

CHAPTER V.

The Rebuilding—1897.

THE circumstances connected with this event are amongst the most encouraging in the history of the chapel ; especially considering the many years during which God has maintained His truth here, and the drain caused by the multiplication of surrounding places of worship.

The chapel had been growing dilapidated from year to year, repairs being periodically done ; and it had become clearly necessary to renovate it. But the question of means was a serious difficulty. The people (I was informed) felt the pastor had done so much himself that they should not allow him to be troubled at all with this source of anxiety, and decided privately to take the labour in hand themselves, as a matter

distinct from providing the means for the maintenance of the ministry. They called a private meeting for the purpose in my absence one Sabbath day. I felt warmly the kind consideration of feeling thus shown. After their going into the matter, however, despondency arose owing to the difficulty of the work. I asked them not to be despondent, and suggested that they should call a meeting of the congregation after the afternoon service, when I would vacate the pulpit, and they could state the case fully. This was done; and the first proposal was one involving the expenditure of £16. But it was thought that this would be throwing money away, as the chapel required re-seating. This, it was considered, would require at least £50. But many of the people could not see where such an amount was to come from. Considering the apparent difficulties, the meeting seemed to be much discouraged, and the matter appeared in danger of dropping. I then asked Mr. Hider (one of the deacons) if he had got in an estimate. He replied

that he had not. I said I had obtained one from Mr. Relf, a builder, of Uckfield, which was £68. I had previously seen Mr. Henry Taylor, of Paddock Wood (whose father, Mr. John Taylor, formerly gave out the hymns and conducted the services, previous to Mr. Burfoot), and stated the case to him. He promised £5 to commence it. I urged him to increase this to £10. He seemed inclined to do so, but said that at any rate he would not stop at £5, and urged me to push on with the work. I stated these facts. Fortunately there was a good congregation present. I further said I would add £5 to Mr. Taylor's, and asked what additional fives we could make up amongst us. This seemed to put new life into the meeting, and, to the surprise of everyone, the result of the afternoon's promises (with lesser sums) was about £45. A committee was there and then appointed, and the matter left entirely in their hands. Thus a meeting which began in gloom ended in sunshine. The opinion then began to be expressed that to merely reseat the chapel would be useless,

as the roof was in such a bad, as well as leaky, condition. It was finally decided to have a new roof altogether, and also to improve the heating arrangements, &c. (the chapel being often bitterly cold in the winter), and to provide a much needed water tank for the chapel house water-supply; as I began to receive most encouraging promises of help from many whom I went personally to see, or wrote to, and from most unexpected quarters, as well as an increasingly noble response from our own people, whose devotion to the dear old place and God's truth was truly remarkable; and this feeling, as the matter became known, extended rapidly amongst those who are now living at a distance from us—many old members of the congregation and former scholars in the Sabbath school. I travelled a good deal to see those likely to assist us, and stated from the pulpit from time to time the unexpected success with which God continued to attend my efforts. His hand was evidently in the matter. This place, which had so long been a witness to His truth, was not to

decline. Much local interest outside our own people was also aroused; and the end was the substantial rebuilding of the chapel as it stands to-day, with the addition of the porch, further vestry accommodation, a minister's vestry, new classrooms, enlargement and repair of the pulpit, and the reflooring of the vestry and chapel lobby. The whole work and circumstances were a source of astonished gratitude to both the people and myself, and I can never enter the chapel without a feeling of deep and peaceful thankfulness being present on my mind: a remark which I believe equally applies to them.

The total expense, including contributions other than in money (and reckoning the saving of the architect's fee, &c.), was about £400. The total cost in actual money to be paid was £329 4s. 3d. Of this, £264 3s. has already been subscribed; leaving a balance yet to be obtained of £65 1s. 3d., WHICH WE BELIEVE GOD WILL MOVE YET OTHER HEARTS TO SEND US.

