Sunday-schools. 'She always believed in them, they were the best institutions in the world, they did a vast amount of good,' and so forth.

"'Well, madam, I suppose you have a Sunday-school in this neighborhood?'

"'Oh, yes!'

"'Who is your superintendent?'

"'Wall, rally, I've forgot. John!' calling her son from the yard, 'come here!'

"'Who is the superintendent of that Sunday-school?'

"'What Sunday-school, mam?'

"'That Sunday-school where you and sis went last fall across the prairie in the timber.'

"'Why, mam, there ain't any Sunday-school over there and never was. Sis and I went to gather hazel-nuts.'

"I sometimes find such friends to the Sunday-school," he would observe, "but I would a thousand times rather meet an open enemy. When an open enemy is converted to the cause, I expect action on his part and am sure to get it; but such *friends* are the curse of every good cause."

In the same part of the state, Mr. Paxson had another little experience which shows how utterly some people fail to comprehend the idea of christian unity. He was sometimes blunt in his address. He was sensitive to the state of the spiritual atmosphere which envelops people, and prepared himself accordingly. He either bristled with pointed assertions to stir them up, or smoothed the feathers of opposition the right way to calm them down, as seemed to him the mode of procedure most likely to lead to final success.

Upon this occasion he entered a house one day, and asked a woman who was sitting by the fire-place, if there was a Sunday-school in the neighborhood.

"'No, there ain't,' was the curt reply.

"'Don't you think you could have one?'

"'Might have a Methodist one,' she replied.

"'Madam,' he said quietly, but with emphasis, 'there are no Methodists in heaven.'"

"She sprang to the door and opened it as if to order him out. But feminine curiosity as to what he would say, prevailed, and hesitating, she said, 'Presbyterians, I suppose!'

"'No, madam, my Bible does not teach me that there are any Presbyterians in heaven.'

"'Baptists, I reckon?'

"'No, madam, my Bible does not say that there are any Baptists in heaven.'

"'Well, who are there?' she inquired with a nonplussed air.

"'Christians, madam.'

"'Oh! you're a Campbellite then?'

"'No, madam, my Bible doesn't say there are any Campbellites there.'

"'What! are you a Roman Catholic?

"'No, madam; if you wish to know to what particular church I belong I am a Methodist.'

"'Why, I thought you said no Methodist would go to heaven.'

"'Oh, no! I said there were no Methodists in heaven; we leave our distinctive names here. There we are known as followers of Christ.'

"Closing the door quickly, she grasped his hand warmly, saying, 'Do take a chair, brother; I opened the door to order you out. I am mighty glad I didn't—*I'm a Methodist.*'"

He had always been quite fastidious about his food. This was a thorn in the flesh which he set seriously to work to subdue, for he found all sorts of fare upon so many different tables. It would never do to manifest the slightest dislike to what was placed before him, or to refrain from partaking of things obnoxious to him, as, for instance, the often recurring biscuits, yellow as gold with saleratus, and fried bacon swimming in grease

He must be all things to all men if thereby he might win some, in even so personal a subject as his daily bread. In this, as in most things he attempted, he succeeded, as the following narrative recited by himself will show.

CORN BREAD ON A LOG.

"In a steep hollow near the Mississippi river, I came to a primitive log-cabin, built of round logs with the bark still adhering. There were four white-headed, bare-footed boys standing in the doorway. I inquired for their parents. The oldest boy replied that his mother was dead, and his father was up on the hill chopping. I drove 'Robert Raikes' to the foot of the hill and hitched him. Then I climbed the hill, guided by the sound of the axe, until I found the man. I introduced myself as a Sunday-school missionary, and asked him a few questions. Without answering me, he looked up at the sun and said: 'Stranger, it's about twelve o'clock, my dinner time. Let's go down to the cabin!'

"We reached the house and he invited me in. The only article of furniture I could see was a three-legged stool, upon which he invited me to be seated. He went to the fire-place and with a stick lifted the lid off a skillet which contained two loaves of corn-bread, which he had put to bake before going out to work in the morning. I

wondered what he was going to do with it, as there was no table in the house. He carried the skillet to a log which had the top side flattened, and lay near the door. He turned the bread out upon this log. He then placed the skillet over the coals, and taking a large butcher's knife from the belt around him, and which he carried for the purpose of skinning deer, he cut slices from a flitch of bacon which hung in one corner and placed them to fry.

"When the meat was done he set the vessel on the log beside the bread, and invited me out to dinner. I sat on one end of the log, the man on the other, and the four boys stood, two on each side. I used my pocket-knife in partaking of this simple repast.

"When we had finished dinner, I told my host what a good thing a Sunday-school was, and that I was to have a meeting that night at the school-house, a half mile away, and that I wanted to see him and his boys at my meeting.

"He wiped his mouth on the sleeve of his hunting-shirt, and said: 'Stranger, I will come; for a man that ain't ashamed to eat

fat meat and corn bread off a log has got something good to tell, and I am coming to hear what it is, though I never had any education.'

"That night a school was organized and a library procured. This man and his boys were placed together in a class; but, a few years afterward, so rapid had been his improvement, he was elected superintendent of the school.

"Some ten years after this, I was attending a Sunday-school convention in one of the counties of the state, when a young man came up, clasped my hand and called my name, and asked me if I remembered organizing a school at a place where I ate dinner out of doors off a log with a man and his boys. I recalled the place at once. The young man said, 'I am the oldest of those boys, the one who told you where father was chopping. I shall always thank my Heavenly Father that you led my earthly father into the Sunday-school. It was the means under God of his conversion and of my own. A large church has grown out of that school, and I am a delegate from that church to this convention.'

"It was difficult for me to realize that this intelligent young man, a delegate to the convention from a large country church some seventy miles away, was indeed the very white-haired boy I had met at the cabin in the woods."

CHAPTER VII.

ROSES AND THORNS.

THE Society for which Mr. Paxson had labored so long and so zealously called him in the year 1856 from his solitary backwoods travels to the east, to speak in behalf of the work of the Sunday-School Union, before the cultured audiences of great cities. The change was indeed great from lonely rides in "Jimtown Hollow" or along the sides of "Buffalo Knobs," to the rush and roar of Broadway.

But he enjoyed every fresh experience in life with zest. He was so perfectly natural, so simple, unaffected, and unpretending, that he appeared before his cultivated hearers with never a thought of himself or what personal impression he would make. His only thought was: assembled here are the wealth, culture, and religion of the nation; woe is me if I plead not the cause of the poor and needy children of the

west! His own zeal and love were so great that what he said awakened like sentiments in the hearts of his auditors, and he carried them with him in breathless interest.

Year after year, he was called upon to return and spend his winters in the eastern cities, employed in lecturing upon his work, in order to engage benevolent people there in the task of supplying destitute regions in western fields with necessary funds for their evangelization. Into this work he entered with untiring energy and an all-absorbing devotion. He had endured the experiences he narrated; he had had a part in the destitution he was called on to describe; he had felt all the pathos and the pain, all the joy and gratitude of those who are uplifted by timely help from lives of worldliness to lives of consecration. It was no wonder then that this plain western missionary was startling in his facts, all-persuasive in his arguments, touching in his eloquence. Although he spoke every night in the week save Saturday, and from three to five times on Sunday, in all the

principal evangelical churches in the various towns and cities of the eastern, and some of the middle states, not one of all these spirited, earnest speeches has been preserved. They came unpremeditated from his heart, wrought an effective work for the Master, and died away into silence, or were treasured only in the hearts of his hearers.

"Christ wrote nothing," he would reply, in answer to requests to write down his addresses; "how *can* I write them, when I do not know until I see and *feel* my audience what I shall say? I speak as the spirit within giveth me utterance."

The press was unanimous in its commendations of the speeches of "The Great Western Missionary." A Boston daily noticed a meeting in that city as follows: "The audience was large in spite of a violent storm, and the meeting was of the most interesting character. Mr. Paxson riveted the attention of every one present. The facts he gave in connection with his labors in organizing Sunday-schools in the west were of the most thrilling character, and

showed the amazing work which he has been enabled to accomplish as a servant of the American Sunday-School Union.

"At the close of the address a handsome collection was taken up to aid Mr. Paxson's missionary work in the west. Many persons remained to shake hands with one who had organized more than a thousand Sabbath-schools, and an earnest desire was expressed to have him speak again in Boston. This he will probably do, as he speaks every night in the week save Saturday."

The New York papers commented upon his efforts as follows:

"Last evening a meeting was held in Dr. Spring's church, corner of 37th Street and Fifth Avenue, in behalf of the American Sunday-School Union.

"The indefatigable missionary, Stephen Paxson, made an address in which his aristocratic auditors were so deeply interested that they wept and smiled alternately, never heeding mistakes in grammar, or rhetorical discrepancies. They were assured that Mr. Paxson was just the man for the work. He has a good head, well poised, over a

heart filled with love for his noble task. He has accomplished a work that the most popular dignitary in the church might be proud to acknowledge. The contributions for this occasion were five thousand dollars."

