

Society of Biblical Archæology" (vol. vii. pp. 210-225), and of the latter, in the "Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache" (for 1878, pp. 2-6).

BOURCHIER WREY SAVILE.

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ART. III.—THE SUNDAY SCHOOLS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

*The Thirty-seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Sunday School Institute, 1880-81.*

IF the subject of Sunday Schools was threshed out last year at the Centenary, there is now grain to be gathered, eaten, and digested. Most of us, perhaps, are conscious of having acquired of late a larger and more correct view of what has been done, is being done, and has yet to be done, in the way of Sunday School organization and improvement in teaching power. Yet to no subject more than to Sunday Schools may the adage apply "Live and Learn." Any one who peruses carefully month by month the pages of the *Church Sunday School Magazine* will have felt the breadth of its grasp: and to analyse the last Report of the Church of England Sunday School Institute is to gain a bird's-eye view of much of England's Church life. Archbishops and bishops, clergy and laity, north and south, townfolk and countrymen, infants and adults, teachers and taught, there come before us acting and speaking, caring or being cared for in the fellowship of the Sunday School.

A peep has been lately given through a sketch by one of its founders, Mr. J. R. Frewer, into the origin of the Society which now makes its influence felt in much more than half the parishes of England, and is extending itself daily in India and the Colonies. Few studies are more interesting than the tracing of great movements to their first impulse—to "watch the new-born rill just trickling down its mossy bed," destined to swell and expand itself into the "bulwark of some mighty realm"—to go in spirit into the upper room in Jerusalem, where abide in prayer and supplication the first little group, whose names a child might write, of "the Holy Catholick Church." Here then is the simple story:—

In the summer of 1843, five Sunday School teachers met in the Boys' Parochial School connected with St. Saviour's, Southwark, to consider by what means they could best provide for their own and their fellow-teachers' improvement in the art of teaching. They

were fully alive to their deficiencies as teachers of others, and yet hardly knew where to look for the training of which they felt their need.

The then recent publication of a book by Mr. R. N. Collins, Superintendent of St. Bride's Sunday School, Fleet Street, called "The Teachers' Companion," pointed out to them much that was needed before they could hope for success in their work, but it did not in any great degree suggest the remedy. What was felt to be wanted was an institution similar in its working to the National Society's Training College for day school teachers, where the theory of the art of teaching could be imparted, together with such practical application as would be supplied by classes of boys and girls to whom instruction should be given, and by which the best methods of imparting that instruction should be exemplified.

But, even if an institution of this kind had existed, how were young men and women, who had most of them to work for their daily bread, to avail themselves of its benefits?

It became evident, therefore, that what was wanted was an opportunity for mutual improvement by meeting together after the day's secular work was over.

The only Society then existing in London to which they could look was the "Sunday School Union," of which one or more of the teachers above referred to were members. At this particular period, however, an agitation had been set on foot with the object of removing the "Church Catechism" from the list of publications issued by the "Union." After many sharp debates—for several of the officers of that Society were attached members of the Church of England—the proposal was carried, and the Church Catechism excluded from the "Union" catalogue.

The new effort, as at first proposed, was to be a purely local one, and the suggested title was the "South London Sunday School Teachers' Aid Society." It then occurred to one of the number, "Why confine the movement to South London? Why not extend it to the whole metropolis?" The attempt appeared a formidable one, but it was decided to make it.

A meeting was then called by a written circular, and was held in the same schoolroom, under the presidency of the late Rev. William Curling, Chaplain of St. Saviour's, Southwark. At that meeting a large number of teachers came together, not only from South London, but also from the City and the Islington Sunday Schools. At this meeting Mr. John George Fleet was present, and from that time took an active interest in the work, and it soon became evident to his fellow-workers that he was "the right man in the right place." It was he who suggested the name of "The Institute," and it is well known to many that to his energy much of its subsequent success is, under God, to be attributed.

The next step was to interest the clergy, and this was by no means so easy a matter as at first sight appeared. Strange to say, that, with a few noble exceptions, the clergy of that day were inclined to look coldly upon the movement, and up to the end of the first two years of

its existence there were but eighteen (including two country vicars) who were subscribers to the Institute's funds.

