

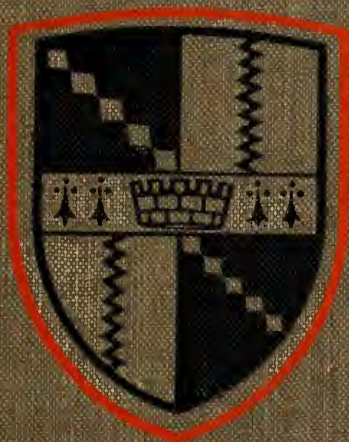
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# THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH TOWNS

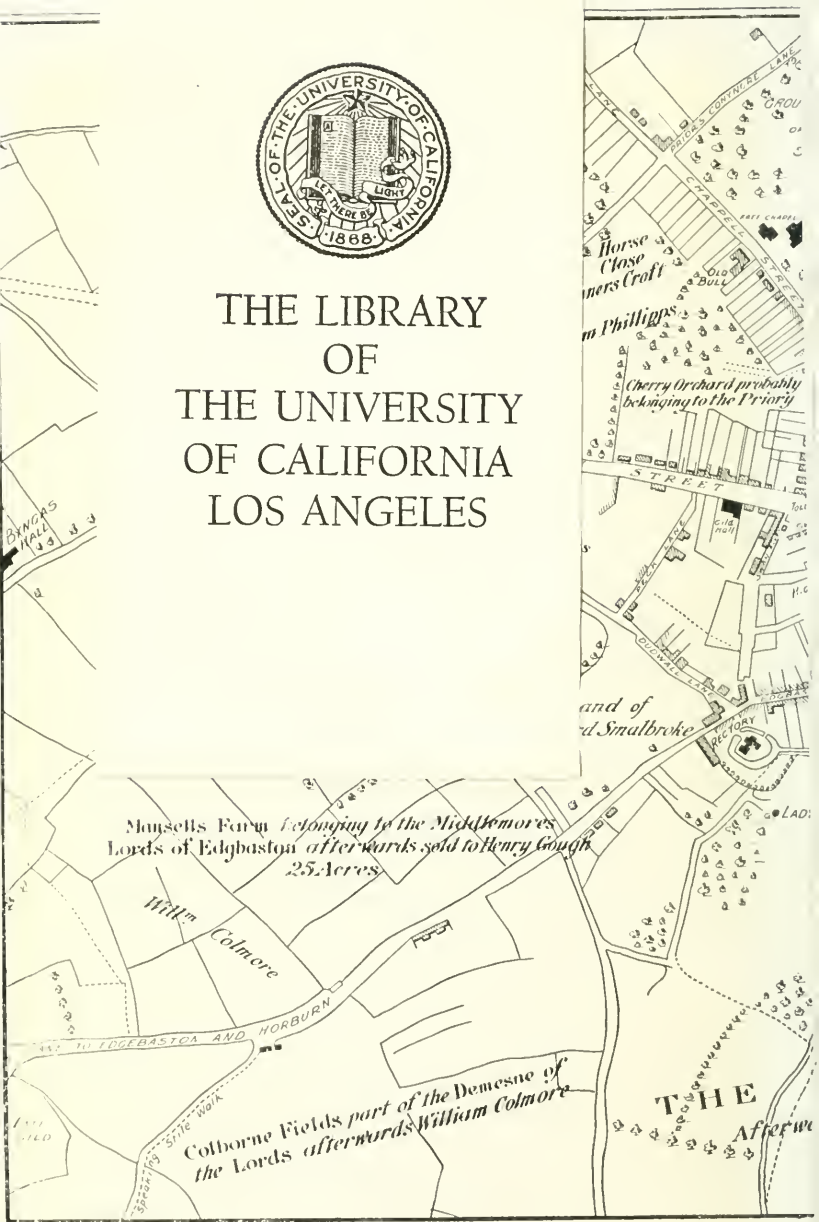
## BIRMINGHAM



J.H.B. Masterman



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*Mansells Farm belonging to the Middlemores  
Lords of Edgbaston after works sold to Henry Gough  
25 Acres*

*William Colmore*

*Colborne Fields part of the Demesne of  
the Lords afterwards William Colmore*

*THE  
Afterwards*





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*Photo. by Whitlock*

ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH

*Frontispiece*

THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH TOWNS

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# BIRMINGHAM

BY

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## PREFACE

I HAVE mentioned overleaf some of the most accessible authorities from which I have drawn materials for this book. I wish to express my special indebtedness to Mr. R. K. Dent, whose *Making of Birmingham* is a storehouse of information about the history and institutions of the city. Mr. Howard Pearson has most kindly allowed me to avail myself of his great knowledge of Birmingham, and has read through these chapters in proof. Mr. Walter Powell, Chief Librarian of the Birmingham Public Libraries, has given valuable help in connection with the illustrations and maps.

I have tried to avoid overloading this book with details of merely local interest. My aim has been to show the part that Birmingham has played in national history. I hope that the citizens of Birmingham will accept this attempt to tell the story of their city as an expression of gratitude for the many kindnesses that I received from them during the ten years that I had the honour of sharing their life and interests.

J. HOWARD B. MASTERMAN.



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# BIRMINGHAM

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

NO English borough has played a more important part in the industrial and political life of the nation during the last hundred years than Birmingham. Starting as a small manorial estate in the eleventh century, it has gradually become the centre of a great industrial area reaching to Dudley and Wolverhampton in the west, and towards Coventry and Nuneaton in the east. Its growth has been due in part to natural advantages of climate and situation, but even more to the energy and enterprise of its citizens. The fact that Birmingham developed later than its neighbours saved it from sharing in the decline that the older mediæval towns suffered through the restrictive policy of the craft guilds, and enabled it, at a later period, to offer asylum to Non-conformists who were denied the right of public worship in chartered towns. It has recently been described as "the typical city of industrial individualism." \* Hutton's account of the people of Birmingham as he saw them in 1741, though coloured by local patriotism, is typical of what many other observers have noticed. "They were a

\* Sir William Ashley in *British Association Handbook*, 1913.

species I had never seen ; they possessed a vivacity I had never beheld ; I had been among dreamers, but now I saw men awake, their very step along the street showed vivacity ; every man seemed to know and prosecute his own affairs." The number of different industries carried on in Birmingham has been of great advantage to the city in giving stability to industry and in fostering variety of interest. The city has fewer men of great wealth than most of our other great industrial centres, but a considerable number of Birmingham manufacturers have attained to a fairly high standard of prosperity.

Until recently, most of the leading citizens have lived within easy reach of the heart of the city, instead of escaping to more distant suburbs, and this has tended to prevent the detachment from civic interests that has been so injurious to some of our English towns. Birmingham has shown a special aptitude for developing the civic loyalty of the strangers within its gates, and not a few of the men who are most closely associated with the public life of the city came to it from other parts of the country. Birmingham has, I think, less than other English cities of the clannishness that resents the intrusion of "aliens."

Birmingham is just far enough away from London to avoid being attracted into the solar system of the metropolis. There is little of the somewhat artificial literary and artistic life that develops in a community of leisured people, but the city has long since lived down the reputation for shoddiness that was once associated with the word "Brunnagem." Art and literature cannot, in a city like Birmingham, be dissociated from industrial and commercial life. They must minister to the good life of the citizens



rather than to the æsthetic instincts of a privileged class. It is in design and craftsmanship, rather than in poetry and music, that art tends to express itself in a community whose chief industry is the production of finished articles, the raw materials for which are imported from other districts—iron from Staffordshire, and steel from Sheffield. Some of the industries that formerly made their home in Birmingham are no longer carried on there. Nail-making has migrated to Dudley and Stourbridge, saddlery to Walsall, cutlery to Sheffield. But as these trades have dwindled, others have developed. Gun-making became an important industry at the end of the seventeenth century, and hardware and jewellery soon after. Brass-work and engineering established themselves in the course of the eighteenth century, and many other industries have since been added. In recent years a centrifugal tendency has shown itself, and new factories have grown up on the outskirts of the city, in the area that has lately been included within the municipal boundaries. This will tend to relieve the congestion of population in the central part of the city, and encourage the growth of garden suburbs like those at Bournville and Harborne. There are slum areas in Birmingham, as in all our great industrial towns, that must be completely cleared at the earliest opportunity. The civic authorities are fully alive to the importance of ridding Birmingham of the squalor and ugliness that were the legacy of the rapid and unregulated growth that followed on the industrial revolution.

Politically, Birmingham has during the nineteenth century steadily supported democratic ideas, and has been conspicuous for its loyalty to the leaders who have succeeded in winning its confidence.

While leading the movement for the municipalisation of public services, it has not proved a fruitful field for the more extreme forms of Socialism. Under Mr. Chamberlain's leadership, it has in recent years become a stronghold of the newer Imperialism, which desires to foster trade within the Empire by preferential tariffs. The political future of the city is a matter about which it would be rash to prophecy. At present the Labour opinion in the city is divided, and is unable in consequence to exercise the influence that it would otherwise be able to do in political affairs. Whether Birmingham will ultimately become a Labour stronghold only the future can determine.

The attention of Birmingham is directed to the present and the future rather than to the past; yet no city can afford to neglect its own past,

“ Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure  
By which thou hast the earth.”

No community can break the entail of its own historic development without impoverishing its present and endangering its future.

## CHAPTER II

### MEDIÆVAL, BIRMINGHAM

THE Anglo-Saxons conquered and settled the western Midlands from two directions. The Hwiccas from the south-west, under their King Ceawlin, pushed up into Worcestershire and south Warwickshire, but appear to have been checked in their advance by the great forest of Arden that covered all Warwickshire north of the Avon. Another body of invaders, landing at the mouth of the Trent, gradually forced their way into the Midlands, and small parties penetrated into the forest of Arden from the east. One such small group, the *ingas* or family of *Berm*, established their *ham* or home on the banks of the little river Rea, not far from the old Roman Rykneild Street. A rough track connected the village in the valley with Egbald's Ton (now Edgbaston), a group of houses on Rykneild Street; and near by the village of Aston (East town) grew up. The country around was open heath land, and King's Heath, Small Heath, Balsall Heath still survive as names of outlying districts of the city.

The earliest authentic information that we have about Birmingham is supplied by Domesday Book. "Richard holds of William four hides in Bermingham. The arable employs six ploughs; one is in the demense. There are five villeins and four bordars

and two ploughs. Wood half a mile long and four furlongs broad. It was and is worth twenty shillings. Ulwine held it freely in the time of King Edward."

We gather from this account that Ulwine, the Saxon owner, had been dispossessed, and the land granted to William Fitz-Ansculf, a Norman nobleman whose seat was Dudley Castle, and who also held the manors of Selly Oak, Handsworth, Edgbaston, Aston, Witton and Erdington, which are all now included in Greater Birmingham. Several of these manors are valued in Domesday at a larger sum than Birmingham, the entire population of which apparently consisted of nine families, and the household of Richard, the Lord of the Manor. No church is mentioned, though there was certainly a Norman church there a little later.

In the twelfth century the manor of Birmingham passed into the hands of Gervase Paganel, who in 1154 granted it to his "sewer" or steward, Peter, the grandson of the Richard who had held it at the time of the Domesday Survey. Twelve years later Peter De Bermingham secured from the Crown a charter authorising him to hold a market on Thursdays "at his castle of Burmingeham." This charter was confirmed by Richard I. in 1189, and marks the beginning of the commercial life of Birmingham. In 1250 William De Bermingham obtained from Henry III. the privilege of holding a fair for four days at Ascensiontide. In the following year, he also obtained permission for another fair on St. John Baptist's Day and the two days following—a date afterwards altered to Michaelmas. The market rights of the manor were purchased by the Town Commissioners from the heiresses of Lord

Archer for £12,500 in 1824, when the present Market Hall was erected. The two fairs were maintained till recent times, the autumn fair being known as Onion Fair. They were opened with civic processions and banquets, and were associated with amusement rather than with serious business. As official functions, they came to an end in 1875.

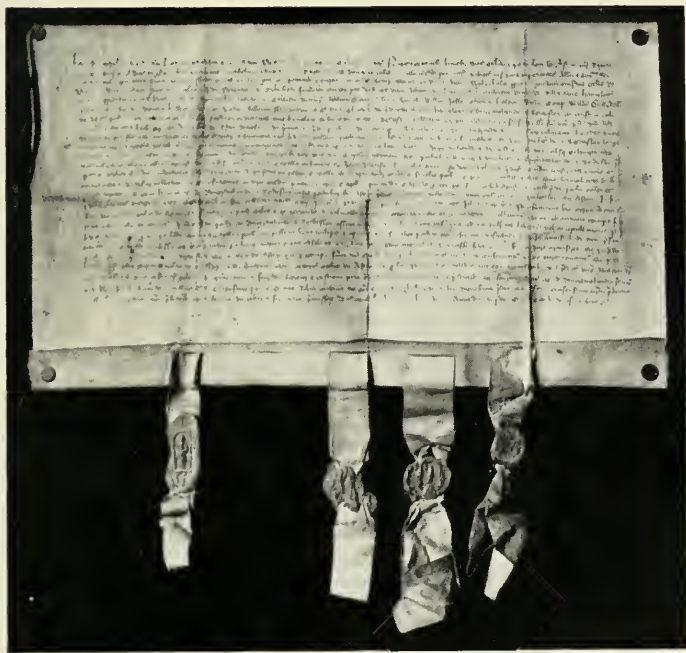
The De Bermingham family played an honourable part in national affairs. One of them took part in the reduction of Ireland under Henry II., and became the founder of the Irish branch of the family, which still survives. Another, William, joined Simon de Montfort, and fell at the battle of Evesham. Another William served under Edward I. in Gascony, where he was taken prisoner. His grandson raised forces for Edward II. in 1324, and was summoned to Parliament by Edward III. under the title of Lord William De Bermingham. The tombs of several of these De Berminghams are in St. Martin's Church. The estate remained in the hands of the same family till 1536, when Edward De Bermingham was imprisoned and dispossessed in circumstances that are somewhat obscure, and his estates transferred, a few years later, to John Dudley, afterwards Duke of Northumberland, on whose attainder for high treason the manor again escheated to the Crown, and was subsequently granted to Thomas Marrow, in whose family it remained till the last century.

Some time in the thirteenth century St. Martin's Church was erected on the site of a smaller Norman or Saxon church, and was endowed with two Chantries by members of the De Clodshale family, of Saltley. A Hospital or Priory, dedicated to St. Thomas the Apostle, was founded soon after, but the few references to this Priory that have survived

do not present its monks in a very creditable light. Both the Priory and the Chantries were confiscated at the Reformation.

A much more important foundation was the Gild of the Holy Cross, which was established in 1392 at the request of "the Bailiffs and commonalty of Bermyngeham," with a Master, Wardens and a brotherhood, and a Chantry at St. Martin's. A Gild Hall was erected in New Street, and the Gild gradually took over a good deal of the work formerly done by the manorial authorities, including the relief of the poor and the repair of two great stone bridges and of the highways. A similar Gild of St. John the Baptist was established at Deritend, on the other side of the Rea. At the Reformation the property of the Deritend Gild, including a Grammar School, was seized by the Crown, and the Gild of the Holy Cross only retained its almshouses, losing for a time all its endowments. In 1552, Edward VI. restored to the town a part of the plundered property, then valued at £31 a year, and the old Gild Hall was then turned into a Grammar School, the later history of which will be told hereafter.

By the Tudor period Birmingham had become a flourishing little town. In his *Itinerary of Britain*, John Leland describes his visit in 1538. Entering Birmingham from Deritend, he notices the smiths and cutlers in the hamlet, and the "proper chappell" (St. John's, Deritend). Crossing the bridge into Birmingham, which he describes as "a good market town," he writes: "There be many smiths in the towne that use to make knives and all manner of cutting tooles, and many lorimers that make bittes, and a great many naylors. Soe that a great part of



*Photo. by L. Lloyd*

AGREEMENT WITH THE MONKS OF TYKEFORD IN DERITEND  
CHAPEL, DATED 20 MAY, 1351

FROM THE ORIGINAL IN THE REFERENCE LIBRARY, BIRMINGHAM





the towne is maintained by smithes, who have their iron and sea-cole out of Staffordshire." A few details of interest are supplied by a Survey of the town made in 1553, when the manor escheated to the Crown. From this we learn that there was a Town Hall or "Tolbooth," where the business of the Court-Leet was conducted, and which acquired its later name of Leather Hall from its use by the "Searchers and Sealers of Leather" whose business it was to inspect and stamp the leather produced in the town.

The last important event in the history of mediæval Birmingham was the foundation of Lench's Trust, the nucleus of which was a legacy by William Lench, which was subsequently augmented by benefactions by other donors. The Trust took over much of the charitable work that the Gild of the Holy Cross had done before its suppression.

## CHAPTER III

### PURITAN BIRMINGHAM

AT the beginning of the seventeenth century, Birmingham was a busy little market town, with a population of about 5000 and a considerable industrial life. As an unincorporated town, it was still under the jurisdiction of the Bailiffs of the Manor, and the townsfolk were dependent on their own exertions for the maintenance of their prosperity. In the religious and political controversies that arose in the early years of the century Birmingham supported Parliament in its opposition to the autocratic claims of the Crown. When Charles I. made his second ship-money levy in 1637, the county of Warwick petitioned unsuccessfully for a reduction of its assessment on the ground of the weekly allowances that it had made to Birmingham during a pestilence that had visited the town in the previous summer. The assessment on Birmingham was £100, which may be compared with £266 levied on Coventry.

When the war broke out, Birmingham threw itself whole-heartedly on the Parliamentary side. Clarendon speaks of "Bromicham, a town so generally wicked, that it had risen upon small parties of the king's, and killed or taken them prisoners, and sent them to Coventry, declaring a more peremptory malice to his Majesty than any other place." A

few days before setting up his standard at Nottingham, the king marched through Warwickshire, and demanded entry into Coventry. The men of Coventry refused to open their gates and manned the walls against the royal forces. Three hundred men of Birmingham shared in the defence of Coventry and "regardless of their own lives for their Countrie's good, and fearless of the cavaliers' cannon-shot . . . dauntlessly sallied out of the Citie, and did execution on their enemies, forcing them to flie and forsake them."

