

Memorial to John Bunyan at Elstow.

Laying the Foundation Stone.

Sir Frederick Howard's Reminiscences.

There was a felicitous and interesting ceremony at Elstow on Thursday, when Sir Frederick Howard laid the memorial stone of the new Bunyan Memorial Hall at Elstow. For nearly a hundred years a congregation has worshipped in the venerable Moot Hall on the Green, and has been served by a succession of faithful workers, and now it is felt that the time is come when that congregation should have a more permanent and better equipped home for the work. In this beautiful and historic village there are many memories and memorials of Bunyan and his times, and it seems fitting that there should be a memorial building in which the people who endeavour to walk in the way that he pointed out should meet to draw inspiration from his teachings and uphold his traditions and the example of his piety. The Hall, which is to stand upon a site which has been given with characteristic generosity by Mr. Samuel Whitbread, will provide good accommodation for the purposes of public worship and for the work of the Sunday School. It is estimated to cost, when completed, £1,600, and of this sum £1,086 had been already contributed. It is the hope of the Committee that it may be possible to open the Hall in September next practically free of debt. The work of building has been commenced, and the foundations are being well and soundly laid.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED BUILDING.

The site is on the main street, adjoining the village school, and nearly opposite the Bunyan cottage. The ground plan shows a main hall 46ft. by 25ft., approached by an entrance porch, with oak doors, and there will be two class-rooms, which will be separated from the large hall by a folding movable division, so that they can easily be used as additions to the hall, the whole giving seating accommodation for nearly three hundred people. There will also be an infants' room 20ft. by 15ft., a class room 15ft. by 12ft., library, cloak and ladies' room. The floors are to be of maple wood, and there will be a pine dado 4ft. high round the wall, which in the upper part will be plastered. The roof will be partly open, showing the timbers of the roof principals and ceiling at the collar line. The heating will be provided for in part by hot-water radiators, and special attention will be given to the ventilation. Externally the walls will be of red sandstone bricks, and the roof will be covered with red tiles, the gables being half-timbered in oak with rough timbered panels, overhanging eaves, and barge boards. The elevation fronting the road shows a large and handsome Tudor bay window, with oak mullions and transoms, and lead lights. The gable above the window is filled in with dark oak vertical timbers, rough cast between, and bordered by barge boards under the eaves, which are supported by ornamental brackets, the whole being terminated at the apex with a finial. There are two similar gables on the north side to the ends of the two class-rooms, and another at the end of the infants' room on the south side. A turret ventilator will be placed on the ridge of the main roof. It will be seen that the style chosen for the building is a pleasing treatment of the English domestic, which is well in keeping with the old-world air of this interesting village.

The contractors are Messrs. Freshwater and Sons, of Bedford, and the work is being carried out from the plans and designs, and under the superintendence, of the architects, Messrs. Usher and Anthony, 9, St. Paul's-square, Bedford.

The memorial stone will bear a bronze plate with ornamental moulded border, and embossed as follows in XVIIIth. century lettering:—

BUNYAN MEMORIAL HALL,
TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN BUNYAN,
PARACHUTE, DREAMER, INTERPRETER.

This stone is laid by
Sir Frederick Howard,
May 19, 1910.

STONE LAYING CEREMONY.

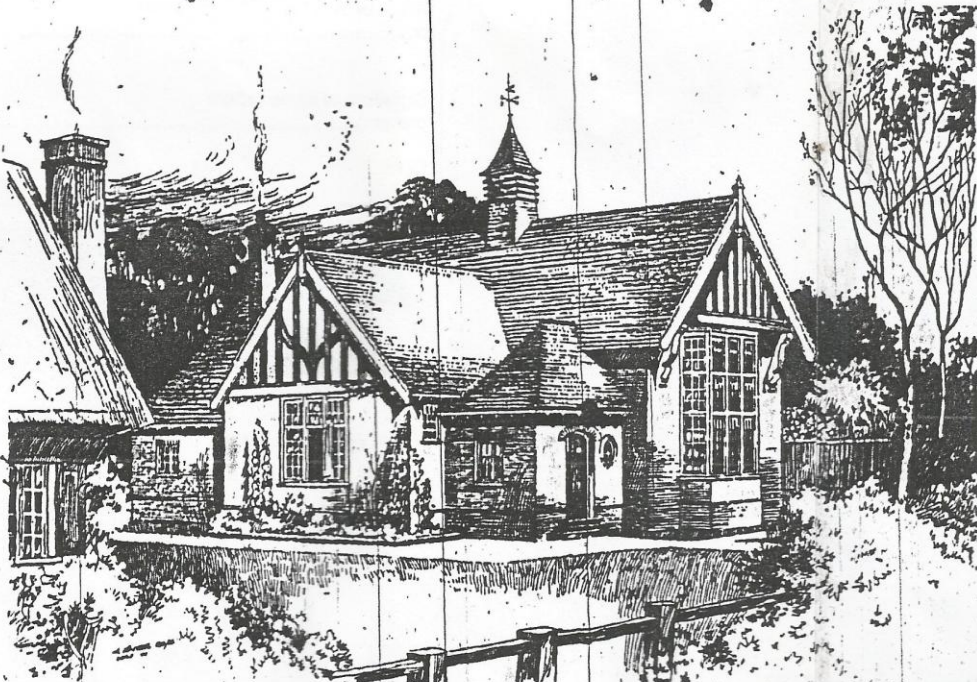
It was a happy concourse that gathered within and around the rising walls of the new Hall in the brilliant weather of Thursday afternoon. The sun shone upon a charming setting for the mise en scene—fruit trees in full blossom, a meadow golden with buttercups, the fresh spring foliage of the distant clover, the road lined with oaks, and a large assemblage seated under the awning, or standing in the crowd that surrounded the spot where the memorial stone, suspended by chain and pulley, hung over the brick-



