

NOT TO BE TAKEN



The Relation of Sunday School Teachers to the Band of Hope Movement.

Rev. C. A. DAVIS, late of Bradford.

MR. FOUNTAIN J. HARTLEY, in his valuable paper, "The Sunday School Army," recently published, tells us that there are in England and Wales over 5,200,000 Sunday scholars, of whom about three millions are in the Nonconformist Schools, and 2,200,000 in the Schools of the Church of England. These figures represent twenty per cent. of the population, and bring out the striking and welcome fact that one in every five of the inhabitants of this country is a Sunday scholar. For their instruction we have a band of 593,000 teachers. If we add to these the figures for Scotland and Ireland, we get a total of 6,060,000 Sunday scholars, with 674,000 teachers.

Now about eight millions of the population of England and Wales are between the ages of five and twenty, or about the Sunday School age. If we add to the 5,200,000 scholars one fifth of the 593,000 teachers as being twenty years old and under, we are brought to the conclusion that about *two-thirds of the young people of the land are connected with the Sunday School.*

Throughout the kingdom eighty-one per cent. of the teachers are Church members, which warrants the belief that a spirit of true Christian earnestness pervades their work, while it does not necessarily imply that the remainder are not Christians. We are accordingly not without direct result. Fifty-seven in every thousand of the scholars are Church members, and fourteen out of every thousand professed their faith in Christ, and joined the Church last year.

Although this is not enough to satisfy Christian ardour, it excites Christian thankfulness, and the picture is so far bright. There is presented to view at one glance a direct exercise of Christian influence upon a fifth of the population at its most impressible period, or upon two-thirds of the *youthful* population, from which we are warranted to anticipate the happiest results. Six millions of young people, and more than 600,000 Christian men and women instructing them from the open Bible every Sunday within the blue seas that encircle Great Britain! Is it not a sunny scene?

Look on this picture! and on this!

There exist in the land such gloomy buildings as prisons and reformatories. In their cells may be found forty thousand persons: *six out of seven* of these have been Sunday scholars! I state that plain, unvarnished fact, and you are surprised and pained. A few years since the Chaplain of the Salford New Bailey Prison, stated that of 1,050 convict boys admitted into his prison school during a little more than seven years 977 had attended Sunday Schools.

Are the Sunday Schools and the Prisons, then, so close together? Is the way from the one to the other so open and so easy? Can it be that six out of seven in those dreary precincts have crossed over from the bright and holy Sunday School? Had they not joined in the sweet singing? Had they not been taught from the open Bible? Were they not surrounded by Christian people? Did they not know the generous pleasure of class friendships? Had they not been loved and prayed for? And can they have managed to break through all and get to prison?

JOSEPH LIVESLEY
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NO.

You ask, "How did they get there?" My answer is: They did not pass directly from the Sunday School to the Prison; they went through the public-house. *If you can shut the public-house door against the scholars you have shut the prison door.* But do not take my word for it. You ask how the Sunday scholars came to the prison. Mr. Logan, in Glasgow, asked that question of sixty-two criminals who had been Sunday scholars, and were being tried at one assizes. Fifty-nine of them answered, "Drinking and public-house company."

You ask, "How did they get there?" The Superintendent of the Wellington Reformatory said that after twenty-five years' experience he found that of over a thousand boys of the thief class, more than nine hundred would never have come that way but for the drinking habits of the parents. In all that time, said he, there had been only two in the Reformatory who were the children of teetotal parents. And four thousand children are sent to Reformatories every year.

You ask, "How did they get there?" Mr. Justice Hawkins said at the Durham assizes, last year, "Every day I live the more I think of the matter, and the more firmly do I come to the conclusion that the root of almost all crime is drink. It is drink which for the most part is the incentive to crimes of dishonesty. It is drink which causes homes to be impoverished, and traces of the misery which it causes are to be found in many a cottage, denuded of the commonest articles of comfort and necessity, which have gone to the pawnshop simply to provide for that hideous tyrant, drink. I believe, knowing what I do, and having by experience had my attention drawn to it, that *nine-tenths of the crime of this country is engendered inside the doors of public-houses.*" These thrilling words are from the calm lips of a judge.

You ask, "How did they get there?" Of forty-six scholars once belonging to the vestry class of Surrey Chapel, in the time of the Rev. James Sherman, the teacher learned that twenty-two had become drunkards, thirteen were steady, and the career of the rest was unknown. The Rev. James Sherman's ministry was an awakening ministry. Eighty persons owed their conversion to one of his sermons, and the school must have felt the warmth and glow of his fervour. Yet nearly half of that splendid class became drunkards, and the fate of half of the remainder is unknown!

