



Matthew Henry's Chapel.

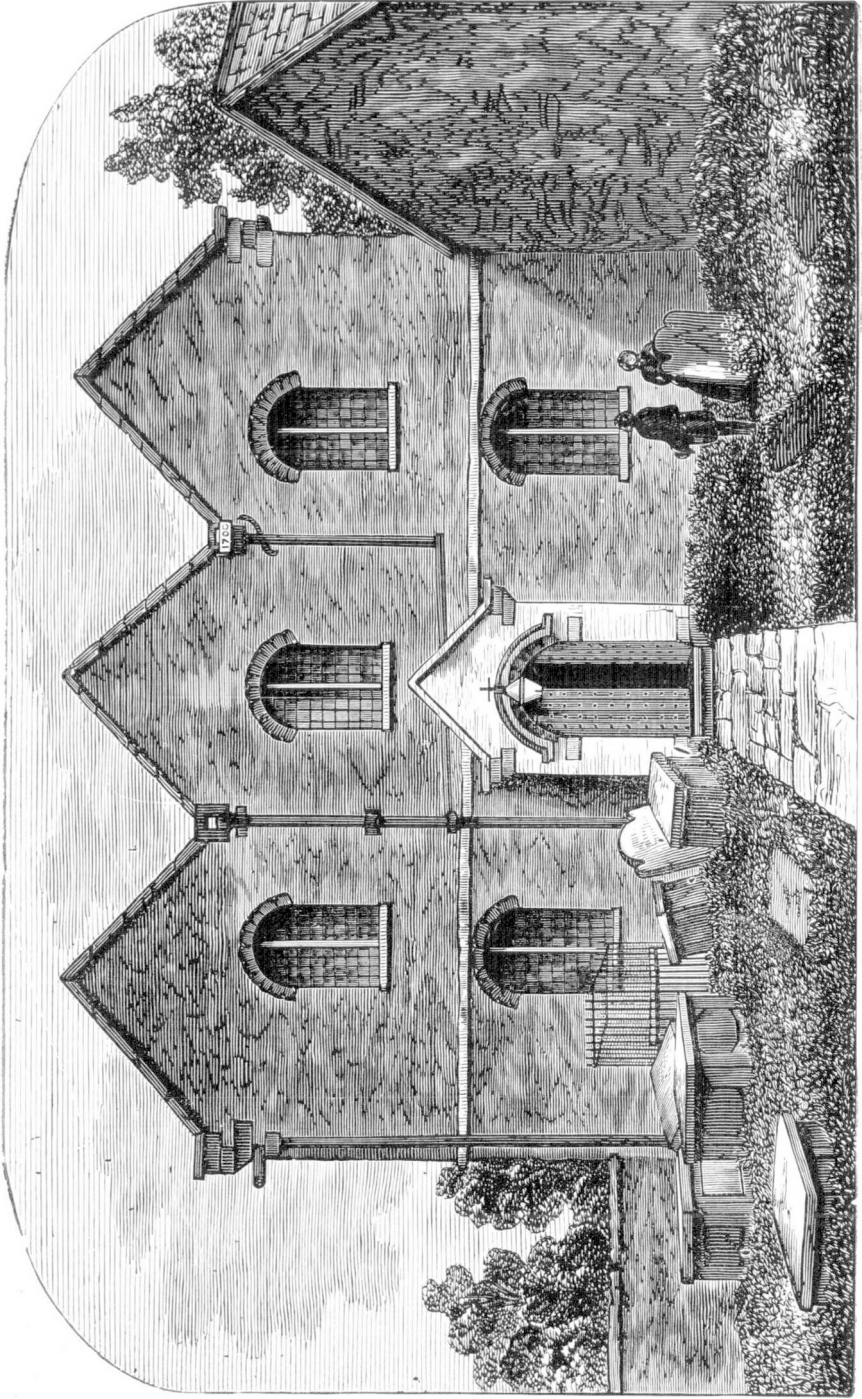
By W. W. TASKER.

(Read 15th February, 1916.)



TMUST crave your attention to this paper on Matthew Henry's Chapel, and I hope you will not be wearied by the story of how it came to be built, or by the references to people and events connected with it and with our old city. Whatever I have set down is purely historical and archæological, not tinged with any religious or political colour. There was so much to be said upon the subject, after investigating and reading various authorities, that I had some difficulty in describing briefly the origin of this the first Nonconformist place of worship in Chester.

Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, was one of the ejected ministers who would not subscribe to the Act of Uniformity. In 1643 Philip was entered a scholar of Westminster School, London, and admitted a student of Christ Church, Oxford, in 1647. During the latter part of 1648 he journeyed to London and visited his father, John Henry, who was the King's servant and keeper of the orchard at Whitehall, and there he witnessed the beheading of King Charles I. Philip was engaged as tutor to the sons of Judge Puleston of Emerald, and preached at Worthenbury on Sundays. He married a daughter of Mr. Daniel



Trinity Street front of Matthew Henry's Chapel, before the restoration in 1862.

Matthews of Bronnington on April 26, 1660, and his son, Matthew Henry, who founded the chapel, was born October 18, 1662.

