

SPITALFIELDS.

SIR GEORGE WHELER AND HIS CHAPEL
ST. MARY'S, SPITAL SQUARE.

*A Paper read to the London and Middlesex Archæological Society at Bishopsgate ,
Institute, on April 20, 1912.*

BY W. H. MANCHÉE.

STOW, writing in 1598 of St. Mary's Spital, says:—

“In place of this hospital, and rear adjoining, are now many fair houses built for receipt and lodging of worshipful persons.”

Of these houses, among the principal was one known as “The Brick House,” which belonged to Sir Edward Wheler, a goldsmith, of London.

This worthy knight is often stated to be the father of the first baronet, Sir William Wheler, but this statement is incorrect. The connection of the latter with Sir Edward's family is obscure, but he always claimed cousinship with them, and was the residuary legatee of William, Sir Edward's son and heir. Sir William purchased “The Brick House” from this William some time previous to 1657, for in a deed of that date he is described as its owner.

Sir William, the first Baronet, came of a good old City family, and no doubt became the courtier he was in his later life through the fact of his mother being the sister of Lord Hervey. The family with which he claimed cousinship were all City Goldsmiths, although the elder branch had settled on an estate at Martin Husingtree. His own near relatives were City mer-

chants, and so far as one can see there does not seem any justification of his adoption of his "cousin's" arms. Having gained his entrée into Court circles, he appears to have been, like the Vicar of Bray, whatever the times might be, determined to maintain his position, for he was knighted by Charles I., by Cromwell at Hampton Court in 1657, and created Baronet by Charles II. on the 11th August, 1660. His creation as a Baronet was incidentally the probable cause of his making Sir George Wheler his heir, but this I shall come to later.

In 1660 Sir William obtained an Act of Parliament permitting him to build on his property in Spitalfields, and this most probably marks the first real building enterprise in the district.

From this date onwards the building of houses seems to have increased apace, for in Ogilby's map of 1667 we find that the district was then covered with streets to a large extent, and yet there was no church accommodation provided for the parish, other than St. Dunstan's, Stepney, which was too far distant to be of any real service. Added to this came the large influx of French weavers after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which made the need still more pressing.

It was at this period that Sir George Wheler stepped in. As a devout churchman and owner of a great part of the district, this state of things troubled him greatly, and he tried to get the people themselves to build a church, offering to head the list with £500, if they would subscribe the same, but he appealed in vain. The matter then rested until he met a Mr. Thomas Seymour, a goldsmith of Lombard Street, who had started a free school in Norton Folgate, later known as Turner's Free School, and arrangements were made between them by

which Sir George provided the land and two-thirds of the cost of the building, Mr. Seymour contributing one-third and attaching the school to the chapel. This building, which was erected in 1693, was called "The Tabernacle," and so appears as late as 1746 in Pine's map of London.

Sir George Wheler, by whose name the chapel was afterwards known, was the son of Charles Wheler, a Colonel in the Life Guards in the time of Charles I., and it was during the exile of this Royalist family in Holland that the third child, George, was born at Breda in the year 1650. In 1652 Charles and his family returned to live with his widowed mother at the Old Palace, Charing, Kent; in July of that year his mother died, leaving him the remainder of the lease of the Old Palace; and it was about this period that Sir William sought out and became acquainted with his future heir.

In 1665 Sir William fled to Derby to avoid the Plague, but shortly after his arrival there he was struck down with the disease, and died. Colonel Wheler and his family were then in very straitened circumstances; the lease of the house at Charing had expired, and they had removed to London. Lady Wheler, however, had a life interest in all the estate, so that they had the bare comfort of a future inheritance, tempered by the fact that Lady Wheler kept possession of the will, and only divulged its contents on Colonel Wheler's agreeing to pay her ward, a Miss Taylor, the sum of £1,500 after her ladyship's death. In 1667 George went to Oxford, entering Lincoln College as a Commoner, the following year becoming a pupil of Dr. Hickes, afterwards known as

the non-juring Dean of Worcester, a man who was destined to have a great influence on his later life.

In 1670 Lady Wheler died, and George and his father entered into possession of the estates bequeathed to them, not, however, without opposition on the part of the Baronet's family. It appears that the second Baronet had procured the baronetcy for his "cousin" on the understanding that Sir William would leave the estates to go with the title, and this arrangement not having been fulfilled, the second Baronet was afraid to take action against Lady Wheler, who was a favourite of Royalty and attached to the Household of Charles I., and so waited until her death. Sir Charles then commenced a suit against the two heirs, Colonel Wheler and his son George, which was not settled until Michaelmas, 1673, by arrangement between the parties, the Order of Court being dated the 31st March, 1674. At the Bishopsgate Institute is to be seen a copy of the deed dated the 29th June, 1683, by which the terms of the Order was carried out, by which Sir Charles gave up all claims on payment of £150 per annum to himself and his heirs, this sum being charged on the property in Spitalfields, whose gross value was then £400 per annum. Assuming the tale of the bargain to be true, and that it was corroborated by King Charles II., who, according to George, sent a private note to the judge confirming it, Sir Charles certainly had a genuine grievance. The two "cousins" had evidently quarrelled over the business, as Sir Charles commenced a suit against Sir William during the latter's lifetime to compel a settlement of the property, but this was dropped, and it is probable that this action was the cause of