I have heard the Rev. Dr. Macfadyen, of Manchester, give similar testimony concerning elder scholars in his school. How came your scholars to the prison? The answer to the question is furnished *for me, not by me*; furnished by the prisoners themselves; furnished by their jailors, their chaplains, their judges; and it is this, that *drink opened the way from the school to the prison.*

This being proved, I am plied with another question by the anxious Sunday School teacher: What influence in favour of drink is brought to bear upon my scholars? Some of them, alas! see nothing else at home but drinking and its results. From their miserable home they go out into the streets. There they need not pass on the average more than thirty-five houses before they find one open to them where the bar is sanded, and the bar parlour has a fire. Within this place they meet a number of young people of their own age, and in their company they can get drink; the very drink that has ruined their home. But it excites them, and they like it. A friend of mine counted 1,100 persons enter one public-house in Salford on one Sunday evening, the great majority of them young persons.

Other attractions allure them within the power of the baleful spell. The deadly hook of drink is baited with music. At Burnley, for instance, "a midnight visit to a singing saloon in a place for the sale of intoxicating drinks brought to light the fact that two hundred persons were assembled at one time. Thirty beardless youths were in the best seats, and in the second seats there were between thirty and forty lads, ranging from as low as nine or ten to fifteen or sixteen years of age, and one half of the remainder were young men." And so they unlearn the good taught them in the Sunday School, and begin the descent to the prison.

The influence in favour of drink does not always come in this gross form. Some of your scholars are not fated to inhabit the unhappy homes just described. The father is a good man, he has ale or wine on his well-spread table at dinner, and takes a "nightcap" before going to bed. The boy knows his Sunday School teacher does the same. He has never thought deeply on the subject of intoxicating drink. No view of its horror has led him to think upon it. He has been habituated to seeing its reputable use by whisky-drinking Christians (strangely incongruous title!) and he does not suspect danger. Yet the liking for

it grows upon him. He is not gifted with the self-control or the stolidity which was an attribute of the father or the teacher, and he goes into excess. He cannot balance on the tight rope as others could, and he falls. He is weaker, and cannot, like those strong swimmers, breast the current, and is carried away. But had they been wiser, or more considerate, or more self-denying, it might have been far otherwise with him.

The terrible array of 700,000 drunkards loses 70,000 a year by death, and yet is maintained in full force, recruited from the less terrible, but for this reason equally lamentable, array of moderate drinkers; and the gap made in the ranks of the moderate men by the passing over of 70,000 a year into the ranks of the drunken, is in its turn continually replenished from the ranks of the youth. Sunday School teachers ought to know this, for if, as we have seen, nearly two-thirds of the young people of the land are in the Sunday Schools, it follows that 45,000 *Sunday Scholars become drunkards every year*; and if we take fifteen years as the average time spent in the Sunday School, *we lose in that time 675,000 scholars as drunkards.*

There is the danger! Where is the deliverer? What influence can be brought to bear upon the young people to save them from this danger?

There is a powerful agency which has them in charge, a band of more than 600,000 teachers, one to every ten scholars; and *if this agency can be made a shield from drink, our object is, humanly speaking, accomplished.*

Listen a moment! If your scholars, unwarned, enter a place where intoxicants are sold, they are in peril. The singing saloon, with its fascinations, draws them within the narrowing circles of the whirlpool, and only by a miracle can they escape the depths in which thousands like them have perished. The surest preventive to this peril, by Divine grace, is a distaste of strong drink, and a horror of the public-house. This is clearly perceived, and the result has been the formation of the Band of Hope to create this distaste, and to inspire this horror. We wish to persuade all our Sunday Scholars to become teetotalers, lest some of them should become drunkards. If the alternative be, as it often is, teetotalism or drunkenness, there is not a Christian of you but would say, "Let all be teetotalers, rather than some of them drunkards." But this involves your becoming an abstainer yourself, in order that your exhortation may be enforced instead of paralysed by your example.

I do not press upon you that you can live without stimulants—though you can. I do not urge that your health will be better without them—though it will. I do not insist upon the superior longevity of abstainers as proved by Insurance statistics—though this fact is so proved. I do not press the advantage of economy which is on the side of abstinence—though this is the case. But I appeal to the love you bear to those boys and girls whom Christ has committed to your charge, with the injunction, "Feed my lambs." David saved his lamb from the mouth of the lion and the bear. Shepherd over that little human flock, rescue yours likewise from the devourer. Alive to the importance of your work, and wide awake to any influence that would rob you of its result, recognise and confront the greatest hindrance of all. Set down your foot, and resolve no longer to have your holy work thwarted by the power of drink. Do not put me off by saying it is a good work, and you will leave it to be prosecuted by those who are enthusiastic in it. I want *your* enthusiasm as well as theirs, and I will tell you why.