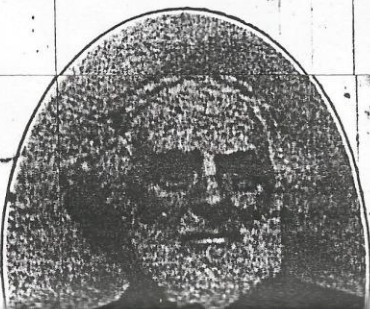
Sir Frederick Howard,
Bedford's Grand Old Man.



Mr. Samuel Whitbread,
Lord of the Manor of Elstow.



SKETCH OF THE MEMORIAL HALL.



May 12, 1910.

STONE LAYING CEREMONY.

It was a happy concourse that gathered within and around the rising walls of the new Hall in the brilliant weather of Thursday afternoon. The sun shone upon a charming setting for the mise en scene—fruit trees in full blossom, a meadow golden with buttercups, the fresh spring foliage and the distant clover, the road lined with castings, and a large assemblage seated under the awning, or standing in the crowd that surrounded the spot where the memorial stone, suspended by chain and pulley, hung over the brick-work pier which had been built to receive it.

Among those present were Sir Frederick Howard, the Rev. Mr. John Brown, Pastor Emeritus, and the Rev. W. Charter Piggott, the present minister of Bedford Bunyan Meeting; Mrs. Charter Piggott, Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Piggott, the Rev. Mr. Barradale, the Rev. W. G. Leadbetter, the Rev. T. Varley, the Rev. H. Barnes, Mr. T. E. Rose, Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Leeds Smith, Mr. Alfred Clane and Miss Clane, Mr. Charles Pottit (Harrold), Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Carruthers, Miss Carruthers, Mr. W. J. Robinson, Mrs. Biss, Mr. and Mrs. T. E. Leppard, Miss Sturges, Mr. A. H. Clare, Mr. H. E. Corbold, Miss Robinson, Mr. and Mrs. Whitmore (Stagden), Mr. R. H. Poynter, Miss Rogers, Mr. P. Gamman, Mr. Hart, Mr. W. T. Lansberry, Mr. T. G. Carruthers, Mr. E. Stride, Agnes, Mr. Abraham Smith, Mr. Wm. Warton, Mr. W. H. Leete, Mr. F. Spooner, Mrs. and Miss Kirby, Mr. and Mrs. C. Aveline, Mr. and Mrs. J. I. Anthony, Mrs. Keynes, Miss Keynes (Cambridge), Mr. Hockley, Mr. J. W. Newton, Mr. J. Rogers, Mr. T. E. Anthony, Mr. T. Peer, Mr. W. Watkins, Mr. S. Freshwater, Mr. T. Freshwater, Mr. B. Litchfield, and Mr. Shaw.

The proceedings opened with the hymn, "Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven," led by choir and harmonium. The Rev. V. A. Barradale read the 122 Psalm, and offered prayer on behalf of the King and the bereaved Royal Family. Thanks were offered for him whose name that building would bear, for the truth to which he bore witness in his time, and for the fact that "he still speaketh to all the world."

The Rev. W. Charter Piggott said they had hoped to have with them the Rev. Alexander Whyte, of Edinburgh, who had done for the spiritual interpretation of the "Pilgrim's Progress" what Dr. Brown had done for the life of Bunyan himself. Dr. Alexander Whyte wrote: "How much I wish I could have been with you to-morrow. It cannot be told how much I owe to John Bunyan. I had to regret that another who was very close to them in their esteem and affection, Mr. E. P. Rose, was still confined to his bed, so that it would be unwise for him to come out even for the purpose of a work in which he was so much interested at Elstow. There were apologies from the Revs. Frank Smith and T. C. Hillard. Colonel Josselyn was sorry not to be with them, and sent a contribution. Of their other friends he would name only one to whose generosity they owed the site on which they were met—Mr. Whitbread (loud applause). In his letter, Mr. Whitbread said: I am sorry to be unable to attend at the stone-laying at Elstow, to which you are kind enough to invite me. But for some time past it has been necessary for me to decline entering into any engagement of the kind. I trust you may have a fine day and a successful gathering. Enclosed is a cheque as a contribution to the fund for the Memorial Hall.—Yours faithfully, Samuel Whitbread."