The Birmingham blade-makers are said to have supplied the Earl of Essex with fifteen thousand sword-blades, while they "not only refused to supply the king's forces with swords for their money, but imprisoned divers who bought swords upon suspicion that they intended to supply the king's forces with them." They also, "with unusual industry and vigilance, apprehended all messengers who were employed, or suspected to be so, in the king's service." Though Birmingham was not a fortified town, the townsfolk "had so great a desire to distinguish themselves from the king's good subjects, that they cast up little slight earthworks at both ends of the town, and barricaded the rest, and voluntarily engaged themselves not to admit any intercourse with the king's troops." Charles I. stayed at Aston Hall on his way to Edge Hill, and on the following day the men of Birmingham cut off his baggage-train and captured his plate and furniture, which they sent to the Earl of Essex at Warwick.

In the spring of the following year Prince Rupert, with a small force of about two thousand, passed by Birmingham on his way to York, and determined to occupy it. Though the town had only a hundred and

fifty musketeers and a troop of horse, it was decided to resist the Royal forces, and earthworks were cast up near Camp Hill. But the Royalists were easily able to outflank and disperse the civilian force, and put the Roundhead cavalry to flight. The Earl of Denbigh, who was in command of Rupert's cavalry, was killed in the fray. Some looting took place after the occupation of the town, and when the Royalist troops left next day, they set fire to it in places, and 78 houses were destroyed. They also pulled down the mill of one Richard Porter, where sword-blades were manufactured for the Parliamentary forces. As only eleven men, and two women, are recorded as having lost their lives in the defence of the town, the fighting cannot have been very severe. The cavalier losses were about thirty men.

The Birmingham men had their revenge by an attack on Aston Hall. The Holte family had for several generations resided at Duddeston Manor House, and in 1611 Thomas Holte purchased one of the baronetcies offered for sale by James I. as a means of raising funds for the suppression of the Ulster rebellion, so adding the Ulster crest of a red hand to his escutcheon. A few years later, he acquired Aston Park, and began the erection of a fine mansion, which is said to have been designed by Inigo Jones. The Hall was completed by 1635, and, as has been already said, the king was entertained there on his way to Edge Hill. In December, 1643, twelve hundred townsmen from Birmingham attacked the Hall, which was defended by Sir Thomas Holte's retainers, reinforced by forty musketeers from Dudley. The staircase of the Hall still bears traces of the bombardment. After two

days' siege, the Hall was captured and plundered. Edgbaston Hall was seized and fortified by an irregular force under the command of one John Fox, a tinker by trade, who seemed to have carried on a successful guerrilla war against the Royalist forces in the neighbourhood.

The staunch support given by Birmingham to the Parliamentary cause made the name of the town a byword to the Cavalier party after the Restoration. Among the minor industries carried on there was the manufacture of counterfeit coins, and Brummagem became a name for fraudulent pretentiousness in the political controversies of the Restoration period. "I coined heroes" says Tom Payne, "as fast as Birmingham groats." Another writer of the time describes Satan as "that Brummingham Uniter of Mankind." The Whig leaders were nicknamed by their opponents "Birmingham Protestants," and a contemporary ballad describes Monmouth as a "mobile gay fop, with Birmingham pretences." The reputation of Birmingham as the centre of the counterfeit coinage industry survived till the middle of the eighteenth century, when a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* contributed a poem "Upon a Birmingham Halfpenny."

The unpopularity of Birmingham may be due in part to jealousy of the growing prosperity of the town, which was developing its industries vigorously during the latter half of the century. In 1690 Misson, a French traveller, after describing the fine works of "Rock Crystal, Swords, Heads for Canes, Snuff Boxes, and other fine works of steel" that he saw at Milan, adds that they can be had better and cheaper in Birmingham. A little later, in 1724, another traveller, referring to the ironwork carried

on in the town, says : " It's incredible the number of people maintained by these Iron and Bath-metal works, and the great perfection they have brought them to ; furnishing all Europe with their toys, as sword-hilts, screws, buttons, buckles, and innumerable other works." The manufacture of buckles became an important local industry, and metal buttons were also made in great numbers. When buckles went out of fashion at the end of the eighteenth century, thousands of workpeople in Birmingham were thrown out of work, and strenuous efforts were made to induce the king, as the leader of fashion, to discourage the " unmanly, absurd and ridiculous " fashion of shoestrings.

The Birmingham gun-making industry received its first official recognition when Sir Richard Newdigate succeeded in securing for the town from William III. an order for muskets, for which he had been dependent on Holland. The Birmingham gunmakers showed their gratitude by presenting Sir Richard with a musket, which is still preserved, with the accompanying letter, at Arbury.

The efforts of Clarendon, after the Restoration, to re-establish the authority of the Church of England led to the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, and the ejection from their cures of those ministers who refused to conform to the Anglican system. Three years later the " Five Mile Act " prohibited these dispossessed ministers from settling in or near an incorporated town. Many of them found refuge in the larger unincorporated towns, which became the strongholds of Nonconformity. At least twelve of them settled in Birmingham, and their presence there probably attracted to the town a considerable number of Puritan laymen, whose

independence of spirit and earnestness of purpose must have made them a valuable acquisition to the life of the town. As soon as the Toleration Act of 1689 legalised Nonconformity, a meeting-house was erected in Birmingham near St. Martin's Church, and a second "Presbyterian" place of worship was built three years later. The Society of Friends established itself in the town during the lifetime of George Fox, who once at least visited the town. As was the case elsewhere, popular prejudice against the "Quakers" showed itself in occasional attacks on their place of meeting. The Roman Catholics also suffered from mob violence, a fine church which they erected in 1687 being destroyed by a Protestant riot within two months of its consecration.

The strongly Nonconformist character of Birmingham fostered its industrial progress. Cut off from entry into the learned professions by the fact that the Universities were barred to them, English Nonconformists devoted their energies to business life. "Certain ideas," says Sir William Ashley, "became dominant among them, which had not indeed been altogether absent from the Christianity of earlier centuries, but had been moderated in their operation by other and conflicting opinions. Among these ideas we may single out the following: business as a divine 'calling'; the sinfulness of pleasure-seeking; the lawfulness of material gain." He quotes Richard Baxter's advice to his congregation: "If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way, if you refuse this and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward." \*

\* Sir William Ashley, *The Economic Organisation of England*.

Industrious and frugal, while distrusting amusements as worldly and asceticism as papistical, the Birmingham manufacturers soon began to be capitalists on a small scale, and were able to extend their trade into wider European markets. Instead of the craft gilds, of the existence of which in Birmingham there is no trace, the local manufacturers appear to have developed a strong capacity for voluntary association, and at a later time public meetings were constantly held to consider the price of raw materials, improvements in means of communication, and other matters affecting local industries.

Though Nonconformity was strong in Birmingham, the Church of England was still firmly entrenched in the affections of a large section of the people. The old parish church of St. Martin's, built of a soft friable stone, had fallen into decay, and it was now encased in red brick, "buried in an ugly tomb, literally bricked up as if, like Constance in 'Marmion,' it had committed an inexpressible sin, and had received sentence of living death." \* In this brick casing it remained till 1872. The interior of the church suffered an even more hideous desecration. "Intruders were suffered to fence themselves about in high-backed and securely-locked pews, and to create for themselves freeholds in the church of the people." A regular traffic went on in "pews" or "kneelings," both at St. Martin's and St. John's, Deritend.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the growth of the town made further church accommodation necessary, and an Act of Parliament was passed authorising the erection of a church in the "high-town," which was then on the edge of Birmingham.

\* J. T. Bunce, *History of Old St. Martin's*.



A site known as the "Barley Close" was given by Mr. Robert Phillips, and funds were raised for building the church of St. Philip's, to which a parish was assigned. The design, which was furnished by Mr. Thomas Archer, a local architect, shows the influence of the school of Wren, and was to some extent modelled on St. Paul's Cathedral. Hutton speaks with enthusiasm of the new church as he saw it while the neighbourhood was still a residential district. "When I first saw St. Philip's at a proper distance, uncrowded with houses, for there were none to the north, New Hall excepted, untarnished with smoke, and illuminated by a western sun, I was delighted with its appearance, and thought it then, what I do now, and what others will do in the future, the pride of the place. If we assemble the beauties of the edifice, which cover a rood of ground; the spacious area of the churchyard, occupying four acres, ornamented with walks in great perfection, shaded with trees in double and treble ranks, and surrounded with buildings in elegant taste; perhaps its equal cannot be found in the British dominions."

A corner of the site, not required for the church and rectory-house, was used for a free school—the Blue Coat Charity School—erected in 1724. The lease of this school, which is still a flourishing institution, and will shortly be moved to a new site on the outskirts of the city, sets forth that "several inhabitants of Birmingham and other pious people, considering that profaneness and debauchery were greatly owing to gross ignorance of the Christian religion, especially among the poorer sort, and that nothing was more likely to support the practice of Christianity than an early and pious training of youth . . . have raised a considerable sum of

money for erecting and setting up a charity school."

The Church feeling of Birmingham was shown in other and less desirable ways than church building. A section of the people in the town were affected by the anti-Whig reaction of Queen Anne's reign, and when the notorious Dr. Sacheverell visited the town in 1709, and rode in triumph through the streets, "the inhabitants of this region of industry caught the spark of the day and grew warm for the Church." This "warmth" showed itself a little later, when something aroused the mob of Birmingham to attack the Meeting Houses. They burnt the Old Meeting House to the ground, and only spared the Lower Meeting House on the promise of the proprietor that it should be used for some other purpose, and that he would in future attend Deritend Church, where he had a pew! As a matter of fact, the building continued to be used for services till seventeen years later (1732), when the inconvenience of the site led to the erection of a new building on the site where the New Meeting House now stands.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

**D**URING the latter half of the eighteenth century, English agriculture and industry were passing through the developments which are now generally called the Industrial Revolution. The wars and treaties of the earlier part of the century opened up wider markets for English goods, and the breakdown of the old trade regulations left enterprising traders more free to push their wares everywhere. Thus Hutton writes, in 1780 : " The commercial spirit of the age hath also penetrated beyond the confines of Britain, and explored the whole continent of Europe ; nor does it stop there, for the West Indies and the American world are intimately acquainted with the Birmingham merchant ; and nothing but the exclusive command of the East India Company prevents our riders from treading upon the heels of each other in the streets of Calcutta."

The growing demand for English products stimulated production, especially in the textile trades, and encouraged invention and organisation. Agricultural changes and a rapid growth of population provided a larger reservoir of labour, while the growth of credit and the large profits made by the rise in the price of land and by successful trade led to the development of the capitalist system.

The influence of the Industrial Revolution was less marked in Birmingham than in the great industrial centres of the north. One reason for this was that the textile industries, in which development was most rapid, never succeeded in establishing themselves in the town. For a time the weaving of hemp and cloth was a considerable industry in the district, and the first attempt to spin cotton by the method afterwards used, in a better form, by Arkwright, was made at Sutton Coldfield in 1700; and John Wyatt and Lewis Paul, the original inventors, set up a spinning-engine in Birmingham, worked by "two asses, walking round an axis." But in spite of several efforts, cotton-spinning never proved successful.

A second reason was that the variety of trades carried on in the town tended to prevent—or at least to postpone—the growth of great factories with their attendant abuses. Birmingham remained till the end of the century a town of small manufacturers. But the prosperity of the town is shown by the rapid increase of population, which rose from 23,000 in 1750 to about 70,000 at the end of the century. The town began to extend, and speculative builders prepared a legacy of trouble for later generations by crowding the courts with houses erected with little regard for beauty or sanitation.

The wars of the period brought prosperity to the gun-trade, and some of the Birmingham sword-makers showed a discreditable impartiality in supplying swords and cutlasses to friend and foe. In 1740 the growing demand for brass led to the establishment of brass-foundries in the town. A notable captain of industry of this period was Mr. John Taylor, whom Hutton quaintly describes as a

man "who possessed the singular powers of perceiving things as they really are." "To this uncommon genius we owe the gilt button, the japanned snuff-boxes, with the numerous race of enamels, also the paper snuff-box, at which one servant earned three pounds ten shillings per week, by painting them at a farthing each." The weekly output of buttons from Taylor's factory exceeded £800 in value. In partnership with Charles Lloyd, John Taylor founded the first bank in Birmingham, in 1765. On Mr. Taylor's death the control of the bank passed entirely into the hands of the Lloyd family.

A much more famous Birmingham manufacturer was John Baskerville, who came to the town as a gravestone cutter, and subsequently set up as a japanner. "He effected an entire revolution in the manufacture of japanned articles, and his trays and waiters became greatly admired as works of art." Having acquired a considerable fortune, he turned his attention to the printing trade, and founded the world-renowned Baskerville Press, from which he issued the series of works that have made his name famous. After printing editions of Virgil and of Milton's poems, he produced a Greek Testament for Oxford University, and crowned his achievements by the issue, in 1763, of the Baskerville folio Bible. On his death, in 1775, most of his type was bought by a French society, and used to print a handsome edition of the works of Voltaire. Some of it found its way into the possession of the University of Oxford, and was exhibited at the Birmingham Exhibition of 1885.

One of Baskerville's apprentices in the japanning trade, Henry Clay, invented *papier mâché*, made by

pasting sheets of paper together. This he used for cabinets, sedan chairs and other purposes. He amassed a large fortune before the expiry of his patent enabled other manufacturers to enter the business. A pin factory was established in the town in 1763, and the jewellery trade grew rapidly. Birmingham hardware remained the staple industry, providing "axes for India and tomahawks for the natives of North America ; and for Cuba and the Brazils, chains, handcuffs and iron collars for the poor slaves. In the primeval forests of America the Birmingham axe cut down the old trees ; the cattle-pastures of Australia rang with the sound of Birmingham bells ; in East India and the West they tended the fields of sugar-cane with Birmingham hoes." I do not know whether there is any truth in the charge that the manufacture of idols for export to India formed part of the local industry.

The greatest of all the leaders of industry of this period was undoubtedly Matthew Boulton, whose father had come to Birmingham from Lichfield and set up business as a silver-stamper. Young Boulton set himself to lift the reproach from Brummagem products, and being possessed of a considerable fortune, which he increased by marriage with a rich Lichfield lady, he established a well-equipped factory in open country about two miles from the heart of the town, to which he gave the name of Soho, from the name of a wayside inn near by. The Soho factory attracted workmen from all parts of Europe, and was soon famous for the artistic excellence of its work. Boulton was a shrewd man of business who "would buy any man's brains," and (it may be added) was prepared to pay a fair price for them. The Soho works employed nearly a

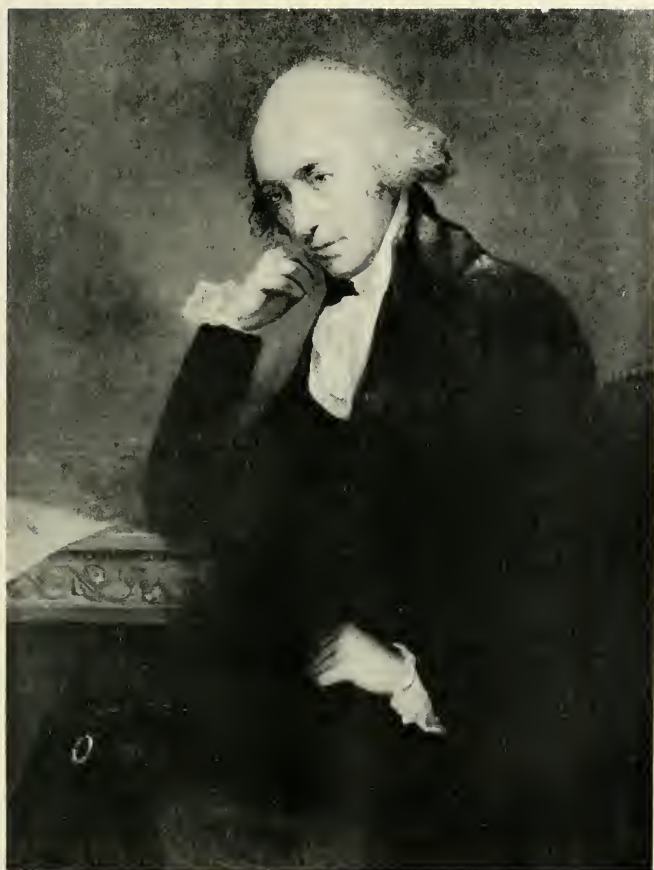
thousand men, and became a school of design." Boulton wrote to a friend: "I have trained up many, and am training up more, country lads into good workmen, and wherever I find indications of skill and ability I encourage them." Boulton's greatest need was for power for carrying on his works, and at this juncture a fortunate accident brought him into connexion with James Watt. Watt, who had been developing his steam engine, based on a model of Newcomen's that he had been repairing under the protection of the University of Glasgow, had undertaken to supply one of these engines to Dr. Roebuck for the Carron Iron Works, but before it had got into working order Dr. Roebuck became bankrupt, and Boulton took over his share in the invention in payment of a debt of £1200 owing to him. He now invited Watt to join him in Birmingham, and so the new firm of Boulton and Watt was established.

Watt was a shy, unbusinesslike man, who found in Boulton exactly the partner that he needed. So in 1772 the Soho factory began to develop the steam engine. The firm passed through an anxious time before the invention showed itself capable of becoming a commercial success, but before Boulton and Watt retired in 1800 the reputation of their engines was secure, and the new source of power now made available for mines and factories did more, perhaps, than any other invention of the time to shape the course of the Industrial Revolution. Without Boulton's energy and optimism, the genius of Watt would have achieved little. "In every relation of their long connexion, the cool, clear head and sagacious skill of Boulton were the mainstay of his delicate and nervous friend. The two

partners were ever on the best of terms, although Boulton's patience must sometimes have been severely tried. His bold and vigorous policy always prevailed; and whatever the modest genius of Watt devised, the enterprise and energy of Matthew Boulton brought thoroughly before the world." Efforts were made, successfully in the case of the rotary crank, to induce Soho workmen to betray the secrets of the firm, but generally the employees were loyal to their masters. On his retirement James Watt settled at Heathfield Hall, Handsworth, where he carried on mechanical investigations till his death in 1819. The garret where he retired in order to be undisturbed in his work remains still in the same condition as when he left it.

