

## Rehoboth and Radium.

**J**UST below the lantern light on the Eddystone Lighthouse, erected on the sea-worn and dangerous rocky coast off Plymouth are carved the following words: "To give light and to save life"; powerful and truthful words, suitable to the purposes for which the lighthouse was constructed.

In no less degree are these words applicable to the two buildings—one on the site of the other—which within the past 150 years, have been erected on a piece of land in Riding House Street, Regent Street, London.

In the early years of last century the place of worship of the Baptist worthies, and known as Rehoboth Chapel, here stood, and the cause was under a faithful and devoted servant of the Lord, the Rev. John Wigmore.

The theology taught in those days may be found in one of the hymn-books then in use in the chapel, Gadsby's Selection, Hart's, and Philpot's. Mr. Wigmore, however, compiled a selection, including some of his own compositions, known as *Wigmore's Hymns*, which also was used; the first hymn was in the form of an acrostic upon his name.

The choir was of men's voices, led by a Mr. Ferris, who, on his retirement from the chapel and business, went to live in Hampshire. The tunes were set by him with the aid of a pitch-pipe, such as may still be heard in similar chapels. The singers were seated just below the pulpit, on removable boards which covered the Baptistry, and their hymn-books rested on a three-sided sloping desk as a music-stand. The chapel had a gallery, with the pulpit at the rear end, facing eastward.

Mr. George Rudler (1800–1876) was one of the deacons for some quarter of a century, ending 1872. He kept a commercial and classical school, known as the Foley Street Academy. It is believed that amongst his scholars was Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who received instruction there from the autumn of 1836 to the summer of 1837.

One of Mr. Rudler's sons, Frederick William, an eminent geologist, was Professor of Natural Science from 1875 till 1880 in the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and subsequently for many years curator of the Museum of Practical Geology in Jermyn Street; President of the Royal Anthropologi-

cal Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, and in 1903 a Companion of the Imperial Service Order.

But to return to our Baptist worthy, the Rev. John Wigmore. Born in humble life towards the close of the eighteenth century, he worked as a lad in the coal mining industry, and the writer of this article, then a child of eight or nine years of age, well remembers hearing the minister, with deep emotion in his voice, narrate to his congregation the horrors which he endured when, as a lad, he listened to the terrifying religious teaching of the time. He was a man of benevolent, loving, and patient temperament, and the religion of terrorism was uncongenial to his affectionate nature.

He could be emphatic in his preaching, and on one occasion at a morning service, letting his hand fall somewhat heavily on the pulpit desk, one of the gas-lamp globes—not having been firmly secured into its holder, was so shaken as to fall on to the floor, and was of course broken to pieces—much to the amusement of the younger portion of the congregation.

One evening, on holding a baptismal service, Mr. Wigmore, during his sermon, remarked, "Do you not think the service of baptism a beautiful sight?" and an aged member of the congregation seated in the gallery and wearing a large white cravat, responded, "Yes, it is a beautiful service."

The site of the chapel was not large, and no Sunday school was attached to it. As children we had to attend the Sunday school at Keppel Street Baptist Chapel, under the care of the Rev. Mr. Milner. From 1860 onwards, Mr. R. Tallack was the superintendent, Mr. S. Toone, Mr. Squirrel, Mr. R. H. Parker, were amongst the teachers; and it was a great day when, perhaps twice or three times in the year, a letter from the Baptist missionary in India, and named Guyanoba Powar, was read aloud to us from the superintendent's desk. Another interesting occasion was when a Mr. Cooper, a chemist in the Seven Dials, came and delivered us afternoon addresses. He was always a favourite.

Those were the days when Rehoboth Chapel was as a lighthouse to shed light—the light of truth and of the gospel—and to save life—the life of the soul. And faithfully did its dear minister, John Wigmore, display that light in all clearness, to the fulness of his power.

Men and buildings serve their purpose—"they have their day and cease to be." And so with Rehoboth Chapel. Its work of diffusing the spiritual light for the soul's salvation gave place in the year 1911, under the progress and development of science, to the diffusion of a new light; transmuted under nature's laws, in the cause of and for the promotion of human comfort in the alleviation of bodily suffering; the Radium Institute was then

built upon the site where formerly stood Rehoboth Chapel. Radium, a beneficent element, one of the products of the forces of nature—a provision which the thoughtful mind cannot but regard as the outcome of part of the blessings for mankind, and an emanation from the wonders and powers of Nature's God, the great almighty Creator of the universe.

As in former days the Rev. John Wigmore so faithfully taught us that there is no limit to the love of our almighty Father for His erring children—and that the only limit to that love is the deliberate wilfulness of closing our eyes to see and our hearts to receive that love and His forgiveness consequent upon repentance—that the divine love of the Father and of the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man are boundless save for that limit. So with the progress of science, we are learning from the teaching by radium that there is no limit to the amount of energy in the world available to support life—only there is a limit imposed by the boundaries of knowledge on our ability to recognize and to use it.

The knowledge of the truth, as revealed by Jesus Christ, and the knowledge revealed by a study of radium, are the brother and sister in religion and science, and it is more than a coincidence that the passing of Rehoboth Baptist Chapel is amply satisfied by the erection on its site of the Radium Institute; for the divine purpose of each may be summed up in the words, "To give light and to save life."

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*Hawkshead.*