



SKETCH

OF




WESLEYAN

METHODISM

IN

REDDITCH.

1752-1892.



REDDITCH :

D. GLADWELL, EXPRESS PRINTING WORKS, QUEEN STREET.

1892.





In preparing this sketch of Methodism in Redditch, the following—among other sources of information—have been freely used, viz.—Wesley's Journal; Rev. J. Bond's "Golden Candlesticks and How They were Lighted;" Minute Books; Minutes of Conference; Hall's "Circuits and Ministers;" Mr. Wm. Avery's "Old Redditch;" "The Redditch Indicator"; and the Manuscript Notes of the late Mr. J. Wright

Every effort has been made to secure accuracy; and it is hoped that, though imperfect, it may, at least, prove interesting to the present generation of Methodists in Redditch; and may also be a nucleus, from which some future writer may draw materials for a fuller and more enlarged History of Methodism in this Circuit.

A. T.

Redditch, November, 15th, 1892.

= Alfred Tucker.



I.—Introduction of Methodism into Redditch.

THE history of Methodism in Redditch dates back to the days of our Founder. John Wesley visited the town—then a small village—on three occasions. His first visit seems to have been on Thursday, July 25, 1752. On his way from Chester to Bristol, he stopped for two or three hours at Redditch. News of his coming had been passed on, and he found a congregation awaiting him between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. This was but a flying visit, for in the evening of the same day he preached at Wallbridge, near Stroud. His next visit occurred on August 23, 1756, but it is not recorded that he preached on this occasion, but only passed through the town, on his way from Wednesbury to Evesham, when he had a very narrow escape at one of the most fatal places in the neighbourhood—the road through Beoley brook, where several serious accidents have occurred. Wesley was accompanied by Messrs. Walsh and Bruce, and his journal states that the public roads were impassable in consequence of the floods, and that near Redditch they came to a place which was flooded, and Mr. Bruce, seeing a footbridge, walked over, leading his horse by a long rein through the water. In an instant the horse disappeared, but soon emerged and reached the bank. Mr. Wesley, gaining experience from this, found a safer place further down, where he rode through. His third and last visit, so far as we have any record, took place on Thursday, March 12, 1761, on his way from Evesham to Birmingham, when he preached about one o'clock to a “deeply serious congregation.” It would seem, therefore, that he was pleased with the Redditch people, as compared with those of Evesham and of Birmingham. For we find from his journal, that at the former place he had been received with hooting and howling, and of the latter he writes:

"Perhaps the time is come for the Gospel to take root even in *this* barren soil;" and elsewhere he speaks of "the beasts of the people at Birmingham." Mr. Lloyd, the grandfather, or great-grandfather of the Rev. Wm. Lloyd, used to say that when he was a boy he heard Mr. Wesley preach in the field called 'the rack hill,' and that he formed a small society, and laid his hand on his head and blessed him. It appears, however, that the leader placed in charge by Mr. Wesley, was not the good man he professed to be, and the little society was broken up.

Time passed on. The foundations of the Methodist Church in England were being laid deep and broad by our great founder. In 1791 the Methodist Apostle was 'gathered to his fathers.' But there was a spot in this neighbourhood—"the barren soil of Birmingham," as he calls it—where, as "on the top of a mountain," he had sown "a handful of corn;" and, by the winds of God's providence and grace, some of its fruit was happily wafted to Redditch. Syrian merchants and Roman soldiers, in the first days of our faith, carried with their wares and arms the Gospel to distant regions; and since then war and commerce have often been pressed into the service of King Jesus. Saul of Tarsus, when he visited Athens, had his soul "stirred within him" by the sight of its idolatry; and Thomas Cocker, of Hathersage, in Derbyshire, wire manufacturer and Methodist, trading with Redditch, was profoundly impressed with the gross ignorance and great wickedness in which the people lived, and, as he passed through Birmingham, on his way home, called on the Rev. Richard Reece, the superintendent minister there, (afterwards President of the Conference), and left a sovereign with him to commence a fund to meet the expenses of preachers from Birmingham to Redditch. Active effort followed anxious counsel. Mrs. Longmore, of Birmingham, was a sister of Mrs. Joseph Turner, of Bredon, Redditch, and joined the Methodist preacher and the Methodist wire manufacturer in their plot against Satan's dominion. Mr. Reece could not himself go to Redditch; but he found William Dunn, a zealous young local preacher, who could. Dunn was to go and preach; Mrs. Longmore was to open the door of her sister's house for his reception; and the God of the Gospel backed this insig-