Matthew attended the Free School at Whitchurch, and then went to London in 1680 (when he was nearly eighteen) to finish his education at a school kept by a Mr. Doolittle; while staying there he was stricken with fever and, when convalescent, returned home in 1681. To the surprise of friends and relatives (because it was always understood he was to have been a minister) Matthew went to Gray's Inn, 1685, as a Student at Law. Now that was the year his father was put in Chester gaol for being a dissenter, and kept there for three weeks. Matthew, who had come down from London, wrote to his father in prison from Willington Cross. Towards the end of October that year, 1685, he went back to London, and wrote home frequently, describing the persecutions and trials of Nonconformists and others, and of those who took part in the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion. About the end of 1686 Matthew came on business to Chester and lodged with a Mr. Henthorn, who, knowing that he sometimes preached, got him to do so at his (Henthorn's) house. Matthew afterwards returned to London and many applications from the brethren at Chester were sent to him to come down and settle as a preacher; and in view of doing so he was privately ordained in London on May 9, 1687. In the latter part of May he returned to Broad Oak, his home, and in June (to use his own expression) "was fetched" to Chester, where he preached his first public sermon.

In 1682 there were three dissenting congregations in Chester, ministered to by William Cook, Ralph Hall and John Harvey, ministers of the Established Church

ejected from their livings for non-compliance with the Act of Uniformity. Mr. Cook was formerly at St. Michael's Church, Chester, and had been sent to the common gaol by the mayor for preaching in his own house; he died in 1684. Mr. Hall was ejected from Mear, in Staffordshire, and was imprisoned in Chester gaol for six months for breach of the Five Mile Act. He, too, died in 1684, shortly after his imprisonment. After the deaths of Mr. Cook and Mr. Hall their congregations were broken up and dispersed through the persecutions of the times, but occasionally met at each other's houses, or joined the congregation which assembled secretly at Mr. Harvey's house. Mr. Harvey had been ejected from Wallasey in Cheshire.

Piggott, in his *History of Chester*, 1815, says:—

“James II, under the pretence of universal toleration, but primarily with the view to establish Popery, granted Nonconformists the liberty of public worship” (of which they had been deprived in the latter part of Charles II's reign).

It was about this time that Matthew Henry began his ministry at Chester, and through the indulgence of the Government collected the remaining members of the congregations of Mr. Cook and Mr. Harvey. He opened a meeting-place in Whitefriars Lane, near the site of a house in Bolland's Court, in the garden of which is a summer house, where Matthew Henry is said to have written the greatest part of his *Commentary on the Bible*. Mr. Harvey had a separate meeting in Bridge Street, and Matthew Henry wanted him to agree and unite both congregations, and he (Henry) would be his assistant. Harvey refused and said they should each stand on their own bottom. In August, 1687, Matthew Henry married Katherine, daughter of Mr. Hardware of Bromborough Court; on this account

the family came to Chester. Upon Mr. Harvey leaving his house in the Friary and removing to Bridge Street, which was more convenient for his meeting-house, Matthew Henry took it and lived there about twenty-two years.

In September, 1687, King James II, in his Progress, came to Chester, when (in the words of Matthew Henry):—

“It being intimated to us that it would be expected, and the Churchmen having led us the way, and divers Lancashire Ministers being come hither to attend him, Mr. Harvey and I and the heads of our Congregations joyn'd in an Address of Thanks to him. Not for assuming a Dispensing Power, but for our Ease, Quiet, and Liberty under his Protection; we presented it to him at the Palace: he told us he wish'd we had a Magna Charta for our Liberty. We did not promise to assist in taking away the Tests, but only to live quiet and peaceable lives. And since we have been reproach'd for making that Innocent inoffensive address to the King to return him thanks for our Liberty, we cannot but remember that at the same time, Sir Richard Leiving, then Recorder of this City, made a speech to King James at his entering into the City, wherein he told him 'That the Corporation was his Majesties Creature and depended upon the will of its Creator: and that the Sole Intimation of his Majestie's Pleasure should have with them the force of a Fundamental Law.'”

The Corporation in their robes met King James at the Bars and escorted him to the Bishop's Palace. It was on this visit to Chester that the king heard Mass in St. Mary's Chapel, or Chantry, in Caesar's Tower, the Castle. There was a reason for Matthew Henry referring in contemptuous terms to the servile speech from the Recorder on behalf of the Corporation, because in 1684 the Charter of the city had been surrendered and a new one granted which restricted the powers and

privileges of the Corporation. The following extract from Rev. H. D. Roberts' *Matthew Henry and His Chapel*, gives Matthew Henry's account of the event:—

“Power was reserved to the Crown to put out Magistrates and to put in at Pleasure; This precarious Charter was joyfully accepted by those that were for surrendering the old one, that Alderman Mainwaring and some other Aldermen of the same honest Principles might be turn'd out, and none but those of their own Kidney taken in. By this Charter Sir Thomas Grosvenor was the first Mayor, Alderman Wilson the 2d, Alderman Olton the 3d, and Alderman Starkey the 4th. In the latter end of his time about August, 1688, one Mr. Trinder came to this Town for the new modelling of the Corporation according to the Power reserved to the Crown by the New Charter; he apply'd himself to me, told me the King thought the Government of this City needed Reformation, and if I would say who should be put out, and who put in their Places it would be done; I told him I begg'd his Pardon, that was none of my Business, nor would I in the least intermeddle in a thing of that Nature. However, he got his Instructions from others; the New Charter was cancell'd, and another sent of the same Import, only altering the Persons, and by it all the Dissenters of Note in the City were brought into the Government, the Seniors to be Aldermen, and the Juniors Common Council men, and Sir Thomas Stanley, Mayor. This Charter was brought down, and the Persons call'd together to have notice of it, and to have the time fix'd for their being sworn. But they, like true Englishmen, unanimously refus'd it, and desir'd that the Ancient Charter might be restor'd, tho' they knew that none of them would come into Power by that, but many of them that were their bitter enemies would be restor'd by it. This I take to be a memorable instance both of the Modesty of the Dissenters, and a proof of how far they are from an affectation of Power, the top of their Ambition being to live quiet and peaceable Lives in the free exercise of their Religion according to their Consciences, As also their inviolable Fidelity to