Sir William's seeking out Colonel Charles Wheler, a perfect stranger, and making him and his family the heirs in place of the other. On Lady Wheler's death George entered himself as Gentleman Commoner at his College as more befitting his proper station, but Sir Charles having commenced his action, Colonel Wheler, who all along seems to have been very worried at the prospect of losing the property, begged his son to remain with him in town during the trial, and so George, not to lose time, entered the Middle Temple, and spent his time between there and Oxford. His being in town was not all loss, for during that period his Rector, Dr. Crewe, was created Bishop of Oxford, and George called on him to offer his services on the journey down, and thus began a friendship, leading later to so much preferment to the young collegian.

The Chancery suit being practically at an end in September, 1673, George, following a severe illness, resolved to go abroad, and made arrangements with Dr. Hickes, then Fellow of Lincoln College, to accompany him. This journey lasted three years, and was the result of a resolve to rid himself of many of his acquaintances, some of whom he considered undesirable. His temperament seems ever to have been of a deeply religious turn of mind, and in his *Notitia*¹ he relates his prayer the night before leaving England, in which to quote his own words:—

“I beseeched God to protect and Prosper me in my Travels and Bring me Safe again to my Country and Parents & friends, Whereupon I had an Immediate Impression upon me imploring that my Request should be

¹ Edited and published privately by Mr. E. T. Wheler-Gatton.

granted, if (I) would serve God and Enter into Holy Orders after my Return. I thereupon Resolved I would, if I could by Study become fit, and should be ffound worthy, to enter that Holy and Honourable Calling."

This coming from his own pen certainly carries more weight than the story so often repeated, which I give later. With such stern resolves as this journey must have been commenced with, and in such company, one can be sure that the time was not wasted in frivolous amusement, and following the bent of his boyhood days, the whole time was spent in antiquarian research. The result was his authorship of "A Journey into Greece, etc.," a work which at once established his reputation as an author. His book, which at the time was held in high esteem by numismatists and antiquaries, is even to-day well worth study. It was published in 1682, and a copy accepted by the King, who, in recognition of his labour and research, conferred on him the honour of Knighthood at Winchester on the 11th September, 1682. We can have no doubt of his abilities, when we read that without any previous knowledge of charting, he mapped out some coastlines, which on later examination by experts were found to be perfectly correct.

The year following his knighthood Sir George entered the Church. Readers of Macaulay will realise what a sacrifice this step must have been to a man of such brilliant attainments and wealth, but as I have stated before, this was the fulfilment of a vow. As to this another tale is told, that while he and his companion were on their travels, they were accidentally marooned, and that Sir George vowed, if he were spared, to devote himself to God's service; but his own words are certainly more to be relied upon, and, moreover, this same

tale is told of others. His taking Holy Orders was a source of great annoyance to his family, but Sir George seems to have been perfectly happy in the step, for he is said to have replied to one critic that he "would rather be the vicar of a moderately endowed church than to be the most rich, if vicious, lord of the manor." In the following year, 1684, he took his degree of M.A., and by the influence of his old college rector, Dr. Crewe—now Bishop of Durham—was appointed Canon of Durham Cathedral the next year; and, through the same influence, he was offered by Magdalen College, Oxford, the living of Basingstoke, which he occupied for seventeen years.

It was during this latter period that Sir George interested himself in the erection of this chapel. He had previously, in the year 1681, while engaged on his book, made a special journey through France to collect reliable evidence of the sufferings of the poor French Protestants, and on his return presented a copy of his Report to each Member of Parliament, and this no doubt drew his attention to Spitalfields, where so many of the Frenchmen had settled, and may very largely have been the reason of his efforts to build the chapel bearing his name, which he successfully carried to an issue during his stay at Basingstoke.

In 1702 he took his Divinity Degree, and went North, dying there in 1722. He was buried in the Galilee of Durham Cathedral, where a monument erected by his son, Granville, the well-known scientist, is still to be seen. In the library is also to be seen an oil portrait of Sir George, presented by Mr. Granville Wheler, and a case of coins collected by him on his first travels.

By his will made in 1719, and proved on the 6th May,

1724, Sir George placed on record his regard for the French Protestant refugees by expressing the wish, that if the two Churches then proposed to be built in the district, provided for by the Act of Queen Anne for the building of fifty new churches in London, were erected, this chapel should be handed over to the Huguenot Church, that a French minister should officiate in his native tongue according to the rates of the Church of England; and he provided for a manse for the minister so appointed. Of the two churches only one was built, that of Spitalfields, and the request was therefore never fulfilled. The second church would have been at the rear of Norton Folgate on the south side of White Lion Street, and the proposed plans are to be seen in the Middlesex Collection at the Guildhall. Difficulties arose as to the title of the land, as to which Ellis quotes the opinion of counsel, and as a result the building of the second church was abandoned.

