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HOW WE STARTED THE FIRST SUNDAY-SCHOOL IN  
SAPPORO, JAPAN

[WITH TWO INCIDENTS THROWN IN]

We did not ask the pastor of the Church to give notice that “ next Sabbath there would be a Sunday-school directly after morning service, to which all were cordially invited and in which we hoped, not only the children of the congregation but parents also, would take part ”—words so familiar to us all. In the first place, there was neither Church nor pastor at that time, though there is now ; and in the second place, there were no children among the few Christians who assembled every Sabbath for study of the Bible. Hence, you see,

we were obliged to adopt some other plan for opening our school. And this is what we did :

We bought a quantity of nice cakes, made of beans and rice flower and sugar, such as the children are very fond of (and grown people, too), took some picture cards of different sizes, with Bible texts printed on them, and, thus armed, we went through the streets showing our cakes and cards and telling the children we met that if they would come to the foreign teacher's house they should have some of each and hear some music on an organ and foreign singing. Notwithstanding all these inducements, they seemed indifferent and we returned, quite discouraged, to await the appointed hour. But what was our joy when we found ourselves surrounded by fifty—not twenty, the number we had prepared for. Many of them came with not over-clean, but earnest, eager little faces. My companion, Mrs. Watase, the first graduate from Graham Seminary, Tokyo, and representing well the good work done there, told the children before they left why we had invited them and asked them to come the next day, which was Sunday, to the room across the way—a place used for our Sunday service. She promised every comer one of the large cards, but the following day, as we feared, few came. It was a beginning, however. Thus we opened our Sunday-school, which now numbers more than one hundred and fifty pupils, who are nearly perfect in attendance.

A hundred and fifty children, away in the North of Japan, learning to worship the One God, Our Father, and sing praises to Him ! They will not make the mistake their parents once made before our school was opened.

It was on “ Sapporo-holiday,” the one day in the year set apart for the special worship of the guardian deities of the place. The streets were filled with men, women and children, dressed in their picturesque holiday attire. Some would go to the temples and many would not ; but all would have a good time.

Professor and Mrs. Brooks, whose kindness to me when I was living alone in the North I have often spoken of, wishing to see what people did at the temple, joined the crowd, taking with them in a baby carriage which had just arrived from America their little daughter, six months old, the first white baby who had ever appeared in that part of the country. As they entered the broad avenue leading to the temple, a Japanese nurse in advance with the carriage, the throng parted, stepping back to right and left, leaving

an open space up to the temple door, and all eyes were turned, in a somewhat awed but curious gaze, upon the fair child in the carriage. What did it mean? The Japanese are not usually so respectful to foreigners. But when they were heard to say, "It is one of the gods from Tokyo," all was explained. The people took the baby for a god and the baby carriage for its conveyance.

The children of our Sunday-school are not only learning about the true God themselves, but are trying to help others to know. I have heard them singing in their homes, "Jesus Loves Me, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," and others of our sweet hymns. But the sweetest music we have in our Sunday-school is that which is made in the contribution box, a cast-off tin oyster can, as every Sabbath at the close of school the children march up and drop in their sen—sen which represent such self-denial as few in the Sunday-schools of Christian lands can understand. At first the contribution was offered by the few boarders only in our mission school, but gradually it was increased by others. During the past two years we have been able to send ten copies of *Glad Tidings* each month to the prisons not far from Sapporo, where there are two or three thousand prisoners confined, and where more than sixty have become Christians. We have also purchased new hymnals, lesson leaves, text cards and Christmas trees for the school.

I should like to tell you what a plain little text card once did for us in Hakodate, because it is such an encouraging incident, showing how our Father can make use of very little things in His service.

Our "street Sunday-school," there, was one gathered every Sunday from the streets and held in the most populous part of the city, wherever we could find a room large enough. One day we were seated on the floor with about a hundred children, all listening intently to my Bible woman, who was telling a story, when a woman appeared among the crowd at the door and called to some one in a loud, angry voice. A little girl sprang up and hurriedly made her way toward the door where I was sitting. As she passed I slipped some cards into her sleeve, returning the angry look of the woman with my best smile and apology.

The next Sabbath I was surprised to see the child there again, having heard that her mother had told her the Sabbath before she must not come and that she had disobeyed her. When I spoke to her about it, with a beaming face she replied that her mother had let her come because she liked the words on the card I had given

her and thought we were not teaching bad things. I looked at the card which she held up ; the text was this : “ Children obey your parents in all things ; for this is pleasing to the Lord.” The child has been in the Sunday-school ever since and her parents are studying the Bible with her.

Who gave the penny for that card? I do not know, but our Father knows and (H)e does not forget the least we do for Him.

Sarah C. Smith.