Among the men trained by Boulton at Soho the most remarkable was William Murdock, who owed his appointment to the fact that when he called to ask for employment he was wearing a wooden hat that he had turned on a lathe constructed by himself. Boulton recognised the inventiveness of the youth, and Murdock became a close associate of the two partners. While he was superintending the erection of one of Watt's engines in Cornwall, he constructed a working model of a locomotive steam engine, so forestalling the later invention of Stephenson. The model, which is now in the Birmingham Art Gallery, actually ran on the Cornish roads, greatly alarming the local pastor, who is said to have mistaken the fiery monster for the Evil One. Murdock was too busy with other things to carry this invention further, but in 1792 he adopted coal-gas for lighting his house and offices at Redruth, and even invented a portable gas lantern. Boulton adopted the new illuminant for lighting the Soho





JAMES WATT

FROM THE PAINTING IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY BY CHARLES  
FREDERICK VON BREDA



factory, and Dr. Smiles says that on the occasion of the celebration of the peace of Amiens in 1802 the whole front of the factory was illuminated with coal-gas. The use of coal-gas for illumination gradually spread, and the Soho factory added to its activities the manufacture of gas-making apparatus. Another of Boulton's young men was Francis Eginton, who became famous for a new method of picture-reproduction which was apparently akin to photography, but the secret of which has been lost. He left the firm in 1780 to set up business as a maker of stained glass, and specimens of his work can be seen at St. Paul's Church, Birmingham, at Lichfield Cathedral, and in many other places.

Among Boulton's later activities was an earnest and successful effort to improve the copper coinage, so as to make it more artistic and harder to counterfeit. After making copper coins for the East India Company, and for the French Revolutionary Government, he received his first commission from the British Government in 1797. He died in 1809, at the ripe age of eighty-one. Boulton, Watt, Murdock, and Eginton are all buried in a chapel of Handsworth Church, and a fine statue of Watt, by Francis Chantrey, stands in the church. Another statue of the great inventor, by Alexander Monro, was erected in 1868 in an open space in front of the Public Library.

One of the greatest hindrances to trade was the lack of convenient methods of transport. "Only light articles could be exported, as they had to be loaded on packhorses, which carried them by bridle-paths to Bewdley on the Severn, whence by barge they could be sent to Gloucester and Bristol." A coach ran regularly from Birmingham to London,

doing the journey in two days, but even at the end of the century the roads around the town were atrociously bad. Some of them, according to Hutton were "scarcely passable." "For want of causeways and bridges, the water is suffered to flow over the road, higher than the stirrup." The transport of coal and iron along such roads was laborious and costly, and as soon as canals began to come into use, a number of Birmingham townsmen determined to construct a canal from Birmingham to Wolverhampton. The scheme was launched in 1767 and James Brindley, the famous engineer, was employed to plan out the undertaking, for which the necessary Act of Parliament was secured in 1768. The canal was completed by the following year, and was to some extent reconstructed by Telford in 1824, the waterway being widened, the locks reduced in number, and several bends straightened. The success of this venture led to the construction of a second canal from Wednesbury, joining the Coventry canal at Fazeley, and in 1791 a more ambitious project was launched for a canal to Worcester wide enough to enable barges from the Severn to reach Birmingham. This canal, with its celebrated tunnel of two miles near King's Norton, was completed at a cost of £600,000. Till the advent of railways, these canals were of the greatest service to the industries of Birmingham as a means of transport of raw material, and a good deal of coal, and other material—about 8 million tons a year—is still conveyed by them. The last canal constructed in the neighbourhood was the Tame Valley Canal, between Great Bridge and Aston, which cost over £400,000, and was opened to traffic in 1845. The Birmingham Canal Company has encouraged the erection of works along the

canal by the grant of specially low tolls on coal and cinders, and the owners of such works have also a statutory right to use the canal water for their engines. As a result the canal banks for a considerable distance are lined with "ironworks, mills, forges, brickworks, collieries, chain and anchor works, nail works, tube works, galvanising works, and chemical works." \*

The history of Birmingham journalism belongs to the period with which we are now dealing. A printer named Warren, whose chief title to fame lies in his connexion with Dr. Johnson, carried on a *Birmingham Journal* for a little while, but it had come to an end some years before the arrival of Mr. Aris, who in 1741 came to Birmingham from London and set up as a printer. He started a weekly newspaper under the title of *The Birmingham Gazette*, which was soon after enlarged to *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*. Dr. Langford, who was at one time local editor of the paper, has placed all students of the history of the town in his debt for the valuable collection of extracts from the files of the *Gazette* from 1741 to 1841 that he has collected in *A Century of Birmingham Life*.

The growing prosperity of Birmingham during the later part of the eighteenth century is shown by several local events. In 1765 Dr. John Ash summoned a meeting to consider the erection of a hospital. The project was warmly taken up, but various delays intervened, and in 1768 a musical entertainment was organised to assist the fund. The entertainment was given in St. Philip's Church, and marks the beginning of the long series of

\* Mr. G. R. Jebb, C.E., "The Birmingham Canals," in *British Association Handbook*, 1913.

Triennial Musical Festivals that have been among the most important features of the artistic life of the town. The hospital was completed in 1779. Five years earlier, the first theatre worthy of the name had been built in New Street. It was burnt down in 1792, but a finer building was at once erected on the same site, and Mr. Macready, the father of the celebrated actor, became the manager. Among the earliest visitors to the new Theatre were Mrs. Siddons and her brother, John Philip Kemble.

Another evidence of the intellectual activity of the time was the establishment of the Birmingham Library, in which Dr. Priestley took a leading share. Just before the end of the century a permanent building was erected on the tontine system, and the institution flourished, in spite of a secession of the Nonconformist members, who objected to the inclusion of books on controversial theology, and in consequence founded the New Library, which carried on side by side with its parent-institution till it was re-absorbed in 1860.

## CHAPTER V

### BIRMINGHAM DURING THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

FOR twenty years, with one short interval, Great Britain was at war, first with the French Revolutionary Government, then with Napoleon. Birmingham shared with the rest of the country in the privations and sufferings entailed by this long period of war, during which trade was disorganised, taxation increased, and food rose to famine prices.

Shortly before the outbreak of war the Birmingham riots of 1791 brought discredit on the town, and drove from it one of its most distinguished citizens, Dr. Priestley. Joseph Priestley was born in 1733, the son of a Yorkshire manufacturer of homespun. As a Nonconformist, he was unable to secure a university education, and was trained for the Nonconformist ministry at Daventry. After three years of ministerial work in Suffolk, he became a schoolmaster at Nantwich, and then a teacher at the Warrington Academy, where he began his scientific investigations. After some years, he returned to ministerial work at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, and then became attached to Lord Shelburne for several years in the capacity of librarian and literary adviser. In consequence of his religious views, he left Lord Shelburne's service, and came to London, where he became the friend of Josiah

Wedgwood, who assisted him financially in the cost of his scientific work, and of Franklin.

Priestley's earliest scientific work was done in the then little known subject of electricity, in which he made at least two discoveries of importance. He then turned his attention to the investigation of gasses, or "airs," as they were then called. He invented soda-water; but his chief title to fame is his discovery of oxygen,\* which he called "dephlogisticated air," on the theory that a substance which he called "phlogiston" was removed in combustion. Lavoisier, the great French chemist, to whom Priestley communicated his discovery in 1774, was able to disprove the "phlogiston" theory, and gave to the newly-discovered gas the name of oxygen. Priestley also discovered nitrogen, nitric oxide, hydrogen chloride, ammonia, and several other gases, and in a valuable work entitled *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air* he contributed some important facts about the influence of vegetation on the atmosphere. "He was, in fact, one of the earliest to trace the specific action of animals and plants on atmospheric air, and to show how these specific actions maintained its purity and constancy of composition." His discoveries led to his election to a Fellowship of the Royal Society, and Edinburgh University conferred on him the honorary degree of LL.D.

Priestley was also known as a religious controversialist, his special purpose being to free Christianity from what he regarded as ecclesiastical accretions. As a Unitarian he was suspected by the

\* According to Ide Freund (*The Study of Chemical Composition*, p. 39), the Swedish chemist Scheele made the same discovery two years earlier.



orthodox, while his concessions failed to win over agnostic opinion.

Priestley's chief contribution to political thought is contained in his *First Principles of Government*, in which he forestalled some of the doctrines of the Utilitarian Philosophy. Bentham, who derived from Priestley the phrase "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," says that in this treatise he "saw delineated for the first time a plain as well as a true standard of whatever is right and wrong, useful and useless or mischievous in human conduct." Priestley was an earnest advocate of toleration. "Unbounded freedom of thinking," he writes, "may certainly be attended by some inconveniences, but it cannot be restrained without infinitely greater inconveniences."

In 1780 Priestley settled in Birmingham, and became the minister of the New Meeting House. His reputation as a scientist won him many friends, and he became one of a little group of men, including Boulton, Watt, and Erasmus Darwin (of Lichfield), who met once a month, and became known as the "Lunar Society," because the meetings were arranged so that the members could get home by moonlight. Josiah Wedgwood, Sir William Herschel, and Smeaton were among the visitors who from time to time attended the meetings.

During his residence in Birmingham, Priestley carried on religious controversy and came to be regarded as the leader of the anti-Church party. As such, he was constantly denounced from the pulpits of the Church of England, and a strong personal prejudice was created against him. When the early enthusiasm for the French Revolution began to give place to fear of the excesses with which

it was associated, Priestley's well-known sympathy with the revolutionary party became another point in the indictment against him. A dinner held to celebrate the second anniversary of the taking of the Bastille set a spark to the smouldering antagonism, and a mob, inspired by the war-cry of "Church and King," broke the windows of the hotel, and then burnt down the New Meeting House, and demolished the Old Meeting House "with axes and hammers." Dr. Priestley was hurried away by his friends just before the mob reached his house, which they burnt. For three days, Birmingham was given over to mob rule, and the houses of several leading citizens known to be of liberal opinions were plundered and burnt, among the sufferers being Samuel Ryland, William Hutton and John Taylor. The arrival of a body of dragoons brought the riots to an end, and the town was obliged to pay £27,000 as compensation to those whose property had been destroyed. Dr. Priestley settled for a time in London, but was compelled by public hostility to emigrate to America, where he died in 1804. He bore his sufferings and losses with exemplary patience, his only expression of regret being at the destruction of his library and chemical apparatus, which were irreplaceable. It only remains to add that in 1874 a statue of Priestley was erected, by public subscription, in Victoria Square, and unveiled by Professor Huxley.

The unruly character of a section of the Birmingham people showed itself in various outbreaks of mob violence during the hungry years of the French war. Efforts were made to raise funds for providing bread at a reduced price for the poorest inhabitants, and to put down profiteering, or forestalling and regrating, as it was then called. Party feeling ran



JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

FROM A DRAWING IN PASTELS BY JAMES SHARPLES IN THE  
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY



high, and an "Association for the Protection of Property and the Constitution of this Country" was formed, to counteract the radicalism of which the "Protestant Dissenters" were regarded as the exponents.

Birmingham was, from the beginning of the war, forward as a volunteering centre, and raised a corps of volunteer infantry, of which each member was to clothe and arm himself and serve without pay; and also a body of Loyal Birmingham Light Horse Volunteers. In 1802 Nelson passed through the town, and was received with the greatest enthusiasm. He was shown over several local factories, welcomed at the theatre, and entertained at a banquet, at which "Lady Hamilton favoured the company with several songs in the most superior style."

An interesting series of letters on the social life of Birmingham at the beginning of the nineteenth century is contributed by Mr. John Morfitt to a collection of essays and poems compiled by Mr. Pratt. Mr. Morfitt, who had been for some years a resident in the town, bears testimony to the social spirit and marked attention and respect paid to strangers. Mr. Pratt confirms this verdict: "I have never found, in any part of the world, a more unaffected desire to see, serve, and amuse a stranger, whether information or curiosity be his motive." According to Morfitt, the Birmingham citizens were connoisseurs of ale, and "one of the chief luxuries of a Birmingham mechanic is a leg of mutton, with turnips and caper sauce." Tripe and cow-heel was also a favourite dish, which was announced by the town crier when ready for sale. Mr. Morfitt and the editor both mention love of gardens as a characteristic of the people. After speaking of the "voracious appetite for reading,"

and the charitable character of the Birmingham people, they turn to the darker side of the picture. The morals of the working people were very bad. The language used in the streets by the work-people from the factories was a succession of oaths, and drunkenness was common. Mr. Morfitt condemns strongly the employment of women in factories, whereby their homes are neglected and the children left to run wild till they, in their turn, are swept into the vortex of industrial life. "Boys and girls, men and women, frequently associate, and there is scarcely a line of separation drawn, either by policy, decorum, or sexual distinction. So that the work of the manufacturer is carried on, too many, it is to be feared, are totally indifferent whether vice or virtue, health or disease, modesty or indecency, compose the society. . . . The men and women teach the boys and girls the mingled industry and immorality they have learned themselves."

By 1804 the political life of Birmingham had moved a long way from the Church and King attitude of 1791. "The manufactories have their politicians and republicans, as well as the barber's shop and the alehouse; yea, and their revolutionists, Robespierres, and atheists are as numerous and as fierce; and it is as common to hear the downfall of states, the High and Low Church party, the indivisibility of the great nation, the imperfection of thrones and dominions, and the perfectibility of human nature, the bill of rights and the bill of wrongs, discussed and determined in casting a button or pointing a pin, as at the Devil's tavern or the Robin Hood Society."

When war broke out again after the short-lived piece of Amiens, Birmingham threw itself

energetically into the work of enrolling volunteers to resist the threatened invasion, while the women set themselves to make flannel underclothing for the soldiers.

The Orders in Council, with their restrictions on trade, were very unpopular in Birmingham, and the merchants and manufacturers agitated for their repeal. The deputies sent to London to press for repeal were received on their return with great public rejoicings, and a special vote of thanks was accorded to Henry Brougham for the zeal, ability and perseverance with which he had supported the cause of repeal. In the following year, Thomas Attwood, who was then High Bailiff, was presented with a silver cup as a grateful testimonial for the assistance that he had rendered in the destruction of the monopoly of the East India Company.

One link with old Birmingham was severed in 1815, when the Commissioners bought the moat and Moat House, erected on the site of the old Manor House, and laid out the ground as a Cattle Market.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE REFORM ACT

THE period that followed the close of the Napoleonic war was one of disillusionment and distress throughout the country. The Corn Laws kept up the price of bread, and the demand for munitions of war ceased just at the time when the demobilisation of the army threw into the already overstocked labour market a great number of additional "hands." According to a statement of Brougham in the House of Commons, there were 27,000 paupers in Birmingham two years after the close of the war. A petition to Parliament signed by thousands of the workers in the town gives a pathetic picture of the misery of the time. "Some cause," say the petitioners, "which we cannot understand has deprived industry of its reward, and has left us without employment and without bread, and almost without hope. We have no longer any demand for our labour nor any bread for our families. Our life has become useless to our country and burdensome to ourselves. . . . Many of us have not had any kind of employment for many months, and few of us more than two or three days' work per week, at reduced wages. The little property which we possessed in household furniture and effects, and the small, hard-earned accumulation of years of industry and care, have been consumed in



the purchase of food, and we are now under the necessity of supporting our existence by a miserable dependence on parochial charity, or by soliciting casual relief from persons scarcely less distressed than ourselves.

“In the midst of these painful sufferings and privations, our friends and neighbours tell us that we must wait, and hope for better times. We beg leave to inform your Honourable House we have waited for better times until our patience is quite exhausted, for whilst we wait we die.”

George Jacob Holyoake, who was born in Birmingham in 1818, gives a vivid picture, in his *Autobiography*, of the condition of the Birmingham workers in the early part of the century. His mother was the last maker of horn buttons in the town, and his father was a skilled worker at the Eagle Foundry. “It was always a peculiarity of Birmingham that numerous small household trades existed, which gave the inmates independence, and often led—if the trade continued good—to competence or fortune.” While still a child, young Holyoake went with his father to the foundry, where he learned the trade of a whitesmith. He carried on his education at the Mechanics’ Institution under Daniel Wright, till he left Birmingham to start his career as an “agitator,” soon after his marriage in 1839. “My first acquaintance with my future wife was when she lived in the house of the chief Unitarian bookseller in Birmingham, James Belcher, whose father had been imprisoned in Warwick Gaol in Dr. Priestley’s days for selling heterodox works, political and religious.”

Holyoake gives a depressing account of the condition of the working-people at this period.

“ Piece-workers and day-workers were so continually subjected to reduced prices and wages that they never felt certain on Monday morning what they would receive on Saturday evening. There were no trade intimations where other employment might be obtained—no energy in seeking it—there was continual resentment, sullenness and disgust, but no independence or self-dependence. If a man saved a little money, he carefully concealed that he had done so : if he could afford to dress cleanly and moderately well, he was afraid to do so, as his wages were sure to be reduced.

“ The condition of mechanics who worked in little workshops of their own was bad. They had to sell their small manufactures to merchants. The men who lived in the town, and those who came miles into it, with the produce of their week’s work, were kept hanging about the merchants’ warehouses until nine, ten, or even eleven o’clock on Saturday night before they were paid.”

Instead of appealing to violence, the Birmingham artisans turned their attention to political agitation. A number of them formed the Hampden Club, under the presidency of George Edmonds, a schoolmaster and solicitor, of whom Holyoake says that of all the political leaders of the time in Birmingham he had most force of character and was best instructed in Liberal principles. The Hampden Club was regarded by the authorities with a suspicion which was increased when the Club organised an open-air meeting on Newhall Hill, at which 30,000 people were present. The meeting protested against the buying and selling of seats in Parliament and against the Corn Laws, and demanded “ such a reform in the Commons House of Parliament as will restore

frequent elections and general suffrage." When the Regent, in opening Parliament a few days later, denounced the proceedings of the Birmingham reformers, he was greeted with hisses and groans in the streets of London. The suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act led to the closing of the Hampden Club, and reformers in Birmingham were imprisoned for selling copies of the Radical papers, the *Birmingham Saturday Register* and the *Inspector*. The attacks made on the Radicals by some of the clergy led to an amusing form of reprisal, a large body of workmen marching Sunday after Sunday to Christ Church, where they filled the pews to the great distress of their proprietors.