nificant expedition with the might of His Omnipotence. In 1807 Dunn preached in Joseph Turner's cottage; curiosity was excited, the house was filled, and better still God's power was felt. The next Sunday a similar service was held, and men and women were "almost persuaded" to become Methodist Christians. Then

HOSTILITY BEGAN TO SHOW ITSELF;

but the heroes who had undertaken to lift Redditch out of its moral filth, were not to be daunted. Sabbath after Sabbath local preachers from Birmingham walked over in all weathers, often through snow and rain and mud, twelve and a half weary miles, to preach the Gospel that they felt and loved. Amongst these, James Heaton distinguished himself, and the Conference of 1807 took him into its ranks, and stationed him as a home missionary at Redditch.

There, in the little parlour of Thomas Huins, Mr. Heaton formed the *first* Methodist class, consisting of seven or eight persons. They met usually on Sunday evenings after preaching; and so rapidly grew their numbers, that in five or six weeks it became necessary to divide them into four classes, the leaders being—Sarah Reading, Thos. Huins,* Jos. Reading, and Jos. Turner. Birmingham still sent many willing helpers, trudging joyfully to Redditch, and every night they held meetings to help the good work.

Then the devil and his friends rose to

VIOLENT OPPOSITION.

The Methodists were ridiculed as fanatics, and denounced as secret foes to the Established Church. The windows of the house where they preached were broken. Rotten eggs, mud and stones were lavishly showered on the congregation. "Devout women" who "consorted with them," in the dark winter nights suffered much in dresses, bonnets, and shawls, and sometimes more painfully in person. At last the "drum

* On Thos. Huins' Class-paper, lying before me, bearing date October 5, 1808, to March, 1809, are the following names—Thos. Huins, Hy. Houghton, Jos. Ireland, Job Palmer, John Mitchell, Thos. Lloyd, John Turner, Jos. Turner, Rd. Halbutt, Josiah Cutler, John Gittens, John Thornton, Ed. Allen, Hy. Bourne, and Abner Wright.

Among the first Redditch Methodists were also—Nancy Pinfield, Eliza Millward, John Hollington, Mrs. Job Palmer, Abigail Perry, Benj. Pearce, Saml. Reeves, Rd. Mogg, (Leader,) Mrs. Wild, Jos. Monks, B. Pearce, T. Bayliss, Wm. Bayliss, Jos. Strain, Thos. Monks, Robt. Rose, together with members of their families.

and fife band" was employed to march the Methodist rogues out of the parish. But the band soon came to grief. The service was still held in Mrs. Turner's house. Round the congregation on every side gathered the mob. The beleaguered Methodists, who seem to have had a good spice of muscular Christianity in them, resolved upon a sally. At their head, out amongst the medley music of the besiegers' tin-kettles, warming-pans, fire-irons, and fifes and drums, marched Mrs. Turner, armed with a candle and carving knife! She instantly singled out the loudest offender, and plunged her knife into the heart of—*the big drum!* Other similar losses, it was feared, might follow that of the loud sounding parchment, if these muscular Christians were too much pressed, and the siege was therefore prudently abandoned.

More space was now wanted for the crowding worshippers—not seats cushioned, carpeted, and curtained, but plainest sitting or standing accommodation, where the Word of God might be heard. The two lower rooms of the cottage-sanctuary were already crammed, and now a board was taken up in the floor of one of the bedrooms, that the preacher's voice might sound through to the women, privileged, unseen, to occupy that dormitory-gallery. After twelve months of such "pursuit" of worship "under difficulties," widow Smith, who kept a school at The Grove, offered her large room on the ground floor, and the offer was gratefully accepted.