The Society's first local habitation was in a dilapidated building belonging to the Scottish Hospital, situate in a court leading out of Petter Lane, and rented at about £15 or £20 a year. The small quarto minute-book, bound in parchment, if still in existence, records the doings of that "day of small things."

The Society's first public meeting was held in the "Hall of Commerce" (now the Consolidated Bank), Threadneedle Street, and was presided over by its early and constant friend, the late John Labouchere, Esq.

The excitement on the question of the Church Catechism was so high at this time that the Committee were warned that they should be prepared against any disturbance of the meeting, and they therefore took the precaution to issue tickets with the note: "The person using this ticket pledges himself to abide by the decision of the Chairman." Even this precaution was not sufficient, for a small but energetic knot of partisans interrupted the meeting, and it was only on the forcible removal of one or two of the more violent that the meeting was allowed to proceed. The rooms next occupied by the Society were in Salisbury Square, and the periodical lectures were given in schoolrooms lent by the managers of various Ward and National Schools. For many years the late Rev. John Harding, Rector of St. Ann's, Blackfriars (afterwards Bishop of Bombay), and the late Rev. Prebendary Auriol, Rector of St. Dunstan's, Fleet Street, gave their hearty personal aid and the use of their respective schools.

Well do we remember how, when as yet only in Deacon's Orders, we welcomed the first numbers of the magazine of the Institute. Sunday school teaching was no novelty then with us. We had been engaged in it, we might almost say from childhood, certainly from the age of fourteen; and we can remember once and again being forbidden the pleasure as a penalty for our own Sunday morning lesson being ill said at home. Yet even then we were not unhelped, though we write of more than forty years ago. Our superintendent, a Church of England layman, himself prepared and printed lesson papers in which he sought to "divide the word of truth," and supply Scripture references for our use. Once a month also he gathered the body of teachers together to tea in his house, to discuss the affairs of the school and commend teachers and scholars in prayer to God. Ladies and gentlemen, young shopmen and shopwomen, the bricklayer in his smock-frock and the crippled cobbler, the tradesman in active life and the aged and, perhaps, not too strong-minded little man, who had retired from business, met on these occasions, and found according to promise One "in the midst of them," whose presence made it good for them to be there. There rest at Sierra Leone the remains of two, a Catechist and his wife, sent forth by the Church Missionary Society, whose hearts the Lord had touched

with the desire to spend their lives in missionary service, but who like many others about the same date, were taken up almost immediately on their arrival out to higher service above. Such advantages, however, as we had were, we believe, comparatively speaking, uncommon in those days; they are not to be met with everywhere now; though after all they are not to be compared with those enjoyed at the present time by thousands of superintendents and teachers under the auspices of the Sunday School Institute.

What are some of the more striking advantages derived from the Institute? This is a question we are more than ever prepared to answer, after a careful perusal of the Report under review. We by no means pretend to exhaust the list, but let us give prominence to a few.

I. First and foremost we are inclined to place its *Publications*. If we say less under this head than some others, it is because we believe Church Sunday School teachers are year by year regarding the publications of the Institute with higher appreciation. Its sales last year extended to a million and a half, including 548,478 magazines, 67,222 lesson volumes, 148,571 lesson papers and syllabi, 135,474 hymn books and liturgies, 286,697 services of song and other musical publications. What this means in the way of help by division of labour, in saving of needless expense, in the diffusion of the best materials, in the sympathy of numbers, is best known to those who, like ourselves, when superintending large Sunday Schools in a northern manufacturing town, have attempted independently a portion of this work. No one will doubt the honesty of Mr. J. G. Fleet's remark, when referring to local schemes of lessons which he had met with, "I can *honestly* say that none placed before me were in any way to be preferred to those issued by the Institute." And yet we cannot pass on without observing, Is this not a case in which the Wise Man's saying may hold good, "In all labour there is profit?" The increased interest excited by the local effort may more than compensate for its inferiority. It certainly would be an interesting thought if, even as in our Churches the same Scripture lessons are everywhere read each Sunday morning and evening, so in our Sunday Schools the same portions of Scripture, or of our Church Catechism, were taught wherever the Church of England has gathered her little ones for instruction, from Japan westward to Columbia. But we doubt the wisdom of attempting to enforce this, especially in the case of adult classes, under a highly educated teacher. Nor would it conduce to this end if, as has been tried in some dioceses, a syllabus of lessons prepared by the Inspector took the place of those furnished by the Institute. While speaking of publications, may we express the hope that the Institute