In 1819 the leading reformers determined to elect members to Parliament in spite of the fact that Birmingham was unenfranchised, and on the suggestion of the veteran reformer Major Cartwright, Sir Charles Wolseley was elected as "Legislative Attorney" for Birmingham at a great Newhall Hill meeting, at which 60,000 people are said to have been present. The chief movers in this action were at once arrested, and George Edmonds was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment, Major Cartwright to a fine of £100, and several others to various terms of imprisonment. Before the trial, a meeting was held at Newhall Hill to protest against the "Peterloo massacre," at which many thousands of men, most of them in mourning, assembled around a platform hung with black cloth.

For some years, the repressive action of the Government kept down political agitation in Birmingham, but in 1828 East Retford was disenfranchised for corruption, and a proposal was made in Parliament to give the two seats to Birmingham.

The proposal was defeated, but Lord John Russell announced his intention of bringing in a Bill in the following session for the enfranchisement of Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. Political interest reawakened, and the leadership of the reform party in Birmingham now passed into the hands of a notable body of men, of whom Thomas Attwood was the most conspicuous. He was a banker interested in currency problems, and a man of sincere religious convictions. Mr. Jaffray tells how, when Attwood had determined to found the Political Union, "he went down on his knees in the grey of the morning, and prayed to Almighty God that if the great association he contemplated was not calculated to promote the liberty and the happiness of the mass of the people it might not prosper."

With Thomas Attwood were associated Joshua Scholesfield, afterwards his colleague as member for Birmingham, George Frederick Muntz, who, according to Holyoake, was one of the first men in Birmingham to wear a beard, and Thomas Clutton Salt. In January, 1830, a meeting was held under the presidency of Mr. Muntz, at which Mr. Attwood proposed the establishment of a Political Union for carrying on the agitation for Parliamentary reform. The Union adopted as its motto "Peace, Law and Order." The foundation of the Birmingham Political Union was followed by the establishment of similar Unions in Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and other large towns.

When Lord John Russell's Reform Bill was introduced in the House of Commons, in March, 1831, a great meeting in Birmingham declared for "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." The second reading was carried by a majority of

one, and Birmingham was illuminated ; but the Bill was defeated in committee, and the king agreed to a general election, which resulted in the return of a great Reform majority. The Second Reform Bill passed the House of Commons in September, 1832, but was rejected by the House of Lords, and the country was brought to the verge of revolution. The Bill was re-introduced in the House of Commons, and the second reading was carried in the House of Lords by a small majority. It was important to strengthen the hands of the Ministry, and the greatest Reform demonstration ever held in Birmingham met at Newhall Hill, when no less than 200,000 people from Birmingham and the surrounding districts are said to have taken part. The hymn of the Union was sung by a hundred thousand voices :—

“ Over mountain, over plain,  
    Echoing wide from sea to sea,  
    Peals, and shall not peal in vain  
    The trumpet call of liberty.  
    Britain’s guardian spirit cries—  
    Britons awake ! awake ! arise ! ”

The culminating point of the meeting was reached when Clutton Salt called on the whole assembled crowd to uncover and repeat the pledge : “ With unbroken faith, through every peril and privation, we here devote ourselves and our children to our country’s cause.”

The Government was defeated on the Committee stage in the Upper House, and on the refusal of the king to create enough peers to insure the passing of the Bill, resigned. The excitement in Birmingham was intense. “ Every kind of employment appeared to be altogether suspended, the streets were crowded from morning to night. Placards were exhibited

in the windows, some of which were in these words : ' No taxes paid here until the Reform Bill is passed.' Immense numbers of people to whom political agitation was disagreeable now joined the Political Union." A petition was drawn up threatening in plain terms an appeal to arms, and a deputation was sent to carry it to London. When revolution seemed almost inevitable, the news arrived that the Duke of Wellington had found himself unable to form a Ministry, and that Earl Grey had been recalled. With a profound sense of relief, the leaders of the Political Union set out for London to present an address to him. On their return to Birmingham they were welcomed with tremendous enthusiasm, the entire town turning out to do them honour. On June 4th the House of Lords passed the Bill.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the services rendered to the country throughout this crisis by Thomas Attwood and the other leaders of the Political Union, who refused to sully their cause by appeals to mob violence, and steadily kept the controversy on the high level of moral right.

The Reform Act gave two members to Birmingham, and Thomas Attwood and Joshua Scholefield were elected without opposition as the first Members of Parliament for the town. It was resolved to keep the Political Union in existence, and in the spring of 1833 a visit from Daniel O'Connell afforded an opportunity for another Newhall Hill demonstration, at which the Ministry was indicted for its Irish policy, its refusal to allow vote by ballot, and its maintenance of the Corn Laws. The Political Union having now become a definitely party organisation, the Conservatives in the town founded the Birmingham Loyal and Constitutional Association, and its

chairman, Mr. Richard Spooner, partner in the Bank of Attwood, Spooner & Co., contested the seat unsuccessfully in the 1835 election.

Some machinery was needed for roping in the new voters enfranchised by the Reform Act, and Birmingham was one of the first towns to form a Reformers' Registration Council for this purpose. Political controversy was active, and the new Town Hall, which was opened in 1834, superseded Newhall Hill as a meeting-place for demonstrations by both parties. But the high hopes that the Reform Act had excited were followed by disillusionment. The great body of the workers had not gained a vote, and the progress of Reform seemed slow and uncertain. The Radical leaders in Birmingham tried to turn this vague discontent into constitutional channels by founding a new Reform Association, which formulated its demands for "household suffrage, the ballot, triennial Parliaments, payment of members, and the abolition of property qualifications"—practically the same programme that (with the addition of equal electoral districts) constituted the "six points" of the People's Charter, drawn up in 1838 by six members of Parliament in consultation with representatives of the Working-men's Association. In the election of 1837, feeling ran high in Birmingham, and a serious riot was only averted by the discretion of Colonel Wallace, who sent the Worcestershire Yeomanry out of the town. They were followed by a great crowd, which pelted them with stones and execrations, but the men kept their tempers, and though a few citizens were arrested and charged with riot at Warwick Assizes, the Crown allowed them to be let off on their own recognisances to keep the peace.

Those who wished to keep the Chartist movement on constitutional lines were hard put to it to restrain the more turbulent spirits, who, under the leadership of Feargus O'Connor, advocated an appeal to violence. O'Connor's *Northern Star* was the most influential of the many newspapers started to advocate Chartism. Birmingham was one of the strongholds of the movement, and a petition in favour of the "six points" received over 94,000 signatures. Great meetings were held in the Bull Ring, where highly inflammatory language was used, and the efforts of the magistrates to prevent them were ignored. In July, 1839, a body of London police were drafted into the town, to the great indignation of the people, and a free fight took place in the Bull Ring, which was only terminated by the arrival of the military. Three Chartist leaders, Dr. Taylor, Lovett, and Collins, were arrested, and their trial on the 15th led to a much more serious disturbance. A mob armed with bludgeons and spikes marched to the prison and broke the windows. They then returned to the Bull Ring and began an attack on the shops, which they looted and burnt. At last a body of Dragoons was ordered to clear the streets, and the rioters were dispersed. Grave fears were felt of the renewal of the riots, but a great display of armed force cowed the mob, and Birmingham gradually renewed its normal activities. A number of the rioters were condemned to various periods of imprisonment at the Warwick Assizes, and the town had to pay over £15,000 compensation for damage.

The riots of 1839 discredited the Chartist movement in Birmingham, and the reformers turned their attention to the work of the Anti-Corn Law League, of which a branch was formed in the town in 1841.



Birmingham played a subordinate, but not unimportant part, in the agitation that resulted in the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

Thomas Attwood, who had made less mark in Parliament than might have been expected from his earlier career, retired from the representation of the borough in 1839, and was succeeded by G. F. Muntz, who remained member for Birmingham till his death in 1857. The son of a Polish emigrant who had settled in Birmingham, he had acquired a large fortune by the manufacture of an alloy of copper and spelter for sheathing ships' bottoms, known as "Muntz's Metal." "His burly form, his rough-and-ready oratory, his thorough contempt for all conventionalities, the heartiness of his objurgations, and his earnestness, made him a favourite of the people." He proved a somewhat unreliable representative, who claimed the right to go his own way, but retained his popularity largely in consequence of his association with the earlier political struggles for enfranchisement.

## CHAPTER VII

### MUNICIPAL REFORM

TILL the middle of the eighteenth century, Birmingham was governed by officers appointed in the two Manorial Courts—the Court Baron and the Court Leet—while the affairs of the ecclesiastical parish, which included the relief of the poor and the survey of the highways, were under the control of the churchwardens and other officials elected by the parochial vestry. The most important officers of the manor were the High Bailiff, who was generally responsible for the supervision of the markets and trade regulations of the town, and the Low Bailiff, who acted as sheriff. By a long-standing convention the High Bailiff was always a Churchman (and therefore generally a Tory), while the Low Bailiff was a Nonconformist (and therefore generally a Whig). Birmingham gradually outgrew this manorial system, and for lack of efficient control, the streets remained unlighted and uncared for, while the absence of building regulations left every lessee free to encroach on the roadway. To remedy these evils an Act of Parliament was secured in 1769, known as the "Lamp Act," which set up a body of Commissioners, who were authorised to levy a rate for the lighting and cleaning of the streets, and for removing certain

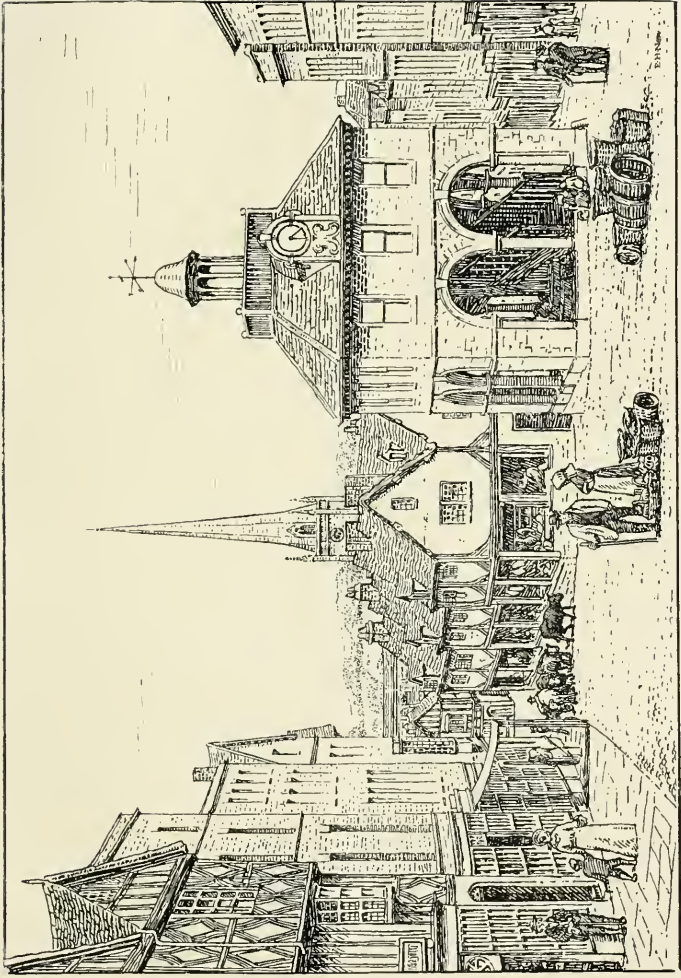
buildings that obstructed the centre of the town. These Commissioners, who filled up vacancies by co-option, remained the governing body of the town till 1838. From time to time they acquired fresh powers, and were responsible for the purchase of the market rights from the last Lord of the Manor, and for the erection of the Town Hall, built originally to meet the needs of the Birmingham Musical Festival. The Hall, a noble building in the Classical style, with seating accommodation for over three thousand people, was completed in 1834.

One of the first steps taken by Earl Grey's Ministry after the passing of the Reform Act was the appointment of a Commission to report on municipal government, which the confusion of conflicting authorities, and the absence of effective popular control, had made very inefficient. The report was followed by the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act, by which the existing incorporated boroughs were given a representative Council; and power was conferred on the Crown to incorporate other towns on the petition of the inhabitants. Two years after the passing of the Act, the Birmingham Reform party determined to secure a charter for the town, and in spite of a good deal of opposition, the petition was granted, and Birmingham, now a town of over 150,000 inhabitants, came under the government of a Town Council consisting of a Mayor, sixteen Aldermen and forty-eight Councillors, elected by the thirteen wards into which the borough was divided. A Corporation seal was adopted bearing the arms of the De Bermingham family, with the motto "Forward." The first elections took place at the end of the year (1838) and were fought on strictly party lines—an evil system which

is still retained in many English boroughs. All the seats were won by the Radical candidates, who were in consequence able to fill up all the municipal offices with their friends. In 1839 Birmingham obtained a separate Commission of the Peace, and a Court of Quarter Session was established with Mr. Davenport Hill, the well-known criminal law reformer, as its first Recorder.

The actual powers of the Town Council were at first very limited, since the Town Commissioners, and several other bodies, continued to exist, and retained their powers and responsibilities. In 1849, in a report to the Government, it is stated that "there are eight distinct and separate governing powers within the Parliamentary borough of Birmingham, and consequently eight separate sets of officers have to be found to do the work which may be done by one efficient staff." By the Improvement Act of 1851 all these bodies were absorbed into the Town Council, which then, for the first time, became the responsible authority for the government of the borough.

But before this stage was reached, the borough was involved in difficulties owing to a technical illegality in the charter, which was only removed by an Act of Parliament in 1842. One result of this illegality was that the overseers were unable, or at least unwilling, to levy a rate, and the new borough could only finance its judicial business by borrowing money from the Government. It also hampered the Council in the important task of creating a local police force. Birmingham had only a body of night watchmen maintained by the Commissioners and some parish constables responsible to the County Justices. The Chartist riots of 1839 showed



THE BULL RING IN THE XVIII TH. CENTURY  
FROM "THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM"



the need of a local force, and Lord John Russell proposed that a loan of £10,000 should be granted to Birmingham to enable such a force to be organised. The proposal was violently opposed by Sir Robert Peel, who declared the Birmingham Council to be "unfit and unworthy to be entrusted with the control of the police force of the town." To propitiate the opposition, Russell agreed to place the police force under a Chief Commissioner responsible to and appointed by the Home Office. This insult was bitterly resented by the Council, but it was not in a position to resist, and only obtained control of its own police force when the Act of 1842 gave full legality to the charter.

Under the provisions of the Public Health Act (1848) an inquiry was held into the sanitary conditions of Birmingham, and the details of the report give a somewhat lurid picture of the defects in sanitation which then existed. "The borough of Birmingham," says the Commissioner, "is not so healthy as it may be, on account of unpaved streets, confined courts, open middens and cesspools, and stagnant ditches." He recommends, among other improvements, the closing of burial grounds within the borough, a better water supply, the provision of parks and pleasure grounds, and a complete system of drainage. This report did much to clear the way for the Improvement Act which finally made the Town Council master of its own house.

The twenty years that followed were years of partial stagnation in the municipal life of the borough. "The dominant idea of the party in power," says Mr. Hiley, "was to spend nothing, and therefore to do next to nothing for the improvement of the

town, and a stage was reached at which some of the ablest citizens held themselves aloof from the Council to such an extent that the Council became, according to Mr. Bunce, a byword, and an object of aversion and even of contempt." In 1853 the borough debt amounted to £300,000 and the rates to 3s. 9d. in the pound. A determination to keep down the rates led to the election to the Council of men who lacked the courage and imagination needed for the effective leadership of civic life. Some improvements were made; the turnpike gates on the boundary of the borough were removed to a quarter-of-a-mile outside, £10,000 being paid as compensation to the owners; a new borough cemetery was provided; some street improvements were carried through; and a site was purchased for Council offices. But, on the whole, the work of the Council was perfunctory and uninspiring. "It was the custom in those days for several prominent members of the Town Council to meet at the 'Woodman,' a well-known tavern in the town, to discuss Council business in a kind of informal caucus. There was nothing against the house, but the habit was, to say the least, undignified." The story of Mr. Vince's protest may be read in Mr. Dale's *Life* of his father.

The best account of the change that came over Birmingham municipal life is in Dr. Dale's *Life* of his friend, Dr. Crosskey.

"Towards the end of the sixties a few Birmingham men made the discovery that perhaps a strong and able Town Council might do almost as much to improve the conditions of life in the town as Parliament itself. I have called it a 'discovery,' for it had all the freshness and charm—it created



all the enthusiasm—of a discovery. One of its first effects was to invest the Council with new attractiveness and dignity. Able men and men of considerable social position had already discharged municipal duties, but very many of their colleagues were of a very inferior order. It now became the ambition of young men and cultivated men, and men of high social position, to represent a ward and to become aldermen and mayors. The weaker and less effective members of the Corporation were gradually dropped, and their places filled by men of quite a new type. The November ward meetings assumed a new character. The speakers, instead of discussing small questions of administration and economy, dwelt with glowing enthusiasm on what a great and progressive town like Birmingham might do for its people. They spoke of sweeping away streets in which it was not possible to live a healthy and decent life; of making the town cleaner, sweeter, and brighter; of providing gardens and parks and music; of erecting baths and free libraries, an art gallery and a museum. They insisted that great monopolies like the gas and water supply should be in the hands of the Corporation; that good water should be supplied without stint at the lowest possible prices; that the profits of the gas supply should relieve the pressure of the rates. Sometimes an adventurous orator would excite his audience by dwelling on the glories of Florence and of the other cities of Italy in the Middle Ages, and suggest that Birmingham, too, might become the home of a noble literature and art."