The following are the names of those who have
subscribed to the work:—

Mr. Henry Taylor ...	...	...	...	...	£5	0	0
E. Littleton (Pastor) ...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
Mrs. Isaac ...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
Collected by ditto ...	...	...	...	...	1	12	6
Mrs. Dadswell ...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
Mr. J. Burfoot ...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Jas. Baker ...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
Bishop Dicksee ...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
Mr. Hider ...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Mrs. and Miss Hider...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Mrs. Newbold ...	...	...	...	...	2	10	0
„ Hinckley ...	...	...	...	...	2	10	0
„ Mephram ...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Collected by ditto ...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
A Friend ...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Mr. J. Webb ...	...	...	...	...	2	10	0
Mr. and Mrs. Fermor ...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Mrs. Henry, Miss, and Mr. H. Welfare	...	...	...	...	2	10	0
Mr. W. Vickery ...	...	...	...	...	2	0	0
„ Virgo ...	...	...	...	...	1	15	0
„ Walter Welfare ...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
„ W. Bingham ...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Ditto, in memory of his late Father	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Mr. T. E. Turk ...	...	...	...	...	2	0	0
Ditto, in Memoriam ...	...	...	...	...	3	0	0
Miss Jane Welfare ...	...	...	...	...	0	5	0
The Misses Kingsbury ...	...	...	...	...	1	10	0
Miss E. Sanders ...	...	...	...	...	0	7	6
Mr. Caleb Taylor ...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0

Mrs. S. Card	...	...	...	...	... £1 0 0
„ Thos. Obbard	...	...	...	...	... 0 10 0
Mr. S. T. Tankard...	...	...	...	...	... 5 0 0
„ Crowhurst	...	...	...	...	... 0 10 0
Mrs. Crowhurst	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
A Friend	...	...	...	...	... 0 2 6
Messrs. Sprott & Sons	...	...	...	...	... 2 2 0
Mr. T. T. Allen	...	...	...	...	... 1 1 0
Mrs. Davies...	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
Mr. S. Moon	...	...	...	...	... 2 2 0
„ Thomas	...	...	...	...	... 2 2 0
„ Carr, Senr.	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
„ T. Stapley	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
Mrs. T. Stapley	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
Mr. W. Whitmore	...	...	...	...	... 2 0 0
„ A. King...	...	...	...	...	... 2 10 0
„ Humphrey	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
„ Batchellar	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Eade	...	...	...	...	... 1 10 0
Mr. H. Wonham	...	...	...	...	... 5 0 0
„ Matthew Hobbs	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
Mrs. Matthew Hobbs	...	...	...	...	... 0 10 0
„ Joyner...	...	...	...	...	... 5 0 0
Mr. John Allen	...	...	...	...	... 1 10 0
„ Branson	...	...	...	...	... 0 10 0
„ H. Donkin	...	...	...	...	... 2 2 0
Miss M. Hollamby...	...	...	...	...	... 0 10 0
A Friend	...	...	...	...	... 5 0 0
Mr. William Pratt	...	...	...	...	... 1 0 0
„ R. Pratt	...	...	...	...	... 2 2 0
„ S. Pratt	...	...	...	...	... 5 0 0
„ Buick	...	...	...	...	... 0 10 0