may see its way shortly to supply a penny magazine, with lessons, in simplest language, specially as an aid to teachers who are of more humble attainments. The want has long been felt, and we believe that the magazine would secure a wide sale.

II. The *Training Lessons* furnished by the Institute appear to us to stand next in importance. These have been given sometimes in connection with Ruri-decanal Conferences and School Associations, sometimes on occasion of visits to individual parishes by an organizing secretary, or member of the London Committee. The Teachers' Associations, of which 287 are now in existence, are, we firmly believe, productive of much good. Self-help and mutual improvement should be their basis. They tend to elevate the teacher's standard of efficiency. He learns discipline. Higher aims in teaching are inculcated. That good feeling is cherished which Robert Raikes expressed in the following words:—"I find few pleasures equal to those which arise from the conversation of men who are endeavouring to promote the glory of their Creator and the good of their fellow creatures." But to quote from the report of a master in the art, Mr. H. G. Heald:—

Of the value of training lessons it is impossible to speak too strongly. The "looker-on," wedded, it may be, to certain plans and methods, follows the lesson given, and, tracing his course from the opening to the close, learns more of the proper method of awakening and retaining the attention, of simplifying Christian truth, of the proper use of illustration, and the best plan of catechizing than could ordinarily be acquired by much study at home. In short, the lesson, if it deserve the name, shows the Sunday School teacher not only *what* to teach (so far as the subject under discussion is concerned), but also *how* to teach. The value of the training lesson is increased tenfold when the discussion which follows is of a practical character. . . . When, by the tact of the chairman, teachers are led to speak freely, very much good results.

It is well observed by another organizing secretary that "the more Sunday Schools and Sunday School teaching are brought into light, the more unwilling will Sunday School workmen be to see their work half done or ill done."

The following suggestion, by the Rev. W. A. Corbett, is thoroughly practical:—

If teachers would undertake to give training lessons, and join in discussions on matters of practical interest to those engaged in teaching, much benefit would often be received as well as conferred. At present, training lessons are usually given by those who are more or less expert, and the special points in the lessons escape notice, because not observed upon afterwards. Might it not be advantageous if sometimes those who are less practised in the art of teaching would give the lesson, and one who has had long and varied experience were invited to point out its excellences or, if needful, its demerits?

III. The system of *Teachers' Examinations* stands high among the special advantages and successes achieved by the Institute. It has been now six years in operation. The number of candidates entered for the 30th May last was 1,114, of whom 910 presented themselves for examination at 136 different centres, and of these 389 were placed in the first class, and 264 in the second. The subjects of examination were, Scripture portion, Genesis xxxvii. to Exodus xiii., with a lesson to be selected therefrom; and from the Prayer Book, the Litany, together with Articles XV., XVI., XVII. and XVIII.

The Rev. A. J. Worlledge, M.A., Prebendary of Dunholme, and Tutor in the Scholæ Cancellarii in Lincoln Cathedral, Final Examiner in the Scripture Section, writes:—

The answers to the questions set in this section show the value of the examination in promoting accuracy, clearness of expression, grasp of details, and reverent study of the Bible. I have no hesitation in saying that the average level of excellence which has been reached in this examination is far higher than that which would be found in the large majority of answers sent up in examinations for Holy Orders, which too often manifestly indicate the want of any adequate instruction in the Bible, either in our public schools or amongst the pass-men in our Universities.

The Rev. Randall T. Davidson, M.A., Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Final Examiner in the Prayer Book Section, makes the following remarks:—

I have been much struck by the general excellence of the selected papers submitted to me for examination. The standard reached is a much higher one than I had expected. The papers generally are of a thoroughly satisfactory character, both in matter and style, and are evidently the result of much careful preparation.

