

still half latent. Still it is well that they should be stated clearly and forcibly, as they are in the article before us. It is unnecessary, in this place, to follow Mr. Low further in his exposition of his thesis. Many of our readers can complete the train of thought for themselves. All of them would do well to refer to the paper from which we have quoted. Such a handling, reverent and intelligent, of the great themes of divine revelation, can have only the happiest results for Christian thought.

#### INTERNATIONAL CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

BY REV. JAS. A. ELLIOTT, B.A., RECTOR OF COWANSVILLE, QUE.

It is not uncommon to hear men deplore the existence of the Sunday school as a usurpation of the duties of parents and sponsors. In theory the charge is well founded, for in an ideal state of the Church this branch of Church work would be unnecessary, but inasmuch as neither society in general nor the Church in particular can be said to be ideal, this objection has no force in practice. If parents and sponsors refuse to do their duty by their children, what alternative has the Church but to supply this food that ought to have come from their hands? At all events the Sunday school has a history which now passes the century mark, and with its age it has brought forth the evidences of a permanent institution. It is therefore folly and a waste of time for serious Churchmen to carp at its birth when the only practical question is, how shall we control its growth? It is readily admitted that if the Sunday school is to retain its hold upon the public mind and not fall into disrepute as a fossil of uncertain antiquity, it must keep pace with the day school. Secular education is receiving the most careful attention at the hands of specialists, and school children are handled in a much more scientific way to-day than a score of years ago. The psychology of child-life has become a serious and important study, and after it has passed the theoretical and speculative stage will give an immense permanent impetus to the cause of true education. If we consider the gravity of the issues depending upon the efficient working of the Sunday school, in the face of the neglect of parents and sponsors, in the face of the impossibility, under our present circumstances, of casting more than a shadow of this work upon the day school, and the limited time at the disposal of the religious educators, it will at once be realized how carefully and thoroughly the whole Sunday school system should be worked out. The best should be our aim. This best is not what the clergyman and his little band of Sunday school workers can evolve in a given parish. It is not the best produced by the united powers of a diocese, but that resulting from the united efforts of a united Church.

It is with this thought in mind that a plea is here put forth for consolidation and concert of action on the part of the whole Anglican Communion in reference to a united scheme of Church Sunday school lessons. It is here taken for granted that it is utterly impossible for the Anglican Church to accept the International undenominational lessons as presently constituted, inasmuch as the Church year is practically ignored therein. It may also be assumed that the progress of natural selection is too slow to warrant the Church in waiting for the special merits of any one of the many schemes now in use, to appeal to the Church at large, and receive universal recognition. The

movement must be inaugurated and carried out by the Church as a definite feature of a progressive programme. The experiment of unification has been tried by the other Protestant bodies and has proved successful so far as it goes. The question now receiving their attention is the proper grading of the lessons. If we look about us in our own Communion the most conspicuous feature of our Sunday school work is the lack of unity and coherence. The Church in England and Canada stand to one another as mother and daughter, and the Church in the United States and Canada as sisters, yet no such close relationship exists between them in this most important work of religious education. If Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, &c., with their different creeds and polity, have found it to their advantage to unite all over the world in a common scheme of lessons, it surely is worth our while to give the matter serious consideration as applied to our own communion. In Canada and the United States the name of the schemes in use is *legion*. The same probably is true in England. Here is a scheme that has the approval of a diocesan synod; there is one that can only boast of the sanction of an archdeaconry, and others again that have no approval outside the parishes in which they are used. Here are the isolated fagots of Church Sunday school workers and organizations toiling away in the four corners of the earth, each at a scheme different from all the others, and the question may very properly be asked, will we avail ourselves of the wisdom of the fable, and bind them together and in their union partake of their strength. A number of men may fail to raise a given weight when acting separately, and succeed, with the greatest ease, when acting together. This the position of the Church at large, a position that surely ought to be corrected, for it is responsible for the dissipation of much precious energy. In advocating the establishment of an international scheme of Church Sunday school lessons, it is of course to be remembered that it is only an *order or method* of study that is proposed. There is no intention of attempting the impossible and undesirable task of having all teachers teach the same lesson in the same way from the same data. What is aimed at is to establish the simplest bond of union and that which renders the greatest possible freedom. That bond is the simultaneous study of a given portion of the Bible and Prayer Book by the Sunday schools of the whole Church,—just as the same lessons for daily morning and evening prayer are used by practically the whole Anglican Communion. Why should the Church boy in England study the parable of the good Samaritan, we will say, next Sunday, and his brother or sister in Canada not study the same for two or three years to come? Why should not the boy who moves from one parish to another find himself as much at home in the new Sunday school as he does in the new church? These are questions worth thinking about. It is time to raise our eyes from the little bit of work before us and take a view of the larger work which lies at the door of a united Church.