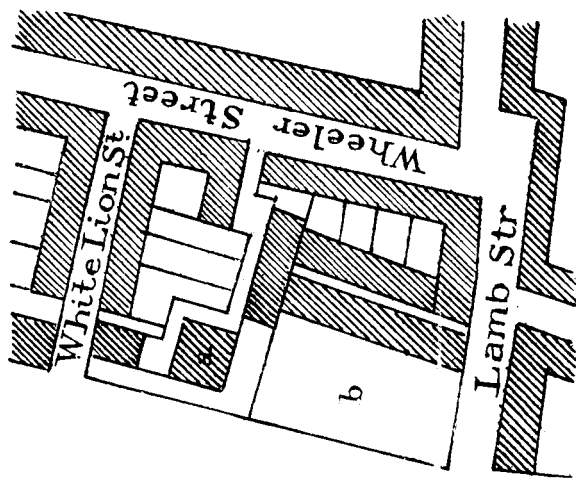
"The Tabernacle," to give the chapel its original name, was erected by Sir George at the rear of two houses on the south side of White Lion Street, fronting a court variously known as Tabernacle Court, Passage, or Yard, and now called Church Passage. This is to the east of Spital Square, and according to Ellis, was immediately opposite the site of the old Spital Cross.

Sir George was recommended by the Bishop of London to appoint the Rev. Luke Milbourne as his first minister, and at the beginning appears to have been very happy in his choice. Mr. Milbourne, however, seems to have overlooked the fact that the chapel was a proprietary one, and to have adopted the position of a duly inducted clergyman, and as such, resenting any interference in his church by Sir George, whom, as mere

patron, he considered had no right to dictate to him. This led to an open rupture, and as Mr. Milbourne refused to leave, Sir George took the law into his own hands, locked up the chapel, and took possession of the keys. Amidst great protests Mr. Milbourne and a large number of his congregation removed to a throwster's shop near by, where he opened a rival chapel. How long this rival chapel lasted I have been unable to trace, but nine years later, the 24th June, 1704, Mr. Milbourne was appointed Rector of St. Ethelburga, in the City, and he died in that office on the 15th April, 1720. Pope describes him as "the fairest of critics," and also introduces him in the *Dunciad*. The *Dictionary of National Biography* states that he was Curate of Great Yarmouth for many years, and also that he was lecturer at St. Leonards, Shoreditch; but it makes no mention of his ministry at St. Mary's, which had such a very unhappy termination.

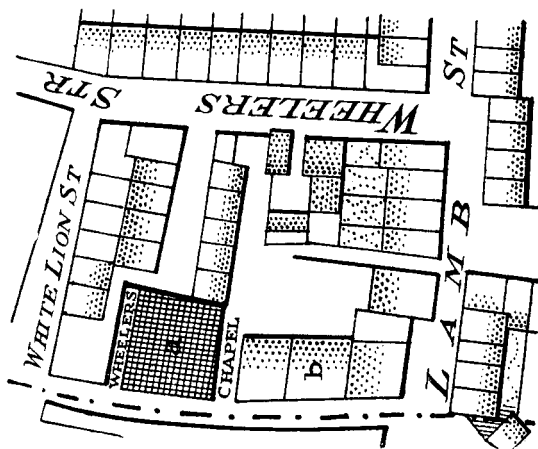
Mr. Milbourne's quarrel with Sir George Wheler is fortunate in one respect, for it led to the preservation of a good deal of the early history of the chapel. The protests against the eviction of Mr. Milbourne took the form of five cases or petitions, although there does not seem to have been any actual law proceedings; and of these I have been able to trace three: the third, fourth, and fifth, and from these I learn that the chapel was originally opened on Christmas Day, 1692, the building being a second-hand one of timber, costing altogether for the removal and fixing the sum of £100. Its dimensions were 50 feet by 30 feet, the 30 feet apparently from Ogilby's map representing the width of the gardens of the two houses in White Lion Street given by Sir George. The furniture was of the simplest

ST. MARY'S CHAPEL, SPITALFIELDS.



FROM GASCOIGNE'S MAP, 1703.

- (a) CHAPEL, c. 30FT. BY 30FT.
- (b) BURIAL GROUND, c. 60FT. BY 110FT.



FROM HORWOOD'S MAP, 1799.

- (a) CHAPEL, c. 50FT. BY 50FT.
- (b) SITE OF VICARAGE AND SCHOOLS
(FORMERLY BURIAL GROUND).

description, consisting of a pulpit, a reading desk, and twenty-two forms of eleven feet each, providing accommodation for, roughly, 150 persons. This building was merely an experiment, and evidently much larger ideas as to the building were at one time cherished, as Wren was to have been consulted as to the permanent building to be erected later.

The chapel proved to be a success, for on the third petition Mr. Milbourne mentions that under his ministry the number of his congregation had increased to 500 in two years, and that he had added galleries, and that even then very many more had stood outside the south window, as there was no room inside.