Surely these testimonies were full of encouragement as to the future of our Sunday Schools. The more so, as the Institute studiously refrains from mentioning any text-books, and *cramming* is thus avoided. Nor are the results of the scheme to be measured only by the examination. Classes for the study of the subjects selected were attended by many who had no intention of coming forward for examination. At Islington, we are told that so many as 80 per cent. of the classes joined them with the simple desire of self-improvement. At Greenwich, in connection with the Sunday School Association, a class has been held for some months past by a clergyman, for the instruction of ladies in Greek, with the object of enabling them to study the New Testament in the original. It is popular and makes good progress.

IV. Another good service, for which the Church of England is indebted to the Institute, is the collection and compilation of

reliable *Statistics* of Sunday Schools in our Church at home. The effort extended over three years, and was conducted with the approval and aid of the Archbishops and Bishops. The result is now before us in a tabulated form, of which the following is a summary:—

The parishes in the Dioceses of England and Wales which made returns were in number 8,405. The number which did not make returns was 6,064. The returns, therefore, apply to .58 of the whole number, leaving .42 unaccounted for.

The number of mixed Sunday Schools in the parishes making returns was 8,030.

The number of Sunday Schools for infants, 1,703.

The number of Sunday Schools for adults, 2,257.

The total number of Church of England Sunday Schools in the Dioceses of England and Wales is 16,498.

The number of Bible Classes in the parishes making returns is 5,153.

The following are the numbers of scholars and teachers on the books:—

Male scholars (not infants), 499,354; female scholars (not infants), 509,363; infants, 222,242; adults, 58,314.

The total number of scholars on the books of the Schools in the 8,405 parishes making returns is 1,289,273, giving an average of 78 for each School. Allowing the same average for the 6,064 parishes not making returns, the total number of scholars in Church of England Schools is 2,222,891.

The number of male teachers on the books of the Schools is 41,477; female ditto, 71,935.

The total number of teachers on the books of the Schools in the 8,405 parishes making returns is 113,412, giving an average of 6.87 for each School. Allowing the same average for the 6,064 parishes not making returns, the total number of teachers in Church of England Schools is 195,533.

The average attendances are as follows:—

Scholars at Morning School, 503,951; at Afternoon School, 740,582; total daily attendances at Schools making returns, 1,244,533.

The average attendance of teachers at Morning Schools is 51,256; at Afternoon School, 70,054; total daily attendances, 121,310.

Some further interesting results are added:—

The number of scholars over 14 years of age in the Schools making returns is 168,734.

The number of scholars who are communicants, 48,680.

The number of teachers who were formerly scholars, 30,764.

Separate services for children are held in connection with 2,709 of the Schools making returns (*i.e.*, for more than one-third).

The Church Schools held in the premises of the Schools making returns number 6,945.

The number of Church Schools held in Board Schools is 201.

In a former article (CHURCHMAN, Vol. ii. p. 20) a rough estimate was given of the scholars and teachers in Church of England Schools in connection with the returns supplied by various Nonconformist bodies. It would appear that the actual number of teachers is less by one-fifth than that estimate, while the scholars were rightly guessed. Compared, however, with the recent census of our population, these returns are scarcely creditable to the Church, and we are thankful to see that in such great centres as Liverpool and Birmingham successful efforts have been recently made to increase the number of Church Sunday scholars. In the Report before us it is stated that in Liverpool and the neighbourhood "there are now upon the books 2,625 teachers and 36,198 scholars, as against 2,329 teachers and 30,746 scholars on December 31, 1879, showing an increase in one year of 296 teachers and 5,452 scholars." At Birmingham, we read of a "cavass of the whole town for additional scholars and teachers." If like efforts were everywhere made, we cannot doubt that the Church's Sunday Schools, and through them the Church's membership, would hereafter be greatly augmented.