II.—Bredon Chapel.

A chapel, however, was soon necessary. But where should a site be got? Almost all the land around was copyhold. And where should the necessary money be obtained? The richest of this little flock could not give more than £5. But "the God of heaven prospered them," and they built; Birmingham furnishing good counsel, and some substantial help. This Chapel was opened in 1808, by the Rev. Jas. Wood. The site for this first Wesleyan Chapel in Redditch, was given, or sold, for the nominal sum of ten shillings, by John Bennett, of Studley, needlemaker. The twelve trustees were—Robert Cocker, of Hathersage, Derbyshire, wiredrawer; Jas. Heaton, Methodist preacher; Wm. Dunn, gun finisher; Wm. Scattergood, toymaker, all of Birmingham; John Gittens, joiner;

Thos. Huins, cordwainer ; Jno. Turner, Jos. Reading, Henry Houghton, Jos. Ireland, Jno. Mitchell, needlemakers, Redditch; and Thos. Blundell, of Studley, needlemaker. The land was 18 yards in length, by 11 yards and 4 inches wide, and was garden ground in the occupation of Jos. Turner. The deed bears date 2nd September, 1807, and was made by Rd. Hyde Guardner. The persons above-named were the main supporters of Methodism in the early time. But there was another a most important friend to the cause, whose name does not appear—Mr. Thos. Williams, a very generous helper, who left £1000 to the Wesleyan Missionary Society.

The Methodist fire now began to flame more openly, and to bad men most offensively. The spark in the private house was an annoyance; the blaze in the chapel an intolerable nuisance.

PERSECUTION WAS RESUMED.

At their services frightened birds were sent flying amongst the rickety tallow candles, to extinguish them. Dogs that could both "bark and bite" were introduced into the chapel, and let loose one upon another, if not upon the congregation. These were comparatively small annoyances. But one Sunday evening, when the sturdy yeomen of the porch were off their guard, in there stole a human-devil, wrapt in a black cow-hide, with the beast's horns poking above his head, and a chain rattling from his tail. Having stalked up the aisle, he took his seat as a hearer. The women screamed, and the preacher stopped; but John Hollington, a great muscular farmer, grasped the "man-demon," carried him to the door, flung him down four or five stone steps upon the scraper, and left him there, howling that his arm was broken.

The devil's open assault had only brought him to grief, and so he took the more prudent course of

SECRET OPPOSITION.

But his success was no greater. As John Martin, needle-scourer and Methodist, at dinner time sat in a quiet corner of the mill reading his Bible, he overheard the plot. A toy-cuckoo was to be introduced into the chapel under the arm and coat of the chief conspirator, to rout the Methodists with its startling cuckoo-cry. But, forewarned, the latter were fore-armed. The service proceeded quietly till the sermon had been commenced,

when from the centre of the chapel out there sounded, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" to the startled congregation. Then straightway uprose John Hollington aforementioned, pounced upon the chief offender, and, in spite of his friends, first took from him the obnoxious cuckoo, and then swept the whole band unceremoniously from the premises; and the service was finished in peace. After this six of the ringleaders were brought before the magistrates at Droitwich, and fined a guinea each, the senior magistrate on the bench shaking his fist at them and saying, "If you ever come here again on such a charge, you shall go to jail every one of you!"

But though the strength of this persecution was thus broken at Redditch, in other parts of the circuit it raged unhindered. At Alcester Mr. Heaton was dragged up and down in the street-gutter, and so beaten that he carried the marks of his ill-treatment to his grave. In 1812 the Rev. Michael Cousin was preaching in the chapel at Alcester, when a brick-end was thrown at the chapel, which struck the preacher with such violence that it was feared he was killed; but though he recovered, he carried the mark of the wound to the grave. But, like Paul, these Methodist pioneers could say, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." At Henley, the magistrates sent the constable and others to stop the outdoor preaching; and on one special occasion, were foiled and beaten by the tact of Mr. John Collins, father of the late Rev. Thos. Collins. Mr. Collins went, with a few friends, to hold an out-door service at Henley. After singing and prayer, the constable interfered, saying he had orders to stop all such proceedings. Mr. Collins, treating the constable with the greatest courtesy and studied deference, turned to the people, telling them his anxiety to be subject to the law, and that, had the magistrates not sent the constable, he should have told them such and such things. So captivating was his manner and matter, that he was able in this way to tell the people all his message.