At Brooklyn, in January, 1859, he was warmly received. One of his meetings is thus described by a New York correspondent:

"The large and elegant church of Rev. Mr. Budington was opened for this missionary gathering. The night was cold, but the audience large. Mr. Chidlaw made a good speech, but the chief speech of the evening was by Mr. Paxson, one of the society's missionaries in the west. It was a model speech; short, pointed, racy, effective. We need more such. They hit the nail on the head. He showed how the work was done out west. How, in an almost hopeless settlement, a few papers, books and personal efforts gather in the children; how the parents follow; then the prayer-meeting; then the preacher. At times the audience was convulsed with laughter, and then the eye was dimmed

with tears. Every story was told with inimitable effect."

A paper in Bangor, Maine, said of him:

"Mr. Paxson is an uneducated man, but his unaffected simplicity, his ready wit, his skill in telling a story, his quaint expressions, his evident sincerity and earnestness, give him great power over an audience. His extensive travels, his indefatigable industry, his peculiar work, and his peculiar talents for it, have brought him into contact with vast numbers in the new states of the west, and have given him great influence there. It has been said by those who know, that he has exerted more political power in saving those great states than scores of politicians. His address was lengthy, but it was a common observation of the people, as they left the house, that they could have listened much longer. We will only say to our friends who want to secure an effective speaker for Sabbath-school occasions—one who shall at once entertain his young auditors and leave a good impression on their minds, that they can not do better than to secure the services of Mr. Paxson."

A Philadelphia paper adds the following:

"Probably very few persons interested in Sabbath-schools have failed to hear the pioneer missionary of the west. He has been laboring in connection with the American Sunday-School Union for some twenty years, and has done a work which few men are able to do in a lifetime, having himself organized over eleven hundred Sunday-schools. He has been speaking in this and other cities for several weeks to large and deeply interested audiences. The facts connected with his work produce the greatest astonishment on the minds of those not familiar with the west. His addresses are convincing and instructive."

In Connecticut, Rhode Island, and other states he was equally welcomed. A Hartford journal said:

"It was our good fortune to hear 'Father' Paxson's address, and we can assure our readers that none who have once listened to his earnest words and touching narratives, will ever be willing to miss a second opportunity of hearing him. He has true western eloquence, simplicity,

and fervor, and all who love the Sunday-school work will find their love of it quickened and intensified by his words. Few men have been privileged to do so much toward the moral elevation of the human race."

After these cheering winters in New England, when the money so much needed in destitute places had been lavishly poured out to enrich the fields he tilled—when he had been welcomed and hospitably entertained by the best men in the most luxurious of homes—when the Sunday-school children of the Quaker City had publicly testified to their appreciation of his labors by presenting the lame missionary with a cane cut from the Mount of Olives—Mr. Paxson went back to his lowly life-work in obscure places, content and joyful. For a time he had "lain in the lilies and fed on the roses of life,"—now, he went from the 'prophet's chamber' in the home of George H. Stuart, to the log cabins in the west, glad to accept the situation and finding nothing unendurable in it.

The following little incident occurred in

one of these log cabins soon after a return from the east. He was six feet tall; the cot given him to sleep upon was short. He had become accustomed to better accommodations, so he forgot the limitations of his cot, and as he fell asleep extended himself his full length. His feet, covered by a white sheet, went right through an open space between the logs in the wall of the house where the mud filling had dropped out. He was awakened very early in the morning by the fierce barking of a dog and the cry of a boy: "Mr. Missionary! Mr. Missionary! wake up and take in your feet or Jowler will bite your toes off."

Mr. Paxson found that he could not organize schools fast enough to satisfy him by his own unaided labor; so, when his eldest son was fifteen, he took him for an assistant.

They would visit the towns, especially on Saturdays, as then there would be many farmers in; and going about among the wagons and teams, would make inquiries about the different schools in the various neighborhoods where the farmers lived,

thus securing much desirable information in a little time, besides saving miles of travel.

Once they were passing through a settlement to reach a place they had heard of in this way, when they came upon an old field school-house with the chimney leaning one way and the house another. The chinking and daubing had all dropped out from between the logs. It was determined that a school must be organized here; and so they hunted up the only man who had ever been a christian and told him they proposed to have a Sunday-school meeting. He said it was impossible to have a school, for the people must have Sunday for fishing and hunting. He did not go himself, but every one else did. The missionary insisted on trying to start a school, and asked him to be superintendent. He said: "Well, in the first place you won't start the school. Then, in the second place, if you do, they won't have me for superintendent."

He sent his son around on old "Bob" to every house in the neighborhood to tell the people to come out that night to a Sunday-school meeting at the school-house.

They came. The boys brought their guns, horns, and hounds. They stacked their guns in one corner. While the speaker was addressing them, the dogs outside got into a fight. As soon as a dog was whipped, he would run into the house, as the door was off its hinges. Two men put the door cross-wise, and held it to keep the dogs out, while the Sunday-school was being organized. After the meeting the boys began to blow their horns, and the dogs began to howl, and all was confusion.

But the school was organized, five dollars being collected for books, and ten dollars donated, while the discouraged brother was promptly made superintendent. As our missionaries went their way, the lad asked his father if this was what was meant by sowing the seed beside all waters.

Two years later, in passing near this place, a man told them the subsequent history of this school. He said: "After you left, the people decided it was a Yankee trick to get our money and that the books would never come. But, by and by, to their surprise they did come! The people

got together to get the books on Sunday, and they went to reading the Bible. After a while they concluded they were living too much like heathen people, so they sent off and got a preacher to come and preach. All the teachers and about two-thirds of the scholars joined the meeting."

Two more years passed by, and again the missionary found himself in the neighborhood of the old field school-house. He found the spot occupied by one of the finest country churches in Northern Missouri, and that one hundred persons constituted its membership.

The most frequent obstacle in his way was the extreme poverty of the people, but he had a happy faculty of securing all they were able to give. They would inform him that they would be glad of a library, but had no money, and perhaps would have none until their crops were harvested.

"But how much *would* you give toward buying a library supposing you had the money?" the missionary would inquire. The reply to this would vary, as to the amount, from five to fifteen dollars.

In almost every district he would find one man at least a little better off than his neighbors. So he would say, "Now, is there not some gentleman present who is willing to advance the sum these people are willing to give for a library, and allow them to pay him at their earliest convenience?"

In such appeals he never failed, and would often go away with the only five or ten dollars the neighborhood contained.

The following incident pictures the social condition of part of his field, while illustrating his indomitable perseverance.

"I once went to a wild, desolate region on Panther Creek. I learned that there had never been any kind of a school established there, and that there was but one christian family in the settlement. I called on this man—a Mr. Piper—and he promised to act as superintendent in the school I proposed to organize, provided the people would elect him. There was no school-house, so by his permission I visited all the people and invited them to meet me at his house.

"The night of the meeting arrived, but

no one came. I could see the people in wagons, on horseback, and afoot, passing on their way up the creek. I asked my host where they were going. He went out and inquired of some one, and found they were on their way to a dance, or, as it was rudely designated by them, a 'hoe-down.' After the time appointed for my meeting had passed, I asked my friend to accompany me to the dance. He hesitated, and could not understand why a missionary should go to such a place. I explained that I had a message to give to the people of that settlement, and if they would not come to me, I must go to them.

"We went to the house, and found that the fiddling and dancing had begun. I called for the lady of the house, and inquired if she was willing to ask the fiddler to stop for a few moments, for, although a stranger, I had some good news to tell them.

"The dancing ceased; all wanted to know what the news was and how long it would take to tell it. One man asked if it was news from Pike's Peak, for he had a brother who had gone there to dig gold, and he

would like to hear from there. I told him my news was not from Pike's Peak, but from the peaks of Mount Sinai, a great deal farther off than Pike's Peak, but better news than he would ever get from Pike's Peak, though his brother should secure all the golden treasures it contained; and that it would take me about thirty minutes to tell them my news. Some wanted to hear what I had to say, and others wanted to go on with the dance.

"Seeing there was a division among them, I put it to vote, and a majority voted in favor of hearing the stranger. I talked to them for thirty minutes, then stopped, telling them I was not quite through, but my time was up. All cried out, 'Go on!' 'We'll hear all you have got to say.' I went on, and ended by proposing to start a Sunday-school.

"Some said they rather guessed they ought to do it, for they had never had any good thing on Panther Creek. We proceeded to elect officers. I then told them that they would need a library, which would cost about fifteen dollars, as there were some seventy

children to attend the school. They responded that if money was needed, there was no use of beginning, for there was no money on Panther Creek.

"'But,' I replied, 'I have been informed that you keep up a dance here one night in every week. If you have no money, how do you pay the fiddler?'

"'Oh, we cut wood for him!' was the reply. 'We cut wood for him in the daytime, and he fiddles for us at night."

"I then informed them that a young gentleman in New York state had, only a few weeks before, given me twenty-five dollars; that of this money, which was given on purpose to help needy Sunday-schools, I had fifteen dollars left. If they would agree to stop dancing, and keep up a Sunday-school, I would buy a library for them with that money. All consented except one young woman, who said she would rather dance than eat sugar, but if the rest quit, she supposed she would have to do so too. Three years afterward they employed a minister, who said he never had a more attentive audience."