Mr. Amos Parker	£1	0	0
„ Alfred Hoath	2	2	0
„ Geo. Fenner	0	10	0
„ Knight	5	0	0
„ Jas. Cooper	1	0	0
„ W. Horton	0	10	6
„ Mr. Haynes—In memory of the late Philip Dickerson	1	1	0
Mr. Isaac Vinall	1	1	0
Mr. and Mrs. F. C. Baker	0	10	6
Mrs. Adams... ..	0	10	0
Mr. Thomas Robinson	2	2	0
Miss Littleton	1	1	0
Mr. R. H. Wilmshurst	1	1	0
Mr. W. R. Alchin	5	5	0
Mrs. M. A. Tasker... ..	1	0	0
Mr. W. Abbott	0	10	6
Mrs. Wright	1	1	0
Mr. and Mrs. George Taylor	2	0	0
Mr. Wakelin	0	10	0
„ Schweitzer	0	10	0
„ J. J. Pierce	1	0	0
„ Thos. Pratt	1	0	0
Mrs. Thos. Pratt	0	10	0
Mrs. Fry	0	16	0
Miss Budgen	0	1	6
Mr. and Mrs. Simon Cole	5	5	0
Miss F. Stevens	2	5	0
Mr. S. G. Graham... ..	2	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Spedding	2	2	0
Mrs. Gifford	0	5	0
A Friend	0	5	0

Mr. Hoadley and Friends...	...	...	...	£1 18 6
„ Chas. Turner	...	...	...	1 13 6
Scholars' Subscriptions	...	...	...	0 9 0
Miss M. Pollington	...	...	...	1 0 0
Mr. J. Burfoot, Junr.	...	...	...	1 0 0
Mrs. Butler ...	...	...	...	0 10 6
Mr. J. E. and F. Twiner	...	...	...	1 1 0
„ Jas. Pollington	...	...	...	0 10 0
„ Joseph Pollington	...	...	...	0 10 0
„ Jesse Pollington	...	...	...	0 10 0
Miss Bishop...	...	...	...	0 2 0
A Friend ...	...	...	...	0 4 0
Mr. Jas. Taylor	...	...	...	5 0 0
„ S. Bartlett	...	...	...	1 0 0
„ Hale ...	...	...	...	0 10 0
„ T. Denne	...	...	...	1 0 0
The Goldsmiths' Company	...	...	...	5 0 0
Collection made at the Baptist Chapel, Bolton	10	13	0	
The Misses Wood	...	...	...	1 0 0
Mr. W. Primrose	...	...	...	0 10 0
Rev. H. Thompson	...	...	...	0 5 0
„ J. Campbell	...	...	...	0 10 0
Mr. W. T. Baker	...	...	...	1 1 0
Dr. Newell	...	...	...	0 5 0
Mr. Combridge	...	...	...	0 10 0
Mr. and Mrs. Walker (America)...	...	...	...	5 0 0
Mr. R. Wells	...	...	...	2 0 0
„ L. W. Miles	...	...	...	1 0 0
„ H. J. Lawson...	...	...	...	2 2 0
Mrs. Oliver	...	...	...	0 5 0
Mr. W. Dadswell	...	...	...	0 10 6
„ C. Baldwin	...	...	...	1 1 0

Mr. Jas. Turner	...	...	...	...	£1	0	0
„ Robt. Webb	...	...	...	...	2	2	0
„ Albert Groombridge	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Friends at West Hartlepool	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Mr. Hume	...	...	...	...	0	5	0
„ Hubbard	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
„ Richd. Kimber	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
„ Eli Wickens	...	...	...	...	0	5	0
„ G. Abbott	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Baker	...	...	...	...	2	2	0
Mr. Fredk. Kenward	...	...	...	...	1	5	0
„ Jas. Tasker	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Mrs. Temple	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Mr. B. R. Sands	...	...	...	...	0	6	0
Mrs. Burfoot	...	...	...	...	0	5	0
E. S. C.	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
Mr. Coles Baker	...	...	...	...	5	5	0
„ A. W. Humphrey	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
„ A. Kingsbury	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Mr. and Mrs. Pickering	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Mr. Thos. Kingsbury	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
„ Geo. Neve	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
„ W. S. Waterer	...	...	...	...	0	10	6
Collected by Miss Moon at Ringmer	...	...	...	...	1	4	0
Mr. Wm. Moon	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
„ Geo. Field	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
„ Taylor (Boar's Head)	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
The Misses Hoath...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Ladies' Contribution (Proceeds of Tea Meeting at Reopening)	...	...	...	...	2	12	0
Mr. and Mrs. Powell	...	...	...	...	0	5	0
„ H. Wood	...	...	...	...	0	5	0