LEGAL OPPOSITION

was now attempted. In 1809, John Smith was stationed at Redditch. Against him a magistrate, who was a retired barrister, instigated proceedings. He was served with a summons

for preaching in an unlicensed house at Alvechurch. In due course he appeared before the magistrates. Mr. Allbutt, a schoolmaster and Methodist, an intelligent and spirited man, who lived in the neighbourhood, undertook the management of the defence. A witness was sworn, who, when questioned as to the number of persons present at the service, declared he could not say there were ten. Mr. Allbutt insisted, therefore, that a congregation could not be proved. The witness then deposed that the preacher read something out of a book, but could neither name the book nor any of the words read. Mr. Allbutt now insisted that Mr. Smith could not be proved to have preached. "How," at length asked the magistrate, "did Mr. Smith address you?" "Sir," said the intelligent witness, "I think he was dressed just the same as he is now!" The case was dismissed, and home returned the Methodists, singing along the roads—

"Thine arm hath safely brought us

A way no more expected,

Than when Thy sheep passed through the deep,

By crystal walls protected."

In 1810 Samuel Sugden was preaching, out of doors, at Bromsgrove, then in the Redditch Circuit, when two parish constables appeared. They pulled him down, and marched him off to the parish lock-up. A messenger was immediately despatched to Redditch, to inform the Rev. Michael Cousin, the superintendent minister, of the affair. On receiving the news, Mr. Cousin started off to Mr. Allbutt's house, a distance of nine miles, and reached it at three a.m.; and by seven both the superintendent and his friend were at Bromsgrove. They found that a prayer meeting had been held at the prison door, Mr. Sugden within and his friends without, praying and singing together all night long. Then came the constables; and, refusing Sugden an opportunity either of washing or refreshment, marched him off to Droitwich. His two friends hired a chaise and pair, and in a short time overtook him and the constables. The chaise was stopped, and the doors opened. The constables thrust Sugden in, intending to follow; but Mr. Allbutt quickly closed the door, and bade the driver proceed, leaving the two guardians of the law to perform their long and weary trudge alone. Before they arrived the three Methodists had refreshed themselves, and were comfortably seated in the

magistrates' room. The preacher was charged with disturbing the peace. In support of such a charge there was absolutely no evidence. The constables in turn were therefore charged with having exceeded their duty. This the magistrates admitted, but were disposed to punish them with only a small fine, and then dismiss the whole case. But in opposition, Mr. Allbutt spoke his mind plainly, and was violently ejected from the court; and then Mr. Cousin told the justices that the matter should be carried to a higher tribunal. The Connexional Committee of Privileges interfered, and in the issue the parish of Bromsgrove compromised the matter by paying all the expenses, with £50 to the hospital at Birmingham, and £50 more to that at Worcester.

From this time open persecution gradually subsided, and soon ceased. But who can tell how much present day Methodists owe to the steadfastness, perseverance, and piety of their persecuted predecessors.

THE GOOD WORK WAS EXTENDED

by the formation of a Sunday School, and a Benevolent Society—institutions carried on with increasing success to the present time. The indefatigable labours of the Rev. Jas. Heaton were fruitful of the best results in town and country. Under his direction a chapel was built at Studley, in 1809, and Methodism was introduced into several places. About this time open-air services were often conducted in the surrounding villages and hamlets.

In 1810 Redditch became the head of a Circuit, and contributed £10 to the quarterly board—a great advance on the 25/- sent to the *first* quarterly meeting at Bromsgrove, in Sept. 1807. These were times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, when many were added to the fellowship of the Church, for in July, 1812, Redditch reported 140 members; Studley 45; Crabbs Cross 40; and chapels were built at Alcester and Crabbs Cross. For the next three years Redditch and Bromsgrove were again united, but in 1816 were finally divided; one minister being appointed to each place, exchanging monthly, to 1826, when Stratford-on-Avon was included, and two ministers were appointed. In 1828 Stratford was detached, and one minister appointed to Redditch for three years. Since 1832 two ministers have laboured in the circuit.