It was a curious fact in regard to the money which enabled the missionary to establish this school, that it was given by a young gentleman in Albany, who had designed to purchase a ball ticket with it; but, hearing of the destitution in many parts of the west, as regarded all religious influences, he concluded it would be wrong to spend the money in that way, and that instead, he would make it a contribution for the support of some needy Sunday-school. Thus, the money saved from the ball-room in Albany broke up the dances on Panther Creek.

As the traveler passes down the Mississippi River, he may see upon one of its highest bluffs two stately churches, one Methodist, the other Presbyterian, which are the outgrowth of this Panther Creek Sunday-school.

Mr. Paxson was in the habit of saying that the word "impossible" was not in his dictionary. "I can't" was another phrase against which he waged a relentless warfare. No matter how forbidding the state of circumstances, he pushed ahead with as much zeal as though everything favored his

efforts. He came to Roanoke to organize a school, but there was neither church edifice nor school-house in the little village. He soon discovered a tobacco barn, and into this he collected the people and organized them into a Sunday-school. Afterward when a school-house was built, the Sunday-school was moved into it, and still later, when a church was erected, it was transferred to that. Ever since its rude origin in a tobacco barn, now more than thirty years ago, that school has continued in summer and in winter, in peace and in war.

Upon one occasion he knocked at the door of a school-house in the backwoods, where, by the hum of voices, he knew the school was in session. There was a rush as of hurrying feet and then all was still. In obedience to a faint "Come in," he entered the room and saw the abashed teacher standing in the middle of the floor, spelling-book in hand, but not a scholar was at first sight visible. Glancing about the room, as he greeted the teacher, he saw that the pupils had sought concealment under the benches.

With some difficulty, by producing picture papers, he coaxed them out; and, after having gained their confidence a little and banished their fears of a stranger, he taught them a little lesson on the subject of manners. He found the poor children had never been to school before. He requested them all, when they went home in the afternoon, to tell their parents to come to the school-house that night, as he had something of the greatest importance to tell them. As the children were all interested, they did not fail to come back and to bring their parents along to hear what the stranger had to say. A school was organized at once in Hazel Switch Dell.

He also organized a school at Briar Branch, where the majority of the people were very needy, but he collected what little money they had. He was told that a wealthy widow lady, who lived some two miles away, had sent word that she was heartily in sympathy with the movement, and would be glad to contribute towards the support of the school, if the missionary would call at her house. Charmed with the

thought that now the school could have a map of Palestine and a Bible Dictionary, at least, he hastened over fields of waving corn and grass to her home. He was ushered into a fine parlor where the soft-cushioned chairs, velvety carpets, and beautiful pictures were a delight to his eyes, weary with the sight of rude, bare floors and walls.

The lady presently entered and expressed her gratitude to him for his interest in the spiritual welfare of the poor people about her, and said if he would excuse her a moment she would get the sum of money she had decided to contribute to so worthy a cause. She manifested such a generous interest that he mentally decided to think no longer of a five dollar library, for the school could have a fifteen dollar one just as well as not, and that was the very one needed. The lady returned and dashed his lofty expectations by handing him *ten cents.*

But this incident was unusual and not generally characteristic of the west.

Old and established schools were always ready to help young pioneer schools in destitute regions.

Very pleasant examples of this were constantly occurring in Mr. Paxson's experience. The Cold Water school, organized out in the open prairies of Illinois in 1854, was helped into existence by a timely donation of books from the American Sunday-School Union. It soon became a thrifty, self-supporting school, and sent its spiritual father a handsome sum to help in the establishment of other schools.

In 1849 he organized a school in a community where only two religious persons could be found to take charge of it; but, years afterward, he found that it had grown and prospered, and had organized an evangelical church.

Many of his schools formed missionary societies, and made quarterly contributions to aid him in establishing new schools.

Over all his thousands of teachers he exerted a wonderfully inspiring influence. He made them feel that it was a great thing to be good, that it was of the utmost importance that they should improve themselves in every possible way. He would often remark: "My Heavenly Father has not sent

me to tell many things to a few people, but he has sent me to tell a few things to many people." These few things were neither new nor strange, but old truths vitalized by his own earnest belief in them.

He would encourage his teachers in such simple words, but with such soul-felt manner that they would be aroused and stimulated by his most unpretending remarks. He would often address them somewhat in this way:

"My dear friends in Christ, I am speaking now to you who have this immensely great charge of directing the young mind and heart. If there is any one class of God's people that I love better than another, it is you.

"The christian sister or brother, who is taking the child from the paths of vice and folly, and placing its feet in the paths of piety, I look upon as occupying the highest position in the world that any mortal, save the minister of Christ, can occupy. You are doing a work in which angels would delight to engage; you are starting little rills of influence, which will flow on to

eternity, depositing blessings all along the way.

"If we write upon marble, it will perish; if we write upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we write God's holy truth upon young immortal minds, it will live and brighten forever. I will state my conviction that while America is to decide the destiny of the world, the Mississippi Valley is to decide the destiny of America; and the Sunday-school is to decide the destiny of the Mississippi Valley, and the Church is to decide the destiny of the Sunday-school. And I do think the Sabbath-school is heaven's last experiment to aid God's ministers in bringing the world to Christ. Engaged in this work, your names may not be heralded by the captains of earthly hosts; they may never be sounded by the silver trumpet of fame; but in the courts of glory they will be written in letters of light, which will burn on in a blaze of glory, when this world and all its glitter of vanity shall have passed away. Your work is for eternity, and here you can never tell how

much good you accomplish, because you can never measure the amount of evil which you have prevented. But one day, in the glad hereafter, you shall know; when the question is asked:

"'Who are these whose little feet,
Pacing life's dark journey through,
Now have reached that heavenly seat
They had ever kept in view?'

"And the answer comes—

"'I, from Greenland's frozen land;
I, from India's sultry plain;
I, from Afric's barren sand;
I, from islands of the main.

"'All our earthly journey past,
Every tear and pain gone by,
Here together met at last,
At the portals of the sky!

"'Each the welcome "Come" awaits,
Conquerors over death and sin;
Lift your heads, ye golden gates,
Let the little travelers in!'"

Our missionary had no doubt as to the future greatness of the west. He felt assured that a dense population would one day cover these mighty prairies; that the descendants of these untaught people whom he was trying to educate and uplift, would

be the heroes and sages of the time to come. He felt himself a kind of John the Baptist in the wilderness, feeding upon locusts and wild honey, but preparing the way, in some rude, pioneer fashion, for the coming footsteps of the Prince of Light.

The world trusts the man who gives positive replies and is sure of his own purpose. So the masses trusted Stephen Paxson; and by "carrying knowledge to the people who sat in darkness," he transformed dangerous elements into elements of strength and safety. He was willing and glad to use his indomitable energy and the full measure of his magnetic influence in the work of uplifting the lowest and most ignorant. At the risk of his life, having been warned with threatenings again and again not to attempt the task, he broke up the Sunday horse-racing at Loafer Grove, organized the rowdies into a Bible school, and kept them there, after he was gone, by the force of a strong, personal influence, until they were moved upon by a higher power.

One secret of his abiding influence over others lay in the fact that he felt in his own

heart all the awe of such a gift. Solemn as "eternity's stillness" was the thought ever present:

"Choose well! your choice is
Brief, and yet endless."

Though working in a sphere the world considers comparatively humble, yet this man of God was not left without the temptations of mammon. A gentleman at the east, who knew of his perfect familiarity with western lands, and who had the utmost confidence in his unswerving integrity, offered to take him into partnership for the purchase of some of these lands. He was offered $50,000 to invest, the two to share equally in the profits. The offer was resolutely declined. He could not think of giving a divided interest to his great work.

Years afterward, Mr. Paxson and his business friend compared notes. His friend had doubled the $50,000. Mr. Paxson drew his memorandum-book and pointed to the record —fifty thousand scholars gathered into Sunday-school up to that time — adding, "I would not alter the record or change the investment."

CHAPTER VIII.

MASS MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS.

MEANWHILE the war-cloud had begun to darken and overshadow the land. All hearts grew anxious. Mr. Paxson rejoiced over the fact that the Union army was depopulating his Sunday-schools. He felt that his teachers and scholars were not only prepared to fight bravely, but to die nobly, if need be, in their country's cause. In one township, out of one hundred and eighty-one voters, he found that one hundred and twenty-eight had gone to the war. One of his Sunday-schools on McGee's Creek had sent to the war every one of its male pupils over twelve years of age.

Through the quiet street of Summer Hill, one warm night, sounded the cry, "The bush-whackers are coming down upon Louisiana!" a town in Missouri, some ten miles away.

The men and boys of the village speedily

armed themselves, as best they could, and departed to the defence of the town, leaving women and children to watch the long night through, beset by fears as to what might happen to their loved ones. Nothing of consequence happened to the disturbed town, but the young men had all their patriotic feelings aroused, and soon many of them bade farewell to their pleasant homes and went away to the war, some of them never to return.