By the kindness of Sir Frederick Howard he was able to send another letter from Mr. Whitbread, addressed to Sir Frederick: "I am very glad to see you are going to take the lead at the Bunyan Memorial Hall ceremony at Elstow. It would have given me great pleasure to meet you there on such an interesting occasion, but of late I have been unable to take part in any formal gatherings. Mr. Piggott added that Mr. Whitbread had very generously and graciously enclosed a cheque for £100 (loud applause, and exclamations of pleasure).

Mr. A. G. Carruthers, speaking as Treasurer of the Building Fund, said it would have been impossible to select a site more fitting. It was within sight of where once stood the cottage where Bunyan, his soldiering days being over, brought the partner of his choice, and it faced the Bedford-road, which he must have often traversed with weary feet and along which he and the comfortable passed 250 years ago to Bedford jail to the dismay of the congregation meeting in the granary in Mill-lane. The possession of that site had become possible owing to the munificence of Mr. Whitbread, the lord of the manor, who nearly 40 years ago declared, in the hearing of some present, that while Bedford ways and manners had changed since Bunyan's time, the springs of action in the human heart remained the same. On behalf of the trustees he publicly and gratefully acknowledged Mr. Whitbread's gift of which made the erection of that Hall possible (applause). They also counted themselves fortunate that they had with them their friend and well-wisher, Sir Frederick Howard, who bore a name deservedly honoured in their community. The Howards, father and sons, for more than a century had been conspicuous for their interest in the Free Churches which had done so much to lighten, purify, and ennoble the national life and it was fitting that Sir Frederick



Rev. John Brown, D.D.
Pastor Emeritus of Bunyan Meeting.



Rev. W. Charter Piggott,
Pastor of Bunyan Meeting.



Rev. John Clifford, D.D.

[Block kindly lent by "Morning Leader."]

should take a prominent part in proceedings to do honour to Bunyan's genius and teaching, from which they had received a heritage so precious. Having described the building about to be erected, Mr. Carruthers said he had received up to the previous night £1,100, and they expected to open the Hall free of debt in the autumn. A great stimulus had been given to the movement for its erection by the munificence of a friend who was described as the anonymous donor, and £180 was raised by the villagers of Elstow, who had done very nobly. Contributions had come from men who were in the Councils of the State, and the humblest toilers of the soil. All such men recognised the greatness which was condemned to the jail, and the principles which afore-time were scorned (applause).

SIR FREDERICK HOWARD LAYS THE STONE.
The Rev. W. Charter Piggott, in handing to Sir Frederick Howard the silver trowel, and asking him to lay the stone, said there was no one who could give them greater pleasure by performing such an act, no one whose name was sweeter in the memory and life of Bedford, and no one whose name they would be more glad to associate in after generations with that Hall (applause). [The silver trowel was fitted with ivory handle, and inscribed "Presented to Sir Frederick Howard on the occasion of his laying the Memorial Stone of the Bunyan Memorial Hall, Elstow, May 19th, 1910." With it was a leather case lined with blue velvet.]

Sir Frederick Howard spread the cement. The stone having been lowered and adjusted, he tapped it with the mallet thrice, advanced to the front, and said: To the glory of God and in the name of the Holy Trinity this stone has been laid, and with the devout hope that from generation to generation this house of God may be an untold blessing. We will, I am sure, devoutly hope that here many poor weary wandering ones will find the wicket-gate. You have heard that this site upon which we have gathered is the generous gift of Mr. Samuel Whitbread (applause), the venerable owner of most of that which forms old Elstow, with its verdant and beautiful surroundings. You will, I am sure, share my regret that he does not feel able to be here to undertake the work which has been committed to your obedient servant. This house of God is to be erected in no spirit of rivalry, but there is one regret I have—that the structure is not to be built of simple field stone. But there is a more important consideration.

Here the word of God will be regularly read and taught. Here the all sufficient atonement for the sin of the whole world will be faithfully proclaimed. Here the fundamental doctrine of the justification by faith will be faithfully preached. Here the child will be trained to cultivate the spirit of reverence, and taught that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. About 423 years ago there was born within a bowshot of this spot a poor little helpless child, destined in the providence of God to become the wonder of the world, and yet only about 25 years ago no reliable history of that genius had ever been written until the Rev. Dr. Brown gave to the world that imperishable history of his—the most enchanting volume that, I think, I have ever read. No wonder that it is read so widely in both hemispheres. I rejoice to know that that volume, written with such scholarly simplicity of language, and yet with such chaste and luminous language, so admirably befits the history of that never-to-be-forgotten hero of Elstow (applause).

