

STOW COMMEMORATION
AT ST. ANDREW UNDERSHAFT, LONDON,
ON FRIDAY, 30TH MAY, 1947

ADDRESS BY THE REVEREND A. C. BOUQUET, D.D.

THE Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs, attended by the State Officials, were received at the Church of St. Andrew Undershaft on Friday, 30th May, 1947, by the Lord Bishop of Kensington, by Dr. A. C. Bouquet, the Revd. T. Barfett and the Churchwardens. The Lesson was read by Commander Bridgmore Brown, and the customary procession was made to Stow's Tomb, where the Lord Mayor placed a new quill-pen in the hand of John Stow's effigy, and presented the old one in its case to the prize-winner from Mary Datchelor School. After the service, the Bishop, Dr. Bouquet and the Chairman of Council lunched with the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House.

Added interest was given to Dr. Bouquet's address by the fact that he is a descendant of a branch of the Stow family of Cornhill, which settled about 1680 at Farnborough Hall, near Bromley, an estate they leased from the Hart-Dykes, and there flourished until the 19th century. The Farnborough Stows were proud of their distinguished forbear, and Dr. Bouquet's career as a historian at Trinity College, Cambridge, maintains the tradition of sound learning established by John Stow. No one of these Stows attained to any outstanding fame, but Dr. Bouquet's great-grandfather once had an adventure which would have pleased John Stow, and pursued a highwayman from Farnborough, through Bromley and Lewisham, then unspoiled villages, and captured him at a wayside tavern in Greenwich. The pistol, which was dropped near Farnborough Hall, is still an heirloom belonging to Major Roger Stow, late of the Dover Garrison, and the last of his line.

Dr. Bouquet paid a debt of gratitude to the City of London for its generous hospitality to the Huguenots in 1685 after their tragic experiences in Poitou, so graphically described by Alfred de Vigny.

The Bouquets were able to send their sons to Westminster School and then to find posts for them in the newly established Bank of England, where there has never ceased to be one of the

family employed in some capacity. Dr. Bouquet himself enjoyed the hospitality of the School of St. Dunstan in the East for his early education.

Dr. Bouquet took as his text St. John xviii., 37, "Everyone that is of the Truth heareth My voice," and spoke fittingly of John Stow as a Christian.

(a) Stow was the heir of a long Christian tradition, and four generations of the Stow family had supplied the Church of St. Michael's, Cornhill, with lamp oil and candles. His grandfather was, in 1506, Master of the Tallowchandlers' Company; an earlier Stow had been Dean of St. Paul's, *c.* 1420, and Camden records a chantry to his memory in the old Cathedral. C. L. Kingsford mentions still earlier members of the Stow family as far back as 1283.

Stow records the legend that the adjacent Church of St. Peter, Cornhill, was the oldest in Britain, built in the reign of King Lucius, and he mentions, though he will not affirm, that it was built by an "Archbishop" of London.

(b) Living as he did in the time of the Reformation and through four Tudor reigns without disaster, Stow had a lively interest in the mediæval Church, in which he probably disagreed with his mother, and once or twice got into trouble for his alleged sympathy with foreigners and with Romanists. The Bishop of London reported "unlawful" books in Stow's library, but these included Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, a clear indication of Stow's real attitude to the Church. Stow was a loyal subject of the Virgin Queen, and a supporter of Archbishop Parker, who made a rich accumulation of MSS. now at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and for whom Stow edited some documents. Parker evidently trusted the scholarship of Stow, who was in no way a crypto-Papist, but a typical, genuine Elizabethan Anglican. The lists which he gives us of Mayors and Bishops of London suggests that he thought the two lines equally valid, and that he felt that the Elizabethan Church leaders maintained and ensured the English Church as a true and continuous development without a break from the pre-Reformation institution. Stow does not argue or defend the point, but writes at the end of his list, "this much for the succession of the Bishops of London," without any fear that someone will challenge all those from Grindal onwards. This *argumentum e silentio* is worthy of note, especially as Stow was

not used by Parker as Hooker was by Whitgift to defend Anglicanism. Incidentally, Stow regarded Whitgift as a man born for the good of church and country. Improvements in church organisation Stow welcomed, though he cordially disliked iconoclasm, and he was by no means a mere *laudator temporis acti*. The longest story he tells of any London Bishop refers to Bishop Roger Niger who admonished the money-lenders of 1229 to do penance for their sins, and when they mocked and threatened him he excommunicated them all and ordered that all such usurers should be expelled from London. Stow was an original member of the Society of Antiquaries, founded in 1572, under Parker's patronage; he read a paper on the origin of sterling money, and would liked to have written an outline of universal history, such as those we owe to Voltaire and H. G. Wells. It is probable that his researches into church history greatly helped Dugdale to write his famous *Monasticon*.