Upon one occasion in these exciting times, Mr. Paxson was holding a Sunday-school meeting in the state of Missouri, when his audience became intensely excited by the approach of twenty-five armed "bush-whackers." That an evil fate was nearing them, all surmised, and each was anxious and alarmed. Mr. Paxson kept perfectly cool. He told his little congregation to remain quietly seated, while he began singing one of his favorite hymns. The bush-whackers gathered about the door and listened a few moments, then quietly walked in and seated themselves upon the benches nearest the door. He

felt that there was more power in song than in words; and as his new audience seemed very attentive, he sang song after song until weary. He then ceased, and the bush-whackers went quietly away, while the people drew long breaths of relief.

Again it became necessary to change his place of residence, in order that his sons might be educated at college without the expense of sending them from home. Jacksonville, Illinois, was near the centre of his field of labor, and thither the family removed in the year 1861. This city of schools and public institutions welcomed the arrival of the veteran missionary, in the persons of many of its best citizens, who had become well acquainted with him and his work.

He opened a depository of the books of the Society for greater convenience in filling orders, and amid all the tumult of the times, continued his peaceful efforts in behalf of the children of the land.

"Robert Raikes" had now become old and infirm. It was a serious question how much more travel the faithful creature could

endure. Frequently his master was compelled to take compassion on him and travel on the cars, in order that he might rest. The family all thought that his last days should be restful ones, and hoped that something would happen to relieve him. Mr. Paxson's friends always liked to travel with him, because, they said, he could not go six miles without meeting with some adventure, or, at the very least, an "incident" would occur at the first corner, or a "fact" be found waiting for him at the sign-post; so it was thought quite reasonable to suppose that *something* would certainly happen to relieve poor "Old Bob," and comfort the heart of his compassionate master.

Sure enough, one day a letter came all the way from New York, which said, as nearly as can be recalled:

Dear Brother Paxson:—This morning I found that the Lord had put one hundred dollars in my pocket-book, which I feel directed to send to you for the purchase of a "Robert Raikes, Junior." Your old friend,

RALPH WELLS.

The eyes of the missionary were dewy with tears, as he folded the letter, saying:

"I am not worthy of this, though my faith is strong that I shall never see the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread. But the *work* is worthy of those things which shall forward it; and this dear friend's gift shall be dedicated to carrying the gospel to those who sit in darkness."

What a question was now to be decided! for where could a horse be found worthy to succeed "Robert" and to bear his name? Great caution was advised, extreme prudence insisted upon. So very anxious was every one that weeks passed by and many horses had been under review and still no choice had been made. At last, upon reaching home one evening, after a fruitless quest for a worthy animal, Mr. Paxson was told by his wife that she had found a "Raikes, Junior." A man had brought a horse to the house that day for his inspection, which she was sure, to all appearances, was just the horse desired. He was immediately secured and soon proved himself adequate to the work which lay before him.

A pleasant feature of Mr. Paxson's work

was the letters he received, especially those from children. A young girl in Sangamon county wrote him a letter in 1864, telling him that she had so longed for a Sunday-school to attend, that she had started one herself. She took three children from her own family and two from a neighbor's, secured the help of a young friend about singing, and with these began a Sunday-school. The third Sunday the school numbered thirty scholars, and often afterward one hundred. The school was in need of books, and she wrote to him for supplies.

He gave the history of this "Antioch School" at a convention in Springfield, as an illustration of what one young, earnest soul could do in the work of the Master, and closed his remarks by saying, "and this young girl is with us to-night." Though years have passed away, his simple letter of warm encouragement is still preserved by her, and she treasures up his last words to her: "Live right, and we shall meet up yonder."

Long after his first simple effort in Winchester, it became evident that Sunday-

school conventions had finally grown popular, and that the power of organized effort was fully recognized. He had predicted the wonderful advance which would be made in this direction, and had given the strength of his influence in aid of the work. A writer in the New York *Independent*, in a description of one of the Illinois State Sunday-school Conventions, says:

"No religious gathering in the country excites more general attention. This year it met in a vast 'Wigwam,' in the beautiful city of Bloomington. Three thousand enthusiastic delegates were present. In the afternoon the convention met in sections for close practical work. In the evening the theatre — pit and parquet, stage and gallery—was jammed. A thousand people outside petitioned for another meeting and a church was opened which immediately overflowed. The next morning was given to exciting discussions under the strict application of the five minutes and later three minutes rule. It is astonishing how unwontedly eloquent men become under this hydraulic pressure.

"Stephen Paxson, the old Illinois missionary of the American Sunday-School Union, spoke in his well-known style. And the eloquence of Stephen Paxson makes one feel, after all, that education is rather a dispensable luxury than a necessity. The lady who was the teacher of the little daughter who led him into the Sunday-school was also present. Mr. Paxson and Prof. P. G. Gillett were appointed to campaign in the counties of 'Egypt.' Other members of the executive committee divided the rest of the state among them. As heretofore, when money was asked, more was tendered than was needed. The one thousand dollars asked for this year was raised in fifteen minutes, and the committee were obliged to refuse subscriptions. Up to the minute of adjournment the interest increased. Speeches followed in quick succession, being mingled with the stirring songs of Philip Phillips. Mr. D. L. Moody, the President, made an eloquent closing address. But how imperfect my poor representation of this, as I firmly believe, the most remarkable convention of the kind ever held."

Another notice of the same meeting says: "Illinois has the best corps of voluntary workers, and is the best organized of any state we know. Three thousand delegates, besides many people, were present in a large 'wigwam,' built for the purpose. Father Paxson was the lion of the last day, and made one of his thrilling and characteristic speeches. Thousands of scholars were there and his reception was grand indeed."

For such a furor of Sunday-school interest even Mr. Paxson was scarcely prepared, although he had worked to this end through weary years, when indifference was the prevailing hindrance to all successful effort.

At the first International Sunday-school Convention, held at Indianapolis in 1872, the chairman, Prof. P. G. Gillett, said—referring to the maps of Illinois and Missouri, which were shaded so that the lighter parts represented the greater number of churches and Sunday-schools: "You will find a broad belt of light through Central Illinois and Northern Missouri, caused by the labors for forty years of the pioneer Sunday-school missionary."

"Open the windows and let in the light," were the last words of a great writer—the dying Goethe; but, "Open the windows and let in the light" of truth and knowledge was the *life motto* of these humble disciples.

Mr. Paxson was so catholic in his sentiments that these Sunday-school conventions were peculiarly pleasing to him. He was accustomed to remark: "I love to meet in this way, if for no other reason than that it rubs off the rough edges of sectarian prejudice, as here we all meet upon the broad platform of God's truth. Here we know no differences. We ask not to what church you belong, but, are you laboring in this grand work? I think God is thus uniting the Protestant churches of this country for the great battle just before us."

At a convention in Galt, Upper Canada, Mr. Paxson was the guest of the mayor of the city, who had become as much interested in his Sunday-school experiences, as Mr. Paxson was in the country and people about him. At one of the meetings he narrated a little story which greatly amused his audience. He was trying to show that it

is not best for teachers to preach to their scholars, but simply to teach them.

A lady had told him an anecdote of her experience, which bore upon this point. Said she: "For many years I prepared my lesson to preach to the scholars. A little incident occurred one day that upset all my ideas about preparation. I was preaching to my scholars, and they were listening, as I thought, with great attention. One little girl particularly appeared to be listening and drinking in everything I said; when, to my surprise, she inquired, 'Missis, do you know if a person would pare their nails on Friday, the witches would not catch her?'"

"The child had not been hearing a word she said. Then she began to reflect, and changed her plan accordingly. Now, my friends," continued Mr. Paxson, "I will read directions for preparations from one of the best writers ever heard of in the United States," and he proceeded to read passages from one of the apostles.

Upon another occasion he was attending a convention, and the subject under discussion was: "What are the necessary qualifi-

cations of a Sunday-school teacher?" The different speakers wrangled over it a good deal, and much feeling was aroused when Mr. Paxson arose and said: "My dear friends, I wish to read a few lines from a very old book, bearing upon the question under consideration:

"'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane *and* vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness. * * * Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. * * * Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. * * * Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. * * * These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of believers, in

word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee. * * * Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; * * * for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. * * * O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and opposition of science, falsely so called.'" *

When he had finished the passage he sat down without a word. A deep silence fell upon the audience. All seemed to feel that nothing more could be said. Finally, a member arose and said:

"Mr. President, that subject having now been completely exhausted, I move that we proceed to consider the next topic."

The motion was carried unanimously. All incipient speeches were thus hushed, and perfect harmony restored.

*See Epistles to Timothy.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW WORK.

The condition of the people of this section of the country was now much improved by the civilizing influence of railroads, and by the spiritual and mental development consequent upon the establishment of day-schools and Sunday-schools, so that Mr. Paxson now rarely met with the rude experiences of an earlier period. He no longer dreaded a similar adventure to that of being lost on "Grand Prairie" with fire behind, and before, and around him. He was not again compelled to take his saddle to bed with him for the double purpose of making it serve as a pillow for his head, and of preventing the rats from gnawing it during the night. Better arrangements were made for him than those of yore, when he organized schools in tobacco barns, or in a school-house surrounded by a swollen creek and which he could not

reach without bridging the stream, or in a deserted car by the railroad track. "Robert Raikes, Junior," was never turned loose, as his predecessor had been, to find his supper in the woods or on the prairie. No longer did children run under the bed or behind the door upon seeing a stranger approach the house. He was not again warned that an attempt to organize schools in certain places would be at the risk of being disabled or perhaps of losing his life. He was never again suspected of being a horse-thief, trying to spy out the land under cover of religious meetings; or a Yankee swindler endeavoring to cheat people out of their money under pretense of buying books for them.

