



Parish Church News

Codford St. Mary

CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH OF CODFORD ST. MARY

Yesterday (the 2nd instant), The Church of Codford St. Mary, was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese. The early part of the day was anything but promising, but subsequently the weather proved most favourable for the occasion. The attendance of the clergy was as large as could be expected, considering the demands upon their time for three successive days in the immediate neighbourhood. We counted 24, irrespective of the Bishop and Chaplains, and the Rev. G. M. Webster, rector of the parish. Upon the Bishop's arrival at the Churchyard gate, a procession of the clergy was formed, which moved along at a solemn pace, reciting the 21st Psalm. The sublime Liturgy of our Church was read by the Rector, with much feeling and energy. The sermon was preached by the Bishop from the 9th chap. of Ecclesiastes, and the 10th verse. Words cannot convey a due idea of the excellence of the discourse. It was plain, so that all, even the meanest, could understand it :- scriptural, so that none could gainsay it ; - and so forcible that it was impossible to resist its stirring appeals. After the reading of the Offertory sentences, a collection was made between 30 and 40 pounds. The Clergy then received the Holy Communion. A most pathetic circumstance occurred during the administration of this sacred rite. An inhabitant of the parish, so crippled that he was unable to walk alone, was led up to the holy table by two clergymen, and partook of the emblems of the body and blood of Christ. It was a most affecting sight, and the Bishop and the Clergy generally were much moved at the scene. At the conclusion of the morning service, the company retired to the Rectory and other hospitable domiciles of the parish, for refreshment, and we gladly testify of those who catered on the occasion, that "though they entertained the rich, they ne'e forgat the poor." Among the visitors, we noticed most of the influential families of the neighbourhood, and the strictest order was preserved throughout the proceedings by the force under the command of Capt. Meredith, who was himself present.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the church bells summoned the visitors and parishioners to re-assemble in their newly-consecrated Church, when the service was read in an impressive manner by the Rector, and a sermon, most appropriate in its subject, forcible in its appeals, elegant yet intelligible in its diction, and delivered with a feeling and earnestness which called forth the deep attention of a numerous congregation, was preached by the Venerable Archdeacon Lear, from the 27th Psalm, 4th and 5th verses. A collection was made from pew to pew, the amount which appeared to be considerable, and the readiness with which the poor contributed as of the ability God had given them, was a circumstance which could not fail to attract the attention of the parties employed to collect their hearty offerings.

A spirit of Christian liberality seemed to influence all present, yet we fear there is ample room for the manifestation of an acceptance of the repairs, additions and we may say _____ Church in question. The old tower, and a small portion of the south wall, appear to be all that belonged to the original structure externally. The south wall having fallen, and in the course of 1843, whilst the rubbish was removing from around the foundations, it was resolved to build an additional aisle, under the able direction of Mr Wyatt, the diocesan architect. In carrying out this intention, it was found necessary to take down the old walls, and thus various fragments of carved stone clearly indicating the age of the original Church, were brought to light, which are now arranged on a stone shelf within the newly erected porch, and are of a character sufficiently interesting to justify the attention of ecclesiologists. The date of the original church is supposed to have been about 1000. There was a circular arch formerly existing between the nave and the chancel, which was afterwards

altered to that pointed arch which is now found there, restored with much care to its original beauty, and offering an example of the transition from Norman to the early English style, which well deserves a careful examination, and a careful perusal of the very learned and scientific description given in Dr. Ingram's Memorials of Codford St. Mary, a work published for the benefit of the Church there, and meriting a place in the library of every topographer or antiquary. The book can need no great recommendation than the fact that the author, the learned president of Trinity College, to whom we are indebted for the Memorials of Oxford, is a native of Codford St. Mary, and therefore has called forth all his antiquarian lore, to elucidate the history of the Church to which he has been an especially bountiful contributor, and with which his earliest religious feelings are identified.

The additional aisle is built in the decorated style, which pervades the entire building; the early English windows are formed on the north side of the chancel, and the east window is perpendicular. The term *decorated* must not convey a notion of lavish expenditure – all has been done with a regard to economy, but there is nothing which offends good taste, nothing deficient, nothing calculated to weaken the impression that this is the place where God hath set his name, and that hither the tribes of the locality may come and find every aid to their acceptable worship. “You no longer (observed the Archdeacon in his discourse) lie under the disgrace as a parish, of having a Church dilapidated which bespeaks so ill of the spiritual condition of those to whom its reparation belongs.” The east window of the Church is filled with stained glass of various allegorical and heraldic characters. It contains the coat of St. John's College, Oxford, patrons of the living, in the first light, the Queen's Arms in the centre one, and those of the diocese in the third. The east window of the south aisle contains the arms of the Rector, and the south window nearest the door is a memorial window to Dr. Ingram's family, with the armorial bearings, and an inscription in diagonal lines. A beautiful tablet, designed by Mr Wyatt, and according with the prevailing style of the Church, commemorates the same family, and is placed over the south door. The fittings are of stained and varnished deal, bearing a very ecclesiastical appearance, and harmonizing well with the ancient oak which had been carefully applied to use as far as practicable. The sittings are open, and to this outward demonstration of spiritual equality, if we may judge from a growing sense of its propriety, the church builders and church restorers of the present generation will speedily conform. The altar and pulpit hangings are of crimson cloth, beautifully worked by the hands of some young ladies, with suitable devices and emblems. There is no prothesis, but a square niche in the north wall of the chancel with chamfered edges for receiving the elements prior to oblation; in order that the officiating minister may find no inconvenience in carrying out the directions of the rubric, in placing the bread and wine of the Holy Supper on the table, prior to reading the prayer for the Church Militant, and _____ is frequently done from custom and inadvertence, depositing them there even before the commencement of the morning prayer.

Altogether the day was most happily, and we may hope most profitably spent; and we trust that with respect to those who have been instrumental in carrying on this good work, multitudes may arise in many successive ages, and call them “blessed”.

We can only conclude this long notice, by expressing our earnest prayer that all who have influence would feel their responsibility to help on the high and holy feeling which is daily gaining ground in this Diocese ; - that the dilapidated and ill pewed, and exclusive churches which yet disgrace the county, may quickly disappear, and their dishonoured state be forgotten in the style and Christian character of their renovated appearance. Above all, with the increase of church accommodation and ecclesiastical adorning, may the spirituality of the church members receive an effectual and practical impulse – that with fairer temples and more decent solemnities as regards the outward ministration of holy things, we may, as members of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, grow more and more in charity and devotedness – more zealous for the glory of the Church's Head – more consistent in our endeavours to increase and preserve a people who shall be to our God “for a name and a praise.”

(*Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, Thursday 3rd October, 1844) & (*Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, Saturday 5th October, 1844)