The earliest leader of this civic renaissance was undoubtedly Mr. George Dawson. His career and

character belong to the religious history of Birmingham, but his influence extended to the municipal life of the borough. "For many years he had been teaching that unless the best and ablest men in a community were willing to serve it, new laws could not work any great reformation; and that it was the duty of those who derived their prosperity and opportunities of culture from the community to become its servants." At a later period Dawson's efforts were powerfully reinforced by the influence of Dr. Dale, who refused to believe in a religion that detached itself from civic duty. The Church of England remained somewhat isolated from the civic life of the time, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain once told the present writer how greatly his personal attitude towards the Church would have been affected if it had been able to speak the language that F. D. Maurice, Bishop Westcott, Dr. Scott Holland and many other later leaders have taught it to speak to-day. The new movement found a leader in Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and a literary champion in Mr. J. Thackray Bunce, the editor of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, which had been started by Mr. Feeney and Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Jaffray in 1857. Joseph Chamberlain came to Birmingham in 1854 from London to join his cousin Joseph Nettlefold in a screw-manufacturing business in which his father was financially interested. He began in the 'sixties to take part in public life, and was one of the most prominent members of the Birmingham Liberal Association when it was re-organised in 1868. In the following year he was elected to the Town Council, and began the career of public service in local life that has won for him the respect and admiration even of those of his

fellow-citizens who were the strongest opponents of his political opinions. "Mr. Chamberlain gave himself to the municipal work with a contagious enthusiasm. He did not merely enter the Council, give a large amount of time and strength to its committees, make striking and eloquent speeches on the new municipal policy; he used his social influence to add strength to the movement. He appealed in private to men of ability who cared nothing for public life, and he showed how much they might do for the town if they would go into the Council; he insisted that what they were able to do, it was their duty to do. He dreamt dreams and saw visions of what Birmingham might become, and resolved that he, for his part, would do his utmost to fulfil them."

The other side of the story is told by Ostrogorski. After explaining the organisation of the Liberal Association, he says: "The Association being a Liberal organisation could only invite the co-operation of those who belonged to the Liberal persuasion. Hence the Conservatives were excluded from the public life of Birmingham. It is true that they had themselves been clumsy enough to supply the Radicals with a pretext for making the local administration a party affair. . . . Long after they had been reduced to impotence in the Town Council, the Liberal Association continued to oppose them with the utmost bitterness at the annual municipal elections. They were dislodged from every position in the local government, from every representative body even of an entirely non-political character, from charitable institutions, from the governing boards of schools. Ignored and thrust out of public life, the Conservatives in their turn came to

identify the interests of Birmingham with those of the Liberal party, and to regard the former with lukewarmness, almost with complete indifference."

In 1873 Mr. Chamberlain was elected Mayor, and at once inaugurated the first of his great municipal enterprises by proposing the purchase by the Council of the two gas companies that then supplied the town. The necessary Act of Parliament was secured early in the following year, and the Companies were bought out for a sum of £58,290 in perpetual annuities. A considerable reduction in the price of gas was at once effected, and the average annual profit since 1875 has been over £45,000, most of which has gone to the relief of the rates.

In the following year, having been re-elected as Mayor, Mr. Chamberlain proposed to acquire the waterworks for the town, and after a good deal of opposition in the House of Lords, the necessary Act was passed, and the undertaking acquired by payment of perpetual annuities of £54,491. The first object of the Council was to improve the water supply, and large sums were expended in laying new mains and supplying reservoirs and better plant. In 1890 the need of fresh sources of supply led the Birmingham Council to purchase and dam up the Elan valley at Rhayader, in Radnorshire, from which water is conveyed nearly eighty miles to Birmingham. The scheme, which cost nearly £6,000,000, was begun in 1893, and the new works were opened by King Edward in 1904.

As soon as the purchase of the waterworks had been carried through, a third great scheme was launched, for the clearing of a great slum area in the middle of the town, and the construction of a new main street leading towards Aston. The area

included some of the worst slums in Birmingham, and the scale of the proposed improvement was calculated to strike the imagination. Parliamentary sanction was secured for the project, and a number of patriotic citizens joined together to purchase any of the property that could be secured at a reasonable price while the Bill was still under discussion, subsequently selling it at cost price to the Corporation. A new thoroughfare, named Corporation Street, sixty-six feet wide, was cut through the area, and sites were let on building leases of seventy-five years. When these fall in, Birmingham will become the possessor of a great deal of valuable property, the rents of which will go to relieve the rates. The Council acquired land for the erection of houses for the workpeople dispossessed by the destruction of the cleared area.

A few years ago Birmingham acquired its own tramway system, and in 1900 bought out the Birmingham Electric Supply Co., and so became the owner of its own electric supply, which has since been greatly extended.

In 1888 the town became a county borough under the Local Government Act of that year, and in 1896 it was raised to the dignity of a city, the title of Lord Mayor being shortly afterwards conferred on its chief magistrate. The "supporters," representing Industry and Art, were added to the borough arms at this time.

The boundaries of the borough were extended in 1891 to take in Saltley, Harborne and Balsall Heath, and eighteen years later the parish of Quinton was absorbed. In 1912 a much more ambitious scheme was carried out, the boundaries of the city being extended several miles out into

the country, absorbing the ancient borough of Aston Manor, the urban districts of Erdington and Handsworth, and the greater part of King's Norton, Northfield and Yardley. This last extension enlarged the municipal area from 13,477 acres to 45,537, or rather over 68 square miles. It increased the population from 525,960 to 840,202, and the rateable value from just under £2,000,000 to £4,340,000.

Birmingham was the first large city to adopt the Town Planning Act, and two areas of undeveloped land have been "planned" by the Town Planning Committee, under the guidance of Mr. J. S. Nettlefold, to whose enthusiasm for housing reform the city owes much.

Two other departments of municipal activity remain to be dealt with. The first of these is the provision of open spaces. As Birmingham gradually extended its building operations into the surrounding districts, the need of securing parks and recreation grounds became urgent. An Act of 1854 permitted the Council to accept gifts of land and provide for their maintenance. Within two years a small area of ten acres (now Adderley Park), was given to the Council by Lord Norton, and over thirty acres of land (now Calthorpe Park) were offered at a nominal rent by Lord Calthorpe. Attempts were made from time to time to secure Aston Hall and Park before they fell into the hands of the jerry-builder, but questions of price hindered any arrangement, and in 1858 the Hall and forty acres of ground were acquired by a private company for use as a place for entertainments and exhibitions. The Park was opened by Queen Victoria, but it did not prove a financial success, and in the end it was purchased by the Corporation, partly by the

help of private donations. The Hall is now used as a Museum, one room being set aside as a Dr. Johnson Memorial. In 1873 a fine estate of forty-seven acres was given to the town by Miss Ryland of Barford, and is now known as Cannon Hill Park. A few years later Miss Ryland gave another Park of forty-three acres at Small Heath (now Victoria Park) to the town, and generously contributed £4000 towards the cost of laying it out. Highgate Park and Summerfield Park represent open spaces rescued from the builder, and paid for out of public funds. Further afield, the generosity of various donors has enabled the Corporation to acquire the Lickey Hills, a patch of unspoiled country lying between Birmingham and Bromsgrove. Till 1873 Birmingham was ill equipped with public buildings, but in that year steps were taken to utilise the site that had long before been purchased for Municipal Offices. A design by Mr. Yeoville Thomason was accepted, and the "Council House" was completed and opened in 1879. A few years later Birmingham obtained its own Assizes, and a site was reserved in Corporation Street for the Law Courts that were now needed. Messrs. Aston Webb and Ingress Bell submitted a fine design in red terracotta, Renaissance Gothic in character, with richly decorated interior, and the foundation was laid by Queen Victoria in the year of her Jubilee (1887). The Victoria Law Courts were opened by the Prince of Wales four years later.

As municipal undertakings, the Public Library and Art Gallery belong to this chapter, though their natural place would be among the educational institutions of the city. The Public Libraries Act was adopted in Birmingham in 1860, after a

careful inquiry had been made into the results of its adoption in Manchester, Liverpool, and other places. The Central Library buildings were completed in 1865, and branch libraries were established in various parts of the town. Much labour was expended in gathering together a Reference Library, and in the formation of a Shakespeare Memorial Library, but disaster befell the collection, which was almost completely destroyed in a fire that broke out during an enlargement of the building. The leading citizens of Birmingham at once subscribed nearly £14,000 for the renewal of the Library, and generous gifts from all quarters attested the sympathy of other towns. In 1882 the restored Library was reopened with nearly 50,000 books, and though some of the treasures lost in the fire were irreplaceable, the Shakespeare Memorial Library now numbers over 9000 volumes and in several other directions—notably in Warwickshire MSS. and prints—the Reference Library is richly equipped. Every student of Birmingham history owes a debt of gratitude to the authorities for the exhaustive catalogue of books on Birmingham that has been compiled, and for the courtesy with which information is afforded to the humblest inquirer.

Several donations were given to the town for the purchase of pictures and works of art, and the provision of an Art Gallery became a pressing need. As the Corporation had no legal power to spend money on this object, the Council overcame the difficulty by giving a site behind the Council House to the Free Library Committee, which in its turn transferred it to the Gas Department on condition that an Art Gallery was built above the offices of the department.



In 1905 Mr. John Feeney bequeathed a sum of £50,000 to the town for the erection of an Art Gallery, and this sum has been used to build an extension above the Council offices on the other side of Edmund Street, connected by a bridge with the older building. The treasures of the Gallery have been provided entirely by private donations, and comprise an unsurpassed collection of the Pre-Raphaelite School, including Burne Jones' "Star of Bethlehem," and Holman Hunt's "Triumph of the Innocents," and several thousand drawings and studies by Rossetti, Burne Jones, and Millais; twenty-six paintings by David Cox, bequeathed by Mr. Joseph Nettlefold; an almost unique collection of armour presented by the Guardians of the Proof House; a great collection of objects illustrating the Italian Renaissance art; and a fine collection of Oriental art presented by Mr. John Feeney; besides individual treasures too numerous to mention. The Birmingham Art Gallery is a standing evidence of the desire of those who have prospered in the prosperity of the city to share with their fellow-citizens the gifts that minister to beauty and gladness.

## CHAPTER VIII

### POLITICAL LIFE FROM 1850

THE years that followed the collapse of Chartism in 1848 were marked by little political activity. A vague desire for further Parliamentary reform found expression in Birmingham and elsewhere, but increasing trade prosperity, and later the excitement of the Crimean War, turned men's attention from internal political questions. The election of John Bright as member for Birmingham in 1857, after his rejection in Manchester owing to his opposition to the war, brought Birmingham again into the forefront of the reform movement. John Bright remained member for the borough till his death in 1889, but was never closely identified with the town. "He made the acquaintance of Birmingham men at a time of life when friendship rarely ripens into intimacy. His visits were not very frequent; and he never took much interest in local affairs." But some of his great speeches were made in Birmingham Town Hall, and the democratic atmosphere of the town was thoroughly congenial to him. In Parliament Bright became the mouth-piece of the demand for the extension of the franchise, and when the death of Lord Palmerston removed the strongest anti-reform influence, Parliament began to give serious attention to the subject. Birmingham

held a great demonstration in support of Mr. Gladstone's Reform Bill of 1866, and a second demonstration was held in the following year to demand the amendment of Disraeli's Bill.

In the Reform Act Birmingham was selected as one of the boroughs in which an experiment was to be made in minority representation, three members being allotted to the town, and each elector having two votes. The Liberal party in the town was determined to retain all three seats, and an important reorganisation of the party machinery was carried out, the ward committees now becoming elective, while they, in their turn, elected the central committee. Every Liberal elector was instructed for whom to vote, and by a careful distribution of votes three Liberals were returned, so leaving the Conservative party still unrepresented. This election was the last in which the candidates were publicly nominated from the hustings. A large Liberal majority was returned, and John Bright rather unwillingly accepted office under Mr. Gladstone as President of the Board of Trade.

The next subject to which the Birmingham reformers turned their attention was education, and in 1867 Mr. George Dixon and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain took the lead in the formation of the Birmingham Education Society, which developed into a National Education League, the object of which was to secure "the establishment of a system which shall secure the education of every child in the country." The League stood for free, compulsory, unsectarian education for all children in rate-supported schools maintained by the local authorities. Mr. George Dixon, the leader of the League, came to Birmingham in 1838, and prospered

in business there. He entered the Council in 1863 and became mayor three years later. In the following year he was elected M.P. for the borough, and retained his seat till 1876, when he retired for a few years, resuming his Parliamentary career as member for the Edgbaston division from 1885 till his death in 1898. Of his work as chairman of the Birmingham School Board we shall have more to say in a later chapter.

Mr. Foster's Education Act of 1870 did not satisfy the League, which remained in existence for some years to advocate compulsory attendance (which was secured in 1876) and the abolition of the clause which enabled School Boards to pay fees at denominational schools.

On Mr. George Dixon's retirement Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was elected as the colleague of Philip Muntz and John Bright in the representation of the borough. During this period Mr. Chamberlain was engaged, in co-operation with Mr. Schnadhorst, in the organisation of the once-famous Birmingham Caucus. The Liberal electors of each ward sent three elected representatives, with their chairman and secretary, to an executive committee, which had the right to co-opt thirty additional members. There was also a general committee, consisting of this executive committee and thirty representatives from each ward, making 594 in all—the famous "Six Hundred." Though democratic in theory, this constitution proved amenable to management from headquarters. The leaders of the party "maintained uninterrupted relations with the masses by means of public assemblies, informal meetings, and personal communications on questions of general interest, and thus kept up a current of public spirit."

The discipline maintained by the Association was strict. Its leaders boasted of "armies of disciplined men, accustomed to stand side by side and to move in unbroken battalions." The "Birmingham plan"—once described by Lord Randolph Churchill as "the dark and evil deeds of Mr. Schnadhorst"—was copied in many other towns. The next stage in organisation was the linking of these representative associations into one Federation, and this was undertaken by Mr. Schnadhorst in 1877, when a meeting was held in Birmingham under Mr. Chamberlain's presidency, and the National Liberal Federation was founded. Mr. Gladstone visited Birmingham to give his blessing to the new organisation, the principles of which he described, in a later speech, as "admirable, sound, just, liberal and popular." The later fight of the National Liberal Federation to secure the control of the policy of the party belongs to general political history.

When Mr. Gladstone was recalled to power in 1880, John Bright and Joseph Chamberlain were both included in his Ministry, the latter accepting office as President of the Board of Trade. The Franchise Act of 1885 gave seven members to Birmingham, the borough being divided into seven single-member constituencies, all of which were won by Liberals in the general election that followed, at which Lord Randolph Churchill made a courageous attack on John Bright's constituency of Central Birmingham, polling 4216 votes against 4989 cast for his veteran antagonist. Lord Randolph never lost his interest in Birmingham, and his last public speech was delivered years afterwards in the Town Hall.

The election of 1885 was the last triumph of

an undivided party. Early in the following year Mr. Gladstone brought in his Home Rule Bill, and a section of the Liberal party, among the leaders of which were John Bright and Joseph Chamberlain, seceded and formed the Liberal Unionist party. In the election that followed, the opponents of Mr. Gladstone's policy won all the Birmingham seats, Mr. Henry Matthews being returned for the Eastern Division as the first Conservative who had ever sat for a Birmingham constituency. Whatever may have been its result on national affairs, there can be no doubt that the break-up of the Liberal party was a real misfortune in the local life of Birmingham. It sundered into opposing camps men who had worked together in close association in local affairs, and while the Conservative party now secured its legitimate influence in the city, many men who would gladly have served it found themselves excluded from public life.

From 1892 the political history of Birmingham has been closely identified with the political career of Mr. Chamberlain. His appointment as Colonial Secretary was welcomed in the city, and during the South African War attacks on his policy were strongly resented, Mr. Lloyd George being obliged on one occasion to escape from the Town Hall disguised in a policeman's uniform. On a recent visit to Birmingham during the late war, he was accorded a very different reception. Birmingham supported whole-heartedly the proposals for tariff reform with which Mr. Chamberlain identified himself after the war, and while he lived he exercised undiminished influence over the political life of the city. I remember very vividly the great meeting in the Bingley Hall to celebrate Mr. Chamberlain's



EAST VIEW OF BIRMINGHAM BY S. & N. BUCK, 1753





seventieth birthday, when ten thousand of the citizens joined in the enthusiastic chorus :—

“ We'll follow Joe, through weal or woe,  
For days of auld lang syne.”

Soon afterwards, a break-down in health obliged him to retire from active political life, and his death marks the close of a chapter in the life of the city. The strength of Mr. Chamberlain's hold over Birmingham has been attributed to his control of the political machine, and undoubtedly efficient organisation has been one of the causes of the success of the Unionist party in the city ; but the personal ascendancy that he was able to exercise was mainly the outcome of the services that he had rendered in municipal life. He was, as he often said, “ among his own people ” ; and at a recent election, a Birmingham working-man expressed crudely but truly the feeling of the electors of Central Birmingham : “ Who's O—— (the alternative candidate)? I'd foller Joe to 'ell ! ”

## CHAPTER IX

### RELIGIOUS LIFE IN BIRMINGHAM

**D**URING the eighteenth century religion did not play a very conspicuous part in the public life of Birmingham. Churchmen and Non-conformists were learning to live together with some degree of mutual toleration, though the leaders on both sides were constantly occupied with doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversies. The Old and New Meeting Houses had no credal basis of membership, and when the majority of these congregations accepted the Arian view that was prevalent in the early part of the eighteenth century, a section of the adherents who held to orthodoxy seceded and built a little meeting house in Carr's Lane—formerly *Godde's Cart Lane*, so-called from the cart in which the sacred elements were carried in procession.

In 1745 John Wesley paid his first visit to Birmingham, where he met with the kind of reception with which he was painfully familiar, "stones and dirt flying from every side for nearly an hour." Six years later he came again, and met with a much more friendly reception. "I was obliged," he says in his Journal, "to preach abroad, the room not being able to contain half the congregation. O, how is the scene changed here! Formerly when I preached at Birmingham, the stones flew on every

side. If any disturbances were made now, the disturbers would be in more danger than the preacher." Wesley visited Birmingham again in 1764 to preach at the opening of the old play-house in Moor Street, which the Wesleyan Methodists had acquired as a place of worship, and in 1782 to open the new chapel in Cherry Street. On this occasion he attended service at St. Martin's Church, his presence affording the rector an opportunity for the vehement denunciation of the Methodists as "hare-brained itinerant enthusiasts." His last visit was in 1790, when he was eighty-eight years of age. Of this visit he writes: "1790, March 19, came to Birmingham. I think the town is thrice as large as when I visited it fifty years ago. The behaviour of the rich and poor is such as does honour to their profession; so decent, so serious, so devout, from the beginning to the end." He is referring, of course, to the congregation to which he preached.

