

CESSNOCK CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

FOUNDATION STONE LAYING.

Yesterday marked an important and forward movement in connection with the Anglican Church at Cessnock, when the Dean of Newcastle, Very Rev. C. H. Golding-Bird, laid the foundation-stone of a new church building. The Dean arrived by the afternoon train, and was met at the station by Revs. H. W. Rogers (Cessnock), A. Phillips (rector of the parish of Mount Vincent), and Mr. George Brown (minister's warden). Mr. R. Schmitzer (assistant to Rev. A. Phillips) was also in attendance.

The Dean was driven to the parsonage, and while he was preparing for the ceremony a large number of people, including many leading residents, had assembled on the site of the new building. On arrival of the Dean, the proceedings opened with a hymn, "The Church's One Foundation," and Rev. A. Phillips read the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Rev. H. W. Rogers said it was a pleasing duty to ask the Dean to lay the stone. He hoped that what he might have to say would stimulate the people to do even more than had been done in the past.

The Dean then unveiled the stone, and declared it well and truly laid. The stone bore the following inscription:—"This stone was laid by the Dean of Newcastle, Very Rev. C. H. Golding-Bird, on September 2, 1909."

He said now that the stone had been laid, the people had their part to do in the uplifting of the Church. He had no doubt they would do their part faithfully. He had been informed that the Women's Guild had raised £223 by means of bazaars. It was difficult to realise how the Churches would manage without the Women's Guilds. He believed that if there were no such organisations many churches would have to close their doors for want of funds. God bless the Women's Guilds; they were doing well, and doing God's service. There was a lesson to be learned from the stone which had been laid that day. His mind went back to England. The first Church he had ministered in 15 years ago dated back to the thirteenth century. That church was only an outward expression of the same church of which they had laid the foundation-stone. The church they were about to erect would belong to the grand old Church of England just as much as the grandest cathedral. They would form one of the units. They all had the same object in view—the bringing of the Kingdom of Christ. Many would worship here, would ask for forgiveness, and find strength and refreshment. He had been told there were 200 families at Cessnock belonging to the church, but there was not that number of families attending. The work of a church did not only depend on the minister's efforts. The minister, bishop, or dean was no nearer to God than were the people. He would ask the people to pack the little church from end to end, and he was sure they could do it. It was surprising what could be done when an effort was made. What he wished to impress upon the people was that they were priests of the laity.

What he wished to impress upon the people was that they were priests of the laity. They had done well, but he wanted them to do better in the future. They must never do less than they done before. There were many men who thought that religion was only for women and children. He wanted to encourage the men to go to church. They could not do without the church, and this was often brought forcibly home to them in their hour of trouble and sorrow. He would ask them not to be ashamed of being religious. Jesus Christ was not ashamed even when the people of old spat in his face. Let the people join together and say:—"This church shall be a cathedral, and we will strive to make it successful." He asked them to make the church their home—a place where they loved to come to meet God, and where God would meet them. The best test of religion was what it cost them. He asked them to give up something, perhaps only some little home comfort for the church, and to value their church.

The minister's warden (Mr. George Brown) said he could hardly conceive of words to express their thankfulness to the Dean for coming to Cessnock. All he could say was that they appreciated his visit very much and deemed it a great honour. They wished to give some practical proof of their appreciation, and had decided to make a presentation to the Dean. Seeing that the ladies of the district had done so much he would like some lady to make the presentation.

Mrs. John Brown then presented to the Dean a gold trinket of unique design, bearing on the reverse the recipient's monogram in beautifully-worked gold letters, and on the reverse the following inscription:—"Presented to the Very Rev. C. H. Golding-Bird, M.A., B.D., Dean of Newcastle, on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of Cessnock Church, September 2, 1909."

The Dean was much impressed with the beauty and unique design of the gift, which he said he valued very much. He remarked that it was the first token of affection he had received in Australia.

The ceremony concluded with the singing of a hymn, and pronouncement of the Benediction by the Dean.

The Dean invited those who felt so disposed to place their offerings on the stone. A large number of persons responded, and a total of £115 10s was subscribed. The Dean called for three cheers for Cessnock which were lustily given.

The site of the new church is close to Main-street, on portion of Brown's subdivision. The building will be of rusticated weatherboard, and will have accommodation for about 250 persons. The main building will be 55 x 25, with a porch 10 x 8, and vestry 10½ ft. square. The cost, including furnishing, will be something like £400. The amount in hand will more than cover the contract price for the building.

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At the close of the stone-laying ceremony, an adjournment was made to the Cessnock Hall, where a public tea and entertainment took place. The tables and hall had been tastefully decorated by the ladies, and presented a pleasing appearance. A large number of persons partook of tea, and they were loud in their praise of the attention shown by the ladies: The following ladies had charge of the various tables:—Mesdames A. W. Bridge, J. Brown, C. Oison, N. Prescott, J. Cruickshank, K. Winter, S. Snape, T. Punch, Misses B. Gordon, M. Woodhouse, B. Brown, and H. Natt-rass.

At the entertainment which followed, Rev. H. W. Rogers presided over a large attendance. The Dean gave a very interesting lecture on South America, which was much appreciated. He also spoke highly of the worth of Rev. H. W. Rogers, and the good work he was doing in the parish.

Rev. H. W. Rogers and Mr. G. Brown also addressed the meeting. The first-named gentleman briefly referred to the work of the church, and thanked the Dean for his attendance.

A programme of musical and other items was rendered, to which the following ladies and gentlemen contributed:—Messrs. Ward, Erskine, Poulton, Voisey, Misses Oswald, Nield, Mrs. Roddam, and Master Robinson. Four pupils of the Cessnock Public School, gave "Climb, Boys, Climb," and Miss Wilson's Neath Concert Company gave a humorous sketch entitled "Young Wife's Debt."

Following were the principal contributors at the laying of the foundation stone:—Mr. George Brown, £25; Mrs. Scholey (Newcastle), £25; Mr. A. W. Bridge, £25; Mr. John Brown, £10; Mr. J. P. Gordon, £5; Mr. John Doyle, £2 2s; and Mr. J. Andrews, £2 2s. Numerous subscribers gave £1 1s each.