Old things had passed away, and all things had become new. He had tried to the extent of his ability to obey the command: "Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that *is* within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And *that* their children, which

have not known *anything*, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it."*

And his reward was that, instead of meeting boys who could not tell who made them, or who died to save sinners, he would hear of this and that Sunday-school boy having become earnest preachers of the word; or of this bright youth of an earlier time, now the honored governor of a state; or of another, eminent in the service of his country; while among the little girls he had gathered into the fold of the Master, he would afterward bid farewell and God-speed to one departing to her life-work in Persia, and hear of another in far-away India.

He had exemplified in his life the fact that "we live in deeds, not years;" and so, though he had a merry heart to "cheat the toil and cheer the way," he was now grown weary, worn by the incessant toil and travel of thirty years. The Society kindly gave him the easier position of taking charge of the Book Depository in St. Louis, with lib-

* Deut. xxxi. 12, 13.

erty to travel whenever he felt disposed, to missionary Sunday-school conventions, mass-meetings, and in similar work.

He moved to St. Louis in the year 1868. To business life he brought the same energy and enthusiasm which had characterized him in his Sunday-school work. Accustomed to do his whole duty and never to do anything by halves, he insisted that the work of each day should be done in that day. His clerks soon learned that close attention to business was the way to win favor. An order left over from one day to another only partly filled, he called a "cripple." A stranger entering the store would perhaps be surprised to hear his emphatic declaration to his clerks that he would have *no "cripples" around him.* His promptness and fine executive ability soon earned a reputation for the house, which was invaluable.

Many of his old friends and acquaintances in the Sunday-school work, upon hearing of his connection with the Sunday-school book business, would write to him for supplies; and many a business letter was relieved of

its monotony by allusions to personal acquaintance and former work, as, for instance, the following:

"The school for which these supplies are bought is an outgrowth of one you organized years ago in a little log school-house at 'Green Pond.' We have now a fine church, which has grown out of that school. I was a little boy then, and you let me ride 'Robert Raikes' around the neighborhood to call the people out at early candle-lighting to organize the school, and I am now the superintendent."

Or something like this:

"Do you remember when you organized a Sunday-school on 'Honey Creek,' and how I had to carry the books you sent, sixteen miles on my back on Saturday evening, in order to have them ready for Sunday?"

Again:

"You cannot have forgotten Joy's Prairie Sunday-school. I am now the librarian, and order all the books. When you came to our house years ago I held the dog to keep him from biting you, while you persuaded father to let me join the school."

Thus he lived over again from day to day in these letters—some of them too personal and precious to be made public—the old life and work. He opened all his numerous letters himself, and had a book in which to enter them; for in all his work order was law.

He soon made the acquaintance of all the children in the vicinity of the store, and would give them cards and papers and inquire where they went to Sunday-school. He was soon compelled to limit their visits to Saturday afternoon, when the store would be thronged with children.

Even here, in the heart of a large city, he was never without an amusing incident; for people from the backwoods now sought him out as he had once sought them. One day a man came to the bookstore, and said he would like to buy the "American Sunday-School Union."

Mr. Paxson told him that he had no book of that name.

"Well, sir," was the response, "make a book for me, then, that will explain the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. I do

not want a big book; let it cost about fifteen cents. I work hard on my farm all the week, and I don't have time to read. I want a book that will tell me right off all I want to know about the Sunday-school lesson."

"I do not," explained Mr. Paxson, "write or publish books myself; but here are a few volumes of 'Teacher's Helps,' written by men much wiser than I am, and they would prove invaluable to you, if you would study them carefully; but, my dear sir, you must not expect to buy, with fifteen cents, *brains* enough to run your Sunday-school class without any trouble or study on your part."

Mr. Paxson's labors gradually extended over various states in the southwest. His services were eagerly sought in all the state and county conventions. Previous to the first state convention in Texas, he spent seventy days in traveling over that vast state, organizing and holding local conventions and arousing the churches to aggressive work in behalf of the children.

The press made various complimentary allusions to this work. One journal mentioned it and its originator as follows:

"Hoary-headed and venerable as he is, he has been striking herculean blows for the work, while he has labored with an enthusiasm that would seem to indicate that he would, if it were possible, reap the whole state for the Lord."

Again—

"The leading spirits of the convention were the Paxsons, father and son. Perhaps no man has accomplished more good than Father Paxson. No man ever started lower. Cursed by orphanage, poverty, lameness, and an impediment in speech, he has toiled on and labored upward, until he has built for himself a monument of good works more enduring than brass or marble. He is an earnest, fluent speaker, throwing so much soul into his subject that the defects of early education are scarcely noticed."

While absent upon this work Mr. Paxson wrote:

"Texas, in many respects, is the most wonderful country on the face of the earth. Take New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and put-

ting them all together you have a state almost as large as Texas. Here is the black, waxy land. Here corn, wheat, and cotton grow side by side, as nowhere else on this continent. Immigration is pouring a steady stream into the great bosom of Texas, and cities and towns are springing up as if by magic. At Dallas, which was the base of our operations, we struck the great Carnival of Mardi Gras in full heat of preparation. The city was on fire with excitement over this wonderful show, and the town filled with strangers. This state of affairs was anything but encouraging to Sunday-school mission work; but we had mapped out Texas for our campaign, and must proceed."

He did proceed, undaunted as of old by any obstacle, and the convention was a success. He appeared with his genial smile and re-juvenated bearing, and seemed fired by a new zeal, as he talked about the development of this great idea, whose history he had watched so earnestly, and now he beheld "How great a matter a little fire kindleth."

The Missouri and Illinois State Sunday-school conventions happened to meet on the same days, beginning May 26th, 1875; and as he could not attend both, he sent this dispatch to the Illinois convention:

Dear Friends: I cannot be present in body, but am with you in spirit. Please read the following passages from God's word:

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. * * * For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men*. I am glad therefore on your behalf; but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." (Rom. i. 8, 9; xvi. 19.)

Iowa also called him into her service, and spoke of him as the "Sunday-school Nestor of the north-west, if not of America." Eleven years after helping to organize the first state convention in Iowa, he returned to attend another, and spoke in warm terms of the progress made—"All were ready and willing to work. I thought I could hear the sharpening of many sickles for future work for Christ in the great harvest-fields. There were no 'stop-over tickets' issued at this convention, no stopping for winter or summer, no pushing out on side-tracks; but on-

ward and upward was the watchword. When I behold the progress made by this state in eleven years, I can only exclaim, 'What hath God wrought?'"

The following is his own account of a mass-meeting of Sunday-school workers in northern Missouri:

"This was a grand centennial meeting to be held on the Fourth of July, and neither money nor time had been spared to make it a success; so, on the night of July 3d, while the torch-light processions were moving, and sky-rockets were flying, and fire-crackers whizzing, and cannons booming all over St. Louis, I started for northern Missouri. Every town I passed for more than a hundred miles was lit up with bonfires, and, as the train swept by, the multitude made the welkin ring. About midnight it began to rain, and by the time we reached Macon, at seven o'clock in the morning, the earth was covered with water. Here Dr. Rubey and Bro. Hale met me at the depot with long faces, much discouraged. The rain was still pouring down.

"'If we have got grit, now let us show it,'

said I. 'Tell all that will follow us to come on!'

"Out of many hundreds that were ready to come, only a few, about forty, had courage enough to face the storm. We took the cars and started for Callao, the place of meeting, ten miles distant. By the time we got there the rain had slackened. The church was opened for us, and soon filled. At ten o'clock the clouds began to break away and the people to pour in by hundreds, so we moved to a grove that had been prepared for five thousand people. We sent a dispatch back to Macon, telling the waiting crowd to come on the next train; all things were now ready. The wind had shaken the water off the trees; the sun soon kissed the damp from the benches. The people kept coming until we had, it was said, three thousand on the ground. They brought with them a centennial dinner, and more than twelve baskets full were left.

"Fourteen speeches were made, and I was compelled to make just half of them; but they had one good trait—they were all short.

"Many interesting incidents occurred here. I met people I had known a quarter of a century before. One man shook hands with me, saying, 'The first Sunday-school speech I ever heard was made by you twenty-six years ago, in Bloomington in this county.'

"Another greeted me, saying:

"'You and your son stopped at my father's in Schuyler county, more than a quarter of a century ago, and started a Sunday-school that is still going on—never stopped from the time it was started. We have a large church which I attend, that has grown out of that school.'

"These and many other incidents which occur to me daily, ought to encourage us all to press on in this noble work.