The Sunday School movement, started by Robert Raikes at Gloucester, was soon taken up in Birmingham, twelve schools for boys and twelve for girls being opened in 1784. The rule that "the scholars in each district, with their respective teachers, go to Church both morning and afternoon" was objected to by the Nonconformists, who asked that their children might go to their own places of worship. On the refusal of the Committee to sanction this arrangement, the Unitarians started Sunday Schools of their own, in which they were soon after followed by the other Nonconformist bodies.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the growth of the town necessitated the provision of more churches, and Christ Church, to the cost of

which George III. contributed £1000, was opened in 1813. A grant from the sum of one million set aside by Parliament, for the building of churches enabled two more churches—St. George's and Holy Trinity, Bordesley—to be built a few years later. Architecturally, these churches have some interest as marking a departure from the ponderous classical style of the eighteenth-century Birmingham churches.

During the nineteenth century several remarkable men served as Nonconformist ministers in Birmingham. The first of these was John Angell James, who became pastor of the Carr's Lane Meeting House in 1805, when only in his twenty-first year. He gradually won for himself a leading place in the religious life of the town, and in 1820 the present Carr's Lane Chapel was built, with seating accommodation for about two thousand people. John Angell James became one of the most famous preachers of his time. One of his books—*The Anxious Enquirer*—had reached a sale of half a million before his death. He was a warm supporter of the London Missionary Society, and was one of the founders of the Evangelical Alliance, and of the Congregational Union. In a fragmentary autobiography Mr. James describes himself as "a mere plodding, working husbandman, using old instruments with some industry, and following old methods with a kind of dogged perseverance and considerable success." In other words, his success was due less to originality or great learning than to the pastoral gifts of sympathy and care for souls.

Mr. James remained pastor of Carr's Lane till his death in 1859. By that time several notable religious leaders had arisen in Birmingham Nonconformist life. Robert Alfred Vaughan is now

chiefly remembered as the author of *Hours with the Mystics*. He came to the town in 1850 as minister of Ebenezer Chapel, but ill health, brought on in part by his over-studious habits, led to his resignation in 1855, and his death two years later. If he had lived, he might have exercised a valuable influence in Birmingham as a scholar and thinker.

A few years earlier George Dawson, a Londoner by birth, came to Birmingham from Rickmansworth, to become minister of Mount Zion Chapel, where he soon gathered a large congregation. Finding himself unable after a time to accept the trinitarian creed contained in the trust-deeds of the chapel, Dawson resigned, and the Church of the Saviour was built for him in 1847, the conditions of membership involving no doctrinal pledge either from minister or people. In this church Dawson ministered for thirty years, occupying a special position of his own in the religious life of the town. "He gathered around him men of all types—some who were dissatisfied with dogma, though they clung to truth; others, who, finding their spiritual energy impoverished by the decay of faith, sought still to keep alive religious emotion, and to retain the shadow when they had lost the substance. Dawson himself, though unconventional to the verge of audacity, was less unorthodox than most people imagined. He was no theologian, and never constructed for himself any definite system of belief. . . . But from one position he never shifted: his hostility to the Evangelical faith, as it was then held by most Churches, was not only bitter, but had in it a touch of contempt; he assailed it with every weapon at his command, and kept up the onslaught year after year. He was not a Unitarian; but in

sympathy and association he stood nearer to the Unitarians than to any other Church, and it was not unnatural that he should be identified with them." \*

Besides his work as a preacher, Dawson became well known as a lecturer, and was described as "the most famous middleman of his day," because he made it his special business to interpret to the people the work of the leaders of modern thought. He did much to interest Birmingham people in the great movements for freedom that were going on abroad, and was a friend of Mazzini, Kossuth and Garibaldi. He helped in several unsuccessful journalistic ventures, the last of which was the *Birmingham Morning News* in 1871. Of his work for municipal reform I have already written. He died in 1876.

Dr. R. W. Dale, who had been Mr. James's colleague during the later years of his ministry, succeeded him as minister of Carr's Lane. He had been trained at Spring Hill College, Birmingham (now Mansfield College, Oxford), and was already no stranger to the town with which his life was henceforth to be identified. He now set himself to know its business and municipal life, and to claim for religion its rightful place as the inspiration of civic service. "Of all secular affairs," he said on one occasion, "politics rightly considered are among the most unworldly, inasmuch as the man who is devoted to political life ought to be seeking no personal or private gain." "I feel," he added, "a grave and solemn conviction that in a country like this where the public business of the State is the private duty of every citizen, those who decline to

\* *Life of R. W. Dale*, by His Son.

use their political power are guilty of treachery both to God and man." "He was bent on making Birmingham a very metropolis of liberty, education, and courageous municipal government. The city, its possibilities and opportunities, possessed his imagination and captured his devotion."

Dr. Dale has been described as a Nonconformist High Churchman, but while he believed intensely in the Church as a spiritual society, he was the sworn enemy of "sacerdotalism," refused to accept the title of "Reverend," and declined to wear a distinctive costume. As a theologian Dr. Dale's special office was the interpretation of Evangelical thought in terms of modern life. "In every creed," he says, in words that evoked the enthusiastic approval of Mr. Ruskin, "there are two elements—the Divine substance and the human form. The form must change with the changing thoughts of man, and even the substance may come to shine with clearer light and to reveal unsuspected glories as God and man come nearer together." Dr. Dale died in 1895 and was succeeded by the Rev. J. H. Jowett, now minister of Westminster Chapel, London.

Closely associated with Dawson and Dale in Birmingham life was the Rev. Charles Vince, the minister of Ebenezer Chapel, who, with less intellectual power than Dale, possessed in a special degree the power of winning the affection of his people. To the same group belongs Dr. Crosskey, who was minister of the Church of the Messiah for twenty-five years, till his death in 1893, and a member of the first Birmingham School Board.

Dr. Miller, Rector of St. Martin's, was Dale's most conspicuous opponent in various ecclesiastical

controversies, and was the recognised leader of the Church in the town. Birmingham (except for a few parishes in Worcestershire) and North Warwickshire had for centuries belonged to the diocese of Lichfield and Coventry, but in 1836 the whole of this district was torn from the Lichfield Diocese and attached to the Diocese of Worcester. Birmingham was thus detached from the diocesan centre with which it had many close associations, and linked on to one with which it had none. The Worcester diocesan authorities regarded Birmingham much as a well-bred country squire regards an impecunious town-bred relation whose importunities he cannot entirely ignore.

During the century, church-building was carried on vigorously, but until recently the churches erected were architecturally featureless. A notable exception was the beautiful church of St. Alban's, Bordesley, designed by Mr. Pearson in the purest Early English style—a noble monument to the self-denying labours of the Pollock brothers in one of the poorest districts of the city. St. Martin's, debased by a series of tasteless "restorations," was almost completely rebuilt. The tower and spire were taken in hand in 1853, and the body of the church was rebuilt twenty years later, through the efforts of the Rev. Canon Wilkinson, who had succeeded Dr. Miller as rector. The necessary funds (about £32,000) were raised by a voluntary rate, and Mr. J. A. Chatwin was appointed as architect. The new St. Martin's is a noble building, worthy of its place at the heart of a great city. Mr. Chatwin was also the architect of the beautiful new Parish Church of Aston, where the old church had become wholly inadequate for the needs of the



large population that had grown up around it. St. Philip's Church was also restored and improved, a chancel being added in 1884, and embellished a few years later with three splendid stained-glass windows designed by Burne-Jones and executed by William Morris. A fourth, representing the Last Judgment, was added at the west end as a memorial to Bishop Bowlby.

St. Chad's Roman Catholic Cathedral, designed by Pugin, was erected in 1841, and consecrated with great ceremony by Dr. Wiseman. John Henry Newman came to Birmingham in 1847, and lived at the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, in Edgbaston, for forty years. He took no part in local affairs, and the only events that stand out in his Birmingham life are the publication of his *Apologia pro Vita Sua* in 1864, and his appointment as a cardinal by Leo XIII. in 1879. He was buried at Rednal, near the Lickey Hills, and his memorial tablet in the Oratory bears the simple inscription, chosen by himself, "*Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem.*"

Three famous Church leaders—Brook Foss Westcott, Joseph Barber Lightfoot, and Edward White Benson—were educated at King Edward's School under Dr. Prince Lee, who afterwards became the first Bishop of Manchester. Westcott and Benson were both born of Birmingham parents, but neither maintained any close connexion with the town after their school days were over. Speaking, long afterwards, of the influence of Birmingham on his early life, Dr. Westcott said, "Those were stirring years. We who passed through them felt that the old order was changing, and that a revolution was going on about us, the issue of which could not be foreseen . . . political, economic,

social, religious changes came in quick succession, and, looking forward already to the work of a priest and teacher, I watched them with the keenest interest."

In 1837 the patronage of St. Martin's, and of three other churches, was acquired by a body of Trustees, the condition of the trust being that the Trustees and their appointees should be "zealously attached to the great principles of the reformed Faith contained in the Articles, Homilies and Liturgy of the Established Church, and particularly to the Doctrine of Justification by Faith only, as set forth in the 11th Article, and in the Homily therein mentioned." The creation of daughter-parishes out of the ancient parish of St. Martin's has given to the St. Martin's Trustees the patronage of a large number of churches in the city, and by an Act passed about twenty years ago, they have power to use the surplus revenues of St. Martin's, which are considerable, in making grants to these daughter-churches. There is no other large town in England in which a body of Trustees exercises so controlling an influence over the ecclesiastical life of the community.

The first attempt to create a Bishopric of Birmingham was made by Dr. Philpott shortly before his retirement from the Bishopric of Worcester in 1890. For various reasons, the scheme fell through, and his successor (Dr. Perowne) made an effort to meet the situation by appointing the Rev. H. B. Bowlby, Rector of St. Philip's, as Bishop-Suffragan of Coventry, with special supervision of the Warwickshire part of the diocese. On his death, in 1894, he was succeeded as Rector and Bishop-Suffragan by Dr. Knox (now Bishop of Manchester),

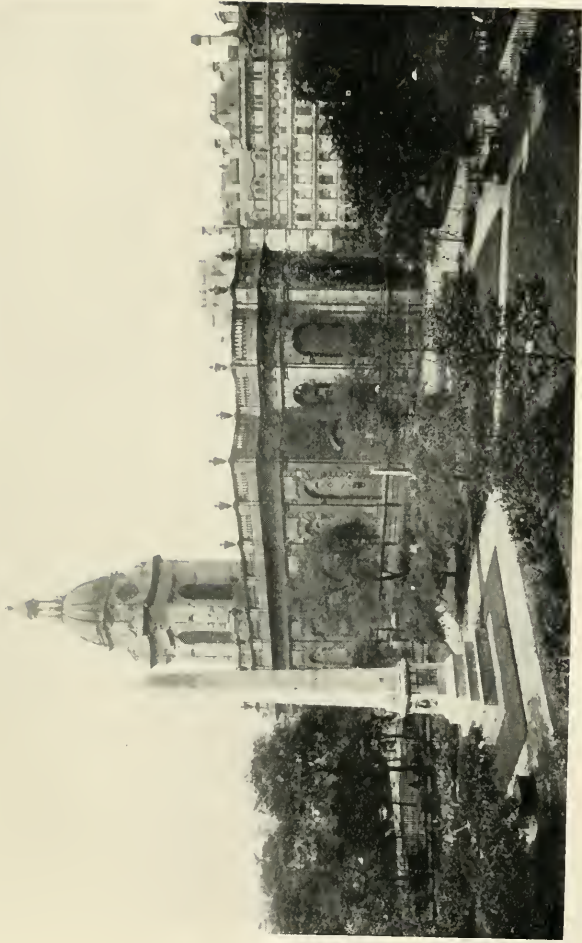
who proved himself a sturdy champion of the cause of religious education.

When Dr. Gore was appointed as Bishop of Worcester, he at once threw himself energetically into the task of reviving and carrying through the Birmingham Bishopric scheme. The necessary funds were raised, an Act establishing the Bishopric was, after tedious delay, passed by Parliament, and Dr. Gore, to the great satisfaction of Birmingham, became the first Bishop. Under his leadership, the Church life of the new diocese developed rapidly. St. Philip's became the cathedral, St. Martin's remaining the civic church of the city. Among the Bishop's chief helpers were Canon Owen (now Dean of Ripon) and Dr. Burrows (now Bishop of Chichester), who served as Archdeacons; and Canon Carnegie (now Sub-Dean of Westminster), who succeeded Dr. Knox as Rector of the Cathedral Church. Dr. Diggle (now Bishop of Carlisle), Dr. Denton Thompson (now Bishop of Sodor and Man), and Canon Willink (now Dean of Norwich) were successively Rectors of St. Martin's.

After six years in Birmingham, Dr. Gore was translated to Oxford, and was succeeded as Bishop of Birmingham by Dr. Henry Russell Wakefield.

Birmingham is closely associated with the Adult School movement, some account of which, as it lies on the border-line between religion and education (if, indeed, they can ever be dissociated), may fitly close this chapter. The Adult School movement has been the special department of social service to which the Society of Friends in Birmingham has devoted its energies. The founder of the Birmingham Adult Schools was Joseph Sturge, the eldest of three brothers well known in the town. He came

across a school for adults, which had been founded in Nottingham by Samuel Fox and William Singleton, and persuaded some of the younger Quakers in Birmingham to take up the work there. The first women's school was opened in 1848, and in the same year William White came to the town, and at once threw himself into the work. "When he began there were probably not more than five hundred members, soon after his death the numbers were estimated at fifty thousand." The Severn Street Adult School grew, and fresh schools were opened, some in converted public-houses. The first Superintendent was Joseph Clark, who has told how Joseph Sturge addressed him on his appointment, "Joseph, if thou thinks thou can't do any good, perhaps thou may'st get some." Richard Cadbury, like his brother, was a generous supporter of the work, and his house, "Uffculme," has been given by his son as a hostel for the movement. It was Mr. William White's experience as an Adult School teacher that made him so effective a chairman of the Improvement Committee that carried through the great clearance of the slums in 1876. Mr. George Cadbury's Garden Suburb at Bournville was also the outcome of his experiences of the life lived by Birmingham men and women in the crowded and ill-ventilated courts where sunlight could hardly penetrate and green things had no room to grow. As the movement has developed, its frontiers have been extended in many directions, till it has become an organised Christian brotherhood, made up of self-governing societies of men and women whose bond of union is expressed in one of the hymns that I often used to hear sung at the Adult School meetings that I attended—



*Photo by Dennis & Sons, Scarborough*

**BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL**



“ God send us men, whose aim ’twill be,  
Not to defend some worn-out creed,  
But to live out the laws of Christ,  
In every thought and word and deed.”

To help the work of the Adult Schools, “ Woodbrooke,” a large house on the outskirts of Birmingham, has been set apart as a kind of training college for Bible Class leaders. More recently, Mr. George Cadbury, Junior, has opened a settlement at “ Fircroft,” in the same neighbourhood, where working men can go into residence for short periods of study and friendly intercourse with one another.

## CHAPTER X

### EDUCATION

THERE is a saying in Denmark that an imposing building in England will be a factory; in Germany, a barrack; in Denmark, a school. The last thirty years has done much to wipe away this reproach, and a visitor to Birmingham to-day will find some of the most imposing buildings in the city devoted to educational work.

The oldest educational institution in Birmingham is King Edward's School, founded and endowed with the estates, then yielding £31 a year, restored to the town by Edward VI. "There is and shall be," so reads the charter, "one grammar school in Brymcham, which shall be called the Free Grammar School of King Edward the Sixth, for the education, institution, and instruction of boys and youths in grammar, perpetually, for all future times to continue." There was to be one pedagogue, one sub-pedagogue or usher, and a body of twenty governors. The school met in the old Town Hall in New Street till a new building of red brick was erected in 1707, to be in its turn superseded by the present building, which was built in 1830 from designs by Mr. Barry, the well-known architect of the Houses of Parliament.

There is little to say about the school till the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the value of its property had risen to about £2,000 a year, while the growth of population provided an adequate



supply of scholars. It was said of Dr. Jeune, who became headmaster in 1831, that "he found the worst school in England and left it one of the best." The new era begins with the passing of an Act of Parliament in 1830, giving fresh powers to the governors, and from that time the school began to prosper. Prince Lee, Gifford and Vardy were all, in their way, great headmasters, and the increasing revenue of the school enabled it to secure an efficient staff. "Within ten years this almost unknown provincial grammar school sent to Cambridge six Senior Classics, an achievement in that field of learning unrivalled, and indeed hardly approached by any public school before or since." It is interesting to remember that two of the last four Senior Wranglers, before the recent abolition of that office, came from King Edward's School. The last important change in the organisation of the school took place in 1883, when the system of co-opted governors gave place to a Board nominated by the Town Council, the Universities, and other bodies. At the same time the branch schools became Secondary or Grammar Schools, linked by a scholarship system with the High School in New Street. Some years later the girls' department, which had shared the boys' school, was provided with a building of its own on an adjoining site.

The Birmingham and Midland Institute represents the last of a series of attempts to establish an evening educational centre for adults. Birmingham had in succession its Mechanics' Institute, its Athenæum, and its Polytechnic, but they all withered before they were grown up. Proposals were mooted from time to time for a Literary and Scientific Institution, and an offer by Charles

Dickens, who visited the town in 1852, to read his "Christmas Carol" in the Town Hall as a means of helping to raise funds for the scheme, led to its being taken up by a number of public-spirited men. A site was given by the town authorities just opposite the Town Hall, and the Prince Consort visited Birmingham to lay the foundation stone. The older part of the present building was designed by Mr. Barry; a new building was added in 1881, designed by John Henry Chamberlain, a well-known local architect, who was hon. secretary of the Institute for eighteen years, and died immediately after delivering a lecture there. He was succeeded by Alderman Martineau, who on his death bequeathed a large sum for the maintenance of the work. The Institute claims to have been the mother of the School of Art and the Technical School—both now municipal undertakings—and it carries on a very successful School of Music under Professor Granville Bantock, and a great variety of other classes and lectures.

