



CHURCH HALL, VICTORIA STREET. [To face p. 160.]

"With such topics, freely commented on by the members, the meeting is bright, attractive, and helpful, and all who have an interest in Christian work among the young are cordially invited to attend and see the character of the meeting for themselves.

"Other features of the guild programme are the monthly social meetings for the active, associate, and honorary members, and a weekly class on Church history, attempted for the first time this session. The scheme of lectures, particulars of which will be found in another column, are also of exceptional interest.

"We feel that the formation of the Guild should be a matter of lively interest to the congregation. It has been said that the greatest leakage in our church membership has been in the matter of our young people. When our boys and girls leave the Sabbath-school, there has hitherto existed no society to enlist their sympathies in Christian work. As a consequence, in many instances, our young people have drifted farther and farther beyond the influence of the church. Not only have they been losing the good influences of Christian fellowship, but the church itself has been deprived of the enthusiasm in Christ's service always associated with a large membership of young men and young women. To bridge over this period, lying between the Sabbath-school and church membership, is in our opinion the best sphere for the guild, and one which it is specially designed to fill. With the fostering care of the congregation and a loyal recognition of the claims of the guild by the young people, we trust that with God's blessing something may be accomplished in this direction."

A HALL BUILT FOR CHURCH WORK.

Under the multiplying agencies of Church life, there had been felt for several years great need of a hall for Church purposes, especially for evangelistic work. In the autumn of 1887, a friend of Mr Webster's, formerly associated with him in Sabbath-school teaching and other Christian work, and an elder in one of our congregations in the south, made him an offer of £400, to be paid in eight quarterly instalments of £50 each, on condition that "the Kirkwall congregation shall set about building such a hall with as little delay as possible." The offer was submitted to the session and the large congregational committee, and it was unanimously agreed to accept the handsome donation, and through Mr Webster to tender cordial thanks to the donor, who in the meantime did not wish his name to emerge.

There was some difficulty in obtaining a suitable site, and some difference of opinion as to where the site should be, so as best to serve the important purposes contemplated. At length a property near the foot of Clay Loan was purchased, where, after having been cleared out, the building

of the hall was commenced. All concerned would have preferred a site more towards the shore—the most congested part of the town—but it could not be obtained. The site fixed upon is central to the whole town, and the purchase of it was agreed to unanimously. On the 29th April 1889, the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone was performed in presence of a large assemblage of people.

The Rev. David Webster, accompanied by the Rev. G. Soutar, M.A., arrived on the ground at half-past two o'clock, when the ceremony was proceeded with, among those present being—ex-Provost Reid, Messrs Samuel Reid, Charles Slater, William Cowper, William Hourston, William Hourston, jun., M. Heddle, John Walls, John Smith, John Eunson, and other leading members of the congregation. The ceremony commenced with the singing of the 319th hymn—

“This stone to Thee in faith we lay;
We build the temple, Lord, to Thee;
Thine eye be open night and day
To guard this house and sanctuary.”

After which the Rev. Mr Soutar offered the dedication prayer—

“O Lord, our heavenly Father, we worship Thee as the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them. We would seek to begin, continue, and finish all our works in Thee. Grant us Thy blessing in connection with the purpose for which we are now assembled. May this building which has begun to be erected be finished through Thy grace. When it is completed, may all the uses for which it shall be employed tend to the promotion of Thy glory. May it be useful for the advancement of education, but still more may Thy blessing rest upon the religious work which shall be performed within its walls. Grant that many may have reason to look to this place as one in which they have met with Thee and obtained Thy blessing. Thou dost teach us through the incidents of our daily life, and as we are reminded that every house must be builded by some man, so would we remember that He who built all things is God. Thou didst lay the foundations of the earth, that it might be fashioned for the habitation of man. Thou didst send Christ into the world that He might be the corner-stone of Thy Church. Grant unto us, that we, coming unto Him as a living-stone, may be built up in Him, as lively stones, so as to be a habitation of God through the Spirit. Pardon our sins and accept of us, for His sake. Amen.”

