

OPENING OF OSWESTRY CHAPEL, WITH REMARKS.

Oswestry is a market-town in Shropshire, situated near the border of North Wales; and contains more than four thousand inhabitants. In May, 1823, it was visited by Bro. W. Doughty, who was sent into those parts by the Burland circuit. And on enquiry what places were the most noted for wickedness, he was directed to Oswestry. And that night he preached in a friend's yard, without interruption; after which he was directed to a public house to lodge. But when he came there, hearing the noise of a great rabble, he deemed it imprudent to go in; so he set off towards his next appointment. But being a stranger, he missed his way, and sat under a hedge all night, having only his umbrella for a shelter.

The next time he preached at Oswestry, there was considerable excitement, and during the service he was interrupted by the constable, and brought before the mayor, who demanded his license, which he produced, and which was correct. Nevertheless the mayor required him to find bail for his appealing at the quarter sessions at Oswestry. But this he refused to give, observing that he meant to go on with his work. The mayor then told him if he would come no more to Oswestry, he should be set at liberty. With this he refused to comply, and that night was shut up in the dungeon. The next morning he was taken to the constable's house; and the people flocking together, he preached the word of life to them through the window, and many wept. He was then sent to Shrewsbury jail for one calendar month, during which he was happy, and rejoiced greatly in the Lord.

On his being set at liberty, he returned to Oswestry on the second Sunday, took his old stand, and his success was great; many were converted to God, a society was formed, and the congregation so rapidly increased, that the house in which they preached would not contain the people. So they purchased a building which had been erected for a bath, with its premises, and converted it into a chapel, which was opened Dec. 12, 1824. This place, however, was on the whole, uncomfortable and inconvenient, and the floor was damp; and it being also too small, our official men made various attempts to obtain a suitable plot of land.

They applied to Sir Watkins W. Wynn, Bart., who gave them a suitable piece of land. But an elderly lady, who had an interest in it, refused to part with her interest,(consequently they were disappointed.

After this they succeeded in contracting for a suitable site. But this plot of land adjoining the premises of J— J—, Esq., and he having heard what he deemed unfavourable reports of our people, his mind was much tried. The trustees hearing of this, appointed Bro. W. Doughty to wait on him. And this issued in a proposal to try to get accommodated elsewhere. The trustees again met, and agreed, if Mr. J. would purchase them a plot in the Castle field, and pay all the extra expenses, they would relinquish the former piece to him. To this he agreed, although the extra expenses amounted to ninety-five pounds.

An excellent plot of land in the Castle field being duly purchased, the foundation sermons were preached on Sunday, June 2, 1840, by Bro. John Petty, from Shrewsbury. The congregation was large, and deeply attentive.

The building: proceeded with diligence, and it was ready for opening by Sunday December 20, 1840. And it was opened on that Sunday, and on Christmas-day, and the Sunday after.

On Sunday Dec. 20, Brother Thomas Greener from Chester, preached at half-past ten in the morning, and at half-past six at night; and Bro. J. Ratcliffe from Wrexham, at half-past

two in the afternoon. The congregations were large, respectable, and serious; and a good influence rested on the people. During the day we processioned a little and it took well.

Brother Greener preached on the Monday night. The company was large, and the power of God attended the word.

Christmas-day morning at one o'clock, we sung through all the streets in the town, and concluded with a short prayer meeting in the open air, at the top of Willow Street. About one hundred and fifty attended, and all was done decently and in order. The singing went well, and Dr. Cartwright, Esq. gave us half-a-crown, which we applied to the chapel.

About two o'clock we commenced processioning, and in the procession six short sermons were delivered; four of them by Brother Hugh Bourne. A great concourse of people followed; and on our arrival at the chapel, it was soon crowded. The tea-party was very large; four hundred and seventy took tea, during which, H. Bourne preached three discourses; first a short discourse from Isaiah ix. 6. The second discourse was from Luke ii. 1-20. The third from Matthew ii. 1-15.

There being many that could not gain admission into the chapel, I and Brother Carter preached in the house connected with the chapel; and a good portion of our preaching was directed to the children, who were numerous and very attentive.

In the chapel every thing proceeded in good order, and the preaching was profitable to many. After tea, the public meeting began. The chapel was very full; and H. Bourne, being appointed chairman, read the circular. The brethren pressed the GOLDEN SYSTEM forward; and names were given in, engaging to raise more than forty-seven pounds for the next anniversary.

We then held a fellowship meeting. And after that a powerful prayer meeting; and the Lord was in the midst.

Sunday Dec. 27. In the morning H. Bourne preached at Morda. The congregation was large and deeply affected; the power of God attended the word, and it was a remarkably good time.

At a quarter before two o'clock, H. Bourne, in company with Brothers W. Doughty and E. Carter, began to procession at the old Toll Gate, and proceeded through the principal streets to the chapel. During the procession, H. Bourne delivered three short sermons, and W. Doughty one. Many heard the word, and followed them to the chapel.

At half-past two, H. Bourne preached to a large and seriously disposed congregation. At half-past six the chapel was crowded, and H. Bourne preached with great liberty. Then followed a powerful prayer meeting; in which there was a taking hold of the Lord by faith; and the Lord poured out his Spirit on the meeting, displayed his power, streamed down his grace, touched the hearts of believers, filled them with his love, and set two souls at liberty, and they rejoiced in him. And this powerful prayer meeting concluded the opening services.

The Golden chapel System was not brought forward to-day. But early in the week an increase of names was announced; and the sums engaged to be raised for the next anniversary, amounted to fifty pounds fourteen shillings and sixpence. And we may hope, that as well as diligence in raising money, there will be a course of constant zealous prayer; of constant prayer to Almighty God to support the chapel, open the way, and make it a blessing to many souls.

Among those who have engaged to raise money for the next anniversary of the chapel, is Brother William Doughty's son William, who is about twelve years of age; and who is confined to the house, being, as the surgeon says in the third or last stage of a consumption. But, hearing that so many had come forward to collect for the next year's anniversary, he undertook to collect one pound, by soliciting the favour of those who come to see him. And he hopes to be able to raise it before he dies.

The quantity of land purchased for the chapel, and house, and for burying-ground, is one thousand one hundred and ninety-six yards; which, at three shillings a yard, amounts to one hundred and seventy-nine pounds and eight shillings.

The chapel is fourteen yards square outside; and six yards high from the floor to the ceiling; no gallery. There are twenty pews, which seat one hundred people; and a singing pew which will seat twenty. The forms occupy the sides of the chapel; and there is a large space in the front of the pulpit, which is convenient for holding prayer meetings, &c. The chapel has a neat pulpit, a boarded floor and two fire-places, one on each side of the chapel. It has a double entrance, before which is a beautiful eight-day's clock, the case which was given by Mr. J. Gabriel of Oswestry.

There are two windows at the pulpit end, and two at the front, each seven feet high and four feet wide, with circular heads. There are two windows on the north side, and one on the south, about the same size, with square heads. One of the circular headed windows was given by Mr. R. Roberts, the Gas proprietor.

The chapel is built of brick, with columns and cornices of Roman cement at the front. The Roman cement was given by the Builder, and put on at his expense. The of land is fenced round with a *bur* wall, with free-stone coping. The chapel front is palisaded, and has double gates, with large stone pillars of Welsh Rock. And the chapel is lighted with gas.

The inscription stone in the front, is as follows:
PRIMITIVE METHODIST MEETING HOUSE.

A.D. 1840.

“Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.”

“Exhort one another.” “Preach the word.”

“Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.”—PAUL.

This chapel is regularly settled on the Connexion.