The question may be asked, will this united scheme, when sanctioned, supersede the countless little rivals now in use? To this the answer may be given, perhaps not absolutely, for here and there we are sure to find a Solomon who will refuse to be guided even by the united wisdom of the Church. But of the ultimate and triumphant success of such a scheme can there be any doubt? It will appear to Churchmen on account of the spirit of unity and brotherhood which it is calculated to foster between the different branches of

the Church. It will also appeal to them on account of the weight of the sanction which it will have received and the palpable advantages from a teacher's point of view which it will possess. In regard to the latter point the advantages may be summarized under the head "improved teachers' helps and literature." There are few clergymen but can appreciate the value of this. They are forced in nearly every case to urge young men and women to enter the Sunday school as teachers who have little or no training for their work and little time to devote to preparation during the week. It is of the greatest possible importance to be able to place in the hands of such persons the mature thoughts and suggestions of the best religious educators. With a scheme such as here proposed it will be possible to avail ourselves of the best products in the way of "helps and literature" to be found in the Church at large. As it is to-day, we are confined to the literature hastily and crudely compiled for some little diocesan or provincial scheme. An effective illustration of this advantage is afforded in the case of the Church catechism. We have one catechism for the whole Anglican Communion, and around this catechism is gathered a rich and varied literature from the pens of English, American and Canadian educators. This is what we want in connection with our Sunday school lessons. Let us enlarge the market for our literature and its quality will in due time be improved. Again there will be greater variety calculated to meet the varied intellectual and ecclesiastical tastes of different teachers. With a multitude of little schemes as at present within the Church, this variety in connection with a given scheme is impossible. It is only in variety that true and workable unity is possible. Let no faint-hearted Churchman imagine that this scheme is too vast and too chimerical for accomplishment. Compared with other great unification schemes it is simplicity itself. It of course cannot be accomplished in a day. It will require time, patience and loving thoughtfulness, but in the humble opinion of the writer it is worth a large expenditure of labour. It is suggested that the matter be taken up in Canada by the various diocesan synods, and the General Synod urged to invite representatives from the different branches of the Church to sit down together and work out the details. The Holy Spirit who presided in the councils of the blessed Apostles will be with His Church until the end of the world. The scheme is here placed before the public and the writer would like to have a frank and thoughtful expression of opinion thereon. In taking this larger view and appreciating the bond of union thus created between the different parts of the Church, we seem to put new life and meaning into the words of the old Creed: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church;" "I believe in the Communion of Saints."

#### MISSIONARY FIELD.

A MISSIONARY TOUR IN JAPAN, BY ARCHDEACON SHAW.

(Concluded from last week.)

Matsumoto is a flourishing town, situated in the midst of a most fertile and populous plain. It was formerly the seat of a daimyo or territorial baron, whose castle still remains intact, forming with its walls and lofty turreted roof a picturesque landmark for the neighbourhood. The town itself was greatly injured in the floods through the bursting of the banks of a river which runs across the plain behind and above the town. The water rushed through the streets in torrents, washing them out in many cases to the depth of several feet, and covering the lower floors