A burial ground was attached, 6,000 square feet in area, which Mr. Milbourne complains would accommodate 500 persons only, less than the number who died and were buried from the hamlet in one year; and yet in 1722 Noorthouck writes:—

“The inhabitants (of Norton Folgate) can be married and buried where they will, but they generally make use of a Chapel originally built for them near Spital Yard by Sir George Wheler, Prebendary of Durham.”

It is difficult to trace the actual site of this burial ground. The various maps extant of the neighbourhood show that the district underwent changes every few years, and it is difficult therefore to obtain any point from which accurate measurements can be taken. Gascoigne's map of Stepney of 1703, which would have been several years in preparation, shows a vacant piece of land to the south of the chapel. This measures 110 feet by 60 feet, or 6,600 square feet in all, and most

probably represents the burial ground, especially as there is no vacant space near in any way approaching this area. The ground, separated by a passage from the chapel itself, lies immediately south of Lamb Street, and with the exception of the house at the corner of Church Passage, which I believe still belongs to the Wheler family, represents the site of the vicarage and schools. This site is affirmed by an old inhabitant to have been a burial ground according to tradition in his boyhood, but beyond this I have been unable to obtain any evidence to support my assumption. Curiously enough the street called Chapel Street, running due east from the back of the chapel, after allowing for the breadth of a house at the Wheeler Street end, measures exactly the 6,000 square feet, and one might reasonably suppose that this was the site of the burial ground but for the fact that Mr. Milbourne in his case expressly mentions that the burial ground was promised from some garden ground to the south of the chapel, and, as will be seen by Gascoigne's map, Chapel Street did not exist in its present area, and appears more as a continuation of the lane at present existing to the north of the old building.

Three houses were also added for the use of the minister and under-officers. These presumably might have been the two houses, on the gardens of which the chapel was built, and the one further eastwards with a garden, for the use of the minister. Altogether it certainly seems from these facts alone that Sir George was not mean in the way the chapel was equipped, and short of actually endowing it, he certainly did all he could to make the appointment as minister a comfortable one.

The original timber building appears to have lasted until 1697. Mr. Goss, of the Bishopsgate Institute, has a note that the chapel was re-built in timber at that date, a fact also mentioned by Mr. Morris Thomas in his parish magazine in 1875. This is confirmed rather by the size of the building as shown in Gascoigne's map, which measures 30 feet by 30 feet, as against the original building, which measured 50 feet by 30 feet. This second timber building cannot have continued for long, for James Paterson in his "*Pietas Londinensis*," which was published in 1714, refers to the chapel as being built of brick and tiles, having one bell, and being a very neat and decent chapel within. This would be the same building mentioned in Strype's *Stow*, 1720, which speaks of a "Chapell upon the Charnell, at St. Mary Spittall, Without Bishopsgate, in Tabernacle Yard." Seymour in his "*Survey of London and Westminster*," published in 1734, also mentions the chapel as in Spittle Yard, with the additional fact that it had fallen very much into decay.

This brick building, despite its want of repair, probably continued until the year 1755 or 1756, when according to Sir Henry Ellis, the chapel was rebuilt. In his "*History of Shoreditch*," published in 1798, he gives the following reference:—

"In 1756 the Tabernacle, having fallen into decay, was rebuilt with brick at the expense of the ratepayers, and as an acknowledgment they were allowed to choose their Minister. After this the right of presentation reverted to the descendants of Sir George.

"The Chapel was re-opened with two sermons on Sept 5th 1756."

The date of the ceremony is correctly given by Sir

H. Ellis as 1756, but in front of the altar was to be seen a stone with the inscription:—

“Sir George Wheler’s
Chapel
1755.”

which seems to point to some delay in the re-opening. The two sermons, according to an entry in the registers, were charity sermons given no doubt for the benefit of the two schools connected with the chapel, one of which I have mentioned before as being attached by Mr. Seymour, the second being a girl’s school, which was founded in 1703.

Records during the earlier period of the chapel are very scanty. In 1747, on taking Holy Orders, the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey—later the founder of the Essex Street chapel and the leader of the Unitarian movement—was appointed here, but only remained a short time. John Wesley preached here on the 18th March, 1739, after his return from America, at the time when he was co-operating with Whitfield in his Methodist movement, though in this connection it must be remembered that Wesley never left the Church of England, and that it was a frequent occurrence later on for the clergy of the Established Church to officiate at his chapel in the City Road, and that it was not until Wesley’s death that the Wesleyans became a separate body.

Defoe in his “Journal of the Plague,” written in 1722, in speaking of the plague pits, mentions:—

“They had also two other burying places in Spitalfields, one where a Chapel or Tabernacle has since been built for ease to this great parish, and another in Petticoat Lane.”

It is more than probable that the sites selected for

these plague pits would have been open or garden ground more or less accessible to the street, and it would seem as if the pit referred to might have been the garden to the west of Tabernacle Yard, now known as Nantes Place, and not the site of the chapel. Ogilby's map of 1677, prepared less than ten years later, shows the neighbourhood round the site of the chapel fully built over, whereas in Spital Square there is a good deal of vacant ground, which would appear to have been far more convenient for the purpose of burial than the site of the chapel. Moreover, at the time of Defoe's writing, the burial ground of the chapel was formed and probably in use, which may have given rise to his confusing the actual site of the plague pit. In mentioning the matter to Messrs. Clutton, the surveyors to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, they rather confirmed this view, stating that they believed the plague pit was in the garden ground to the west of the chapel.