the Rights and Liberties of this Country. Accordingly the old Charter was restor'd in the same state wherein it was when the Tories surrender'd it, by which Mr. Alderman Street was Mayor, and Mr. Robert Murray, Sheriff, his partner Mr. Welands [?] being dead."

In May, 1687, the Act of Toleration was passed, granting liberty of Public Worship. Mr. John Harvey, the minister of the Bridge Street congregation, died in November, 1699.

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Finding that the old meeting place at the White Friars, now the site of Dr. Newall's house, Bolland's Court, was inconvenient, it was decided to build the chapel associated with the memory of Matthew Henry. Consequently, in September, 1699, the foundation was laid, and the chapel was opened for public worship August, 1700; £532 16s. 1d. being the money paid for the land and building.

Mr. Jonathan Harvey, who had succeeded his father as minister of the Bridge Street congregation, failed in health, and through some disagreement with the landlady of the house in which his flock met he resigned September, 1706, whereupon the greater part of his people joined Matthew Henry's Chapel. This Mr. Harvey the younger died in April, 1708.

In May, 1707, the gallery was added, at a cost of £85 os. 5d., to accommodate Mr. Harvey's Independent congregation. Matthew Henry, in these plain and unmistakable words, refers to the addition to his flock:

"And now I reckon we came to be 350 communicants, and about 300 ordinarily present. And Blessed be God, a great deal of comfort and unanimity among us, and my ministry well accepted; for which I praise the Lord."

About this time it was a common practice for the Presbyterians and Independents to worship in one chapel and have separate ministers, as at Leicester and

Andover, which very often led to differences. But the two congregations at Chester were under one pastor, until they split in 1768 through theological disputes.

The congregation at Hackney, London, having asked him to become their pastor, Matthew Henry went there about the middle of July, 1710, and returned to Chester the first Sunday in August that year. In May, 1711, he went again, and stayed until the end of July, and, he remarks,

“ I never had been till that journey so much as one first Lord's Day of a month out of Chester since I first came to it 24 years ago.”

He preached his farewell sermon, May 11, and on May 12, 1712, he finally removed from Chester for Hackney; leaving there about two years afterwards, he retired to Sweetbriar Hall, Nantwich, where he died of apoplexy on June 22, 1714, aged 52.

Matthew Henry's body was brought to Chester, and on the funeral procession (consisting of ten coaches) arriving, it was met by eight clergymen of the Establishment and many dissenting ministers. He was interred in the family vault, within the Communion of Holy Trinity Church. His widow (who was his second wife) placed a memorial brass by the right side of, and nearly on a level with, the communion table. This brass was removed during the restoration of Holy Trinity Church and the building of the spire, about 1863, and is now fixed on the right-hand wall of the south aisle near the end window.

The following is a translation of the Latin inscription on this memorial plate. It proves the goodness of Matthew Henry that his second wife thought well to do this, and also to mention his first wife.

“Near this place Katherine Henry only daughter of Samuel Hardware Esq. and the beloved wife of Matthew Henry, Minister of the Holy Gospel, laid down her mortal remains, who on the occasion of her first delivery, died of small pox, and removed to her own country on the 14th February 1688-9 in the 25th year of her age. (Her infant daughter survived her.) Her bereaved husband buried her in tears.

The above-named Matthew Henry, after laboriously discharging the duties of piety and his ministry, committed to this resting place his body, worn out by exertions bestowed in investigating and commenting upon the Sacred Writings, on the 22nd June 1714 in the 52nd year of his age.

He left an only son and five daughters whom he had by Mary the daughter of Robert Warburton Esq. his now disconsolate widow.”

“In confirmation of the above memorial the following is transcribed from the Parish Registry of Burials for 1714, kept at Trinity Church :

‘Matthew Henry. Clerk. June 25th.’”

From Romney's *Chester*, 1853.

The ministry of Matthew Henry in Chester lasted about twenty-five years. As will have been observed, he was twice married: first, in August, 1687, to Katherine Hardware, who died of small-pox, February, 1688, at the early age of 25, leaving an infant daughter; and secondly, to Mary Warburton, daughter of Robert Warburton of Grange and Elizabeth Berkeley his wife. His second wife, Mary, survived him, and had nine children, six of whom were living at the time of his death. One only was a son, named Philip, who having adopted his mother's maiden name of Warburton became one of the Members of Parliament for Chester in 1747; the other member being Sir Robert Grosvenor.

Matthew Henry was an excellent Hebrew scholar, and utilized his knowledge in writing his famous

Commentary on the Bible, which was issued in five volumes, folio, the first volume being printed in 1706. Besides several single sermons which he published, he was the author of *A Discourse concerning the nature of Schism*, 1689; *The Life of Mr. Philip Henry* (his father), 1696; *A Scripture Catechism*, 1702; *Family Hymns*, 1702; *The Communicant's Companion*, 1704; *Four Discourses against Vice and Immorality*, 1705; *A Method of Prayer*, 1710; and *Directions for Daily Communion with God*, 1712.

