

## Notes

### THE PITHAY CHAPEL, BRISTOL

**D**URING the early years of this century there stood in Bristol an ancient and interesting building with a stone over the doorway inscribed "Baptist Chapel." The first chapel on that site was built soon after 1650, and rebuilt in 1792. In 1817 the church removed to its new home in Old King Street.

Before the building of the Pithay Chapel, the first Baptist Church in Bristol, formed about 1641, had found a suitable meeting-place in "The Friars," buildings once belonging to a Dominican Priory. These very interesting buildings still stand, and have belonged for many years to the Society of Friends. When, however, the church desired a home of their own, they purchased a site in the Pithay, which had been used as "a sope house."

Their first minister, Henry Hinam, died in 1679. His successor was Andrew Gifford, who had been ordained two years earlier. He was a brave, ardent and intrepid evangelist, and preached in towns and villages around Bristol, so that he won the title "The apostle of the West." During the reign of Charles II he was imprisoned four times, three times in Newgate Prison in Bristol, and once in Gloucester Gaol.

In the library of Bristol College there is one of the letters which Gifford wrote from his prison at Gloucester. He died in 1721. It was his grandson, another Andrew Gifford (1700-1784), who presented the Tyndale Testament, and many other valuable gifts to Bristol College.

In 1723, the Church called John Beddome, the father of Benjamin, the hymn-writer. John Tommas (1724-1800) was pastor at the Pithay from 1753-1797. Towards the end of that period the old chapel was rebuilt and made larger. Even so, it was far too small when Thomas Roberts (1780-1841) came as minister in 1807. So in 1817 the first Baptist church in Bristol removed to Old King Street.

Afterwards the old chapel in the Pithay was used by a group of Congregationalists who had separated from Castle Green Church. These eventually removed to a new building. When they moved out, then another Baptist group moved in. In 1804 a group of forty-eight left the church at the Pithay Chapel and formed a separate church, later known as Counterslip. Just thirty years later, in 1834, a similar group of forty-two left Counterslip and found a meeting-place back in the Old Pithay Chapel, which they purchased for £800. They called a minister, Evan Probert, who soon filled the chapel to overflowing. So a site was secured in City Road, and the church removed there in 1861.

When they moved out, yet another Baptist group moved in. In 1856 the pastor and deacons at Counterslip received a petition, signed by 483 names, begging them not to remove the young man, James Davis, who had come from Rawdon College to act as assistant to their aged minister, Thomas Winter, who resigned later in 1859. When this petition was rejected, a very large group separated and found a place of worship at the Coopers' Hall, in King Street, Bristol (not Old King Street) where they met for several years. Here James Davis was married to Miss Ainsworth. When, however, they heard in 1861 that the Pithay Chapel was vacant, they removed there, and here they found a home for some time. Owing to ill-health their minister, James Davis, left and removed to Tynemouth. The cause failed to thrive and so faded out.

During its last days this ancient chapel belonged to Messrs. J. S. Fry & Sons, Ltd., who used it as a box factory. During extensive renovations it was pulled down soon after 1906.

GORDON HAMLIN.

#### KATHERINE MANSFIELD

THE *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XIII (1950), pp. 253f., contained a number of details regarding the family of John Dyer (1783-1841), the first full-time secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, together with extracts from his diaries for 1823, 1827, 1836 and 1837. In a subsequent article (*ibid*, pp. 321f.) examples were given of the curious necrologies or obituary notes, which Dyer put at the end of his diaries.

Ten of Dyer's fourteen children survived infancy. Attention was called to the fact that his eldest daughter, Eliza, proved a woman of considerable ability and that her husband, Joseph Payne, became the first Professor of Education in England. The recently published life of Katherine Mansfield by Antony Alpers (Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 21/-) reveals the interesting and unexpected information that the important literary figure and writer of short stories was a great-grand-daughter of John Dyer.

Soon after Dyer's tragic death in 1841, one of his sons, Joseph, then a young man of twenty-one, emigrated to Australia, becoming a clerk in an insurance office in Sydney. There he married a Sydney girl, Margaret Isabel Mansfield (d. 1906), and a few years later was sent by his company to Wellington, New Zealand. It was one of his daughters, Annie Burnell Dyer (d. 1918), who became in due course the wife of (Sir) Harold Beauchamp (1858-1938) and the mother of a daughter, Kathleen, who as a writer adopted the pen-name "Katherine Mansfield."