The *first* Redditch Circuit Plan was issued in 1811. The names of the preachers, numbered from one to eleven, were as follows—Cousen, Sugden, Bennett, Clarke, Cooper, Huins, Shaylor, Blundell, Mogg, Walsh. The places were—Redditch, Studley, Crabbs Cross, Webheath, Ridgway and Cookhill, Haselor and Alcester, Rowney Green and Alvechurch, Claverdon, Tanworth and Beoley, Mappleboro' Green.

In 1817 the little chapel at Bredon was considerably enlarged, and the Circuit was returned with 250 members. The finances steadily improved, but the Circuit book shows that the income was considerably less than the expenditure. In 1815 there was an accumulated deficiency of £71, and for several years after, sums varying from £15 to £25, which, however, were paid by Conference in the first few instances, and later by the "District Meeting" and "Conference." The income of the Circuit in 1826 was about £20 per quarter.

In 1828 there were 29 preachers on the Circuit Plan, and 14 preaching places.

In 1838, 23 preachers, and 10 places.

In 1832, considerable excitement was caused by the superintendent of the Circuit, the Rev. T. Graham, forbidding Miss Butler, and other young women to preach. Mr. Breeden, then of Derby, but formerly of Redditch, was appealed to, and came over and founded a new Society—the Arminians, who commenced services in the Rifle Corps Room, on the 13th of May, 1832. A minister was at once appointed, and a chapel was opened on 30th of June, 1833, on the same site as the present U. M. F. Church.

The Cottage Service at Webheath was superseded in 1827, by a Chapel at Headless Cross, the Foundation Stone being laid by the Rev. W. Davies, June 25th. Enlarged twice, in 1858 a new and larger sanctuary was erected on the same site, seating about 250, with accommodation for the scholars, at as cost of £500. Captain Emmott was a warm supporter, and the school was aided by the Hewell family, and by the Hon. and Rev. Lord Aston. Mr. Rd. Yoxall was regarded as the Apostle of this cause; for nearly 30 years he superintended the School, never being absent one Sunday, or late five minutes. The late Mr. Jno. Austin, and Mr. William Avery

succeeded to the superintendency—the latter occupying the position for over 40 years.

The present Chapel, School and class-rooms were built in 1874, at a cost of £2500. The chapel seats 350, with space for 150 children, and galleries can be put in to accommodate 200 adults. The Rev. Geo. Mather conducted the Opening Service, the collection being over £300. The debt of £290 it is expected will be paid off during the next twelve months. The school numbers 465, with a staff of 30 officers and teachers.

Years passed on. The work was prospered all over the Circuit, but the data for this period is scanty. The Bredon chapel pew rents realized the respectable sum of about £35 a year, and the Chapel Anniversary collections varied from £9 to £15, according to the popularity of the special preacher for the occasion—once it reached £22. Famous preachers, such as Dr. Newton, Dr. Beaumont, Dr. Melson, and Charles Richardson, popularly known as 'the Lincolnshire Thresher,' made occasional visits, which were seasons of special blessing. The latter came several times to conduct Special Services, and whenever announced the chapel was crammed, and many were awakened and converted, and quickened into a higher spiritual life, under his powerful preaching.

Remarkable Conversions.