During his life he was greatly loved and respected, and the candour and kindness of his mind are clearly shown from the closing words of the sermon he preached at the opening of his chapel, August 8, 1700:

“Be at peace with those from whom you differ in opinion, and receive them not with doubtful disputations. Carefully watch that a diversity of communion cause not an alienation of affection. But be as ready to do every office of love, and kindness, and respect to those from whom you dissent, as to those with whom you consent; resolve, though you differ from them, you will not differ with them. If our separation be not Schismatical in its own nature (as for my part I am satisfied it is not) let us not at any time make it so, by our uncharitable censures, or unchristian heats and passions.”

Another proof of his kindness appears in Mr. Frank Simpson's *History of St. Peter's Church* (pp. 58 and 59), published in 1909:—

“A society was formed in August, 1698, for the reformation of manners. A monthly Friday evening Lecture was given at St. Peter's to promote this good design.

The celebrated Nonconformist, Matthew Henry, appears to have been a constant attendant at these lectures, and many entries in his diary regarding them are interesting. The Bishop of the Diocese (Nicholas Stratford), was the first preacher. Then followed Dr. Fogg, the Dean. Matthew Henry says:

'This good work was first set on foot in that city (Chester) by those of the Established Church. They were happy in a Bishop and Dean that had the interests of practical religion very much at heart. Dr. Stratford and Dr. Fogg, men of very great learning and true piety, both excellent preachers, and greatly grieved at the open and scandalous wickedness that abounded in the city and everywhere throughout the nation.'

Mr. Henry declares the great pleasure he had in hearing the Bishop's sermon :

'I greatly rejoice (says he) in his public testimony borne against the wickedness of the wicked, and I bless God for it.'

With regard to the Dean's sermon he observes :

'It was an excellent discourse, very much to the purpose, pressing home the necessary duty of beating down sin and wickedness.'

and he adds :

'I bless God for this sermon; and as I have from my heart forgiven, so will I endeavour to forget all that the dean has said against Dissenters, and against me in particular. Such preaching against sin, and such endeavours to suppress it, will contribute as much as anything to heal differences among those that fear God.'

Mr. Henry appears to have been associated with the clergy in many good works, and, although at this time a Nonconformist, was allowed to baptize and preach in the Established Church."

But there was a sequel to this movement for the "Reformation of Manners" started by Bishop Stratford and Dean Fogg. The good work had a great many enemies who began openly to deride and oppose it, and form parties and interests against it. So the good Bishop and Dean asked that the Dissenters should form a society for the same purpose. A meeting was held at Matthew Henry's house, July 22, 1700. Plans and methods were arranged to further the object, and, some days later, Matthew Henry interviewed the Dean, who

encouraged him and his friends to carry them out. A few months afterwards the lecture at St. Peter's was preached by one of the curates from Winwick, Lancashire, who condemned the Dissenters helping on the movement because they were schismatics. Those churchmen who favoured the movement sent word to the Dissenters' society to go on with the good work, notwithstanding the remarks made by the parson in his sermon. But the opposition was too strong for them all, and the profaneness of their enemies such that Matthew Henry notes in his diary on October 13, 1700:

“My brother Hulton on Lord's day was seven nights observing the churchwardens of St. Peter's, with a strange minister and others, go to Mr. Holland's Alehouse and sit there three hours, and told the Recorder of it; and Mr. Hulton desired his lordship to admonish them. They set light by the Bishop and challenged the Magistrates to fine them. Whereupon Mr. Hulton was summoned to inform against them, and did so; and they were fined, but were very abusive to him.”

The minister who succeeded Matthew Henry was Mr. John Gardner; he continued in office from 1713 until his death on November 2, 1765. He was buried, near the remains of his predecessor, in Holy Trinity Church, Chester.

Mr. John Chidlaw was co-pastor with Mr. John Gardner for the fourteen years ending in 1765, and on the death of the latter he became sole minister of the chapel and held that office until 1798. Mr. Chidlaw died in 1800, leaving £100 to the chapel, and is buried in the chapel-yard. Thus the first three ministers occupied the pulpit for one hundred and eleven years.

My chief reason for mentioning Mr. John Chidlaw is that he preached and published a very remarkable sermon in the chapel on November 8, 1772, entitled

A Serious Call to regard God's Judgment, on the great explosion of gunpowder on November 5, 1772 (Guy Fawkes' Day), under a large building in Watergate Street Row, in which was being held a Puppet Show. Forty people were killed on the spot and eighty-three injured; in all, one hundred and twenty-three. From that day to this, the locality is associated with the event by a passage, leading from Watergate Street Row, South, to Commonhall Street, still known as Puppet Show entry. I have read a copy of the sermon, and from its contents one is led to understand that the preacher believed it to be a judgment from God upon the wickedness of the people for attending such entertainments, and a reminder for the citizens generally to lead better lives. It is a very serious and solemn exhortation.

To commemorate the life of Mr. Chidlaw, the broken portions of the original gravestone have been cemented together and relaid on to a new flagstone. The old inscription, which read :

" Underneath lie the remains of the
Revd. John Chidlaw
Who departed this life,
the 15th day of November, 1800,
Aged 73."