Mr Webster, accompanied by Mr Soutar and others, thereafter ascended the scaffolding, where Mr John Walls, inspector of works, had the stone in readiness to be placed *in situ*. In the first place a jar, containing the following,

among other articles, was placed in the cavity:—A Bible, several *Congregational Records*, the *Orkney Herald*, *Scotsman*, *Scottish Leader*, Jubilee and other coins, and extract minutes relating to the building. The stone was then swung into position, and Mr Webster, using the mallet, declared it to be well and truly laid. He then proceeded:—The stone which I, representing the session of the U.P. Church, Kirkwall, have now laid, can, with no strictness of propriety, be called a foundation-stone, it being twelve or fourteen feet above the foundation. It would be almost more appropriate to call it the head-stone of the corner. This may remind us of Him who, in the great spiritual temple which God is now rearing, is at once the foundation and the top stone. In that temple, believers in Christ are the stones of the building; Peter speaks of them as living stones; Christ is the foundation, as imparting to it stability and permanence, and He is the corner-stone, as uniting all its parts and setting forth its fair proportions and beauty. He is the foundation upon which the wise man built his house, “and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon it, and it fell not, for it was built upon a rock.” Yes, he is the foundation upon which, if any man build, he shall never be confounded. The stone I have now set is, more properly speaking, a memorial stone, and yet so in a peculiar sense. When the children of Israel had passed over the Jordan, they set up twelve stones as a memorial of the great event. “And Joshua spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over Jordan on dry land.” Not long since we erected a memorial pillar out in Deerness to commemorate a touching event that happened there in the Covenanting times of Scotland. That pillar will serve an important purpose if it help to keep alive in our hearts an interest in a chapter of Scottish history of which Scotsmen may well be proud. It is to the struggles of that period on the part of those who were loyal to Christ and the Covenantant that we are indebted for our freedom in political and religious thought at this day. But, you will observe, that between Joshua’s pillar and our Deerness pillar on the one hand (memorial pillars both), and this memorial stone on the other, there is this difference. They were set up, no doubt, in the most prominent position possible, that

they might be seen by the greatest number. The Deerness monument site was chosen that the pillar might be seen from ships as they passed on their various ways along the ocean highway. Joshua's pillar and the Deerness pillar and thousands of others fulfil their mission of commemoration by their prominence and publicity. This memorial stone of ours, instead of being exposed to view, is hid from the sight of men. We do not wish it to be seen. The place in which we have set it with its contents will soon be forgotten, and the men even of this generation will see it no more. Yet we call it a memorial stone. It has a mission to fulfil; and there is potentiality in it to fulfil its mission. Its mission has respect to the future. When it begins to tell its story, we shall all have passed away from this mortal scene, and not we only, but our children, and their children's children shall have come and gone before this stone shall utter its voice. But the time will come when it shall be brought forth from the bed in which it is now laid to sleep, and it shall then have something to say to the distant descendants of the men of this generation and of this locality, of the scene of which we are now the spectators and in which we are actors, and of this building which we now dedicate to sacred service. We may hope that the time is far distant when this will take place. Far distant it must be, unless these well-built walls should, in the allotments of Providence, suffer from the violence of man, or be toppled over by some destructive agency of Nature. But even should nothing of this kind happen, the wear and tear of ages shall at length lay this structure in ruins, and it may be said of it, as was said of a more magnificent building—"There shall not one stone be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." Into whose hands will our memorial stone then fall? To whom will it tell its tale? What will be the condition of the world—politically and religiously—in that far-off time? These are questions it would be hard to answer. I know, however, that there is an agency at work in the world which has already done much towards its regeneration, and which is destined to work on until that regeneration is complete—that agency is the Gospel—a God-appointed, a God-honoured agency, and therefore one which, in due time, cannot fail of success, and we may hope and believe that before this building falls to pieces, the moral purification of the world will have greatly advanced. Our memorial