Redditch Methodism is rich in its Revival lore from the earliest time. Not only have the various places been blessed, but some of the converts have gone far and wide, and are now among the leading lights in the colonies and elsewhere. We have only space to record two instances. Mr. and Mrs. Jos. Reading were among the earliest members. Previous to their conversion they eagerly pursued the pleasures of the world. Mr. Reading was first brought to the knowledge of the truth by the preaching of Rev J. Heaton, in Mr. Turner's house, in 1808, and after forty-eight years of faithful and successful service, he entered into the joy of his Lord. The conversion of her husband was regarded by Mrs. Reading as a great calamity, ending the happiness of their married life. To renounce her worldly pleasures, and be stigmatised 'a Methodist appeared past endurance.' She bitterly persecuted her

husband for a little while, but having been persuaded to go to Birmingham to hear the Rev. John Nelson, she returned a penitent seeker of salvation, and at once identified herself with the despised Methodists, continuing her membership and her cordial co-operation till she joined the church triumphant. Rejoicing with her husband in the consciousness of pardon, Mrs. Reading found the favour of God to be better than "life," and laboured unweariedly in every good work. Their home at Bredon was the resort of godly men, and the scene of many Christian gatherings—Dr. Newton, Dr. Beaumont, and other eminent ministers were frequently entertained there. Mrs. Reading was specially useful in times of religious awakening; anxious enquirers were invited to the house at any time for counsel and prayer; and to many it became their spiritual birthplace. Continuing to lead her class until the infirmities of more than four-score years obliged her to resign—for sixty five years Mrs. Reading was a consistent and happy Methodist.

During the cholera year (1832) there was a great religious awakening in the town, and the Bredon chapel was crowded every night. Two men spent most of a week—night and day—drinking and song-singing at the "Crown," and carrying on their bravado to the full. One night one of them went out and did not return. Soon after the other left, and wending his way to the chapel, found that his friend was sitting in the adjoining pew, their very arms touching. God's spirit had been powerfully striving with both of them all the week. They were soundly converted, and "were faithful unto death"—John Lloyd and William Fowkes were two of the most useful and honoured men that Methodism has produced, the means of good to Redditch and the circuit that "the day" alone can declare. The youngest son of Mr. Lloyd, who owes everything under God, to Redditch Methodism, is the Rev. Wm. Lloyd, of New York, who has rendered eminent service for several years, during his visits home in the summer, and especially in connection with our Jubilee effort, for which we are deeply grateful.

Multitudes have realized the Bredon Chapel to be "the House of God, and the gate of heaven," and in "that day" it shall be said of not a few—

"THIS MAN WAS BORN THERE."

III.—Bates Hill Chapel.

The ministers and trustees, having long deplored the inadequacy of the Bredon Chapel, took steps to secure land for the erection of such a place of worship as should at once meet the wishes and wants of the public, and do honour to Methodism. The members of the Society, and the public were appealed to, and every effort made to raise funds, resulting in upwards of £900 being promised, in sums varying from 5/- to £200. On January 12th, 1841, it was agreed "that the site of the New Chapel be the land in William-street, offered by Mr. T. Turner." Soon after a new Trust of twenty was formed, and Mr. Robinson was the architect and builder. The Foundation Stone was laid April 26th, 1842, by the Rev. Jas. Miller, the former superintendent, and Jos. Reading, Esq. "the father of the Society;" and the Revs. J. Everett and John Walsh delivered addresses—Mr. Everett preaching in the evening. The new Chapel, to seat 654, was opened nearly twelve months after, on Tuesday, April 11th, 1843, by the Rev. Robt. Newton, D.D., Secretary of the Conference, when he preached two of his famous sermons. Opening services were continued by the Revs. Jas. Bromley, Dr. Beaumont, and Jos. Hargreaves, and the Collections were £205.

The Chapel cost £2351 4s. 8d., the debt on the Bredon chapel was £930, making the liabilities of the trustees £1600. From time to time the chapel and premises were liberally supplemented, in the way of organ, heating, ventilating, fittings, painting, &c., at considerable cost. The Rev. Thos. Collins conducted a series of Special Services in 1855, which were a great blessing both to the Church and congregation.

In 1842 the ministers' residence was removed from Beoley-road to the Chapel grounds—the present house being considerably enlarged in 1891. Prior to 1845, when an organ was introduced, musical instruments had been used in the Chapel; and in 1891 a superior instrument was provided. During Mr. Keyworth's superintendency, 1868-70, new Chapels were erected at Mappleboro'-green, Rowney Green, and Beoley.