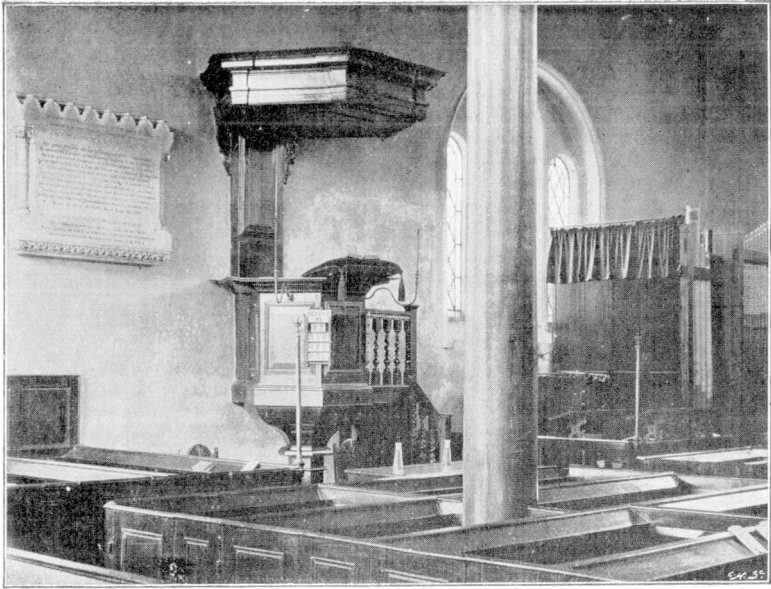
has been recut over the original lettering. Below this inscription, on a small marble inset tablet, the following words have been inscribed :—

" This stone was restored by subscription, Dec. 1908, in memory of the first Socinian minister of this Chapel, co-pastor with Mr. John Gardner 1751-1765, sole pastor 1765-1798. His Theology caused the Trinitarian Secession 1768, resulting in the founding of Queen Street Chapel, 1777. Preacher of the Historic Sermon on the Watergate Street Puppet Show Explosion, 5th Novr, 1772."

About 1768 a Secession took place, some of the congregation (mainly those worshipping in the gallery) leaving, because Mr. Chidlaw was not considered quite orthodox. These seceders at first held their meetings in a room belonging to the Smiths' Company, situated in a part of St. Ursula's Hospital, adjacent to the old Common Hall, on the south side of Commonhall Street. They had no permanent minister until one was found in 1772, in the person of the Rev. William Armitage. Some five years later, in 1777, they founded the Congregational Chapel in Queen Street upon the Independent principles of Church Government, and definite articles of belief were set out in the Trust Deed. By way of contrast I should like to point out that the Trust Deed of Matthew Henry's Chapel only stipulated that the place was built for the "Worship of God," which allowed great latitude to the ministers and did not bind them to any fixed doctrine or creed, so that in course of time, and of the evolution of religious thought, it gradually developed into Socinianism or Unitarianism.

In 1844 a partition wall was built under part of the gallery to make the space behind into a schoolroom, and the chapel was re-pewed. Up to about 1845 the old steps outside the chapel, leading to the gallery from the west (or Trinity Street) end of the building, were in existence; they were shortly afterwards taken down. But there still remains an outside staircase at the eastern end of the chapel.

The year 1862 (two hundred years after the birth of Matthew Henry) saw the old almshouses removed from before the chapel and erected where they now stand. The chapel was re-fronted, a new porch built, and a stone tablet fixed to the wall on the left side of the pulpit in loving memory of Matthew Henry. The



Showing the original Pulpit and Communion Table,
and a Tablet erected in 1862, on the Bi-centenary of Matthew Henry's birth.



Matthew Henry Window,
to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the Chapel.
Given by The Right Honble. Sir John T. Brunner, Bart.

total cost of these structural alterations and the tablet was £930. The inscription on the tablet is as follows:—

“In Reverent Remembrance of Matthew Henry, Minister of this Congregation from 1687 to 1712. His great Abilities and various Attainments were consecrated, In unwearied Labours to the Highest Interests of his Fellow-men, He was a Learned, Sagacious, and Devout Expositor of Scripture: An attractive Teacher: a faithful Pastor: an assiduous Evangelist: And an eminent example of Christian Character ripened Into Spiritual Maturity by unwavering Faith and Fervent Prayer. A Nonconformist from deep Conviction and Fidelity to Conscience: He delighted in a Holy Generosity, and Diversity of Communion neither alienated his Affection, nor restrained his Charity: And both Churchmen and Nonconformists devoutly cherish his memory

Born October 18: 1662. Died June 22: 1714.

To commemorate the Bi-centenary of his birth:

This Chapel, of which he was the Founder, was Refronted,
And the adjacent Alms Houses Rebuilt in 1862.”

I believe the wording was the joint composition of the Rev. Charles Wicksteed and the Rev. J. K. Montgomery.

In 1899-1900 the chapel roof was restored, the old flat ceiling taken down and the present coved ceiling substituted, disclosing for the first time the beauty of the arches (the pillars supporting the same are made of wood, I believe oak): the gallery floor was renewed, and other necessary repairs (caused through dry-rot) were carried out, costing about £900.

The bi-centenary of the chapel and its re-opening was celebrated on October 28 and 29, 1900. Sir John Brunner, Bart., M.P., one of the chapel trustees, in the course of his address offered to defray the cost of the two splendid, artistic, stained-glass memorial windows to Matthew Henry and Dr. Martineau, and so com-

memorate permanently the two hundredth anniversary of the chapel. They add considerably to the beautifying of the venerable place, and keep green the memories of two worthy Christian men. The unveiling of the windows by Sir John Brunner took place on January 10, 1902.