The beginning of the nineteenth century found the chapel again in a bad state of repair. Mrs. Lindsey in a letter to a friend, dated 1801, writes:—

“We came back on Saturday se'night; and on the Tuesday following he (Mr. Lindsey) went to Spital Square to baptise a child from Portsmouth, as he did one nine years ago. It is a singular thing that this call was to the same spot where Mr. Lindsey, fiftyfive years ago, began his ministry at Sir George Wheler's Chapel in the same square, and where his first and last service of baptism was performed. He looked at his old Chapel going now to ruin, all the old inhabitants dead or beggared, the silk trade being ruined.”

It is probable that soon after the date of the letter

from Mrs. Lindsey the chapel was closed. It remained in that condition for nearly ten years. At the end of 1809 a number of gentlemen, who considered the district one in which good work could be done, approached Mr. Hastings Wheler, and offered to put the chapel into repair, if he would appoint their nominee, the Rev. Josiah Pratt, at that time secretary of the Infant Church Missionary Society, as his minister. To this Mr. Wheler agreed, and Mr. Pratt was duly licensed as minister of the chapel by Dr. Randolph, Bishop of London, in February, 1810.

The Sunday following his license from the Bishop Mr. Pratt read himself in. A few friends attended, and the condition of the chapel was such that a pew was swept out for their reception, and it is not surprising to read that there was no sermon. The repairs were immediately commenced, and at a cost of £1,100 the fabric was once again put into a proper condition, an organ being added, the chapel being opened for public worship in the October following.

Ordained in 1792, and appointed Curate at St. John's Bedford Row in 1795, Mr. Pratt was by this time one of the prominent members of the Evangelical party, which then included, among others, the well-known Rev. Charles Simeon. Having assisted in the founding of the Church Missionary Society, Mr. Pratt became its second secretary in 1802, and in 1804 he helped to found the British and Foreign Bible Society, for which he acted as the first Church of England secretary. The same year he was successively appointed lecturer at St. Mary Woolnoth, Limborough lecturer at Christ Church, Spitalfields, Lady Campden lecturer at St. Lawrence Jewry, and assistant curate at St. Mary

Woolnoth. It is not surprising, therefore, that, with a man of his character and ability, the chapel should become, as it did, a place of importance. Pratt was then in his forty-second year, a man of very broad mind, which permitted him to mix with dissenters of all creeds, a rare thing even in these days, and as a result he attracted to his chapel many laymen of note. Among these may be mentioned Mr. Samuel Hoare, of Hampstead, the friend of Wordsworth, and Mr. (later Sir) Thomas Fowell Buxton. As regards the last and his connection with the movement for the abolition of slavery, Sir Thomas in a letter to Mr. Pratt in 1841, pays the following graceful compliment:—

“ Whatever I have done in my life for Africa, the seeds of it were sown in Wheler's Chapel.”

Wilberforce is generally considered the leader of the anti-slavery movement, but it should be remembered that his action was merely to abolish the slave trade. Buxton, however, went one step further, and obtained the abolition of slavery itself in our Colonies.

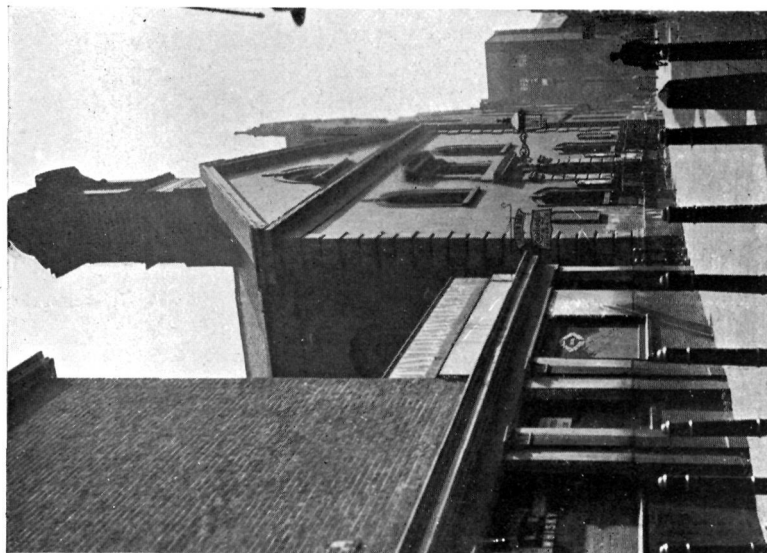
In the spring of 1823 the living of St. Stephens, Coleman Street, which with St. Olave's, Hart Street, are the only two City livings vested in the parishioners, fell vacant, and Mr. Pratt was invited to stand as a candidate. At the close of the ballot Mr. Pratt was declared duly elected, but this election was opposed by the supporters of one of the unsuccessful candidates, and proceedings in Chancery followed, which took three years to obtain the decision that the election was void, as it should have been by poll and not by ballot! A second election resulted in Mr. Pratt again being the

successful candidate, and in the autumn of 1826 he was duly inducted into the living.

