

Activities of the 17th Century Child



opening the summer exhibition, entitled "The Seventeenth Century Child", in the Moot Hall, Elstow, on Monday, Sir Danvers Osborn, Bart., a descendant of Dorothy Osborne, said that he knew of no other county in England which took such pride in its historical possessions as did Bedfordshire. It was, he said, a grand achievement.

Presiding at the opening ceremony, which was attended by many County notabilities, was the Chairman of Bedfordshire County Council (Sir Frederick Mander). Sir Frederick said that on looking through the list of visitors and guests he considered they were unusually fortunate in being in the company of descendants of quite a number of old-established Bedfordshire families, some of whom were flourishing in Bunyan's day. He sometimes wondered whether the reactions of the families of those days to an occasion such as that would have been the same as the reactions of their descendants of to-day.

"Supposing in Bunyan's day or immediately after, invitations had gone round asking people to celebrate the opening of a Bunyan Museum or Memorial. Would those invitations have been answered joyfully by all concerned?" He thought perhaps the Earl of Bolingbroke might have extracted some pleasure from the situation, but he was not at all sure that Sir Peter Osborne, or William Gery, or Richard Orlebar, or Hugh Monoux, would have accepted with the same joy.

DESCENDANT WELCOMED

As for Sir William Foster—one of whose descendants, Com. Philip Francklin, they were pleased to welcome that day—he would probably have had a fit and regarded the situation with horror. Yet with the passage of the centuries the descendants were gathered together in complete accord.

In starting the Moot Hall museum they had brought into being something that was proving almost a kind of shrine, or Mecca, for people the world over who believed in man's freedom to worship God in his own way.

Introducing Sir Danvers Osborn, Mr. T. W. Bagshawe, Hon. Adviser to the Museum, said that when John Bunyan was playing tip-cat on Elstow Green a child who was to become the famous Dorothy Osborne was, doubtlessly, playing in the grounds of Chicksands Priory. In these restless times it was peaceful to look upon her christening robes, her ring, or the coverlet she embroidered. That day they had in Sir Danvers a descendant of Dorothy Osborne with them. Sir Danvers had been a good friend to the Moot Hall collection and

and Lady Osborn (right), with (left to right), Mr. T. W. Bagshawe, Ald. H. R. Neate, Sir Frederick Mander and Mr. R. Turner, looking at the exhibits.

he and Lady Osborn had entered fully into the idea behind it.

Sir Danvers said that he wondered if people realized how much Bedfordshire owed to the efforts of its County Council, Sir Frederick Mander, and Mr. Bagshawe, for the wonderful exhibitions which were given. His family had left Chicksands some years ago but that place would always be home to him. He would never leave it in spirit even if he left it in flesh.

Mr. Richard Turner, Chairman of the Records Committee, proposed a vote of thanks to Sir Danvers, and this was seconded by Mr. F. J. Manning.

SIXTY EXHIBITS

The various activities of a child in the 17th century are well illustrated by the 60 or more exhibits and some 40 photographs, most of which are on loan.

Of particular interest is a horn-book with silver filigree mounting, lent by the Earl of Ancaster, and a similar horn-book with an engraved silver back and handle, lent by Messrs. Bernard Quaritch, Ltd. Both show the alphabet and the Lord's Prayer.

Sir Danvers has allowed the christening robes worn by Dorothy Osborne, when she was baptized at Campton in 1627, to be shown. In the same case may be seen the christening robes worn by Charles II, lent by Mrs. St. John Hornby. A painted panel of an infant with its bottle of 1593, lent by Dr. E. M. Elmhirst, is the earliest known portrait of an English child and its feeding bottle.

A silver rattle, with coral tooth-cutter of Lady Diana Russell, has been lent by the Earl of Bradford, while a spoon, fork, and knife in its original case, c. 1690, has been lent by Messrs. E. T. Biggs and Sons, Ltd.

B.M.S. EXHIBIT

On loan from the principal of the Bedford Training College is "The Pleasant and Delightful History of Jack and the Giants". From the Bedford Modern School Museum can be seen a cradle of oak, dated 1618.

Among a number of articles lent by Lady Richmond are two psalters with embroidered covers, 1634 and c. 1656, two child's embroidered bonnets of satin, 17th century, two toy figures of pikemen, late 17th century, a beadwork chariot late 17th century, and a beadwork layette basket, early 17th century.

Modern survivals of 17th century toys are also displayed. These include a whip and top, a bird-warbler, a hoop, a spinning-rope, and a toy wind