Brass tablets have been placed on the wall above the pews of Major Bryan Johnson and Sir Thomas Gibbons Frost, knight, in memory of two old members of the chapel and lifelong trustees. The tablets were fixed respectively in 1904 and 1905, and the inscriptions are as follows:—

“To the memory of Bryan Johnson;

Born 29th November 1823; Died 28th May 1903.

During his life he was a constant worshipper in this chapel, and for forty-two years one of its trustees. By his integrity and kindness, he won for himself the high regard and esteem of his fellow citizens, and to record their affectionate remembrance of him this tablet is erected by the members of the congregation.”¹

“Erected

by members of the Congregation and friends
to the Memory of

Sir Thomas Gibbons Frost, Kt.

Born 20th Sepr. 1820. Died 6th April 1904.

Thrice Mayor of this City.

A life-long member of this Chapel, and for 62 years one
of its Trustees.

Requiescat in Pace.”

In 1908 the gallery was removed to make the room underneath loftier and more suitable as a schoolroom; also the openings between the arches in front of the gallery filled with a glass screen, and a small gallery made at the east end of the room, which is entered by

¹ This brass is mounted upon an oak tablet made from old timber of the chapel, taken out at the restoration in 1899-1900. It was unveiled Sunday morning, January 27, 1904.

the old steps built when the large gallery was put up in 1707. A new heating apparatus was also installed, the cost of the same being defrayed by the congregation and friends, supplemented by the legacy of £100 left by the late Miss Moreland, who died February 23, 1906, aged 81. She was a daughter of Thomas Moreland, a well known watch and clock maker of Northgate Street, Chester. Miss Moreland was the last of her family and a life-long member of the congregation, as were her father and other relatives. A memorial brass is affixed to the wall adjoining the family pew. A new kitchen and other conveniences were built, mainly at the instigation and with the generous help of Mr. Thomas Arthur Johnson, of West House, Hartford, near Northwich, one of the managers of Brunner, Mond & Co. Ltd., and a nephew of Bryan Johnson before referred to. The cost of removing the gallery and making the new kitchen, etc., amounted to £605 18s. 9d.

On January 26, 1916, took place the re-opening (after reconstruction) of the organ, and the unveiling of a memorial brass to the late Miss M. K. Montgomery. The inscription on the brass is:

“To the Glory of God. This Organ was restored by members and friends in remembrance of Mary Katharine Montgomery, B.A. Born 28th Nov. 1868. Died 24th Nov. 1914. A life-long worshipper in this Chapel, of which she was a Benefactor and Trustee; and an earnest worker in the Sunday School. 26th January 1916.”

The cost was about £100, all work being done by Chester tradesmen. This organ originally came from Bangor Cathedral, and was fixed in the gallery; it was subsequently installed at the east end of the chapel on June 25, 1879. There was given for it the sum of £100 in cash, together with the old organ that used to be in the gallery. In the chapel accounts for 1879 it is shown

that the last named organ was acquired and paid for in the following manner: £125 was paid for it including fixing up, and £16 15s. 6d. for various extras; and the total cost of £141 15s. 6d. was met by subscriptions from members of the chapel and the proceeds of the sale of an old violoncello for £3. Probably up to that date the music was furnished by the usual orchestra common in the churches and chapels at that period.

I must briefly refer to one of the later ministers, Simon Frederick Macdonald, 1856 to 1859. Born at Aberdeen 1822, educated there and at Bonn in Germany, he tried to introduce the Congregational method of church government. The trustees resented his reforming ideas, and would not listen to the congregation having any general management of chapel affairs, for they, vulgarly speaking, "bossed the show." He resigned his pastorate in a long letter addressed to the Congregation of Crook Street Chapel (one entrance of Matthew Henry's Chapel is in Crook Street), dated May 8, 1859, from which I give this extract:—

"I believe in the right and duty of every Christian Society to choose its own leaders and to regulate its own affairs. That right has hitherto been denied to you. You have been ruled by an irresponsible despotism, and unfortunately, a despotism but faintly tempered by wisdom. Against this I have protested and I hope at last with success. I gladly therefore offer myself a sacrifice for your benefit. Such is the simple issue between myself and the governing body of this Society. It has no relation whatever to Christian Doctrine, or to Moral Character: it is solely a question how Chapel business should be conducted."

The following is a copy of the letter sent by the trustees in reply:—

"Redcliffe, Chester,

Revd. S. F. Macdonald, Chester.

13th May, 1858.

Dear Sir, At a meeting held in the Vestry on the 11th

inst. your letter dated the 8th was read, and the following resolution passed, it being distinctly understood that your engagement with Crook Street Chapel terminates on the 29th September 1859. 'That Mr. Macdonald's tender of his resignation having been read: it was moved, and seconded, and carried with only one dissentient that it be accepted.'

I am, Yours respectfully,
Thos. G. Frost, Treasurer."