In July, 1856, there was a Jubilee Bazaar, in commemoration of the *establishment* of Methodism in Redditch, which

realised £212, mainly appropriated to the reduction of the Chapel debt.

In 1860 the Trust Debt was £2031, but by various efforts it was reduced, and in 1868 brought down to £1050, to the great gratification of the Rev. Richd. Eland and the friends generally. Another difficulty had to be dealt with without delay—the Enfranchisement of the Trust Property. By a special effort the sum was raised, and £500 paid to the Lord of the Manor, and £46 17s. 6d. legal expenses—Lord Windsor returning £100 for the benefit of our Day School Funds.

The Congregations gradually increased, and the need of

IMPROVEMENT AND ENLARGEMENT

began to be felt, when for years there was scarcely a family pew to be obtained. In 1882 the Chapel and School were enlarged to their present proportions, several vestries and class-rooms being added, involving an outlay of £2740. About £1700 was raised by subscriptions, ranging from one shilling to £250; and upwards of £200 more by Re-opening Services, Christmas Tree, &c. The Chapel *seats* 905 adults. The school-room is very commodious. The Trust Estate is roughly valued at £8000, and the present debt is £1200.

The Weekly Offertory was introduced eight years ago, and has proved a considerable success—commencing at a little over £3, it has fluctuated between that sum and £4 10s. od., though £5 has been contributed several times recently.

This year being the Jubilee, the interesting event is to be celebrated by a special effort to discharge various liabilities amounting to upwards of £620.

IV.—Sunday and Day Schools, &c.

The *first* Wesleyan Sunday School was formed at the little Bredon chapel in 1808. In 1819 more suitable premises were erected in Evesham-street, and enlarged in 1843. But when the Day Schools were built in Ipsley-street, in 1859, at a cost of £1500, the Sunday School was conducted there. The Foundation Stone was laid by Sir John Ratcliff on Oct. 31st. These schools have passed through the usual vicissitudes common to such institutions. The present staff is 10,

with 360 children under their care, including infants. The number of children presented at the last inspection was 95 per cent., the Government Grant was £226 18s. 6d., and the expenditure £414.

The Bates Hill Sunday School is worked by 57 officers and teachers, 50 of whom are members of our Church; and the scholars, including infants, number 454. Many have been trained for usefulness as members and office-bearers in the church; and others have migrated and emigrated, and are making their mark for good in the localities to which they have removed. Eight of our ministers have passed through this school.

The usual agencies and organizations are in active operation—Town Mission and Benevolent Fund; Mothers' Meeting; Sick and Dividend, Tract, Dorcas, and Mutual Improvement Societies; Ladies' Association, Mens Bible Class, Band of Hope, and Juvenile Society Classes, &c.

In 1869 a Sunday School was started in a house at Holyoake's Fields; in 1871 a Mission School-chapel was built, and in 1885 it was considerably enlarged. The Sunday School numbers nearly 200 scholars, with a staff of 23 officers and teachers. Services are held on Sunday evenings by the Mission Band, who afterward visit the lodging-houses and conduct short services. A mothers' meeting is held Monday evenings, and society classes on Tuesday.

We trust this imperfect sketch will awaken in many hearts the grateful acknowledgment: "THE LORD HATH DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US, WHEREOF WE ARE GLAD;" and encourage the prayerful expectation of still more abundant blessing.

"Conquests gained are grounds of vantage—
 Stepping stones for higher rise;
 Heights when scaled, though bright and lofty,
 Higher point our lifted eyes:
 Valour is the best thanksgiving,
 Rest not in the foe's domain;
 Forward! onward! Christian soldiers,
 Till you reach the heavenly plain."

The following list of ministers appointed by the Conference from the commencement of the Circuit to the present, will doubtless be interesting to many. Previous to 1807, Redditch was connected with, and worked by preachers from Birmingham, under the direction of the Rev. Rd. Reece; at the Conference of 1807, Bromsgrove Circuit was formed, including Redditch; Wm. Hicks and Jas. Heaton being appointed as 'Home Missionaries.'