(c) John Stow was attractively unworldly, which he showed by ignoring the chance of making money as a Merchant Taylor, and devoting his labours for 30 years to work as a historian and antiquary. His City company generously pensioned him, but he impoverished himself by his extensive collecting of MSS., now preserved in the British Museum. His work was appreciated, but few helped him financially and King James I gave him permission to beg. Stow's efforts in this direction were not successful, though William Camden pensioned him; but Stow continued in his work undaunted and unsoured till he died at the age of 80. Ben Jonson tells of a meeting which they both had with two crippled beggars, whom Stow asked what they would charge to receive him into their "order." Once when he was 78 he hinted at growing infirmity by writing "My feet, which have borne me many a mile, have of late refused once in four or five months to convey me from my bed to my study."

(d) Stow's unworldliness is shown in his devotion to truth and accuracy, so essentially Christian virtues. Edmond Howes, his friend and literary executor, comments on his fine appearance, his courtesy, and his retention of memory until the day of his death. "He always protested that he has never written anything either for malice and fear or favour, nor to seek his own particular gain or vain glory, and that his only pains and care was to write truth." Stow's Address to the Reader in his *Chronicles* and *Journals* confirms this verdict: "Though it be written homely, yet is it not, as I trust, written

untruly; and in histories the chief thing that is to be desired is truth," an obvious reminder of Christ's comment to Pilate: "To this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the Truth."

The age of Elizabeth was an age of heated controversy, and abuse was often exchanged. Even Stow sometimes attacks Grafton's alleged crooked behaviour; but as a rule he was an accurate student of documents and as scrupulous as the great Erasmus. His work includes a critical edition of Chaucer, *Chronicles* and *Annals* of England, with five editions to his credit, and, like good wine, kept to the last his famous *Survey of London*, published in 1598, when he was over 70, with a second edition in 1603. Stow was a fine researcher with all the features of the modern scientific historian, and in these days of exaggeration and distortion we do well to take as our model one who never wrote for private ends, and who always wrote the truth even "though it were to his own hindrance."

Though no Puritan, he was a man of great probity, and hated intemperance, and the increase in quaffing even at the royal court of the first Stuart. He was himself a surveyor of alehouses and a collector of men for a muster of 4,000 for the Queen's service. He disliked a lack of discipline among the clergy, and deplored the introduction of the coach-and-four into this country, much as men today might deplore the motor-car. Stow also disliked the "longwaggon" which ran from town to town with passengers and commodities, rather like motor-coaches of today. He strongly disapproved of extravagance, and Howes tells us that he refused to use any wheeled vehicles. His books are a mine of information about Elizabethan customs, and show how little London's spirit and temper have changed. The account of the Elizabethan night-watch, broadcast by the B.B.C., reminded us of the Home Guard; and our V.E. celebrations no doubt resembled those that followed the defeat of the Spanish Armada. As a Londoner and as a churchman Stow was a "citizen of no mean city."

Stow's religious traditions were handed down in his family and its branches, and the Stows of Farnborough Hall had many 17th and 18th century religious books in their libraries. The words at the head of his tomb, "Aut scribenda agere, aut legenda scribere," sum up Stow's ideals, and they have been an inspiration and a judgment for the preacher and for many others. "We must do what is worth recording, or write what

is worth reading," says the proverb; and the English are sometimes accused of being incorrigible Pelagians, who felt that one only had to work hard enough to secure the results. But John Stow, like his contemporary Richard Hooker, felt that we can never act or write worthily, save by the grace of God which strengthened us.

Hooker himself warned us that our hopes are vain if we think we can preserve London by watching it, if we do not ask God to help us. And we are equally wrong if we expect God to protect London if we ourselves are not careful to watch. "Grace is not given us to abandon labour, but labour required lest our sluggishness should make the grace of God unprofitable . . . and, seeing that all we of ourselves can do is naught, let Him alone have the glory, by Whose only grace we have our whole ability and power of well-doing."