"I went back to Macon—cars so full there was not standing room, and all singing, 'Let the lower lights be burning,' and other Sunday-school songs. It was as happy a crowd as I ever saw. I arrived at home all right except my voice. I had left it at the mass meeting."

He says: "It was as happy a crowd as I

ever saw"—but all the crowds he mingled with were happy ones, for he called out every bit of joyousness there was in the people. He had traveled from the Alleghanies to the Rocky Mountains, from the Lakes to the Gulf, on foot, on horseback, and in every possible mode of conveyance; but, no matter how many discomforts were endured by him and his fellow-travelers, he was invariably good-humored and disposed to look on the bright side.

It was interesting to see him enter a car full of people all demurely reading or perfectly silent, as if afraid of some contamination if they touched or spoke to each other. Before he had been present a quarter of an hour, his keen eye had observed every face, and he had discovered this man whom he once met in Maine, shaken hands with that friend from Colorado, and bowed to a lady whom he once made superintendent of a Sunday-school because no man could be found to fill the office. He would introduce these various persons to each other, get them to take seats together, open his satchel and distrib-

ute music-books among them, and among any strangers who would take them. He would remember having seen some men with musical instruments as he was passing through another car, and retiring a moment he would return with them. He would then decide upon some song all could sing, and the music and the singing would begin. Spectators, somewhat surprised at first at his proceedings, would gradually draw nearer and join in. As new people came in at the various stations, they would at first seat themselves demurely and look on wonderingly; then, catching the contagion of the good time the crowd were having, they would soon be at one with them. So plunging through the forest and sweeping over the plain, the noise of the singing and laughing—for he would sometimes tell a story between the songs—mingled with the rumble of the train and the shriek of the engine, and made the travelers feel the truth that "all the world is kin."

At a Sunday-school Jubilee held in Sangerfest Hall, St. Louis, June 20, 1872, "some twenty-five thousand children," the city

papers stated, "flocked into the vast building very much as if some Pied Piper of Hamelin were perched upon the platform piping the same old, mysterious, seductive tune that drew children together long ago.

"So many 'caroling cherubs' in gay attire, the great decorated hall, the thousands of glad voices, and the grand music, made it no ordinary jubilee.

"Various addresses were made, and then the President introduced Stephen Paxson as the oldest Sunday-school worker in the house. His appearance was the signal for three enthusiastic cheers from the audience, and when quiet was restored, in a few well-chosen words he told them of the great joy he felt at witnessing such a goodly sight."

"A gentleman came to my office not long since and said, 'Mr. Paxson, I wish to ask you a question, and hope you will take no offence at it.'

"'No offence at all, sir; ask whatever you please, and I will do as I please about answering it.'

"'Well, Mr. Paxson, some people in the east are a little suspicious of the report that

you have actually organized thirteen hundred new Sunday-schools with some sixty thousand scholars, and they requested me to examine into the matter. Have you any proof of it that you will permit me to examine?'

"'Yes, sir; here are my books containing the name of each school, with its superintendent, post-office address, and number of scholars, set down upon the very day it was organized, for I never left such things over night. Examine them to your heart's content; and you will find duplicates of these records sent from time to time as they were filled at Godfrey, Ill., and also at the Sunday-School Union rooms in Philadelphia.'

"'Ah, yes, sir; I see there can be no mistake in the matter; the records are complete, and I shall take pleasure in acquainting my friends with the facts—Good-bye, sir.'"

Father Paxson once performed the feat of organizing forty Sabbath-schools in forty consecutive days; and those who had tested the work could well understand the strong figure with which he ended the recital—

"But I had to work day and night like a horse."

The summer of the Centennial he visited Philadelphia again, for the purpose of attending the anniversary meeting of the American Sunday-School Union. Here he met many old friends and fellow-helpers in the truth; among them Rev. Dr. Richard Newton, who presided; Rev. J. McCullagh, of Kentucky; Rev. T. Wright, of Michigan; Rev. B. W. Chidlaw, of Ohio; Mr. F. G. Ensign, of Illinois; "Father Martin," Rev. Dr. D. March, and Sir Charles Reed, M. P., of England. It was a gathering of the disciples of the Lord, and filled the Academy of Music to overflowing. On Monday evening they met in the old First Church, where Rev. Albert Barnes preached for so many years, and addresses were made by Sir Charles Reed, Dr. March, Rev. B. W. Chidlaw, and himself.

He visited the Great Exposition and was delighted with many of its attractions, but turned resolutely away from its charms to attend one convention of Sunday-school workers in Pennsylvania, and another in Indiana.

He thus describes a convention in Missouri:

"During the hot season — or, in other words, my vacation for the Centennial summer—I went to Caseyville, Missouri, to attend a convention. I landed at the station with some forty or fifty delegates, and, as no one met us there, we marched double file through the town up to the church. It was not open. I was about to organize the convention outside, when the key was found and the door opened. The house was soon filled, and we organized for work. After two days the crowd was so large that the house would not hold the people. The third day being Sunday, we went to the woods, where a thousand people assembled to hear about Sunday-schools. I met many friends whom I had known twenty-six years ago, when I first visited the county and organized twenty-one Sunday-schools in it. Many of these have since grown into churches. It did one good to grasp the hands of those old friends, who opened their homes and hearts to me so long ago."

After attending numerous other conven-

tions in rapid succession, he speaks of one he attended where the house was too small, and the meetings were held in a grove, with more than a thousand persons present. "Here," he says, "I met many acquaintances who remembered 'Robert Raikes,' the famous Sunday-school horse. These people had given shelter more than once to myself and my faithful horse, more than twenty-five years ago."

The following synopsis of a speech made by him at an International Sunday-School Convention, held in Atlanta, Ga., has fortunately been preserved. It is upon the general topic of "State and Provincial Organization for Sunday-schools:"

"Father Paxson, of Missouri, the veteran missionary, who has started more Sunday-schools than any man living, opened the topic. He had had considerable experience in the work of county, township, and state organization. He had gradually succeeded in planting fifteen Sunday-schools in Scott county, Ills. The need of co-operation, sympathy, and union soon began to be felt in this region, and he determined to call the

schools together. They met in a two day convention—memorable days, for this was the first county convention ever organized in the United States! * It was in Scott county, Illinois, in 1846. So full was he of the convention idea, that people called him crazy.

"But he never had more or better sense. 'The time will come,' he had said, 'when there will be a county convention in every county in the state of Illinois.' He did not then expect to live to see the day; but he had, thank God! Years ago each one of the one hundred and one counties in Illinois, and seventy-three in Missouri, had its organization. He had himself organized forty in Illinois, and did not know how many in Missouri, and to-day the eight counties contiguous to Scott, where the good work commenced, are more enthusiastic in the convention idea than an equal area, perhaps, in the United States. The uniform lesson the speaker believed to be the outgrowth of the convention work. Nobody would have thought of it if they had not come together, found out the delight of

* See note, p. 42.

christian fellowship, and the advantages of united prayer, labor, and study. These conventions had also cured the frost-bitten schools among them. They do not close in winter now: the sentiment was against it. We say to them, 'Why, the devil don't stop his *hoe-downs* and *shindigs* in winter! Why should you stop your Sunday-schools?' And they keep them going.

"The county convention soon developed the need of a state convention, so they held their first state convention; but it was a weak affair. They kept on organizing, county after county, until the great state convention became a power. They employed Mr. D. L. Moody, who has since become the world-renowned evangelist, to complete the organization of counties in the northern part, and the Rev. Mr. Wallace, a Methodist minister in the southern part of Illinois; and when they came together in convention at Decatur, they had five thousand in attendance, and the town had erected a tabernacle costing over a thousand dollars for their accommodation. Father Paxson described, from first to last,

the process by which they raised at Decatur, in the midst of the greatest enthusiasm, by subscriptions made on the spot (and paid too), over $5,000 to carry on the work in the state. And they have never wanted for money in Illinois from that day to this!

"The township organizations are of equal necessity with county organizations for doing thorough work. They tried it in Illinois for ten years without township organizations, but found it slow work. The township and district conventions are the strength of the county, the counties of the state, and the states of the National and International Convention, which is before many years to cover the earth.

"He believed that the next International Convention would be held in the city of London, and in his imagination he could already see that august body of delegates gathered from every nation under the heaven, and where, instead of the placards apportioning the floor of the house to Georgia, and New York, and Missouri, they would bear the names of England, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, Mexico, and China! And

right in the midst of all, in the centre of the house, will be the United States of America.

"Is it too much to expect this? Not at all, when we look at the humble beginning of this grand work, and see how God has nursed and blessed this precious Sabbath-school institution, and carried it forward from strength to strength, to its present glorious proportions:

"'Tis weary watching wave by wave,
And yet the tide heaves onward;
We climb like corals, grave by grave,
And pave a path that's sunward.
We're beaten back in many a fray,
But newer strength we borrow,
And where the vanguard camps to-day,
The rear shall rest to-morrow"

CHAPTER X.

CLOSING LABORS.

