

In order to secure more active co-operation and support in favour of Sunday-schools, the Committee of the Institute, in the year 1873, entered into friendly communication with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the National Society, with the view of obtaining aid, if possible, to the plans which the Sunday School Institute had put forward. Two meetings were held, at which the whole question of Sunday-school organisation and expansion was fully discussed, and, as the result, the Joint Committee, representing the above Societies, decided that they could neither subsidise the Institute nor take over any of its operations, but recommended a large extension of the efforts of the Church of England Sunday School Institute as the best means for obtaining the object desired.

Passing on, the next important event took place in 1880, in connection with the celebration of the Centenary of Sunday-schools. Owing, to a great extent, to the steps which were taken by the Institute for disseminating information upon the subject, a very general interest in the commemoration was aroused amongst the friends of Church Sunday-schools, which assumed, in the end, even National proportions.

The Committee of the Institute were successful in obtaining through Archbishop Tait the patronage of the Queen to the movement, and in every Diocese special action was taken to consider the subject of Sunday-school organisation.

The main objects of the Church of England Sunday School Institute may be briefly summarised under two divisions:—

- I. To extend, improve, and develop the Sunday-school System in the Church of England.
- II. To secure efficient teaching in Church Sunday-schools.

II. SUNDAY SCHOOL EXTENSION.

1. The Institute has promoted the first object by means of the following operations:—

1. By a Central Office, through which information in regard to the needs of Sunday-schools is ascertained, and the best methods of organising and conducting them are suggested.

An evidence of the popularity of the Institute, and the soundness of its principles, is shown by the applications which have been received from the United States and the colonies in reference to the formation of Sunday School Institutes on the lines of the Central Society in England. A few years ago a Sunday School Institute for America was started, which is now supported by the whole of the American Bishops, and similar action has been taken in Toronto, Nova Scotia, Sydney, and other Colonial Dioceses.

The Sunday-school has been one of the most effective mediums for spreading a knowledge of Holy Scripture amongst the masses, and in its early days prepared the way for the British and Foreign Bible Society, the National Society and kindred institutions.

It has also been a valuable adjunct of Missionary enterprise. A missionary without a Sunday-school would be deprived of the most valuable agency by which he wins the confidence and support of the people amongst whom he labours.

It has also brought Clergy and Laity together in larger numbers than any other branch of Christian work, and has produced a large army of Lay helpers, who devote time, energy, and substance in promoting the extension of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Statistics of Sunday-schools furnish unmistakable evidence of their popularity, not only in this country but throughout the world. In 1883 the number of S. Scholars in Great Britain was stated to be 1,548,890. They now number upwards of six millions. The total number of Scholars throughout the world connected with Sunday-schools amounts to nearly 18,000,000, and the total number of Teachers engaged in the work is nearly 2,000,000.

As regards the Church of England, from the Statistics of Sunday-schools and Bible-classes which have been kindly furnished by the Editor of "The Official Year Book of the Church of England," the total number of Scholars connected with Church of England Sunday-schools in England and Wales is 2,628,467. The same returns show the number of Teachers to be 186,614. By adding the Scholars and Teachers connected with the Episcopal Church in Scotland and the Church in Ireland we have a total of upwards of Two and three-quarter millions of Scholars and upwards of Two hundred Thousand Teachers connected with Church Sunday-schools in the United Kingdom.

2. The Extension of Sunday-schools is also fostered by the establishment all over the country of Branch or Local Sunday School Associations.

There has been a steady growth of Associations. In the year 1880 (the year of the Sunday School Centenary) there were 253 Associations. The total number in union with the Institute at the present time is 391. Of these 41 are in London, 332 in other parts of Great Britain and Ireland, and 18 in India and the Colonies.

(To be Continued.)

THE PRAYER BOOK A MISSIONARY.

By BISHOP HUGH MILLER THOMPSON, (MISSISSIPPI.)

A Liturgy is a growth. A real Prayer Book cannot be extemporized. It is a "development." Its roots run back into the dimness of the misty Past. It is the blossom of the ages.

In sore need some soul cried to God! More or less intelligently, more or less articulately, from earth to Heaven went the cry!

In the hour of deliverance, in the great joy of victory—deliverance and victory for himself or for his people—some soul sang till the stars tingled sang its joy and thanks to the Great God who sustains the Right and puts down the wrong for evermore.