V. For among the striking advantages obtained by the Institute we must reckon this furthermore, the assertion and inculcation of *Church principles* in the Sunday School. To explain God's Word and seek to apply it to the heart must ever be a teacher's highest office; and he will have done his duty most successfully whose scholars shall be found hereafter in largest numbers among the saints in light. But the Church on earth has its claims; and we heartily endorse the words of Lord Shaftesbury:—

In these days of blasphemy, when scepticism abounded, when infidelity was stalking abroad, and was not only bold but cunning, when fresh difficulties were started every day that would baffle even the most powerful controversialist, they must be more than ever prepared, not only in their own selves, but to give to the children the means of furnishing an answer to those who asked them the reason for the hope that is in them. He did not wish that children should be trained to controversy. God forbid! But there were certain great principles and facts to be prominently brought before them. They were training up champions of God's truth in the generation to come. They were to teach them the true value of right Churchmanship. In these days the establishment to which they belonged was exposed to very great dangers. There were certain grounds upon which it stood, and these should be imparted to the children. They should be taught that in maintaining it they were not maintaining a political Establishment, but a great Establishment founded that there should be a depository of God's Word, known, tangible, and patent to the whole world; that wherever they travelled they might see outward and visible signs that

this is a nation that worships God, and will continue to worship Him so long as this world shall endure.

By the School Board system they were shut out from distinctive teaching, and it became more necessary to have good Sunday Schools, where every denomination—more particularly the Church of England—could inculcate its own doctrines with force and precision. The teaching should not be of a vague and indefinite character, but true, distinctive, and dogmatic, resting upon the great doctrines of the Gospel set forth so beautifully in the Thirty-Nine Articles.

The Bishop of Liverpool uttered like words of wisdom when speaking at the annual meeting of the Liverpool Institute. We read:—

He held that the regular syllabus of teaching given by the Church of England Sunday Schools in her Prayer-book—the Articles and Doctrines of the Church properly pointed out and put before the young mind—was of the greatest importance to the well-being and standing of the Church of England in this country. Ignorance, he believed, was one grand difficulty to be contended with at the present day; not merely ignorance amongst those who were untaught—those who never went to school—but even amongst professing Church people. He was amazed and astounded sometimes to find how little those who called themselves Church people—those who were very zealous about and would stand up for the Church—really knew concerning what the Church held, and what were the clear and distinct lines she laid down in her formularies and doctrines about the sacraments of Christ.

By the publication of such works as the “Catechisms for the Young,” Bishop Titcomb’s “*Gladius Ecclesie*,” the “Brief Notes of Scripture and Prayer Book Lessons” by Mr. Malden, “Lessons on the Prayer Book,” on “The Collects,” and on “The Church Catechism,” by the examination of teachers in the Prayer Book and Articles of Religion, by the giving of training lessons, with a special effort to show how the Catechism can be used in a Bible lesson, “for the Church’s doctrine is Bible truth,” by the promotion of children’s services and weekly catechizing in church—by these and other ways the Institute helps the good old Church of England to hold her own. The Committee observe in the Report under review:—

In the past Sunday Schools have passed successfully through two phases—the time when they were encumbered with the teaching of reading and writing, and the time of reaction, which followed on the establishment of day schools. We have now a new phase before us, when we are threatened with the elimination of the religious element in education from the day school. Under these circumstances it may be that we shall before long have to fall back upon the Sunday School for training our children in Christian knowledge generally, and in the doctrines of the Church of England specially. If so, whatever may be

the teaching elsewhere, that in our Church Sunday Schools should include the teaching of the Creeds, the Catechism, and the Book of Common Prayer, so that, by God's blessing, our children may grow up intelligent and devout Churchmen.

We should not be doing justice to the Institute were we to omit to mention the debt of gratitude owing to its Managers for their Hymn Book, Choir Festival, and Services of Song. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy House," was the exclamation of one who ordered God's praise in His sanctuary, and taught those who ministered with singing to wait on their office "with their children" (1 Chron. vi. 33). And nothing, we believe, endears God's House more to the young than participation in the praise there offered.

The days of Intercession for Sunday Schools, now annually held in the month of October, at the suggestion of the Institute and with the full approval of the Heads of the Church, are becoming widely observed, and cannot fail, we think, to secure an increase of prayerfulness, with a corresponding enlarged blessing on the work.

