

mission to the parents, and instead concentrated upon tomorrow's adults, he tried a new experiment that he described as "botanizing in human nature." He determined to do something to break the vicious cycle of ignorance, poverty, vice, and crime.

It was natural that a man like Raikes who was deeply concerned about meeting people's needs, a man who loved children, a man who sought to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, should answer his own question of whether or not anything could be done. His reply was "Sunday School." And eventually, all of England and nations around the world echoed and re-echoed the answer, "Sunday School."

Bad Boys and Worse Girls

In 1780 Raikes began his experiments. He avoided the temptation to start with a relatively easy group. He chose the worst slum in Gloucester, where the boys were bad and the girls were worse. Raikes persuaded Mrs. Meredith to allow the school to be taught in her kitchen. She lived on Sooty Alley, so named because of the many chimney sweeps who lived there. It is reported that some of the boys were marched to Sunday School with logs tied to their legs to keep them from running off. The project was so difficult that Mrs. Meredith gave up in despair and the school was moved to the kitchen of Mrs. King, where May Critchley was the teacher. She fared somewhat better, and this school lasted for about two years.

In the first schools, Raikes gathered about 90 children who were employed in pin factories of Gloucester, and he paid four women a shilling each (about 25 cents), to teach these children on Sundays. Classes were conducted from

10:00 am to noon, and from 1:00 to 5:00 pm each Sunday. In order to attend, the children had to have clean hands and faces, and their hair combed.

It is likely that this was the only time all week that all three of those conditions were met. The curriculum in the schools consisted of reading and writing, good morals, and religion. There is no question that the women, who taught children whom Raikes describe as "miserable little wretches", earned their shillings.

Perhaps the most amazing thing is that these schools accomplished what Raikes had intended! He discovered that the children were able to learn. They were desperate to learn! He found that it was possible to maintain order, and that the children were anxious to attend and please. Soon, Raikes started one school after another. He was the motivating force behind the organization of the schools, and he always financed them out of his personal resources.

In spite of his success, Raikes did not achieve instant fame. Many rejected the whole idea of the Sunday Schools. Some religious leaders maintained that his efforts were useless and that he was engaged in sacrilegious activity on Sunday. Even his friends mocked him, calling him and his children "Bobby Wild Goose and His Ragged Regiment". Just as to-day, for every person with an idea and the will to accomplish it, there are many who will explain why it won't work and dutifully prophesy its failure. Undaunted, Raikes continued with the conviction that the concept of Sunday School was worth pursuing.

In spite of these objections, the growth of Sunday Schools surpassed the most optimistic predictions. The vision and commitment of a single individual with