Mr. Macdonald left Chester and went as minister to Blackwater Street Chapel, Rochdale, from 1860 to 1862, where he died January 9, 1862, aged 40, in the zenith of his powers as Preacher, Poet and Scholar. His "Ode to Chester," of eleven verses, graphically describes the various phases of history and incidents connected with our ancient city, and at the great pageant that was held in July, 1910, the first three and the last two verses were set to music composed for the occasion by our Dr. Bridge, who admirably expressed their sentiment. I set out those five verses:—

"Upon the banks of Deva,
That ancient Celtic stream,
A grey old City standeth,
Of centuries the dream.
Of centuries the relic,
Of former days the pride,
When Saxon Churl and Norman Earl
Did England's strength divide.
Engirt with walls it riseth
Above the plain around,
By tower and bridge defended,
By castle, moat and mound;
E'en now those time-worn ramparts
Its fame and power attest,
When erst the land it did command,
And sentinelled the west.

But ah ! how many changes
 Have these old walls beheld,—
 How many a victor vanished,^{1a}
 How many a queller quelled !
 What tides of population,
 Have rolled around this spot,—
 Have spent in strife their little life,
 And been at length forgot !

.
 We greet thee, noble Chester !
 We greet thy kingly men,
 As from the mists of story
 Once more they rise again.
 Thy time-scathed walls we honour,
 Thy crumbling towers revere,
 Thy sacred aisles, thy hoary piles,
 That bring the distant near !
 Long be thy dwellings joyous,
 And bright thy household fires ;
 Thy children brave and loyal,
 And worthy as their sires !
 Long may thy sons be nurtured
 In noble acts of peace—
 In faith and truth, best gifts of youth,
 And still those gifts increase !”

Macdonald wrote many other poems, but the only other example I know of is a hymn of aspiration and hope, *The Church of the Future*.

This account of the chapel and some of its divines would not be complete without a reference to the late Rev. John Knowles Montgomery, who succeeded Mr. Macdonald, and was minister from 1860 to 1896. He was a man of untiring energy and force of character, and accomplished what his predecessor could not do, as he introduced the Congregational form of church management. John Knowles Montgomery was one of the leading founders and secretary of the Victoria Road

^{1a} So in original leaflet ; an obvious slip for “vanquished.”

and Boughton British Schools, and was always associated with any movement in the city for the moral, religious, and civic uplifting of its people. Until within a short time of his passing away, on September 20, 1908, he continued helping on the work of education under the new Act. Truly he was one of the grand old men of Chester. His family have placed a memorial brass in the chapel to him and his wife, inscribed thus:—

“To the memory of the
 Revd. John Knowles Montgomery, Minister of this
 Chapel 1860 to 1896. Who died September the
 20th 1908, in his 93rd year. And of
 Mary his wife, Daughter of the Revd. C. J.
 McAlester of Holywood, who died January 26th
 1893, aged 56 years.

This Tablet was erected by their children.”

The Rev. Henry David Roberts was minister from 1896 to 1900: the author of *Matthew Henry and his Chapel* (published May 1901). During his stay in Chester he was an active worker in favour of improved dwellings for the working classes, and other forward movements of a similar kind. He is now in France with the British troops fighting for the Liberty, Justice and Honour of the Allies. He is not the only one connected with the chapel so to do his duty: nearly fifty Sunday School scholars and members of the congregation, past and present, are at the front fighting for King and Country. God grant them victory! and may all come home again to receive the thankful tributes of a grateful people for their sacrifices in defence of our dear native land.

There are several Trusts and Charities left by members of the congregation, ranging from 1709 to 1797: “For the Education and Maintenance of young men studying for the Ministry”; “Pensions to three Dissent-

ing ministers and three widows of ministers"; "Alms-houses for four poor women, with a weekly allowance of money and coal in the winter"; and "Pensions only for two poor men."

There are also various small legacies invested for the purpose of augmenting the minister's stipend, but these do not amount to much. It is a common error of many to believe there are large endowments for the minister's salary, whereas the congregation is heavily taxed to keep up the same.

The late Miss Humble, of Vicar's Cross near Chester, one of the members of the chapel, gave between £6,000 and £7,000 towards the Manchester Home Missionary College (established about 1854) for training Unitarian ministers.

Entered in the books of the chapel as members and trustees, in the past and at the present time, are names of many of the old families of Chester, professional men, merchants, manufacturers and leading tradesmen, and in many cases their descendants are living now. The Moulson family must be noted amongst these; they were tobacco manufacturers, whose warehouse and shop is now the Grosvenor Garage, opposite the Grosvenor Hotel. Dr. George Harrison of White Friars, is a descendant of Sarah Moulson, daughter of one Thomas Moulson, a tobacconist; she married his grandfather, also a Dr. George Harrison. She had a brother Thomas, who was in partnership with Cropper (another member of the congregation) as tobacconists. They took an active part in the Parliamentary Elections and are lampooned in one of the Grosvenor songs for 1812, written as a counterblast to the well known Egerton song the "Glorious 6th of May," commemorating the Egerton victory in 1807:—

“ 1812. Chester Election Poll Book.
 THE RETREAT OF THE PATRIOTS.
 A SOLEMN DIRGE.
 ADAPTED TO THE ‘SIXTH OF MAY.’
 Printed by the *Chester Chronicle*.

J. Fletcher, Editor.

In solemn step—and hand in hand—
 The fair ‘Virginian Brothers’² lag!
 Resign Commissions, and Command,
 Resolved to stick to snuff and shag!
 In calendar, the Sixth of May
 No more illumes red-letter day.”

“HISTORY OF THE CONTESTED ELECTION IN
 CHESTER, 1812.

Written, arranged and compiled, By the Editor of the
Chester Courant, Chester. Printed and Published by
 John Monk at the *Courant* Offices, in Newgate Street.