During these three years, 1823 to 1826, the morning services at the chapel were conducted by the Rev. Thomas Mortimer, the afternoon service being taken by the Rev. Edward Bickersteth, who had hitherto done so under Mr. Pratt.

In 1827 Mr. Bickersteth took sole charge of the chapel, and shortly afterwards the Rev. Richard Tillard is stated to have made an offer to purchase the chapel and give it to Mr. Bickersteth for life. This purchase was completed in 1829, Mr. Bickersteth being licensed as minister in the August of that year, but the purchase could only have been by way of lease, for the chapel was dealt with by the Wheler family in 1840, or only eleven years later after the so-called purchase.

The Tillard family were until quite recently connected with the neighbourhood. In the various parish magazines their name frequently appears as contributing to the funds of the chapel, and in 1866 the Rev. Richard Tillard is reported by the Charity Commissioners to have terminated the lease of the school in Blossom Street, originally granted by Mr. William Tillard in 1730. The Commissioners in the report of 1897 state that there is a tradition that the almshouses in Blossom Street, built in 1628, were obtained in exchange for The Candle House and other premises in St. Mary Spital. Mr. Isaac Tillard purchased the Candle House and the Brick House in 1719, and one third of the clear proceeds (£182 11s. 10d.) was paid to the trustees of Norton Folgate to meet the charge in favour of certain charities, which may have given rise to this tradition. The Candle House would probably

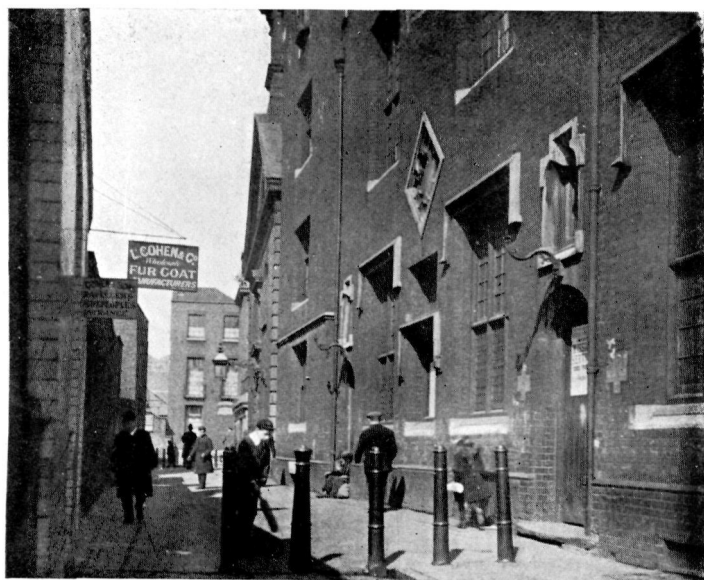


ST. MARY'S, SPITALFIELDS, WEST FRONT.
FROM NORTH END OF CHURCH PASSAGE.



VIEW ON MAP OF WHEELER CHAPEL DISTRICT VISITING SOCIETY, 1829.

ST. MARY'S, SPITALFIELDS.



ST. MARY'S VICARAGE, SCHOOLS, AND CHAPEL (WEST FRONT) FROM THE SOUTH.



SOUTH END OF CHURCH PASSAGE. THE CORNER HOUSE REPRESENTS THE SOUTH BOUNDARY OF THE BURIAL GROUND.

be the same house as the one mentioned by Ellis under the name of "The Spital House," originally the property of Sir Rowland Vaughan, grandson of the Sir Stephen Vaughan, who had been granted the Priory Lands by Henry VIII., and later as belonging to Lord Bolingbroke, and sold by Lord St. John, of Bletsoe, to the Tillard family, in whose possession it then was. This house, the second of its name, was on the southern side of the western arm of the square, bordered by the present Spital Yard, and faced south, and so appears in Jeffrey's map of London, 1735, its garden to the east—a burial ground in later years—being the site of the present Central Foundation Schools. There is still to be seen at the northern and eastern ends of the Square some iron posts blocking both path and roadways, with the words "William Tillard, 1821," cast in the metal, showing the extent of his ownership in the district at that date. Mr. Daw, a former Vicar of St. Mary's, states that the family mansion at Penshurst contains some beautiful old leaden cisterns removed from a house in the Square, I believe No. 20, in which some antique carving and ceilings are still to be seen, showing that their ownership must have extended into quite recent date.