The history of elementary education in Birmingham practically begins with the election of the first School Board in 1870, though the Church of England had built a good many schools in the earlier part of the century. It was ascertained that accommodation was needed for 22,000 of the 59,000 children of school age in the town, and the Board began to build schools to meet this demand. In 1871 bye-laws were made fixing the age of compulsion from five to thirteen. To tell in detail the story of the work of the Birmingham School Board, of which Mr. George Dixon was chairman for many years, would involve too much space. Generally speaking, it may be said that Birmingham has

developed an efficient system of elementary education, and has linked up these elementary schools with a sound secondary school system, leading up to the University as its apex.

The history of the University of Birmingham begins with the foundation, by Mr. Sands Cox, of the Birmingham Medical School, which was incorporated in 1826. Ten years later Dr. Warneford became interested in the school, which he contemplated developing into a Church of England College for Arts, Medicine and Theology. He gave large sums to the building of Queen's College and of Queen's Hospital. At Queen's College there were chairs in Law and Arts as well as in Theology and Medicine. Queen's might have developed into a University College, and so ultimately into a University, but for two difficulties. The first of these was the "lack of pence, that vexes public men," and the other the exclusively Church of England character of its constitution. In 1867 Queen's absorbed a rival medical school that had been carried on at the General Hospital under the name of Sydenham College; and finally, in 1892, the medical department migrated to Mason College, and Queen's was left as a Theological College. The present writer held the Wardenship of the College for several years in conjunction with the Chair of History in the University. His hope was to associate the College in some way with a faculty of theology at the University, but difficulties of finance, and the unsuitability of the College, situated in the heart of the city, for residential purposes, rendered the scheme impossible; and the work of the College is now suspended while the cost incurred by rebuilding is being paid off.

What Queen's College failed to do was achieved by Mason College. Sir Josiah Mason, whose industrial career will be told in a later chapter, used his wealth for noble purposes. His first great gift was the Erdington Orphanage, which he endowed with £200,000 worth of land. He offered a similar sum for the establishment of a College to be built in the centre of the town, and provide a liberal education without theological tests or restrictions of sex or class. In a memorandum drawn up in 1875, when the foundation stone of the College was laid, Josiah Mason explained what he hoped the new College would be. "The scheme of the College is a large one, and I have sought to make it as liberal as possible in the character and extent of its teaching, the scheme of management, and the mode and terms of admission. The trustees are authorised, and indeed enjoined, to revise the scheme of instruction from time to time, so as to adapt it to the requirements of the district in future years, as well as at the present time. I have great, and I believe well-founded, hope for the future of this foundation. I look forward to its class-rooms and lecture-halls being filled with a succession of earnest and intelligent students, willing not only to learn all that can be taught, but in their turn to communicate their knowledge to others, and to apply it to useful purposes for the benefit of the community. It is in this expectation that I have done my part, thankful to God that He has given me the means and the will to do it; hoping that from this place many original and beneficent discoveries may proceed; trusting that I, who have never been blessed with children of my own, may yet in these students leave behind me an intelligent,

truth-loving and truth-seeking progeny for generations to come."

Great trouble was taken by Mr. Cossins, the architect, to make the building suitable for its purpose, and the founder visited the building almost daily, inspecting every detail and giving from time to time most valuable help in the way of suggestion. A Day Training College was associated with the College in 1895, and in the following year it was incorporated as a University College, with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain as President, Dr. Heath as Principal, and Alderman Clayton as Chairman of the Council. But the College could only train its students for London University degrees, and a movement began for converting it into a University. The three northern Colleges—at Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds—had become the federal Victoria University, but no civic University had yet been created in England. Largely owing to Mr. Chamberlain's efforts, a sum of over a quarter of a million was raised, Mr. Carnegie and Sir Charles Holcroft contributing £50,000 each, and a Royal Charter was secured in 1900, constituting a University of Birmingham, of which Sir Oliver Lodge was appointed as the first Principal. One of the earliest steps taken by the new University was the establishment of a faculty of Commerce, under Professor (now Sir William) Ashley, and other chairs were added. One result of the establishment of Birmingham University was that the northern federal University broke up, and the Colleges of Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds obtained charters giving them University rank. Since then Sheffield and Bristol have also secured local Universities of their own.

It soon became evident that the College buildings were inadequate for the technical departments of the University—Engineering, Metallurgy and Mining—and Lord Calthorpe having given a site of forty acres on what was then the edge of the city, a large sum was raised for the creation and equipment of new buildings there. These University buildings, as yet only partly completed, were designed by Sir Aston Webb, and will form a semi-circle of seven blocks with a diameter of classrooms. A central tower 325 feet high was erected at the expense of a private donor to commemorate the services of the first Chancellor. One interesting feature is a model coal mine in the grounds, where surveying, mine-ventilation and other practical subjects can be taught. The new buildings were opened by King Edward in 1909. A residential hall for women has been erected near these new buildings; during the war this became a nurses' home, the University buildings being taken over as a hospital by the military authorities.

The University is supported by grants from the Exchequer, and from the Birmingham City Council and the County Councils of the neighbouring counties. The leading business men of the city have given generous support, several of them serving on the Council; and before the war the number of students had risen to over a thousand. The University gains from its close association with the realities of the life of a great industrial community, while the intellectual activities of Birmingham have been greatly stimulated by the establishment of a great educational centre in the heart of the city.

## CHAPTER XI

### INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS

THE geographical situation of Birmingham, in the centre of England, with no navigable river, made the problem of communications very important, and it was appropriate that the town of Boulton and Watt should be in the forefront in the development of railways. As soon as the short lines from Stockton to Darlington and from Liverpool to Manchester had shown the practicability of the new method of locomotion, proposals began to be mooted for railways from Birmingham to London and to Liverpool. The "Grand Junction Railway" to Liverpool was completed first, and opened in 1837, with great local rejoicings, the first train completing the journey (97 miles) in three hours and seventeen minutes. The Bill authorising the London line was rejected by the House of Lords in 1832, but was passed in the following year, the landowning interest having—it is said—been propitiated by trebling the price to be paid for the land required. The line was completed in three years by Messrs. George and Robert Stephenson.

It was on the London and Birmingham and its connecting lines that luggage vans were introduced, the practice up to that time having been to carry passengers' luggage on the tops of the carriages. It was on this route also that another important

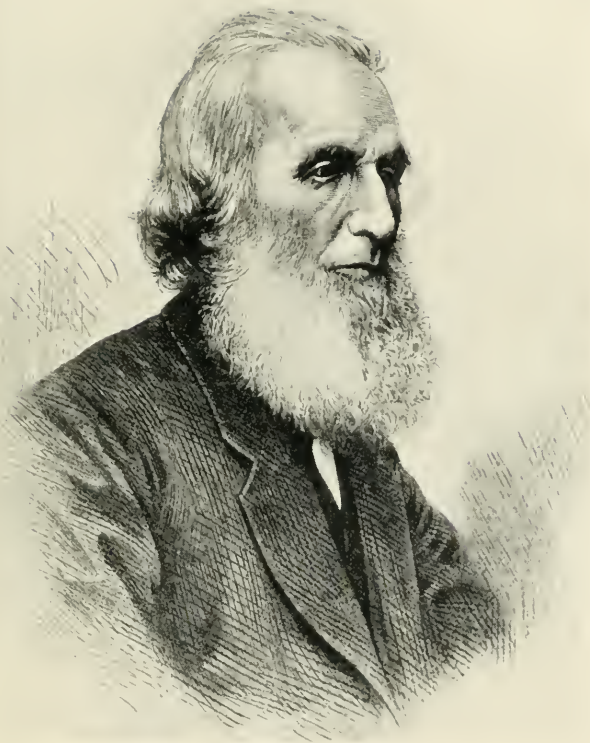
innovation was made, the first travelling Post Office van running between London and Birmingham.

Railways to Derby and Gloucester were immediately taken in hand, the latter line being soon after extended to Bristol. Then the Great Western Railway Company employed Brunel to construct lines, on what was then the broad gauge system, from Birmingham to Wolverhampton and to Oxford, so providing a new link between the Midlands and London.

The Birmingham terminus was temporarily placed in what was then the outskirts of the town, but before long the L. & N. W. R. began to clear a slum area south of New Street for the construction of a central station, which the Midland Railway was allowed to share. In recent years, a great scheme of reconstruction has transformed the Great Western Station on Snow Hill into one of the finest stations on the company's system.

A great variety of industries found their home in Birmingham during the nineteenth century. The development of steel-pen making is connected with the names of two remarkable men. The first of these was Josiah Mason, whose educational endowments have already been described. As a lad he earned a precarious living by selling cakes in the streets of Kidderminster. At the age of twenty he came to Birmingham, and for ten years had a hard struggle to live. "At thirty years of age," he writes, in a short autobiographical sketch, "with twenty pounds of savings as my whole fortune, I was brought into association with one of the most honourable, industrious, and ingenious of men, Mr. Samuel Harrison, the inventor of split rings, whom I served for a time, and to whose business on his retirement





SIR JOSIAH MASON

FROM A PORTRAIT IN THE REFERENCE LIBRARY, BIRMINGHAM



I succeeded. . . . to this business I afterwards added the trade of steel-pen making, which I have now (1870) followed for more than forty-seven years, first as the maker of the well-known Perryian pens, and later in my own name, until I have developed the works into the largest pen factory in the world. . . . This business and that of split-ring making were my sole occupations until 1840, when accident brought me in close relations with my late valued friend and partner, Mr. G. R. Elkington, who was then applying the great discovery of electro-deposition ; and through my association with him in this undertaking I may claim a share in the creation of a form of scientific industry which has so largely enriched the town of Birmingham and increased its fame throughout the world."

The first metal pen was made by Mr. Harrison for Dr. Priestley, in 1790, and in 1829 Mr. Mason bought one of Perry's steel pens from a Birmingham bookseller, and the same evening sent specimens of an improved pen to the makers, so inaugurating a partnership that lasted many years.

Joseph Gillott, who had come to Birmingham from Sheffield to make steel buckles, was introduced to the pen-making industry by his marriage with the sister of John and William Mitchell, on whose methods he improved by the use of a press. "With his own hands, in a garret of his house, he secretly worked until he had succeeded in making pens of a far better quality than had yet been made. His process was one in which, unassisted, he could produce as many pens as twenty pairs of hands, working under the old system, could turn out. There was an enormous demand for his goods, and as he wanted help, and secrecy seemed needful,

the young people married, and Mr. Gillott used to tell how, on the very morning of his marriage, he, before going to the church, made with his own hands a gross of pens, and sold them at a shilling each, realising thereby a sum of £7 4s.

Mr. Edwards tells how Mr. Gillott opened accounts at several banks, so that the knowledge of his large profits might not tempt competitors into the industry, and even buried money in the cellar of his house. He afterwards built, in Graham Street, the first factory on the modern scale erected in the town. Birmingham has remained ever since the home of the steel pen industry, which now produces about 100,000 varieties of pen, and has reached an output of over 200,000 gross per week.

The new method of electro-plating, already referred to, was discovered in 1840, partly by a Birmingham surgeon, John Wright. Messrs. George and Henry Elkington have ever since carried on electro-plating in their works in Newhall Hill.

Among other industries introduced into Birmingham during this period were the manufacture of art metal work and stained glass, for which John Hardman's works became famous; mechanical engineering, which has developed so rapidly since 1865 that "it is now possible, without arousing the protest of other centres of industry, to regard Birmingham as the home of mechanical engineering"; and electric engineering, which, though only recently introduced, has become one of the staple industries of the city. Birmingham also manufactures a great deal of railway rolling stock, and is only second to Coventry as a centre of the cycle and motor industry. The substitution of metal for wooden bedsteads led to a great development of this

industry in Birmingham, fifty of the sixty firms engaged in metal bedstead making being situated in the district.

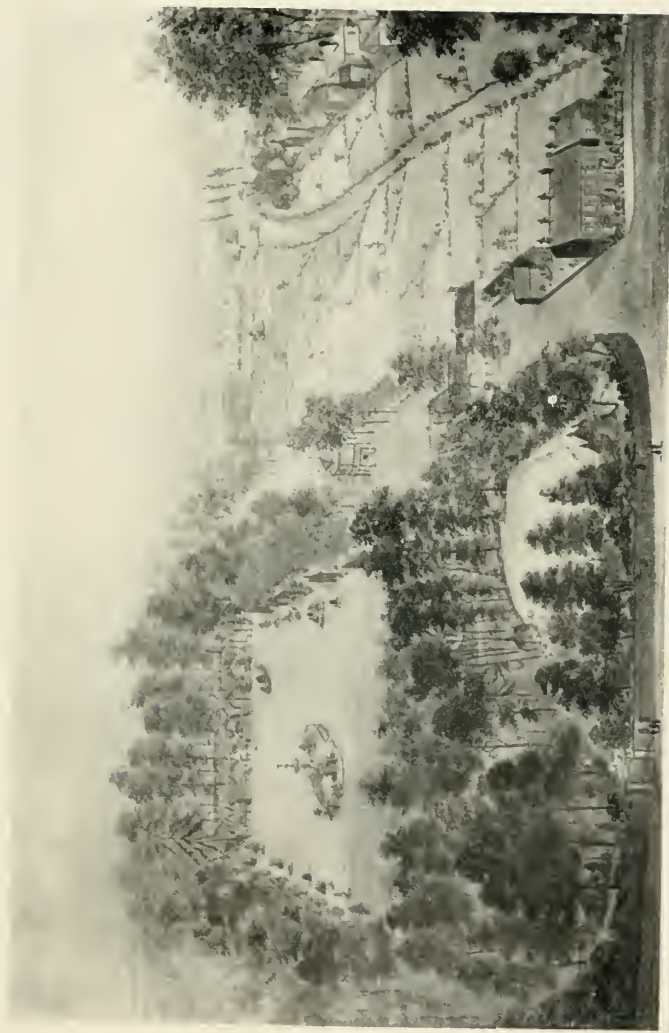
The jewellery trade also finds its centre in the city. "More people are employed in the manufacture of jewellery and gold and silver wares, and in the trades allied to and depending upon them, in Birmingham than in any other city in the world. There are upwards of one thousand separate firms directly occupied in the manufacture of gold, silver, and plated goods, and in addition to these there are all the kindred trades, such as die sinkers, stampers, setters, gilders, engravers, and many other branches which are largely carried on as separate businesses. It is estimated that the number of workers directly dependent for their livelihood on these trades is somewhere between 60,000 and 80,000." \*

For many years the Birmingham Jewellers' and Silversmiths' Association has co-operated with the city in maintaining and managing a first-class jewellery school situated in the midst of the workshops, where youths and girls receive training.

Of the many "captains of industry" who have helped to develop the industrial life of Birmingham it is only possible to mention a few. Sir James Timmins Chance devoted himself to the improvement of the optical apparatus used in lighthouses, on which he became the leading English authority. Chance Brothers and Co. are still the only English firm to manufacture lighthouse glass. Sir James Chance was a generous benefactor to the city, to which he gave West Smethwick Park, at a cost of £30,000. He also contributed £50,000 towards the endowment of the School of Engineering at the University.

\* G. Henry Wright, in *British Association Handbook*, 1913.

Sir Richard Tangye came to Birmingham from Cornwall, and started a small engineering business with his brothers. The firm first came into prominence in connexion with the launching of the *Great Eastern* in 1858, which was only achieved by means of hydraulic jacks invented by the Tangye brothers. Sir Richard Tangye used to say, "Tangyes floated the *Great Eastern*, and the *Great Eastern* floated them." Tangye's works now cover thirty acres, and engines of every kind are made there. Sir Arthur Keen began his career as an employé of the L. & N. W. Railway at Crewe. Having acquired an American patent, he founded the Patent Nut and Bolt Company, which, by amalgamation with the Dowlais Steel Works, became Guest, Keen & Co. A little later, an amalgamation was effected with the firm of screw manufacturers with which Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was connected, and Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds have a practical monopoly of the screw industry in this country. Ralph Heaton & Co., now The Mint, Limited, Birmingham, has done coining work for nearly every country in the world. Mr. Alfred Morcom, who gave up a position in the Navy to join the firm of Belliss and Morcom, was the inventor of a type of quick-revolution engine that has practically superseded all others for certain purposes. Among other large undertakings in the city are the General Electric Company's works at Witton; the great explosives factory of Kynoch's, founded by Mr. George Kynoch nearly seventy years ago; and the Birmingham Small Arms Company—the "B.S.A."—which has recently joined forces with the Dainler Company of Coventry; while the motor industry is represented by the Wolseley, Austin and Lanchester Companies, besides



*Photo by L. Lloyd*

**THE VAUXHALL, ESTATE**

FROM A COLOURED DRAWING BY J. L. PEDLEY IN THE REFERENCE LIBRARY, BIRMINGHAM





others. The firm of Cadbury Brothers is well known for the efforts that it has made to provide the best conditions of work for the workpeople employed in the great cocoa factory at Bournville.

Though far from the sea, Birmingham makes nine-tenths of the cabin furniture used by the shipping of the world; hundreds of thousands of silver watch cases are turned out in the city, the largest watch case factory on this side of the Atlantic being situated in the jewellery quarter; and the city supplied three-fourths of the fifty millions pins that are produced per day in the United Kingdom.

To enumerate all the articles manufactured in and around Birmingham would require several pages. "There are few commodities, with the exception of cottons, woollens, and silks, which the factories and workshops of Birmingham and district cannot supply." Owing to the variety, in character and scale, of the industries carried on in the city, employers and workpeople do not tend to fall into two clearly marked groups, and the relations between them are, on the whole, more friendly than in some other centres of industry. For the same reason, periods of national trade depression are less acutely felt than in other places. Whether amalgamations and the pressure of competition will result in the gradual disappearance of the small-scale producer, only the future can determine; but there is no doubt that any such change, if it came, would involve the sacrifice of one of the most attractive features of Birmingham industrial life.