Mr. Chas. C. Harris	...	...	...	...	£1	1	0
Miss Williams	...	...	...	...	...	0	10 0
Collections at Reopening	11	18 6
Mr. Jas. Cattell	1	1 0
„ Amos Twiner	0	11 0
„ J. Ditch	0	10 0
„ Parris, Junr.	0	10 0
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					£264	3	0
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At the time of the rebuilding, a valuable organ, costing £45, was also presented to me by Mr. W. Chambers and others, of London, for use in the chapel during my lifetime. Mr. Jas. Baker has also given a platform for use at public meetings. Other contributions were : the gratuitous printing by Mr. C. J. Farncombe; a handsome new pulpit Bible (the former one being placed in the minister's vestry) by a lady member; the carpet for pulpit and stairs, &c., by Mrs. Dadswell; the fireplace furniture in the minister's vestry by Miss Kingsbury, and a school fire-range by Mrs. Turk. The valuable gratuitous services of the architect are fittingly referred to in the report; as are those of Mr. Eade.

The last service in the old building on the Sunday afternoon, when the following day men were to commence removing the well-known roof under which so many blessings had been received, was an occasion not easily to be forgotten, and more than one eye was moist, though the necessity for the change could not be forgotten either.

The Interval.

The aspect of the building whilst in a state of semi-demolition was one truly desolate, and the process of reconstruction was an object of much interest to the congregation from Sunday to Sunday. The weather was wonderfully fine during the whole period—a very favourable circumstance considering the time of the year and the entirely exposed state of the inner parts of the structure for a great part of the time.

The Reopening.

During the rebuilding the services were held both in the schoolroom and in the chapel at Mott's Mill—the latter for those residing in that district, as the schoolroom was too small for all. The period of separation (four months) was a good deal felt, and the reunion of the whole congregation at the reopening was a happy occasion. This took place on Wednesday, January 5, 1898, and is best described in the report which appeared in the *Sussex Daily News* and other local newspapers, which is as follows:—

“For the last four months the Forest Fold Baptist Chapel, Crowborough, the oldest Nonconformist place of worship in the district, has been in a state of semi-demolition, and the process of re-building has been an object of wide local interest, owing to the history and associations of the well-known building. The interest in the proceedings culminated in the re-opening services yesterday, when, in spite of the inclement weather, visitors arrived from many surrounding places of worship, as well as from others at a distance, and from London. The somewhat remarkable circumstances connected with the original building of the chapel are doubtless pretty generally known. To relate the manner in which its founding was brought about would take more space than is possible in a necessarily brief summary. The remarkable dream of the late Mr. G. Doggett, the founder (who formerly resided at Old Buckhurst, under the late Earl De La Warr), who saw on the spot now occupied by the chapel a lighthouse, with vessels in distress making for it, which he

interpreted in a spiritual sense (the neighbourhood being then a wild and benighted region), is known to a great many, and was related frequently by the much respected and venerable founder at the yearly anniversaries. This dream took place about seventy years ago, and the chapel was founded at that time as a practical outcome of what he regarded as a spiritual mission suggested to him by God in his dream. Yesterday's proceedings marked another interesting chapter in the history of the building, and the gathering evidenced a lively desire on the part of its friends of two or three generations to be present at the celebration of the event. From age and long use it was found necessary to re-build, re-roof, and re-seat the chapel, as well as to add classrooms, a considerable extension of the vestry accommodation, and to re-floor the vestry and chapel lobby. The whole work has been accomplished in a style both thoroughly substantial and comely, and the result is an edifice at once handsome, commodious, and comfortable.

The Services.