Mr. Bickersteth, whom Mr. Richard Tillard appointed as his Minister, had, as we have already stated, acted as Assistant Minister at the Chapel, and also as Assistant Secretary to Mr. Pratt at the Church Missionary Society, becoming Secretary on Mr. Pratt's resignation of that post. He will be better recognised as the compiler of the "Christian Psalmody"—now known as the "Hymnal Companion"—edited later by his son, the Bishop of Exeter, and still used by many

of our Churches. In the year 1829 he founded "The Wheler Chapel District Visiting Society," two reports of which for the years 1829 and 1833 are to be found in the British Museum. A map of the district, showing a print of the Chapel with its two doors and window in the West end, used to hang in the Vestry, and is now in the possession of Christ Church.

Under Mr. Bickersteth's ministry the Chapel once more resumed its successful career. Funds were provided for two lectures, one on Sunday evening, and another for a week-day evening. The annual amount raised for Charity in one year amounted to £400, and the congregation rapidly increased in its numbers. With Mr. Tillard's assistance the Rev. Thomas Woodrooffe, who later became Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, was engaged as Assistant. In March, 1830, Mr. Abel Smith, after hearing Mr. Bickersteth preach, offered him on the following Sunday the living of Watton, Herts, which, after some consideration, Mr. Bickersteth accepted.

In November, 1830, on Mr. Bickersteth's resignation, Mr. Tillard appointed Mr. Woodrooffe, who continued as Minister until 1833.

In that year the Rev. Thomas Garwood, who had been Mr. Bickersteth's first Curate at Watton, was appointed as Minister. Seven years later, 1840, Mr. Wheler proposed to sell the Chapel, and Mr. Garwood at once opened a fund for its purchase, raising £700 by the end of that year. Hyndman's Trustees, on being approached, offered to contribute £1,000 for its endowment, and £150 towards a permanent repair fund, conditionally, of course, on its being made a district Church. Further difficulties arose, however, as the

Bishop of London, on being approached, required that the endowment fund should be made up to £1,500. Towards this Hyndman's Trustees gave a further £250, conditionally on the balance being raised by subscription. By dint of great efforts, and with the assistance of the neighbouring Churches, this amount was raised by September, 1841, when the badly-needed repairs were at once commenced. The fabric must have been in a very sorry way, for Mr. Garwood in his address of January, 1845, dealing with the consecration of the Chapel, goes on to say:—

“Much of the Chapel had to be rebuilt, as it was found to be in a very insecure state; the timbers of the roof and the flooring of the pews being quite decayed, and one of the side walls having materially bulged.”

Altogether the repairs cost £2,027 1s. 7d., of which Hyndman's Trustees bore £800, the balance, even with outside assistance, taking two years and a half to raise.

The Chapel was formally consecrated on February 23rd, 1842, as “St. Mary's, Spital Square,” the districts of Norton Folgate and the Old Artillery Ground being assigned to it. A curious item as to its consecration is the fact that the new Church actually stood outside its own parish, the ground on which it stood being in the parish of Christ Church. Some important alterations were made in the old Chapel to prepare it for its consecration. A central doorway was made, the two doors being made into windows; the pulpit was removed to the south-east, and a new reading desk of the same size and shape placed at the north-east. For the first time in the history of the building a font was placed in the Church, a small basin held by the clerk

having previously done duty for this. The Vestry, which had been inside the building at the south-east, was removed to a site adjoining given by Mrs. Wheler.

Mr. Garwood, who for some time had been attached to the London City Mission, resigned in 1848 to become its Clerical Secretary, and was succeeded by the Rev. J. D'Arcy Sirr, D.D., who, among other works, is well known as the author of a Memoir of Archbishop Trench. Dr. Sirr's father was the Chief of Police in Ireland at the time of the Irish Rebellion, and has been described by Sheil as the "Fouché" of Ireland, but is even better remembered as the man who arrested Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

Dr. Sirr resigned in 1849, and was followed by the Rev. Thomas Rees. Through his exertions the Vicarage House and Schools adjoining were erected in 1854. The following year he exchanged livings with the Rev. Samuel Clifford, Vicar of Teynham, Kent. Mr. Clifford remained as Vicar until his death in 1866. He was followed by the Rev. John Gilbert Dixon, whose tenure lasted two years.

In June, 1868, the Rev. Thomas Morris was appointed Vicar. I feel unable to write of him in any terms but those of admiration. That true index of the work of the "Father" of a parish, the parish magazine, shows how very hard he must have worked during his care of the district. In 1871 the Schools were enlarged, in 1872 the Church was re-seated and re-lighted, and in 1874 a new organ was erected. The Church was again altered in 1884, the furniture at the East end renewed with solid oak, a prayer desk given by Mr. Philip Tillard, a pulpit by Mr. G. H. Cleare, and a reredos by two anonymous donors. In 1893 appears an appeal for

£300 to £400 for much needed repairs, which it is to be hoped this indefatigable and much esteemed worker obtained. Mr. Morris died in 1894, and was succeeded by Rev. G. C. Daw.