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| 1808. J. Heaton, J. Odgers, 'Missionaries.' | 1837. Jos. Jackson, S. Brown, jun. |
| 1809. J. Odgers, J. Smith, 'Missionaries.' | 1838. Rt. Melson, S. Brown. |
| 1810. Redditch, 'near Bromsgrove,' became head of a circuit. | 1839. Wm. Stokes, T. J. Walker. |
| M. Cousen, S. Sugden. | 1840. Jas. Miller, T. A. Rayner to reside at Alcester; J. Yardley. |
| 1811. M. Cousen, S. Sugden. | 1841. Jas. Smetham, Wm. Moss, B. G. Mitchell, Alcester. |
| 1812. 'Redditch and Bromsgrove' was the designation. | 1842. Jas. Smetham, F. F. Woolley Alcester; B. Gregory. |
| M. Cousen, J. Griffith, T. Mollard. | 1843. Jn. Tindall, T. Shears, to reside at Studley. |
| 1813. J. Bedford, T. Mollard. | 1844-5. Jn. Tindall, E. Russell to reside at Studley. |
| 1814. J. Bedford, J. Lewis. | 1846-7. R. Bond, E. Thorley. |
| 1815. W. Harrison, jun, B. Andrews | 1848. Jn. Walsh, J. W. Davies. |
| 1816. 'Redditch and Bromsgrove' were <i>divided</i> ; one minister each: J. W. Cloake at Redditch | 1849. Jn. Walsh, S. Haigh. |
| 1817. J. W. Cloake to exchange with Bromsgrove. | 1850-1. Wm. Ricketts, R. Horsfield. |
| 1818. M. Dunn. | 1852. H. Powis, S. E. Greathead. |
| 1819-20. C. Hulme. | 1853. H. Powis, T. Pearson (4) |
| 1821-22. J. Whitehouse. | 1854. H. Powis, Jos. Sutton. |
| 1823. E. Banks. | 1855. J. McOwan, S. S. Taylor |
| 1824. W. Wilson, sen. | 1856-7. J. McOwan, J. L. Posnett |
| 1825. Wm. Davies; in 1826 Stratford-on-Avon was included, Wm. Davies, Jn. Nicklin | 1858-9. E. Shelton, E. F. Hardwick |
| 1827. Wm. Davies, Jn. Nicklin. | 1860. E. Shelton, A. B. Holford |
| 1828. Stratford-on-Avon seems to have been detached; and only <i>one</i> minister appointed to Redditch—T. Fletcher. | 1861. T. M. Fitzgerald, A. B. Holford |
| 1829-30. F. Collier. | 1862. T. M. Fitzgerald, E. Knibbs |
| 1831. Thos. Graham, sen. | 1863. T. M. Fitzgerald, B. Burrows |
| 1832. Thos. Graham, Jn. Tindall. | 1864. J. W. Crankshaw, B. Burrows |
| 1833. T. Thompson, W. Hendley | 1865. R. Eland, B. Burrows |
| 1834. Thos. Thompson, sen. S. H. Wardley. | 1866-7. R. Eland, W. R. Stewart |
| 1835-6. Jos. Jackson, Jn. Walters. | 1868-70. R. Keyworth, G. H. Bellamy. |
| | 1871. J. A. B. Harry, P. Pizey |
| | 1872-4. T. Leach, T. Austin |
| | 1875-7. W. Barber, C. E. Griffin |
| | 1878-80. W. T. Nelson, J. Mallinson |
| | 1881-3. A. G. Ward, W. L. Beadon |
| | 1884. Hy. Balls, J. A. Aldington |

1885. Hy. Balls, L. L. Swift
 1886. J. S. Shrewsbury, L. L. Swift
 1887. J. S. Shrewsbury, W. Evans
 1888-9. T. J. Després, W. Evans,
 A. J. Sherwell (Studley).
 1890. T. J. Després, W. Farmer,
 G. Lang (Studley). Mr.
 Després died Aug. 5th,
 1890, and the Rev. H. J.
 Blasdale was sent as supply
 1891-2. Alfred Tucker, John Toft ;
 Joseph Stafford (Studley),
 Evangelist.



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