And human needs are always the same, and human victories, if they be real victories, are always the same, and another and another catches the first lyric cry of thanks, or the first passionate wail for pity, and repeats it and adds to it under the same emotions in the same measure, and the same cadence, and so the prayer grows and the thanksgiving grows, and the broken, stammering confession grows, and the great Hail! Hallel! (Health! Thanks! Praise!) to Jehovah "for His Mercy endureth forever!" grows to more and more articulate, human and rational expression.

The only genuine extempore prayer is a half-articulate cry. In our day and among our people there can be no genuine extempore prayer at all! The attempt to make one contradicts the very definition of prayer. When the logical and constructive faculty is in exercise, there may be speech eloquent, supplication eloquent and ever beautiful—but a real prayer is always essentially a cry! It has been said truly, that the only instance of extempore prayer in the New Testament is the prayer of the Pharisee in the Temple—"God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are."

'The Prayer Book,' * * * * *
Is a World Book. In that lies its power. It is the growth of the ages. The Church has never dreamed that she could make a Prayer Book! An extempore Prayer Book would be a discord more harsh and grating than any amount of extempore prayers! * * * * *
It is of no consequence that men sometimes still give voice to the old moth-eaten prejudices about "praying by a book."

Here, in the Prayer Book, is a collection of devotions, of prayers, praises, thanksgivings, of wailing supplications, of triumphant rejoicings which have been echoed and re-echoed, sung in all tongues, cried in all voices, since the world began. They are Humanity's verbal intercourse with God! The visible and temporal speaking to the Invi-sible and Eternal for six thousand years!

Here is the cry of Humanity since the gates closed on Adam! Here is the psalm of victory 'since man thanked his Father for his first victory over evil! The words were born in the dawn. They shall ring to the last earthly sunset, and the first awful dawn of the new Heavens and the new Earth!

And one of the most divinely obligated testimonies and burdens which the Church has been commissioned and ordained to bear in this land has been this burden and testimony of prayer! That real prayer is not one man's word, nor ten thousand men's word, but Humanity's word and cry to the Lord since the beginning—and therefore the word of the Eternal World!

After years of prejudice and ignorant bitterness, as the light increases, of knowledge and spiritual illumination, we are seeing the results of our slow, patient, half unconscious testimony to Christ and to natural law.

Our Prayer Book, next to the Bible the greatest book in English speech, has come to recognition. In a "Baptist" church the other day the Te Deum was chanted! In a Presbyterian church the minister recites "our" Lord's Prayer, Creed and Ten Commandments! In a Methodist church (well, our dear "Methodist brethren" are our brothers with a bend sinister "for difference," as the heralds say) they use more than half of our Communion service! They "acquire" from us right and left; and they are welcome.

Indeed, our dear separated brothers of all names and kinds find the source of their prayers and heartfelt devotions in that grand old Prayer Book under whose influence their grandfathers grew up, and to whose very words the grandsons are now returning.

"What beautiful prayers he makes" has been said of more than one minister of the various denominations, whose "beautiful prayers" were taken bodily from the Prayer Book!

The Book is uncopyrighted—very free—the more they take the better. All Churchmen are delighted—only men should be frank! Even preachers should tell where they get things.

For this Book, which is, like the English Bible, ours, and yet not ours—ours in trust for all our race—is freely for the use of every "denomination" that chooses to use it. And we know well that every "denomination" speaking English, no matter how prejudiced against us, finds whether it is conscious of it or not, its best and highest expression of devotion in the words of that Book for which we Churchmen are trustees for all who "speak the tongue that Milton and that Shakespeare spoke."

It is a great thing for Christian unity, prayed for, hoped for, sure to come, that the Prayer Book is an English classic. No such English anywhere! Idiomatic, ringing, concise, melodious, thrilling to the heart, "tender and true," genuine as all English speech is and was meant to be—nowhere can you find its equal. No student of the English tongue is equipped for judgment or criticism till he has saturated himself with the odor and atmosphere of "The Book of Common Prayer."

Far off at sea the "the heavy-shotted ham-mock shroud" encloses the dead sailor's form. The grizzled captain stands, surrounded by his wretched crew, and reads from the one Book—"till the earth and the sea shall give up their dead—we commit his body to the deep."

In the saloon of the great Atlantic racer the electric light shines over a sudden merry gathering and the bronzed captain, timid and confused