On the 25th April, 1899, the stone of the Church Mission Room in Steward Street was laid by Mr. Fowell Buxton. The Bishop of Stepney officiated, and among those present was the Rev. James Tillard; and the new Room was opened on the 14th July, 1899, by the Rector of Spitalfields, in the absence of the Archdeacon of London. From time to time notices of services for the Jews appear in the Parish magazine, and at one of them held on October 9th, 1897, Mr. Daw himself concluded the service by giving the three-fold Blessing in Hebrew. These services show plainly that the character of the population was fast changing and giving way to a Jewish element, which is now so strongly quartered there, and Mr. Daw's early experience as Vice Principal of the Hebrew Missionary College must have stood him in good stead at this time. During the period of Mr. Daw's ministry the trustees, in view of the changing character of the district, brought forward the question of closing the Church entirely, but Mr. Daw appealed for further time, and as he was able to show that the Church was still of use in the neighbourhood, his request was granted, and the idea abandoned for the moment.

On Mr. Daw's resignation the Rev. E. Keightley Botwood was appointed as Vicar, February 28th, 1901; and he was succeeded on the 5th June, 1903, by the Rev. George Rigg, the last Vicar. It is to Mr. Rigg's credit that for eight years he carried on the fight for his Church, but that period was sufficient to show that the

sphere of St. Mary's work had almost disappeared; and the doom of the old Chapel was sealed.

In 1911 it was decided to close the Church, and on the 11th June, 1911, the last service was held by the Bishop of Stepney, and on the 13th December following the rare and seldom heard service of Dis-Use was observed.

The Church itself, as a building, was not of great architectural interest. It was built of yellow brick with stone facings; the west end was stuccoed, the gable at that end being surmounted by a bell tower of the lantern shape, capped by a cross. The entrance to the Church was through a vestibule, lined with boards giving the names of the Benefactors of the Girl's Charity School and which are now in the possession of Mr. Hazelwood, as Secretary of the Charity. The interior provided accommodation for about 500, and contained four rows of pews, with galleries running round three sides of the Church. In the Western gallery was the organ, and on either side of this used to sit the Sunday School children, and the Charity School girls, nicknamed from their gowns "The Red School," the choir until recent years occupying the middle of the gallery under the organ. There was no Chancel, a portion of the East end being railed off for the purpose. In front of this was the stone to which I have already referred, which at the cost of Sir Samuel Hoare has been set in the pavement of Christ Church, to the North of the Chancel, where a tablet is to be seen giving its history.

The only painted window was at the East end. The subject of this, a golden sun shining in a circle of dark clouds surcharged with a red cross, the letters "I. H. S."

and the text "I am He that liveth" appearing below, puzzled me greatly until I saw in the second edition of Mr. Scott's "History of Spitalfields" an illustration of the early 12th century seal of St. Mary's Priory with a similar design; from which I surmise that whoever placed the window there evidently wished to perpetuate the memories of the old Priory. It is possible that this window may have belonged to the older building, and that it might thus have some connection with the non-jurors, of whom Sir George was one, for it is related in his memoir that while at Basingstoke he had some trouble with a curate named Genay (or possibly Genée), a Frenchman, who complained to the Bishop of Sir George's preventing him from praying for William and Mary in the daily services of the Church. It will be remembered that these non-jurors were practically outside the pale of the Church, and they were therefore at liberty to erect such windows at a time when such a subject would have savoured of Romanism, and would not have been permitted in the regular Churches. The window here at any rate was incongruous, in view of the well-known Evangelical character of the Chapel.

Attached to the Church was a Vicarage and School-house for both boys and girls, well built of red brick, erected in 1854 during the ministry of Mr. Rees, and enlarged during the ministry of Mr. Thomas in 1871. The Schools were ultimately closed in 1907, owing to the requirements of the London County Council, the principal difficulty being, I believe, the lack of a playground.

The Registers with one exception are of modern date. This exception is a small quarto, of brown leather, in excellent condition, inscribed on the one side "Registers

of Marriages at Sir George Wheler's Chapel, 1720, etc.," and on the reverse "Register of Baptisms at Sir George Wheler's Chapel, 1734, etc." This book was commenced by Mr. Craner, who on his appointment in 1734 found seven marriage licenses in the Vestry cupboard, dating from 1720 to 1724, and entered them up as marriages, though from a legal point of view this was hardly correct, as the marriages although duly licensed might never have taken place, and may possibly have been the reason of their being left behind! No marriages are recorded from 1725 to 1734, the date of Mr. Craner's appointment, when the Register genuinely commences. The last marriage recorded is one on the 7th March, 1752, and none appear to have taken place at the Chapel from then until January, 1845, after its consecration as St. Mary's. This was probably due to the objection of the Rector of Stepney to the Bishop's granting the necessary license for the service to be performed in the Proprietary Chapel. The Baptisms commence in 1734, and extend to the 21st June, 1824, none being registered between the 9th March, 1800, and the 31st July, 1812. This Register, together with a few other relics of the Chapel, have been handed over to the care of Christ Church.

The Church and Vicarage were offered for sale at the Mart on the 20th February, 1912, and were subsequently sold by private treaty to Mr. Greenop, of Falcon Court, Fleet Street. By the conditions of sale the building had to be pulled down within two months, and the old Chapel of ease, founded with so much care and love by an old time devout and earnest Christian, with all its memories of Spitalfields, has now become a thing of the past.