## CHAPTER XII

### LITERARY AND ARTISTIC ASSOCIATIONS

BIRMINGHAM has risen to greatness too recently and too rapidly to have gathered around it many literary associations. It is pleasant to think that Shakespeare may have visited the town, and taken note of the uncouth humour of the "hard-handed men that work in Athens here"; but of this we have no record. The earliest literary leader whose life is associated with the town is Dr. Johnson, whose father used to come over from Lichfield on market days to set up a bookstall in Birmingham. Samuel Johnson often walked over to Birmingham from Oxford to visit an old school friend, Edmund Hector, a surgeon in the town; and after his unsuccessful attempt to earn his living as an usher, he accepted an invitation to stay with Hector, who lodged with one Thomas Warren, a bookseller, in High Street. The outcome of this visit was a proposal by Warren that Johnson should translate for him an account by a Portuguese Jesuit, Lobo, of a *Voyage to Abyssinia*, and some *Dissertations* by Le Grand, for which he offered a sum of £5. Not without some difficulty, due to Dr. Johnson's "constitutional indolence," the book was finished and published in 1735. Dr. Johnson also contributed what Boswell calls a "periodical essay"

to Warren's short-lived paper, *The Birmingham Journal*. In 1735 he married Mrs. Porter, the widow of a Birmingham mercer, who at the time of their marriage was forty-six years of age, while the bridegroom was twenty years younger. They were married at Derby, and Mrs. Johnson's small fortune of £800 enabled her husband to set up a kind of coaching establishment for young gentlemen near Lichfield, the failure of which led him to accompany one of his pupils, David Garrick, to London two years later. Johnson afterwards told Boswell that "it was a love match on both sides," and her death, in 1752, caused him deep and genuine grief. In his later years, Dr. Johnson often visited Hector in his house in Old Square. In 1776 he came with Boswell, when they were entertained by Mr. Sampson Lloyd, to whom Dr. Johnson discoursed "in by no means a gentle manner" on the error of the Quaker disregard for the ordinance of baptism. Boswell was shown over the Soho factory by Boulton, whom he quotes as saying "I sell here, sir, what all the world desires to have—POWER." Next day Johnson drove to Lichfield, remarking, when Boswell charged the inhabitants with being an idle body of people, "Sir, we are a city of philosophers; we work with our heads, and make the boobies of Birmingham work for us with their hands." Johnson's last visit to Birmingham took place in August, 1784, within a few months of his death.

A man of some note in the social life of Birmingham in the eighteenth century was John Freeth, who succeeded his father as host of the Leicester Arms, known to its friends as "Freeth's Coffee House" and to its enemies as the "Jacobin Club." John Freeth had a certain facility for verse-writing,

and a good singing voice, and it was his habit to compose songs on local matters, which he sang for the amusement of his patrons at the Leicester Arms. He published several collections of these occasional verses, including one—*The Political Songster*—printed by Baskerville.

William Hutton was a much more considerable figure in the Birmingham of this period. Hutton's first visit to Birmingham was as a runaway apprentice from Nottingham. He only stayed a few days, but ten years later (1750) he started business as a bookseller in High Street. He claims to have been the first to open a circulating library in the town, and the first to start a regular paper warehouse. The Rev. J. Angel James describes him as a man "who exercised whatever religion he possessed by attending many years the public worship at Carr's Lane. He was in every way an extraordinary man, if we except piety and benevolence. He had raised himself, by his own sagacity, industry, perseverance, sobriety, and economy, from poverty to affluence. He came to Birmingham a poor boy, and he died a country gentleman, in a mansion which he had built for himself. He was the author of several works which manifest great powers of observation, and no inconsiderable tact at narration. He was fond of humour, punning, and attempts at wit, as is evident from all he wrote. But he was cold, hard and somewhat penurious."

Hutton's earliest literary work was his *History of Birmingham*, published in 1782—a sketch of the town and its industries written in a witty and conversational style.\* He followed this up with a

\* Mr. Birrell, in his *Selected Essays*, mentions an incident that presumably has reference to Hutton's *History*:

*History of Derby*, his native town ; and in subsequent years produced several volumes descriptive of journeys in various parts of the country. Just after his death, in 1815, his autobiography was published, containing many interesting sidelights on Birmingham life, and especially on the riots of 1791, from which Hutton had suffered severely. William Hutton's daughter Catherine, was a spritely and interesting letter-writer, and some of her correspondence has been published by Mrs. Beale, under the title of *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century*.

S. T. Coleridge and Charles Lamb have a slight association with Birmingham life through their friendship with Charles Lloyd, son of the banker, who, as the outcome of a visit of Coleridge to Birmingham, went to stay with him as a "paying guest" in Bristol. While there he met Charles Lamb, with whom he collaborated in a little volume of *Blank Verse*, and who remained a close friend after an estrangement had separated him from Coleridge. Charles Lloyd published two other volumes of poetry, *Nugæ Canonæ* and *Desultory Thoughts in London*, and a long and not very successful novel,

"Malone once found Dr. Johnson sitting in his room roasting apples and reading a history of Birmingham. This staggered even Malone, who was himself a somewhat far-gone reader.

" 'Don't you find it rather dull?' he ventured to inquire.

" 'Yes,' replied the Sage, 'it is dull.'

"Malone's eyes then rested on the apples, and he remarked he supposed they were for medicine.

" 'Why, no,' said Johnson; 'I believe they are only there because I wanted something to do. I have been confined to the house for a week, and so you find me roasting apples and reading the history of Birmingham.'

"Happy is the man," adds Mr. Birrell, "who, in the hours of solitude and depression, can read a history of Birmingham."

*Edmund Oliver.* His later life was clouded by mental depression, culminating in melancholia.

Charles Lamb was also brought into friendly relationship with a brother of Charles, Richard Lloyd, who appealed to Lamb for protection against the (largely imaginary) persecutions of his father. Among the letters addressed to this young man are one or two of the best that Charles Lamb ever wrote.

In 1824 Thomas Carlyle stayed for some months in Birmingham, as the guest of a Mr. Badams, a manufacturing chemist of Ashted, which was then a pleasant suburb. In his *Reminiscences*, Carlyle tells of his visit and of his impressions of Birmingham. Of Badams he writes with unusual kindness :—

“ My Birmingham visit, except as it continually kept me riding about in the open air, did nothing for me in the anti-dyspeptic way ; but in the social and spiritually consolatory way, it was really of benefit. Badams was a horse-fancier, skilful on horseback. His unaffected kindness and cheerful human sociality and friendliness, manifest at all times, could not but be of use to me. Seldom have I seen a franker, trustier, cheerier form of human kindness than Badams’—how I remember the laughing eyes and sunny figure of him, breaking into my room on mornings, himself half dressed, ‘ What ? Not up yet, monster ? ’ ”

Besides exploring the neighbourhood on his pony “ Affy,” Carlyle spent much of his time wandering about the town, his description of which is worth quoting.

“ Birmingham I have now tried for a reasonable time, and I cannot complain of being tired of it. As a town it is pitiable enough—a mean congeries

of bricks, including one or two great capitalists, some hundreds of minor ones, and perhaps a hundred and twenty thousand sooty artisans in metals and chemical produce. The streets are ill-built, ill-paved, always flimsy in their aspect—often poor, sometimes miserable. Not above one or two of them are paved with flagstones at the sides; and to walk upon the little egg-shaped slippery flints that supply their place is something like a penance. Yet withal it is interesting, from some of the commons or lanes that spot or intersect its green, woody environs, to view this city of Tubal Cain. Torrents of thick smoke, with now and then a burst of dingy flame, are issuing from a thousand funnels. A thousand hammers fall by turns. You hear the clank of innumerable steam-engines, the rumbling of carts or vans, and the hum of men, interrupted by the sharper rattle of some canal boat loading or disloading; or, perhaps, some fierce explosion when the cannon-founders are pouring out their new-made ware. I have seen their rolling-mills, their polishing of teapots and buttons and gun-barrels and fire-shovels and swords, and all manner of toys and tackle. I have looked into their iron-works where 150,000 men are melting the metal in a district a few miles to the north; their coal mines, fit image of Avernus; their tubs or vats as large as country churches, full of copperas and aquafortis and oil-of-vitriol; and the whole is not without its attractions, as well as repulsions."

Another famous writer who sought in Birmingham relief from depression was Washington Irving, who came to stay with his brother-in-law, Henry Van Wart, just after the failure of his Liverpool business had reduced him to ruin. Van Wart succeeded in

rousing Irving from his despondency, and *Rip Van Winkle* and the *Sketch Book* were written during his stay in Birmingham. Aston Hall appears in Irving's "Bracebridge Hall," where the Holt family are represented by the Bracebridges. His sketch of Stratford-on-Avon was also the outcome of an excursion made during his stay in the town.

The only Birmingham writer who has an assured place in the literary history of the last century is Joseph Henry Shorthouse, a chemical manufacturer who, at the age of fifty, suddenly became known in the literary world through his great novel, *John Inglesant*. The story had been the work of many years, and had been published for private circulation by Messrs. Cornish Brothers, when Mrs. Humphry Ward recommended it to Messrs. Macmillan. It is in part the story, under the guise of a romance, of the author's spiritual pilgrimage from his early Quaker associations to membership of the Church of England. The scenery of the book opens at Little Malvern and ends in the fields opposite Worcester Cathedral. Though full of the adventurous life of the seventeenth century, it is, essentially, the history of a soul, attaining to peace through the realisation of the sacramental significance of life. Mr. Shorthouse wrote several other stories—*The Little Schoolmaster Mark* (1883), *Sir Percival* (1886), *The Countess Eve* and *A Teacher of the Violin* (1888), and *Blanche, Lady Falaise* (1891)—but none of these—except, in some measure, the first—have the same strange fascination as *John Inglesant*.

Among contemporary English poets, two Birmingham writers find a place. Mr. Alfred Hayes, now Principal of the Midland Institute, is the author of several volumes of poetry, and has recently



published a striking Historic Tragedy on the career of *Simon De Montfort*; and Mr. John Drinkwater is known as a poet and dramatist in wider than merely local circles.

David Cox is the one painter of the first rank who has made Birmingham his home, for though Burne Jones was born and educated in the town, he kept up no close connexion with the city after his school days were over. David Cox was the son of a Birmingham master smith, and was set to his father's trade on leaving the elementary school which supplied him with all the school education he received. Finding the work of the anvil too much for his strength, he found employment in the "toy-trade," making buckles, painted locket, etc. Then he became colour-grinder and scene-painter's assistant in the local theatre. Here he acquired valuable lessons in landscape work, and in 1804 he moved to London, where he painted and taught, finding it a hard struggle to live. After holding an appointment as teacher of art at Hereford Grammar School for some years, he returned to London, where the merits of his work were now being recognised. Finally he settled in Harborne, on the outskirts of Birmingham, where he remained till his death in 1859. Cox's output of pictures in water-colour, and subsequently in oils, was enormous, and pictures that he sold for a few pounds now fetch large sums. His range of subjects was narrow, but within the limits of quiet English landscape he has few equals. His work is straightforward and unaffected, achieving natural effects by simple means.

It cannot be said that love of music is as conspicuous a feature of Birmingham life as it is of the life of Wales or Yorkshire, but the triennial Musical

Festival has undoubtedly done something to foster musical education in the city. From the beginning of the Festivals Handel's *Messiah* was the central feature, but after the Festival had been moved to the Town Hall, a wider range was given to the programme, and the Festivals of 1837 and 1840 were notable from the fact that Mendelssohn was present, to conduct the first performance of his *St. Paul* and of his *Lobgesang*. The appreciation with which these works were received led him to bring out the *Elijah* at the Festival of 1846. Since then many new works of importance have been produced at the Birmingham Festivals, one of the greatest being Gounod's *Redemption*, which was the feature of the 1882 meeting.

In 1905 Mr. Richard Peyton founded a Chair of Music at the University, and Sir Edward Elgar was appointed the first Professor. On his resignation, Mr. Granville Bantock, who already held the office of Director of Music at the Midland Institute, was appointed to the Professorship, and thus a close link was established between the University and the School of Music at the Institute.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SOME BIRMINGHAM WORTHIES

IT seems proper to gather into a closing chapter a few particulars of some Birmingham men who have not been already referred to. It is almost certain that John Rogers, editor, with Tyndale and Frith, of Matthew's Bible, was the son of a Deritend loriner. After leaving Cambridge he became Chaplain to the Merchant Adventurers at Antwerp, and there he joined in the translation of the Bible direct from the original Hebrew and Greek, which was published under the pseudonym of Thomas Matthew. Returning to England after the death of Henry VIII., Rogers became a Prebendary of St. Paul's. On Mary's accession he was arrested, and suffered martyrdom at Smithfield—the first victim of the Marian persecution.

Coming down to modern times, Birmingham claims among its notable men Sir Rowland Hill, whose father was a schoolmaster in the town, and who was himself the originator of one of the earliest experiments in carrying on a school on principles of self-government, "leaving, as much as possible, all power in the hands of the boys themselves." He published a pamphlet entitled *Plans for the Government and Education of Boys in large numbers*. Ill-health obliged him to leave Birmingham, and while acting as secretary to Gibbon Wakefield, he

became interested in postal questions, and began to advocate penny postage (1837), and the use of stamps "covered at the back with a glutinous wash." When penny postage was adopted, in 1841, Rowland Hill entered the service of the Post Office, and as Chief Secretary carried through many reforms in the organisation of the postal system. He died in 1879. A statue of Sir Rowland Hill stands in the Hall of the Birmingham Post Office.

Sir Francis Galton, the well-known anthropologist, was the son of S. T. Galton, of Duddeston, whose estate is now Lightwoods Park. Francis Galton was born in 1822, and educated at King Edward's School. His grandfather was Erasmus Darwin of Lichfield, and he was cousin of the great Charles Darwin. He became known as an explorer and writer on Meteorology, and in later years took up the study of heredity, and may be regarded as the founder, in England, of the study of Eugenics. He died in 1911.

The Rev. Rann Kennedy, second master of King Edward's School and Vicar of St. Paul's, was a poet of some repute, and the father of two sons who attained distinction—Charles Rann Kennedy, known for his translations of the Orations of Demosthenes; and Benjamin Hall Kennedy, head master of Shrewsbury School and Regius Professor of Greek in Cambridge University.

Edward Augustus Freeman, the well-known historian, a nephew of Thomas Attwood, was born in Harborne in 1823; and Edwin Hatch, whose work in early Church History led at one time to much controversy, was educated at King Edward's School, which also numbers amongst its pupils Grant Allen, the writer on Biology, and John Churton Collins,

who held the Chair of English Literature in Birmingham University during the last two years of his life. John Thackray Bunce, for forty years editor of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, and Samuel Timmins, F.S.A., who did valuable service to the Library, are honourably remembered in the city, and Joshua Toulmin Smith, the historian of English Gilds, was a Birmingham man, and wrote small monographs on *Traditions of the Old Crown House, in Der-yat-end*, and *Men and Names—Founders, Frecholders and Indwellers*, as contributions to the history of the city.

Among the worthies of Birmingham, a niche must be found for Charles Reece Pemberton, actor and lecturer, of whom Holyoake says that he was the most popular lecturer who ever entered a Mechanics' Institution. He spent the earlier years of an adventurous life in the city, before escaping from an uncongenial apprenticeship to Liverpool, where he was kidnapped for the Navy. He died in Birmingham in 1840.

#### NOTE ON WAYS OF SPELLING BIRMINGHAM.

Mr. William Hamper, F.S.A., collected the following list of variations in the spelling of the name of the city. Forty-nine are from MSS., the rest from printed volumes.

Brumwyham	Bermyngheam	Bromwyham
Burmyngham	Bermyngham	Byrmyngham
Birmingham	Bromicham	Brimingham
Bermingham	Bermigham	Brymymcham
Bremisham	Bremis Cham	Bermengcham
Brymincham	Bermicham	Bermyncham
Bermingcham	Burmyncham	Bremingham
Birmincham	Bromwyham	Byrmicham
Birmyngcham	Bourmyneham	Bermyngcham
Berkmyngcham	Birmygham	Brimicham
Bremicham	Brimcham	Burmingham
Bromidgham	Brinningham	Brimingcham

Bermengham	Berningham	Brummigham
Burmyngeham	Bermynekelham	Byrmegham
Bormingham	Berinyngham	Bremicham
Brymyecham	Brunningham	Brumidgham
Byrmingham	Byrmyincham	Birmyncham
Brumingham	Bruminingham	Birmicham
Brinnicham	Byrmigham	Bromincham
Birmincham	Bromesham	Brimmingham
Byrmyngeham	Barmegam	Burmedgeham
Birmingeham	Burmegham	Burmigham
Bormyngcham	Bremyngham	Burmincham
Byrmycham	Brymmyngeham	Birminghame
Birmyngeham	Brymicham	Brymyngcham
Birmingecham	Bermichcham	Brymingecham
Brymyncham	Bryminham	Brimisham
Burmigam	Brimigham	Birmingecham
Buringham	Beringham	Burmicham
Brammingham	Brumigham	Burmyngcham
Bremecham	Brimechame	Bermyngham
Brymysham	Burmycham	Birnyngcham
Burmichecham	Bermgham	Berringham
Byrmigcham	Brimmigham	Brymingham
Brymyngcham	Birymincham	Byrmincham
Byrmyngcham	Byrmingecham	Birmingcham
Burmucham	Brimmidgeham	Burmegam
Burmycham	Brumegume	Bremmencham
Brumidgham	Bromidgome	Bremingem
Burmegam	Brumegam	Brumicham
Brummingcham	Burmingham	Bermingaham
Bremingham	Bermingham	Brymynham
Brymygeham	Bormycham	Brymyngiam
Brennyngcham	Brymmyngcham	Brimyncham
Brymyham	Brymyscham	Burmygham
Burymynham	Bermechagm.	

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Bristol	...	...	PROF. G. H. LEONARD
Cambridge	...	...	A. GRAY
Chester	...	...	MISS M. V. TAYLOR
Halifax	...	...	J. S. FLETCHER
Harrogate and Knaresborough			J. S. FLETCHER
Hastings	...	...	L. F. SALZMAN
King's Lynn	...	...	PROF. E. TYRRELL GREEN
Leeds	...	...	J. S. FLETCHER
Leicester	...	...	S. H. SKILLINGTON
Newcastle	...	...	PROF. F. J. C. HEARNSHAW
Nottingham	...	...	E. L. GUILFORD
Oxford	...	...	J. WELLS
Peterborough	...	...	K. E. & R. E. ROBERTS
Plymouth	...	...	A. L. SALMON
Pontefract	...	...	J. S. FLETCHER
St. Albans	...	...	W. PAGE
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Shrewsbury	...	...	DR. H. S. CRANAGE
Wakefield	...	...	THE REV. A. GOODALL
Westminster	...	...	THE REV. H. F. WESTLAKE
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