We must not lay down our pen without a concluding notice of the Sunday School Centenary. How heartily it was observed, and with what extraordinary sanction by all classes of society, has already been recorded in the August CHURCHMAN of last year. From the many thoughtful addresses which were uttered on the occasion by men worthy to be heard, we have culled a few sentences to offer to our readers:—

Bishop of BEDFORD: Let teachers use fragments of spare time in visiting the homes of their scholars. . . . Love, sympathy, and earnest effort would certainly be blessed.

Bishop of OXFORD: Teachers had to take care that the Sunday Schools should do something for the children which, without them, would not be done.

Rev. J. F. KITTO: Work was often spoiled by want of definite aim in it. Some teachers aimed only at gaining the affections of their scholars. Some aimed only at cultivating mental vigour. These and others were not wrong in themselves; but they ought to be subordinated to the great end of their work—viz., that God may be glorified by the children being taught concerning Him, and brought to Him.

Bishop of MANCHESTER: There could be no doubt that, but for Sunday Schools, the Christian religion might almost have died out of the land within the last hundred years. . . . Because fifty Sunday School scholars had become forgers and pickpockets, was it a fair argument against them? Where were the 500,000 who were the backbone of the country, and who went to make up the righteousness of the people?

Dean of CHESTER: The mere existence of the phrase "Sunday School," the diligent prosecution of the benevolent work connected with that phrase, the spreading of the results arising out of that work

—all this must have an indirect tendency to imbue the community with a permeating sense of the value and the claim of Sunday. And this is a wholesome mode of dealing with the difficulties of the question of the observance of that day. It stirs up no debate; it raises none of those questions which it is difficult to argue theoretically. By the mere force of diligent and patient work, it suffuses the national life with a healthy tone. . . . Sunday School teachers may rest assured that in their modest endeavours they are doing a patriotic service to their country; that they are strengthening public opinion in reverence for the Lord's Day, and helping to transmit to the future a sacred institution which is full of blessing to mankind.

Right Hon. W. H. SMITH, M.P.: Looking at the effect of Sunday Schools in the past, I think we may say that those of us who have attained middle life can observe with satisfaction, pleasure, and thankfulness, that the outward decorum in our streets, the language which we hear, the conduct of those with whom we come in contact, has enormously improved within our memory and lifetime.

Bishop of HEREFORD: There were those who might strengthen the work by having a class of elder children at their own houses, and there instructing them in religious truths.

Sir ROBERT LIGHTON: One suggestion he would make was that the younger men's class should be taught by ladies.

Bishop of ST. ALBANS: He thought they would be all agreed that the most important work of the clergyman, after his strictly pastoral work, was the preparation of his Sunday School teachers for their weekly work; and he had no doubt that no efforts of the clergy had been more blessed than those expended on that important duty.

Rev. F. F. GOE: The Church of England Sunday School Institute published lessons on all parts of the Old and New Testament History, and it was not too much to say that if they were to bind all the volumes up together, they would have a practical child's commentary on the Old and New Testament, such as could not be produced in any other country besides England.

Bishop of ROCHESTER: Christian teachers! he thought the angels envied them their work, when they saw them Sunday by Sunday taking their places in the School, with all those bright little faces looking up to them, listening to them, seeing if they were in time, if they were patient and could keep their temper, if they had got up their lesson properly, and if they were themselves what they pretended to be. There were no critics like children.

Bishop of LIVERPOOL: The poorest Sunday School in the land was better than no Sunday School at all. . . . He should be delighted to see a system of Sunday Schools established for the upper classes; lest, perchance, in the process of time, the children of that class should get behind the lower classes, and not know as much systematic Christianity as was imparted by the poor despised teachers in Sunday Schools. . . . He wanted a good many more *young men* to come forward to teach, for the work would do them an immense amount of benefit.

Bishop of DURHAM: "Feed my lambs" was the primary charge of

all. The lambs are the hope of the flock, and must be sought out first. Whatever else must be left undone, this one thing must be done. . . .