In the eighty-six schools of the Bradford Sunday School Union, twenty-six are without a Band of Hope. These schools, apparently, have no "enthusiast" to prosecute the work. They comprise 5,651 scholars, with an average strength of 217 scholars to a school, and they have 664 teachers. I want these teachers to inaugurate the preventive work there. Then as to the sixty schools which possess a Band of Hope, they number 22,595 scholars, or an average of 393 to a school. The larger schools, therefore, have the Bands of Hope. Perhaps the Bands of Hope have helped to make the larger schools. Forty-nine of these Bands of Hope report a membership of 9,728, or an average of about 200. The numbers of the remaining eleven are not given. Assigning them, for the purposes of calculation, the lower average of 140, our Band of Hope Membership is brought up to 11,268, or about half of the scholars in these schools, which cannot be far from the truth.

Now what is the proportion of abstainers among our teachers? So far as I have been able to ascertain, there are no statistics on this point, but with the help of the excellent secretary of my own Band of Hope, Mr. Bentley, I have obtained information respecting the ten Baptist

Sunday Schools of Bradford, showing that of the 453 teachers in those schools, 253 (or fifty-six per cent.) are connected with Bands of Hope.

From this it appears that in ten schools where the Band of Hope exists, about half of the teachers are connected with it, and we have already noted that the proportion of scholars is about the same. This fact points to the power of the teacher's influence. Where half the teachers abstain, half of the scholars are abstainers also. *If the remaining half of the teachers should resolve to forego the use of intoxicants, and teach the children so, might we not hope to gain the other half of the scholars?*

That the Band of Hope increases the spiritual power of the Sunday School is abundantly proved and is clearly illustrated by the careful statistics compiled by my late friend, Mr. Isaac Phillips, from the records of my own Church. He showed that during seven years 137 scholars had joined the Church from our two schools, which number about 1,000 scholars; that about half of the scholars belonged to the Band of Hope, but that—not half, which was the legitimate proportion, but five-sixths of those who joined the Church were from the Band of Hope section of the schools. The investigations of Mr. T. H. Bowman, of Halifax, led him to the same conclusion, and we cannot be surprised at it when we consider that the Band of Hope shields the young from the most entangling snare that exists among us, and carries out in one prominent direction the petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

Here there is the bright spectacle before us of six million scholars instructed by more than 600,000 teachers from the Scriptures every week, and thousands of them finding their way from the school into the Church. But it is clouded over by the dark fact that thousands more find their way to the prison—not directly, however, but through the public-house; for 45,000 of them become drunkards every year; and in the prison cells, where six out of seven come from the Sunday School, they unanimously point to the public-house as the pathway from the school to the gaol. Sunday School teachers, we have set our finger upon the greatest hindrance to the legitimate influence of your teaching. It is the drink.

Look at these facts and truths. You will look at them a little hence in the light of God's throne. Strong drink makes havoc even in your classes. It intrudes into those groups of youths and maidens, and steals away 45,000 of them every year. I say quietly in your ear, had you been alive to the danger, and beforehand with it, you could have prevented it. Now you can do little more than look on with your heart standing still, and watch the ruin to the bitter end. I say again in your ear, you did not put up any barrier against the intrusion of this evil foe. The boy was not cautioned by you. There *was* a barrier—the natural dislike to the drink which God put upon his palate—and it was strengthened by the example of hatred to drink which he saw in some who had looked with grief upon its ravages,—and you inadvertently broke it down; the boy admired you, and believed in you, and he saw you take strong drink, and thought he might take it too. Forty-five thousand Sunday scholars fall by drink every year.

Will you join me, will you join many thousands of your fellow Christians, will you join in spirit the Apostle of our Saviour in saying, "If strong drink cause my scholars to fall, I will take no strong drink while the world standeth, lest I cause my scholars to fall." If so, you take your right position in relation to the Band of Hope movement.

Sunday School Teachers and others desirous to form Bands of Hope will find full information on the subject in "THE BAND OF HOPE MANUAL," price 3d., published by the United Kingdom Band of Hope Union, 60, Old Bailey, London, E.C. The Secretary of the Union will be happy to hear, at any time, from friends forming Societies (in town or country), and to afford any assistance that may be possible.

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