Candidates.

John Egerton, of Oulton Park, Esq. and
 E. J. Townshend, of Wincham, Esq.,
 against

General Grosvenor, and
 Sir Richard Brookes of Norton Priory.

THE INDEPENDENT CREW.

To the tune of Bow, wow, wow.

Next in the Presbyterian throng

The M---l---s³ first appear, sirs.

And H-mp----s, Cr-pp-r,⁴ Ly-ns⁵ bold,

With Unitarian sneers, sirs;

With long faced preachers at their backs,

Of true Religious sect, sirs;

And T-yl-r, W-----ms--., and L-w-.,⁶

All three of the elect, sirs.

Chorus.

Bow, wow, wow!

Long may the Talbot stand to bow, wow, wow.”

² Moulsons, tobacco manufacturers.

³ Moulsons. ⁴ Cropper, Moulsons' partner.

⁵ Rev. James Lyons, minister of Matthew Henry's Chapel, 1808-1813.

⁶ Lowe, ancestor of the family of silversmiths of that name.

Sir Thomas Moulson, baronet, Lord Mayor of London, 1634, is of the same family; he founded the church and grammar school at Hargrave, 1627.

The names of the present mayor of Chester, Mr. John Meadows Frost, and of his sisters and brother, Mr. T. Gibbons Frost, are entered in the baptismal register of the chapel; and those of their grandfather, father and uncles occur in the chapel register as members of the congregation.

The late Mr. Henry Wood (of Henry Wood & Co., Anchor Works, Saltney); his son, Mr. Albert Wood, of Bodlondeb, Conway, the generous donor and supporter of the Chester Royal Infirmary, his late brother and sister, Mr. Swinford Wood, the well known artist, and Lady Thomas Gibbons Frost (the mother of our present mayor), were worshippers at the old chapel.

The late John Evans Brassey, ironmonger, whose sons, Mr. Ernest Brassey, City Coroner, and Mr. Herbert Brassey, ironmonger (since deceased), with their brothers and sisters, were baptized at the chapel.

All the Johnson family. Bryan, who founded the Hydraulic Engineering Company, Chester, well known in his day; his nephew Mr. T. Arthur Johnson, a prominent representative of the family of the present time, one of the managers of Brunner, Mond & Co. Ltd., Northwich.

J. Nicholls, the tobacconist. Mentioned frequently in the chapel minutes of the past; Messrs. William, Thomas and Frederick Nicholls, of the tobacco firm of that name (at the Cross), founded 1780, being his present representatives.

THE CHAPEL PLATE.

Queen Anne Porringer. The "Matthew Henry" cup. It is a fine silver porringer, fluted, four and a half

inches high, five and a half inches in diameter. On a shield between the handles are engraved the initials "M.H." London Date-letter 1703-04.

George I. Porringer. The "Statham" Cup. A fine silver porringer, fluted and elaborately worked. Five and a half inches high, five and a half inches in diameter. On a shield surmounted by a cherub's head and wings is the inscription :

"The gift of Mrs. Hannah Statham to the Trustees of the Chapel in Chester, to be used at the Lord's Supper. 1732." On the base, in a different style of lettering from the inscription on the front, is engraved :

S.
I. H. London Date-letter, 1723-24.

George II. Cups. The two "Bevan" chalices, silver, eight and a half inches high, plain bell-shaped bowl, stem, knob, and foot. Inscribed round each bowl :

"The Legacy of Mrs. Mary Bevan to the Presbyterian Congregation in Chester 1745." London Date-letter, 1745-46. Made by Richard Bayley, London, Maker of Communion Flagons.

Six plain Pewter Patens, or plates.

Two Pewter Flagons, with lids, handle, beak, plain.

Mr. E. Alfred Jones, in an article in the *Magazine of Fine Arts*, for February, 1906, upon Nonconformist Communion Plate, says:—

"The Nonconformist communion cup in the large percentage of cases, takes, as will be observed, the form of the domestic porringer, first introduced early in the seventeenth century for the possets and hot drinks then in vogue, and of the later kinds of two-handled drinking-cups; and it is supposed that these types of cups were adopted by some of the earlier Nonconformists, not, as has been suggested, as a protest against the more sacerdotal communion cup largely prevailing in the Church of England, but as loving-cups pure and simple—a mere

transference of secular customs to religious usages, the two handles of these cups rendering them easily handed from one communicant to the other while remaining seated in the body of the chapel, as is so largely the custom to this day."

"The Unitarian body is especially rich in old silver communion plate, many of the pieces having been family possessions transferred to the service of God."

Probably this explains why the Matthew Henry cup is only inscribed with his initials, "M.H.," giving no indication that it was used for a sacred purpose.

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During the lecture there were exhibited various objects of interest lent by the chapel trustees, the Archæological Society, and Mr. W. E. Brown, including: the chapel plate, trust deed with Matthew Henry's signature thereto, his journal containing references to events connected with Chester and the chapel, conveyance of the land on which the chapel is built in Trinity Street, minute books, baptismal and other registers, copies of the sermons preached by Matthew Henry at the opening of the chapel and by the Rev. J. Chidlaw on the puppet show explosion.

In the chapel is the original oak pulpit shaped like a chalice and surmounted with an hexagonal sounding board, oak communion table and five old oak chairs; also, in the vestry, a writing table said to have been used by Matthew Henry when compiling his commentaries on the Bible.

