

manifold gift of the Holy Ghost. That you may be wisely guided in all your deliberations; that by the Spirit of God you may have "a right judgment in all things and evermore rejoice in His holy comfort"; that you may be blessed in your dioceses and in the discharge of all your high duty; and that the Church which looks to you as their "Fathers in God" may ever, under your oversight, make increase to the edifying of themselves in love—is the hearty desire and prayer of your brethren in the fellowship and service of the Lord, the ministers and elders of the General Assembly.

In name and by authority,

WM. MAIR, D.D., Moderator.

Edinburgh, May 31, 1897.

In accordance with the invariable rule of the Conference, no corporate answer can be returned to this address. The Archbishop, however, undertook, with the warm approval of the Conference, to write himself, expressing warm appreciation of this mark of brotherly regard.

1698-1898.

THE 200TH BIRTHDAY KEPT ON ALL CONTINENTS

During the past month—on the 8th day, and days immediately following, we joined our brother Churchmen the world over in services commemorating the beginning of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Linked around the world, from east to west, Christian men and women thanked the Giver of All Good Things for the blessings received at the hands of the society, and prayed that in the future the blessing of God should abide upon and with it.

The beginning of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, like that of many other great institutions, was small and insignificant. It had its origin in the closing years of the 17th century, when the condition of the Church and the English nation was alike unsettled. Towards the end of that century many pious people, much grieved at the profaneness and impiety which had resulted as a reaction from Puritanism, formed themselves into societies for the advancement of Christianity and reformation of morals. They were members of the Church, and their work was naturally done in connection with the Church. There is

ample contemporary evidence of the need of such efforts. The austerity of the Puritan movement had been followed by the laxity of the times of Charles II., which had only too deeply left its mark on the morals of the time. In 1691 an address from the English Archbishops and Bishops led to the issuing of a proclamation requiring all magistrates "to execute the laws of this realm against profaneness and immorality," and declaring that by their neglect and the "connivance of the officers concerned, these dissolute enormities had universally spread themselves."

It was at such a time when religious life was at a very low ebb, that the S.P.C.K. was founded—a notable venture of faith—a launching forth amid surroundings and influences which, to the onlooker, were all unpropitious. The names of the five men who assembled on March 8th, 1698, the first, the inaugural meeting, deserve to be remembered with affection and honour by all posterity. Their beginning has resulted in the firm establishing of a society which was destined to exercise an enormous beneficent influence all over the world. Thus began (to quote the late Archbishop Benson) "the greatest and most important society that we have working within the great Society of Christ. . . . Of all our societies in England this is the oldest and grandest, and its work the very largest ever conceived."

Who composed that little band of zealous Christian men? What names were borne by the five good Churchmen whose hearts were stirred up to see what could be done to check the irreligion and wickedness they saw around them?

FRANCIS LORD GUILDFORD,
SIR HUMPHREY MACKWORTH, BART.,
MR. JUSTICE HOOK,
COLONEL MAYNARD COLCHESTER,
REV. DR. THOMAS BRAY—

the last, perhaps, the noblest of them all. Of these five, one was a peer, two were lawyers, another a soldier, the fifth a humble parish priest, who was the leader and inspirer of them all. Their first meeting was held, it is said, in Hook's chambers, Gray's Inn.

The parish priest, who was the virtual founder of the S.P.C.K., was a remarkable man. His means were narrow, but he was large hearted, his intellect was, perhaps, not much above

the average, but he was imbued with the spirit of holy self-sacrifice which "gave a permanent impulse to five at least of the noblest works on which a Christian can be engaged." "He is," Canon Overton truly says, "a striking instance of what a man can effect without extraordinary genius, and without special influence, and it would be difficult to point to any one who has done more real and enduring service for the Church." He was the great founder of parochial and clerical libraries, and for two years the Commissary in Maryland of Bishop Compton, of London. Dr. Bray's experience in the American colonies proved that the Church's work abroad in the colonies was of so urgent a nature and of such gigantic proportions that it needed all the energies of a separate organization, and in three years—1701—the S. P. C. K. brought into being the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. To the S.P.G. was intrusted the work of carrying the Gospel to the colonies and dependencies of the British Empire. The living agents were provided by it. In the two or three years, however, in which the S.P.C.K. undertook the work, it secured "in Maryland a sufficient maintenance for sixteen clergymen, settled their glebes, fixed libraries, and dispersed among the people many thousand practical and devotional books with good effect." It was rapid growth. The elder institution in 1710 enlarged its operations by undertaking the maintenance and the extension of the mission to the heathen established at Tranquebar, Southern India, by Frederick IV. of Denmark.

The first efforts of the founders, however, were directed to letting in the light of Christian knowledge on the darkened minds of the young. The society has been justly named the "pioneer of education." Its founders were about two centuries in advance of their day, for it was not until 170 years after the S.P.C.K. had established its first school for the children of the poor, that the State awakened to the fact that it was its duty to see that the means of education were provided for every one of its children. Between 1698 and 1712 the society was instrumental in establishing no fewer than 117 schools, educating 5,000 children in London and Westminster, and during the same period 500 schools had by it been established in England and Wales, and the good