



The 1953 Summer Exhibition, "Pilgrim's Progress" in Many Lands", was opened on Monday in the Moot Hall, Elstow, by Lord Luke in his capacity as President of the United Society for Christian Literature.

During the opening ceremony the many County personalities present heard Lord Luke express the hope that Bunyan's tomb in Bunhill Fields, London, might eventually be brought to Elstow churchyard.

The guests also witnessed the presentation, by Major Simon Whitbread, on behalf of Messrs. Whitbread and Co., Ltd., of two doors taken from the old Bedford County Gaol in which Bunyan was imprisoned.

Major Whitbread, who presided, expressed thanks to all those who had lent articles, pictures, and furniture for this year's exhibition, mentioning in particular the Queen Mother, Dr. R. Offor, Sir Danvers Osborn, the United Society for Christian Literature, and Mr. T. W. Bagshawe.

This year, he said, they had been very successful in obtaining the loan of a great many rare editions of "Pilgrim's Progress", and also some editions published in various places all over the world.

Saying that Bedfordshire people had not been exactly kind to Bunyan when he was alive, Lord Luke added that perhaps what they were doing that day, and had done since the Festival of Britain, was making some amends to his memory. It was known, he continued, that "Pilgrim's Progress" had been translated into at least 148 languages, and it was remarkable to think what inspiration the Bunyan

Major Simon Whitbread (left) looking at one of the old prison doors, with (left to right) Lord Luke of Pavenham, Sir Frederick Mander, and Ald. H. R. Neate.

message must have given throughout the world.

Lord Luke then said that he did not believe Elstow would be complete as the home of Bunyan until they could bring back his tomb from Bunhill Fields and place it in Elstow churchyard. Elstow would then be a centre for Bunyan and all that he meant, just as Stratford-on-Avon was for Shakespeare.

After wishing the present exhibition every success, he declared it open.

#### THE GAOL'S HISTORY

In making the presentation of the two gaol doors, Major Whitbread told something of the gaol's history. It stood on the north side of the junction of Silver Street and High Street, and it was certain that Bunyan spent the years 1660 to 1672 in it. It was generally accepted that he wrote "Pilgrim's Progress" in the gaol.

The doors were accepted by the Chairman of the County Council (Sir Frederick Mander) with, as he said, "a sense of unusual pleasure".

Referring to Lord Luke's suggestion, Sir Frederick said it would be a great day for him if the tomb of Bunyan came home to Elstow. He did not know what difficulties there might be in the way of effecting the transference but he promised to investigate the possibilities and should it prove possible would do all that could be done to bring the tomb to Elstow.

The grim doors of the old County Gaol are an effective introduction to the exhibition, which will remain at the Moot Hall during the summer. They remind one sharply of the harsh surroundings which Bunyan's imagination had to pierce to reach his vivid world of spiritual imagery.

And Bunyan's world has never ceased its triumphant growth, spreading from the little market town of Bedford, over land and sea, until to day we find that, through the medium of "Pilgrim's Progress", it has found its way into 150 languages—more than any other book except the Bible.

Some copies of these translations, a few of them published in Bunyan's life-time, comprise the exhibition, in which each continent has a special show-case.

Among the English books is the one sent by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. It is the same edition as that used by His late Majesty King George VI. With it are 17th century Dutch and French, Russian, Spanish, Gaelic, and many more, including an Icelandic. Asian editions have an eastern elegance in their print, especially those of Tibet and China. Africa is represented by various peoples, from Swahili to Kaffir, and one notes with interest the use of real photographs to illustrate the text. This practice had to be discontinued as distinctive tribal markings on a dusky "Christian" used to arouse suspicion among readers of another tribe.

Maoris, South Sea Islanders, Eskimos, and Cree Indians are a few of the nationalities among the American and Australasian section, which, like all the show-cases, contains many interesting photographs of its own native types.

The volumes in the exhibition have been lent by the United Society for Christian Literature. Dr. R. Offor, the School of Oriental Studies, Bunyan Meeting, the Alexander Turnbull Library at Wellington, New Zealand, and Leeds University Library, and a world map, prepared by the

United Society, illustrates much more clearly than words or statistics, the tremendous circulation of "The Pilgrim's Progress".

#### PERMANENT ADDITIONS

These treasures, however, are but visitors. Additions to the permanent collection have been made by Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Bagshawe, Mr. W. R. Wade-Gery, Sir Danvers Osborn, Bart., and Mr. John G. Scholes. Among them one notices a mezzotint of Thomas Tompion, a stump-work panel-portrait of Charles II worked in human hair and silk, and a charming posy ring inscribed "The love I owe I cannot shew", given by Sir William Temple to Dorothy Osborne. The additions which no doubt give most satisfaction to the Moot Hall staff are four 17th century oak benches which were purchased with money received from 1952 admission fees.

Most interesting of the paintings is Sir Peter Lely's portrait of Dorothy Osborne of Chicksands Priory, which has been lent by Countess Mountbatten of Burma. Writing to Sir William Temple, Dorothy Osborne describes it as "the best I ever had drawn for me. . . Mr. Lely will have it that he never took more pains to make a good one in his life".

Completing a "family reunion" are portraits of Dorothy's mother, Lady Dorothy Osborne, and her husband, Sir William Temple. This is the first occasion on which the three pictures have been exhibited together.

Another painting with a local link is that of the famous Roundhead, Sir Samuel Luke, M.P. for Bedford in the Long Parliament and one of Cromwell's sturdy commanders. His picture has been lent by the Duke of Bedford.

Bringing a refreshingly domestic touch are selections from 17th century household inventories. From them we find that the customary table-fare for the prosperous squire in May would include Scotch potage, loin of veal, three large chickens, quince pie, a whole ham, artichoke pie (hot), and belonia sausages!