It is to be regretted that Mr. Paxson kept no journal describing his varied experiences. In a blank-book where he occasionally wrote a few reflections, there is a list of a great number of his anecdotes, which none of the family can recall with sufficient accuracy to reproduce. The titles of these, such as: "Meeting my Sunday-school boys," "Little Sylvia Genett," "Old Lady in McDonough County," "Raikes Lost," "The Skeptic," and like phrases, excite an interest to know what they were; and the whole list of stories, if they could be written as he used to tell them, would absorb the attention of the young people who are unfamiliar with the peculiarities of frontier life.

On one of his birthdays he wrote:

"To-day I am sixty-one years old. How good God has been to me! I thank him for a complete salvation finished in Christ.

I am not troubled. Let death come when it will, I feel ready to meet it. In recalling my youth, I find myself a debtor to grace all the way up. It is impossible to put upon paper my pleasant feelings of the goodness of God."

On his sixty-second birthday he wrote:

"A sinner saved by grace. I find no good thing within me. Many have been the bodily afflictions of the past year, and I ought to be a better man than ever before. On self-examination I find I am not. My daily prayer is, 'Lord have mercy on me, for Jesus' sake.'

* * * * *

"The Lord is good; Blessed be his holy name."

On his sixty-third birthday, he wrote again:

"Still a debtor to grace. If I am saved, it will be through the atoning blood of Christ."

There were also many single reflections headed, "Things to Remember"—such as the following: "Trials rightly used lead to where trials never come." "Scattered

thoughts amount to nothing." "We are no better than we appear before God." "The truths of the Bible will partake of the influences of the age in which they were written." "We never distrust our love to Christ, but we do distrust his love to us." "Earn money by honest effort, all you can; for, without money no leisure, without leisure no thought, without thought no progress."

"It is better to go down through the ages as examples and inspirations of good, than as bearers of the scepter and the sword." "Only the law-maker keeps the law unbroken." "God gives us, not what we ask, but what we need." "Let your scholars drink from a running stream, and not from a stagnant pool." "A dead orthodoxy has been known in all ages of the Church, while a living orthodoxy, the truth as it is in Jesus, has produced all the fruit which the Church has borne." "A man who makes much of himself saves others the trouble of doing so." One of his frequent injunctions was: "Never place a man with a cymling head in an office of trust and responsibility."

He would say to his children: "Do not choose B. for a constant companion. He is gotten up on the narrow-gauge."

He was charmed with the wisdom of these golden verses of Pythagoras, and adopted them for his own use—

"Nor let soft slumber close your eyes
Before you've recollected thrice
The train of actions through the day.
Where have my feet chose out the way?
What have I learnt, where'er I've been,
From all I've heard, from all I've seen?
What know I more that's worth the knowing?
What have I done that's worth the doing?
What have I sought that I should shun?
What duty have I left undone?
Or into what new follies run?
These self-inquiries are the road,
That leads to virtue and to God."

In October, 1880, he had been married fifty years. It was thought appropriate that a golden wedding should be the "final glory of the golden days of work for the Master which preceded it." He had helped to "give the half century significance." So the romantic wedding on the Holston river was re-celebrated at his home in St. Louis. The wife of his youth and the sharer of all his joys and cares was by his side, friends

from the city and from abroad filled the rooms, his children and grand-children gathered about him. Golden wedding songs were sung, a poem was read in honor of the occasion; his beloved pastor, Rev. Dr. Goodell, made a most appropriate address, in which he referred to the fact that the veteran had never grown old in spirit.

A number of congratulatory letters from friends all over the states from the Lakes to the Gulf, from Maine to the "Golden Gate," were then read, adding pleasure to the occasion by their flashes of merriment and touches of earnestness and pathos. Even the telegraph added, from belated friends, brief messages of cheer for the festive occasion.

The *National Sunday-School Teacher*, in reference to the celebration of this golden wedding, among other things, said:

"Our friend deserves a golden wedding, for he has sown seeds that are bringing forth a golden harvest. Few men, with much greater opportunities and attainments, have done work that will count anywhere near so much for mankind and the

Master. With no education to speak of, beyond that which was furnished by the Sunday-school itself, he nevertheless became a powerful Sunday-school apostle, planting his favorite agency all over the prairie states. His head is now silvered, but to all who see him in the light of what he has accomplished, there is a golden halo about it.

"When the history of the Sunday-school movement of to-day comes thoroughly to be written, his name will stand in shining characters as having no mean part in it.

"It is pleasant to see a life with so golden a sunset. It is suggestive of a more radiant morning! Stephen Paxson, with his memories, is richer than many men with their wealth. And he is still so enthusiastic, so zealous, and so vigorous, that possibly we may be invited to his diamond wedding."

While acting in the capacity of city missionary in St. Louis, Mr. Paxson made the acquaintance of many young men and boys whom he influenced to seek better things than they had yet known. He could tell the story of the cross with such simple words and with so much pathos, that every-

where young people heard him gladly. To him the divinity of Christ's life was an ever-present reality. He loved to picture the King in his beauty, the Christ as he appears in his mission to mankind. He would sometimes answer questionings in regard to this King of Glory with the response of the poet:

"Who upon Tiberias' sea,
Stands in raiment white as snow?
He, whose eyes have moistened been
For human sorrow, scarlet sin,
Who destroys eternal woe?
He, who on Tiberias' shore
Stands in raiment white as snow.

"Man, whene'er thine eye is wet
Thinking of eternal woe,
He is gently calling thee
From Tiberias' tranquil sea,
Clothed in raiment white as snow."

The study of the Bible became more and more dear to his heart. He would often come to the breakfast table with a face made radiant by the discovery of some beautiful, but hitherto unnoticed and unappreciated verse. With an interest which was always contagious, he sought to interest every one he met in Bible readings and in the topical study of the scriptures. He

wondered why he had formerly liked so well the wise sayings of Franklin, when here were maxims utterly incomparable; or how he could have been deeply moved by poets at best so inferior to Israel's sweet singer. How could he ever have been absorbed in a Shakesperian play, when the drama of Job was near at hand to dwarf the productions of the dramatist by its unsurpassed grandeur?

Among his little treasures laid carefully away in a private drawer were found, after his death, a much-used Bible, a copy of the "Imitation of Christ," by Thomas a Kempis, and Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living." The leaves of these books were stitched and restitched, indicating constant use. The companion volume, "Holy Dying," was not among his books. He said he had no use for it—that his main business upon earth was to live, and that he did not believe in dying, for what men call death is only a joyous journey, a glad going home. It would occupy but a moment, and there was no need of concentrating attention upon it. If holy lives were lived, this would insure holy dying."

He replaced his favorite songs of Burns and Tannahill of an earlier day, by quaint Scotch hymns which expressed his idea of going hence. A favorite and often sung verse was:

"He is faithful that has promised; He'll surely come again,
He'll keep his tryst wi' me at what hour I dinna ken;
But He bids me still to watch an' ready aye to be
To gang at ony moment to my ain countree."

To the last he was willing to learn, especially any thing which was in the interest of children. He took up the system of Pestalozzi, and made a careful study of the life and work of the Swiss reformer.

A hobby is a luxury to old age, and the person who fails to find an innocent one, as the cares of life drop away, and the ability to do active service decreases, is to be pitied. Mr. Paxson, although busy to the end of life in his great work, was compelled to take things more leisurely and to travel less as he increased in years. The time thus gained he spent in making scrap-books. His Sunday-school scrap-books became a treasure-trove full of the richest gleanings upon Sunday-school topics. Besides these,

he made others upon various subjects. He wrote out an index to each, and sought to make them as complete as possible. These books form a small library of themselves. Although he disclaimed the making of books to the man who wanted to buy the "American Sunday-School Union" for fifteen cents, he became a rare good editor in compiling the thoughts of others.

During the three months of invalidism which preceded his death the attempt was made to entertain him by reading to him. Upon one occasion a large book was selected, the life of some eminent person, but when a few chapters were passed over, he requested the reader to stop.

"You have read this book?" he inquired. He received an affirmative answer. "Will you be so kind as to tell me, in the fewest possible words, the gist of the book—what this man did in the world that was *worth* the doing? There are too many fine-spun theories in this book for me: life is too short to hear them. I want an author to grant me the privilege of making my own deductions, based upon what his hero did."

Upon another occasion "Sister and Saint," or the life of Pascal and his sister, was being read to him. He was pleased with Pascal's endurance of pain, his ability to come within one step of thinking out the "Differential and Integral Calculus" while suffering from an attack of toothache, but he said, "We have the gist of the saint's life in the motto of the book—'Great hearts alone know how much glory there is in being good.' All you have since read only illustrates and amplifies this noble truth."

A perfect character is never interesting in biography. It is as true in human nature as in nature, that where there are heights there must be depths, and absolute symmetry is not to be expected; so the virtues of sincerity, earnestness, energy, and enthusiasm, together with natural eloquence, strong common sense, and a remarkably childlike, teachable spirit, were marred in this case by a habit of great impatience. Stephen Paxson could not brook restraint: he could not forbear to use his "whip of small cords upon money-changers in the temple." His sarcasm was keen, his invective terrible.

He said, not many months before his death, "I have one more conquest to make, and then my life-work is done. I must learn to be patient, and not to rebuke my friends for their blunders."