Lord COLERIDGE : There was no knowledge, innocent, at least, which might not be made of the greatest advantage to them in their teaching. The more they knew, the better they would teach. See what a direct and noble motive that was to self-culture. See what a direct and noble motive it was to guide them in the selection of what they read. It ought to lead them to good books; it ought to keep them from bad books; because good books were like good friends—they loved them after they knew them, they raised the character of those who read them, and they tended to make their readers better for that end which came to all of them, as that end drew nearer.

Bishop of SALISBURY : They must never despair of the children God has given into their charge. With the child for whom the teacher was responsible should always be associated hope.

Still more important is it to notice the *results* of the Centenary Celebration, material and moral.

1. The *material* are.—(1) Upwards of £8,000 given to the Centenary Fund. (2) The old Crypt Schools at Gloucester restored and re-opened. (3) The purchase of the freehold of a large and commodious building, formerly Serjeant's Inn Hall and Chapel, as the future home of the Institute, the centre of the Church of England's Sunday School life.<sup>1</sup>

2. The *moral* results are of a high order, and cannot yet be fully gauged. Sunday Schools have received a public verdict of approval. The Church of England stands forth as the mother of the Sunday School, and her system as admirably adapted to its work and development. New Sunday School Associations have been formed, the staff of teachers recruited, Bishops<sup>(2)</sup> and clergy stirred, parents and educationalists have learned to look upon the Sunday School as the necessary complement of the present condition of public elementary education—a fresh impetus has been given to the demand for progressive qualifying by the teachers in our Sunday Schools. We look forward to the future of our Church in consequence with increased hope. Like the Bishop of Liverpool, we may surely see “a great deal of blue sky in the clear horizon in the days in which we live.” Warning watchmen have their use. Storms

<sup>1</sup> This building is to be opened on October the 26th by the Archbishop of Canterbury. We trust that by the zeal of Churchmen the considerable debt still resting upon it will soon be wiped off. An earnest effort in this direction is being made by means of purses from Sunday Schools, to be presented to the Princess Mary at a gathering in Exeter Hall, on the 22nd inst.

<sup>2</sup> The Bishop of Chichester has recently called attention to the fact that seventeen parishes in his diocese have no Sunday School. We know of country parishes elsewhere where no Church Sunday School exists.

roll up here and there, and sometimes break over our heads. But "God is our refuge and strength." Who should despair of religion in a land which reckons her Sunday scholars by millions, and their volunteer teachers on the weekly day of rest by hundreds of thousands?

JOHN BLOMEFIELD.

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ART. IV.—WILLIAM COWPER.

SECOND NOTICE.

COWPER is a striking instance of a man of mature age, whom true conversion of heart made a great poet. Cowper was kindled into real poetic fervour by the fire off God's altar. Southey has preserved some of his earlier efforts, and it is but truth to say that they are trivial and commonplace. His perception of natural beauty was quickened by grace, and his penetration by the power of the Gospel was the means of the revival of true poetic taste in England. Calvinism, which Coleridge somewhere calls "unimaginative," and which his biographers regard as harsh and narrow, and for which there is no name in their vocabulary too severe, gave the impulse to the most delicate appreciation of the natural world, and of the grace and tenderness of the domestic affections.

While at Olney, Cowper formed a friendship with a lady who not only introduced a new charm into his life, but exercised a fortunate influence over his literary career. This was Lady Austen, a brilliant, lively, charming widow, who paid a summer's visit to her sister who lived in the neighbourhood of Olney. Waiving ceremony, Lady Austen paid the first visit to Mrs. Unwin and the poet, which they returned with all due state and ceremony. "They fell in love with each other at once," in the most simple form of the words, and an intimacy sprang up between them there and then. Before many weeks passed, the plan of settling in Olney had entered Lady Austen's mind, and was encouraged by her two friends.

In the autumn of 1782 she became an inmate of the vicarage. This was, no doubt, the happiest time of Cowper's life. Lady Austen sang to him, talked to him, told him stories, and threw a light into the gloom and a variety into the monotony of his life. Some of his most beautiful songs were composed for her harpsichord. We are indebted to her, not only for the noble dirge on "The loss of the Royal George," but for the immortal ballad of John Gilpin. While Gilpin was running a successful career through town and country, Cowper's poem of "The