A SUCCESSION OF GIFTS.
Mr. Piggott, in stating that the Superintendent would lay on the stone purses filled by the scholars, added that Sir Frederick Howard had handed to him a banknote for £50 (loud applause). After that keynote, let them go on and do their best.
Mr. Abraham Smith, for the Elstow people, Mr. Poynter for the Sunday School, Mr. T. G. Carruthers for the Home School, Mr. Corbold for the Kempston School, and Mr. Rogers for the Goldington School, laid purses on the stone. Another was added by a little girl.

At a later stage Dr. Brown said he was associated with some gentlemen in the city, and in their name as well as in his own, he had great pleasure in bringing a cheque for £25 (applause).
The Rev. W. C. Piggott proposed that their warmest thanks be given to Sir Frederick Howard. He was extremely grateful for the readiness with which Sir Frederick had responded to his request that he would do this service for them. It would be a great pleasure to have this building permanently associated with his name (applause).

DR. BROWN IN HIS OLD VEST.
The Rev. Dr. Brown seconded. Some 18 years ago, he said, he was preaching in Chicago, and there was a reporter present. In the pages of the Chicago Tribune next morning he (Dr. Brown) was represented as being a lineal descendant of John Bunyan, and as having been 15 years Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

during which time he had carried on what were known as "Bunyan meetings" (laughter). If he was a lineal descendant of Bunyan, he thought there was a certain fitness in his seconding this vote of thanks. To himself it was a great pleasure that Sir Frederick Howard, with whom he had been associated so often and pleasantly in days gone by, should take this prominent part in the proceedings of the day (applause). It was 46 years since he came into Bedford, a stranger to everybody—they wouldn't think it to look at him (laughter). He still retained his feeling of affection for that village, and from the bottom of his heart he thanked Sir Frederick for consenting to take this part for them. He felt also that their thanks were specially due to their old friend Mr. Samuel Whitbread. It was known to many of them that in the old church-book, next to the name of John Bunyan in the roll of membership, were the names of William and Lettice Whitbread, ancestors of their honoured friend; so their connection with that church was long and time-honoured (applause). He believed this new departure would mean an enlargement of Christian work in the village. He remembered William White, door-keeper of the House of Commons, saying that in his youth there were some of the truest Christian people in Elstow he had ever met anywhere. Building was extending, he saw, in many directions and opening up opportunities of Christian usefulness. He trusted that the blessing of the Master would rest abundantly upon that building, and the work carried on within it. Sir Frederick Howard and his family had not only had the care of an important manufacturing industry, but he had near to his heart the spiritual welfare of his fellow-townsmen. That Sir Frederick would live long and look as young as he did that day was his earnest desire (loud applause).

Mr. Poynter eloquently voiced the thanks of the friends of Elstow to Sir Frederick Howard, and said his visit was a happy combination of the good old town of Bedford and the illustrious village of Elstow. He also voiced their thanks to Mr. Whitbread.

The vote was carried with very hearty acclamation.

SIR FREDERICK REPLIES.
Sir Frederick Howard, in a racy speech of reminiscence, said he had only done what their late beloved King said in his last moments that he had done—his duty. About 75 years ago his father came to preach at Elstow, but he was warned off and told that Elstow was not Methodist ground (laughter). When he told them that his father walked or travelled 37,200 miles in going to preach the gospel, he thought they would agree that his sphere was quite sufficient wide without poaching on Elstow (laughter). His father had a great love for the surroundings of Elstow, and he (Sir Frederick) thought he had caught that spirit. He thought there was no man who knew Elstow better. He had walked there, he thought, through the years about five times a week, but he was brought up to the habit of rising early in the morning (hear, hear and laughter). He did not read in the Bible that it came to pass "that Joshua rose up late in the morning—it was always 'early in the morning' and that had been his habit ever since he was a boy, for if, when he was a boy, he had risen late he should have got a good thrashing. His father-of whom he was very fond—used to keep a leather slipper, which, if they did not go the right way, was apt to fall on the hinder part (laughter). His grandfather was something like him, and used to say "When you meet a boy, smack him; if he doesn't deserve it, then he soon will" (laughter). Sir Frederick added that he believed he was as a little boy most of his sometimes felt the was no wonder that (ter).
leather slipper (laughter) with the hymn "The proceedings akin faith we lay," and "This stone to thee and of the company and the benediction. Mr. Moor Hall, joined for tea in the