He set about this hard task with earnestness, and he was curious to know, near the last, if it was thought that he was succeeding. How well he finally accomplished this task is best expressed in the words of his pastor: "His life was unique, heroic, unusual, helpful, powerful, from the day he first entered the Sunday-school till the day his earnest, fiery soul swept up to heaven, gathering force and volume and spiritual beauty every day he lived."

He felt intensely the blessedness of living —so intensely, that for him the sun arose in splendor, the streams of earth moved onward, and the subtle influences of all creation were working for him. In thought he became a possible heir in God's great universe to wonderful benefactions. The idea of time became merged in that of eternity, and he saw the opportunities for soul-growth stretch onward endlessly, while

something of the calm of the eternal entered his spirit.

But he never once relaxed his hold upon his life-work. His last letter was addressed to the wife of a gentleman whom he was trying to persuade to enter the missionary field. He told her he had already recommended her husband, and urged her to favor his adoption of the work.

To the last week of his life it was in his thoughts, if he grew better, to attend the International Sunday-School Convention at Toronto, and to go and see his old friend Mr. S. B. Pratt, of Boston.

When at last he knew that he could not recover, he would say with gratitude, "The Lord is taking to pieces the tabernacle of the body very gently." But he never spoke the word "death." He would say, "I shall not go to-day," or, "Perhaps I shall go to-morrow," with all the composure and readiness to depart which characterized his frequent leave-takings during the past forty years.

He sent this message, to be delivered to all christians who knew him and to all who love the Lord Jesus: "This is my word:

Hold fast unto the end. Take hold of christian work, and hold on. I die at my post. All is clear and bright and peaceful. No fear, no tremor, but rest and comfort in God."

Rev. W. P. Paxson thus writes of his father's last hours:

"Several days before he died, I asked him, 'Father, if you should go, is it all right?' He said to me in tones of surprise, 'Why my son, *that* was *settled* many years ago.'

"I have seen many death-bed scenes, but his was the grandest I ever saw, in its calm, conscious sense of complete salvation. His last words were, 'Rest! rest! rest!' 'Home, sweet home!' 'Bless the Lord!' was also often on his lips. He told me to say to all his friends, 'Live for Christ; there's nothing true but heaven.' So he died, and so we go on, with heaven so much richer and sweeter. His love for the old Sunday-School Union never faltered. The last long conversation we had was for her interests. He said, 'Go on, William; you can do more good there than anywhere else. It is the grandest society on earth.' How I shall miss his clear, ringing words in behalf of

the children! But his pleading is now changed to praising, and in the bright forever we shall meet again. How many he has already met! Peck, Father Adams, A. W. Corey, and, besides other workers, Father Martin, and a great host of children who have gone on in childhood from his Sunday-schools to the rest beyond. He gathered us all around him, named his children and his grandchildren, and said, 'God bless the children!' Then, raising his eyes upward, he said, slowly, 'I see more.' 'Did he catch a glimpse then of the glory?"

And so, suffering no pain, but feeling an intolerable weariness, the old pioneer laid down his armor and went before, as he had so often done.

When his spirit took its peaceful, happy flight, the last rays of the setting sun fell upon the couch where his wearied but still beautiful form reposed in its dreamless sleep; and when a flower-strewn grave was made in Belle Fontaine, the clouds dispersed, and the last rays of the setting sun illumined the resting place of one whose life-sun had set only to know elsewhere a glorious rising.

His capacity for friendship was so remarkable, and the interest in the work which he had done was so extensive, that the number of his friends was legion. When the telegraph carried the tidings of his death over the land, even his own family were surprised at the number of people who mourned as for a father. Strong men wrote of how they were shaken by tears of grief; sobs came from the Southern States, tones of lament from calm New England, and a wail of regret from the West. Many memorial meetings were held, and a great number of resolutions commendatory of his character and life-work were passed by his numerous Sunday-schools, as also by churches and conventions.

The prevailing spirit of these testimonials may be gathered from a single one. "The Congregational Sunday-School Superintendent's Union of Boston" and vicinity passed by a unanimous rising vote the following resolutions:

"*Resolved*, That the Congregational Sunday-School Superintendent's Union of Boston and vicinity learn with profound regret and sorrow of the decease of the veteran Sunday-

school worker, Stephen Paxson, of St. Louis, Missouri.

"*Resolved*, That we desire to express our high appreciation of his life and work, believing that the grandeur of Christian labor in establishing 1,300 Sunday-schools and the gathering of 80,000 souls into the same is without parallel in the history of individual effort, and his example must stand as a great incentive to all Christians to personal endeavor in our Redeemer's kingdom.

"*Resolved*, That we hereby extend our heartfelt sympathy to the surviving members of his family, feeling that in this time of bereavement, consolation will flow from a consecrated life and the rich heritage that will be held precious by future generations, as well as the comforting presence of him who is mindful of his own."

But why is this unpretending life of an earnest disciple called a fruitful one? Let us see. In the year 1830 a gift of one thousand dollars is made to the mission work in Philadelphia* which results in the employ-

[* In the spring of 1830 Arthur Tappan, Esq., came into the Sunday-school depository in New York and handed to A. W.

ment of a missionary, who enlists two others in the cause. Among many schools formed whose history has not been recorded, one is organized, where a little child leads her father to become a member and he is converted. He organizes 1,314 Sunday-schools where no Sunday-school had before existed, containing 83,405 scholars and teachers, besides encouraging and aiding 1,747 other Sunday-schools with 131,260 scholars and teachers. He originates a system of county and state con-

Corey his check for $1,000. With this sum Mr. B. J. Seward was employed as a missionary agent of the American Sunday-School Union in the West. Some years later Mr. Paxson was brought into a Sunday-school formed under this agency, and soon began on his own responsibility to establish Sunday-schools.

"Meanwhile," says Mr. Corey, "the Sunday-School Union at Philadelphia sent Mr. Paxson a letter requesting him to work for them. Not understanding the purport of the letter, and not being able to write, he requested a friend to write to Philadelphia to know what it was they wanted of him. He soon received a reply, saying substantially, 'Go to St. Louis, and call upon the superintendent of missions, No. 80 Chestnut street, and it shall be told thee what thou oughtest to do.'"

This he did, and was soon employed seven days (instead of one or two days) in the week, in gathering the neglected children of the West into Bible schools.

About the time he began these labors, another gentleman authorized the American Sunday-School Union, through Mr. A. W. Corey, to make the following proposition:

ventions, and personally organizes Illinois and other states. He also enlists many earnest successful workers in the Sunday-school cause. He takes his son into the work at the age of fifteen, and he in turn organizes 700 Sunday-schools with 40,000 scholars and teachers, besides organizing with his missionaries seventy-six counties in Missouri into conventions, with many other states and counties in the Southwest. To this work may be added the thousands of good books and papers distributed among the poor and needy, and the thousands of

"To the first two schools organized that year in each county west of the Mississippi, if the schools contained 50 scholars and 10 teachers, he would give the half of a $20 library; or, if the school contained 25 scholars and 5 teachers, he would give the half of a $10 library—the school or its friends raising the other half." This proposition was renewed by "O. B." every year for twenty years. It encouraged the formation of 3,029 schools, containing 19,805 teachers, and 111,480 scholars (131,285 persons enlisted in religious education), at a total cost to "O. B." of $18,111.71. This was a most important help to Mr. Paxson and others, enabling them to establish many schools in poor frontier settlements, where, without this encouragement, the people could not have been persuaded to attempt the work. What a stimulus and help similar gifts would now be to those who succeed "Father Paxson" in planting Sunday-schools in the "regions beyond," in the new territories and among the freedmen of the South!

Ed. American Sunday-School Union.]

dollars contributed in the east in consequence of the simple recital of his life-story.

He was lame; yet he could not be confined to one place, but wandered all over the land intent on doing good. His tongue was bound; yet it became loosed for the love of Christ, and proclaimed upon the mountain-top and in the valleys the most joyful tidings. He was poor; but he became a millionaire in the riches of that kingdom in which he felt himself joint-heir with Christ. He was uneducated; yet the teachers he employed were numbered by hundreds and his pupils by thousands, while he became learned in that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation.

The fruits of this rich existence are not all matured even yet. There are seeds in what has been already garnered, which are still to germinate and to bear a part in making the valley of the Mississippi rich in heavenly harvests.

His own frequent assertion in reference to the results of his life-work was: "I would rather a little Sunday-school child would drop a tear of regret and gratitude upon my

grave than to have the proudest monument that it is in the power of man to raise." He had his wish. All the morning before the funeral his house was thronged by the poor and lowly, who wanted to see him and could not follow him to his grave. The colored children explained pathetically, as they timidly sought admission: "You know he was *our* friend, too! He visited our schools and cared for *us*."

All classes of society mourned his loss. A little boy in Pilgrim church remained after morning service until two o'clock to attend his funeral. He told his mother that he could not keep the tears back as he looked upon him.

The children not only drop tears of regret upon his grave, but in many Sunday-schools in the United States and in Canada they gathered together their offerings of love that the sculptor might chisel into a form of beauty and of grace a monument that would commemorate the memory of "The apostle to the children."

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