stone, as you know, holds in its bosom a glass jar, into which has been deposited a number of documents, coins, and other articles, from which the men of perhaps a thousand years hence may learn something of our day and locality. These articles will, as it were, have a voice, though it will be a silent one. Had we been altogether abreast of our own age, we might have had enclosed in our bottle an instrument which, to the finder in a future age, would not only have spoken to the hearing ear, but would have reproduced the voice of any one now living who might have chosen to commit to it such a trust. One of the most recent achievements of science is the construction of the phonograph, whereby we can imprison the human voice so that it can be brought forth and made vocal hundreds of years hence ; and I see that that is the use they are beginning to make of the instrument in connection with such a ceremony as this. Now, what is the purpose for which we are building this hall ? and what is to be its name ? Well, it is designed for educational purposes, and I use the word educational in a wide sense. You may call it a hall of science if you will, for I hope to see science in its various departments taught in it from time to time in the way of public lectures, in so far as we can secure competent men to aid us in this way. You may call it a literary class-room if you will, for I hope to see it turned to some good account in the cultivation of the young. Or, if you wish to give it a name that would indicate the purpose for which, above all others, it has been called into existence, you may call it the Kirkwall Evangelistic Hall. It is Bible truth especially that we wish to have taught here, both to the old and to the young. And all social and educational meetings that are held in this place, whatever form they may take, we desire to make subservient to the advancement of Gospel truth. We believe in the Gospel ; we believe in it as the power of God unto salvation to all that believe. We believe that only so far as our children are brought under the influence of Bible truth are they safe from the snares that beset them on every side, and only in so far as we have an understanding to know Him who is true, can we look forward in the possession of a blessed hope to a glorious hereafter. We dedicate, therefore, this house to God, and we do it with the earnest prayer that He may enable us to turn it to some good account in the promotion of His work in the world.

The proceedings, which lasted less than an hour, were brought to a close by those assembled singing the 127th Psalm :—

“ Except the Lord do build the house,
The builders lose their pain ;
Except the Lord the city keep,
The watchmen watch in vain.”

The hall was formally opened on Friday, 7th February 1890, by the Rev. Dr Robert Drummond, Moderator of Synod, who, to a large audience, preached an impressive and appropriate sermon from John iii. 16, “ God so loved the world,” &c. At the close he expressed his gratification at being with them on the interesting occasion, and of his admiration of the large and beautiful hall he had had the honour of opening.

The new structure is a plain, early English building, containing the hall, 65 feet by 32 feet 6 inches by 22 feet 2 inches high, entered from Victoria Street by a small porch with arched and columned doorway, having a flight of four steps; and two committee rooms, 15 feet by 13 feet and 17 feet respectively, connected by folding doors. In the larger room provision is made for the preparation of tea for soirees and mothers' meetings, and the smaller contains a library. In the intermediate passage is placed the lavatory, &c. The hall is lighted by six arched and mullioned windows, three in each end being filled with tinted cathedral glass. The walls have plain dado linings round to a height of five feet six inches, with double mouldings over, above which they are plastered. The ceiling is diagonally lined in panels, divided with moulded ribs, the curved ends of which spring from moulded stone corbels in the walls. A large platform with twin stairways is arranged at the east end, to which access is obtained by a door from the passage behind, and there is a service door on one side on the floor level. Warming is effected by a slow-combustion stove, and ventilation is obtained by valved fresh-air inlets through the walls above the heads of the audience, and Boyle's patent air-pump extractors on the ridge. The building stands well back from the street, to which it presents its west gable. This gable is pierced by three arched and traceried windows with labial mouldings over, the labials being continued as a string across the entire front. There is a circular moulded window above the central light. The two angles are projected in massive

square buttresses, with ridged and moulded tablings. The apex is surmounted with freestone globe-and-cross finials. An iron railing and double gate are erected at the street boundary of the property, and an outside passage is arranged to afford independent access to the committee rooms. Messrs Robert Cumming & Son, Kirkwall, were the general contractors, and Mr T. S. Peace was the architect.

The hall was not completely finished when, on the 19th and 20th of Dec. 1889, a sale of work was held in it under the auspices of the Young Women's Guild. The proceeds of the sale were destined for the purchase of a harmonium for use in the hall in which the sale took place. Mr Webster, in opening the sale, said the sum required was not a large one, the matter of £40 or £50 would meet the case, but whether the realised sum turned out to be more or less, great credit was due to the members of the guild and others for their zeal and industry in providing such a variety of useful and ornamental articles as they had now before them.

