



The Bi-Centenary Commemoration

On Thursday evening last, a tea meeting was held in the schoolroom of the Independent Chapel, in this village. About 150 sat down to a bountiful tea. The tables were decorated with vases of choice flowers, and over the platform was a prettily worked motto "Union is Strength". The several tables were presided over by Mrs. Smith (wife of the minister), Mrs. T. Beaven, Miss L. Beaven, Miss Lydia Beaven, Miss Axford, Miss Stean, etc. After tea a public meeting was held, the Rev. Wm. Smith, the minister of the chapel, presiding. Singing and prayer having been engaged in.

Mr. Smith said he should reverse the usual mode of proceedings, and thank the friends for their assistance in providing the tea. He then stated the object of the meeting, which was to commence a fund, which they were endeavouring to raise, for the purposes of improving their schoolroom and chapel. They proposed to place a desk and harmonium, in the schoolroom, the latter to assist the children in singing. They had already expended nearly £20 for this purpose, and they now proposed to augment the fund with the view of improving the chapel, by staining or painting the pews. During the time he had been with them, several improvements had been effected in the chapel, and he always found anything for bettering their place of worship which he had recommended to them, they had readily responded to. With regard to the present object, some £15 more was required to carry out the objects proposed, and he had no doubt that the friends at Holt would willingly contribute to it. They had taken occasion of the Bi-centenary, which would occur this year, to raise this fund. Their brethren in various parts of the country were doing much to express their gratitude to God for those devoted men, who, in the month of August 200 years ago, for liberty of conscience, gave up all their temporal support, their possessions and emoluments in the Church of England, rather than do what they considered would be a violation of their consciences – viz. to give their "assent and consent" to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer, as required by the Act of Uniformity. They were good and holy men, conscientious and upright, and they could not but admire such characters. They of the present day, were indebted to such men, and those of like mind, for the privileges they now enjoyed of worshipping God according to the dictates of their own consciences, none daring to make them afraid. They had nothing to say about those that differed from them; all they said was – We respect those faithful men for carrying out their convictions, at the expense of temporal loss. And they respected any man, whoever he may be, who, for conscience sake, had given up his worldly gain and prospects. There have been noble characters, who have lived in the world, who have suffered, bled and died, and these were the men to whom they of the present day were indebted for the religious privileges they now enjoyed. This was what made Britain what it was, Great Britain – this, more than her fleets and armies, had raised this country among the nations of the earth. Happy is the people where this is the case! Yes, happy is the people whose God is the Lord! A God-fearing people are among the greatest supports to a country. The Lord add a thousand fold unto their numbers, if there are such in this land! Then we may expect the prosperity of Britain to be handed

down from generation to generation, whilst there are such men to be found, to support the Truth. As the motto over his head set forth "Unity is Strength" [sic], as long as they were united they would be strong. They had cause to rejoice at the prosperity attending their Sunday School. They now had rather better than 130 children in it, with twenty teachers. They also had a tract distribution, the only one in the village. What they aimed at was, that their church should be a centre of truly good and holy influence around. It depended upon their own individual efforts whether they should be a light in the village, though it might only be a small light. They must take care that they reflected the light of truth, the light of love, from God; and then that light would attract others, and through them towards others again. Thus being bound up in the bonds of holy love, they would grow up in the fear and love of God, and His Son Jesus Christ. The meeting was also addressed by the Rev. W. Barnes, of Trowbridge, Rev. Mr. Mann, of Melksham Mr. Rawlings, of Bradford and Mr. Papps, of Holt, and closed with singing and prayers.

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