Thanks and congratulations, hearty, sincere, and unanimous, were showered upon the architect, Mr. A. E. Allen, of Northampton, formerly of Crowborough and a late teacher and member of the congregation, whose professional work and time (involving many journeys from Northampton) have been given gratuitously. Hearty thanks were also expressed to Mr. A. J. Eade (of Messrs. Eade and Sons, engineers, of Horley), a late member of the church, and son-in-law of the pastor, for his gratuitous services in connection with the fitting of the tank, the ironwork, stoves, and lamp fittings, and not least for his having at great personal sacrifice brought a special staff of men from Horley and worked himself with them night and day for several days, as the only possible means of completing the work in time for the re-opening services of yesterday. Services were held morning and afternoon, when appropriate sermons were preached by Mr. Preston, pastor of Smallfields, and Mr. Dickens, pastor of Rother-

field, from which place many friends attended. Among others, the well-known hymns, 'How pleased and blessed was I,' and 'All hail the power of Jesu's name,' were specially selected, and were sung with much fervour. The public meeting in the evening, which was presided over by Mr. I. C. Johnson, J.P. (ex-Mayor of Gateshead), was of a very stirring nature. The audience were addressed by a number of ministers and friends, and the hymns, especially, 'All hail the power of Jesu's name,' were sung with much feeling. During the day's proceedings affectionate references were made by the speakers to the long work and association with the chapel and people of the pastor, the Rev. E. Littleton, who is now in the thirty-first year of his pastorate, and to the long-continued harmony and mutual affection existing between the pastor and people. Thanks were accorded to the various ladies who had gratuitously provided the tea and presided at the tables and to other active helpers, and a day long to be remembered closed with the singing of

the Doxology and the pronouncing of the Benediction."

Narrow Escape from Fire.

A few weeks after the re-building, the chapel had a narrow escape from fire, and from a very similar cause to that which a month or two after caused Spurgeon's Tabernacle to be burnt to the ground in an hour's time, viz., the over-heating of one of the stoves used for warming the building. This occurred one Sunday afternoon during the service when fortunately the people were present; and it being discovered at the commencement, the friends were able to put the fire out. Otherwise, there can be no doubt this chapel would have been destroyed as quickly and completely as was the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The small damage done was covered by insurance, and measures have since been taken to ensure it against similar danger in future.

Mr. Spurgeon's Father and the Chapel.

Mr. Spurgeon's aged father, whom Mr. Doggett knew for many years, and who was acquainted

with the history of the chapel, always gave the latter a sovereign towards our anniversary collection.

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A number of the female members of the congregation belong to the Women's Protestant Union, of which Mrs. Arbuthnot, of Plaw Hatch, East Grinstead, is president, one of our members, Mrs. Isaac, being a joint local secretary.

Church Membership, Deaths, and Marriages.

At the commencement of my pastorate there were 39 members of the church, 6 of whom had moved away, but still retained their membership. I have since added 53—41 by baptism and 12 by dismissal to this church from other churches. I have buried 34, dismissed to other churches 7, withdrawn 1, the present membership thus being 50; which includes members moved away but still desirous of retaining their membership. I have interred in the chapel burial ground nearly 200. Since the chapel was registered for

marriages in 1872, I have conducted 32 marriages here.

Of those who were members of the church at the commencement of my pastorate, the following only are now living: Mr. John Burfoot, Mr. Geo. Ashdown, Mr. Thomas Obbard, Mr. James Kingsbury, Mrs. Hinckley, Mrs. Wickens (now of Ringmer), Mr. L. Langridge, Mrs. Cane (formerly Miss Sarah Obbard), and Mrs. Tasker. The three latter have removed away from the neighbourhood.

“Thus one generation passeth away after another.”

With regard to the above statistics, as is well known, amongst Strict Baptist communities the membership forms only a very small portion of the congregation, owing to what many consider the very rigid rules for admission to the church, but which we think scriptural. This will be seen on comparing the number of deaths of members with the total burials.