On the evening of the first day of sale, he introduced the Rev. James Walker, of the Established Church, with whom his relationship had always been of the most friendly kind. Calling a halt to the buying and selling that was now going on, Mr Walker said—When Mr Webster asked me to take part in this meeting he did so as if he were asking a favour from me, when in point of fact the favour was all on my side. I consider it a great pleasure to be on the platform with Mr Webster, and I like to regard him as my friend just as much as you can possibly like to regard him as your minister. My intercourse with him and his excellent family has always been most agreeable to me, and I have not the slightest doubt that it will continue to be so. I also consider it a great pleasure to address you, my United Presbyterian friends, and especially on such an occasion as this. This is the first occasion on which you have used this hall, and although I can see that it is not finished, still it is comfortable and augurs well to be one of the most elegant as well as most spacious halls in Kirkwall. It is a great ornament to this part of the town, and as a hall for religious meetings it will, I have no doubt, be largely taken advantage of by the families who live in this neighbourhood. Such a building was greatly needed, and it is only such a congregation as the United Presbyterian

congregation of Kirkwall that could be entrusted with the erection of such an edifice. I think it is well to inaugurate a building of this kind with such a meeting as this. It is pleasant to see such a collection of beautiful work, so many enthusiastic stall-holders, and so many generous purchasers. A great deal of money is raised nowadays by means of bazaars, and the ladies have always much to do with these money-making institutions. Indeed, in every department of useful and philanthropic work, woman's influence is felt to be a great power. It certainly was a bright idea when so many young ladies among you thought of employing some of your leisure time in working beautiful things and useful things and all manner of fancy things in order to obtain a good harmonium. The giving of what is beautiful for the service of God is in full accordance with His will. We are told in the Book of Exodus that when the service of the tabernacle was being prepared, people brought offerings of all that was beautiful and precious. The Bible words are—"All the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands and brought that which they had spun, both of blue and of purple, and of scarlet and of fine linen." Now, I think, Mr Chairman, that no one could have looked upon the beautiful work that lies upon these tables to-day without being convinced that there are still some wise-hearted women amongst us. It is true that this work is not to be directly applied to the sanctuary, but it is to be the means of improving a very important part of the sanctuary service in this hall. We all know the very great improvement that has of late years taken place in church psalmody, and the object of this bazaar is to show how much you, as a Christian congregation, sympathise with that improvement. What is here beautiful to the eye is to be turned into the means of procuring what is beautiful to the ear, and I am glad to know that your praiseworthy exertions are sure to be crowned with well-merited success.

Mr Walker's address was followed by a concert of sacred music, which was appreciated by a large audience.

On Friday evening, at 7 o'clock, Mr Webster introduced the Rev. Alexander Isdale, M.A., B.D., Free Church, Kirkwall, as a brother minister with whom he had had much pleasant intercourse, and for whom he cherished affectionate regard, and who also had come at his request to say a few words to them.

Mr Isdale said—This beautiful hall does credit to the congregation which has raised it, and my trust is that many within its walls may hear the living word. May the promise be fulfilled of it, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." The way we get money has a good deal to do with the way we enjoy it. And in your bazaar it appears to me you have acted on two sound principles, one of which is to give solid work in return for what you get, thus affording occupation to many who may feel that they had fewer opportunities of contributing to the Church's welfare. And another is, that you get what you want with the goodwill and spiritual improvement of those who give. We should think more of the dedication of our worldly wealth to God. Our forefathers had faith enough to believe there was nothing too costly, rare, or beautiful to give to God. Let us have the same devotion, and enlist the money-power, which is so often wasted, as a helpful ally of the Gospel.

The sale was closed on Friday evening at 10 o'clock. The sum realised was £60, and the whole cost of the hall, including price of harmonium, was a little under £1200.

SHORE STREET MISSION HALL.

We need not wonder that our friends in Shore Street and its neighbourhood were a little disappointed that the new hall was not planted down in their midst. It would have been, they said, a blessing to the locality, and was much needed. There was a number of old and infirm people about there, unable to go to church, to whom a place of worship and occasional service at their own doors would have been an inestimable privilege. A mission Sabbath-school, too, had been carried on in the district for some time under circumstances of great discomfort. The school met in a ramshackle loft, which was hung around with emblems of the fishing craft, and was odorous of the calling. Were not the session, under whose auspices the school was conducted, bound to make some better provision than that for the accommodation and comfort of both teachers and scholars? So it was reasoned. What was required in this case was not a large hall, but one containing sitting room for, say, 150 persons; such a building as that would be useful for many good purposes. Opportunely, at a meeting of session in December 1889, the moderator intimated that two friends in the south had kindly put at his disposal £112 towards