

But the work continued to progress, and in November 1839 a Chapel of ease to the mother church was opened in Todd's Lane, later known as Grafton Street.

GEORGE LAWTON.

(To be continued.)

NOTES AND QUERIES

855. JOHN BACON—THE FIRST METHODIST R.A. It seems strange that the same issue of the *W.H.S. Proceedings* which contained a query about John Bacon, R.A., (xxv: 64), should also contain a reference to him in an article about his friend John Russell, R.A., who painted his portrait. Like Russell, Bacon was a Methodist of the Calvinistic school, attending Whitefield's Tabernacle. He was more than four years Russell's senior, having been born in Southwark on November 24, 1740, into the family of a clothworker. As an apprentice in a pottery works, he showed great initiative, and gained a prize from the Society of Arts. Soon he was winning distinctions wholesale, and was one of the first students enrolled at the Royal Academy on its opening in 1768. He also received from its First President, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the first gold medal for sculpture awarded by the Academy, Russell being awarded a silver medal for drawing a few days later. Bacon was also ahead of Russell in becoming an Associate of the Royal Academy, receiving that honour in 1770, whilst Russell became an A.R.A. in 1772. The *Dictionary of National Biography* gives no details of his becoming one of the forty Academicians, but Sir Walter R. M. Lamb, K.C.V.O., the present Secretary of the Royal Academy, informs me that their records show him to have been elected R.A. in 1778. He was thus ten years ahead of Russell in gaining that distinction, so that the better-known portrait-painter loses his title of "first Methodist R.A."

Bacon's work was characterised by simplicity and good taste, and he had neither the desire nor, according to some, the ability to venture far into the realms of imagination or antiquity. Whilst examples of his work are to be seen in many important buildings, they can best be studied in those two great repositories of the sculptor's art, St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, where are also to be seen monuments by his son John, who carried on the business after his father's death. Outstanding in St. Paul's are his memorials of Dr. Samuel Johnson and John Howard the philanthropist, whilst in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey are his works commemorating Thomas Gray and William Mason. Most striking of all in the Abbey is his huge £6000 monument, 33 feet high, to William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, for which he served not only as sculptor but author, composing the inscription. This fact led George III to warn him—"Now, Bacon, mind you do not turn author; stick to your chisel." He did not altogether follow the king's advice, however, but continued to write many epitaphs, both in prose and verse, as well as occasional religious essays, and

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articles on painting and sculpture, including those in Rees' and Chambers' encyclopaedias. Bacon was a very prosperous man, and on his death in 1799—before he reached the age of fifty—he was able to leave £60,000 to be shared between his five children. There seems little doubt that he was also a genuine Methodist by conviction, with a fine Christian character, as is maintained by his biographer, the well-known Evangelical, the Rev. Richard Cecil, author of the life of John Newton. He was buried in Whitefield's Tabernacle, his self-composed epitaph being—

“What I was as an artist seemed of some importance while I lived; but what I really was as a believer in Jesus Christ is the only thing of importance to me now,”

Rev. Frank Baker, B.A., B.D.

856. WESLEY'S FIRST SERMON. The *Methodist Recorder* published in December a picture of an old barn at the Grange Farm, South Harrow, with the heading “Wesley preached his first sermon here.” The *Standard Journal* records Wesley's own statement that his first sermon was preached at South Leigh, near Witney, and the *Methodist Recorder* in its Winter number for 1904 published a fully illustrated and documented account of the occasion. There seems no reason whatever to doubt the claim of South Leigh, though the *Evening News*, referring to the barn, said in October 1945. “Local people will tell you with pride that John Wesley preached his first sermon within its oak-timbered walls and beneath its 60 feet high tiled roof”.

Mr. Sydney Walton, one of our members who lives at Harrow, says that the barn is situated in Roxeth, which he thinks to be more ancient than Harrow. He kindly secured the opinion of a local historian who says he does not think that the “first sermon” story can be substantiated, but is confident that Wesley did preach in the barn, and would welcome any documentary evidence on the point. I cannot furnish him with such, and although one hesitates to be dogmatic, I should be greatly supplied if any came to light.

It has been pointed out that Dr. Adam Clarke lived for a period at Eastcote, near Roxeth, but as he did not acquire his property there till 1824 the fact seems to have no bearing on the point at issue.

F.F.B.

857. WATERFORD AND THOMAS WILLIAMS: In a recent number of the *Proceedings* (XXV. 56ff.) we printed a copy of a letter written by Thomas Prosser, of Cardiff, from a place called “Watterford”. The Rev. R. Lee Cole, M.A., B.D., wrote to us suggesting that we should explain that Prosser wrote his letter from Waterford, in Glamorganshire, and not from the place of the same name in Ireland. For further particulars concerning the Welsh Waterford, also known as Watford, see Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 342n., 506n.

Mr. Cole's letter, however has raised another point that demands some clarification. Crookshank (*History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 14-16) gives the following account of Thomas Williams, the first Methodist preacher to preach in Ireland: “He was a member of a respectable Welsh family, and having received a liberal education, graduated at one of the Universities . . . Having entered the Itinerancy in 1741, at the close of the following