St-Gile's-in-the-Fields' new national schools : interior of the boys' schoolroom.

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OPENING OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS,
ST. GILES'S-IN-THE-FIELDS.

A PUBLIC meeting to inaugurate the opening of the National Schools in St. Giles's, Bloomsbury, was held on Wednesday week in the building. Great interest was manifested in the proceedings by a numerous assemblage. Lord John Russell was to have presided, but having been summoned to attend the Duke of Bedford, who is labouring under serious illness, the Hon. A. F. Kinnaird, M.P., was called to the chair. Among the ladies and gentlemen on the platform were the Ven. Archdeacon Sinclair, Miss Burdett Coutts; Sir J. P. Kay Shuttleworth, Bart., LL.D.; Rev. A. W. Thorold (Rector of St. Giles's), Rev. Emilius Bayley (Rector of St. George's, Bloomsbury), Rev. W. H. Hart (Chaplain of Gray's Inn), and Mr. E. M. Barry.

After a hymn had been sung and a prayer offered, the Chairman opened the schools by saying, "In the faith of Jesus Christ, and to the glory of the Eternal Trinity, I open these schools to the children of the labouring classes in the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields."

The Rev. A. W. Thorold, the Rector of St. Giles's, then read a short paper on the school building. It stated that the parish contained a population, closely packed, of 37,400 souls. Although much had been done by the exertions of good men in that district, the moral and social position of the working classes was mostly at a very low level. Those numbers represented about 5000 children of school age. Various attempts had been made to give them the elements of instruction. Ragged schools, parochial schools, and night schools had to some extent broken up the fallow ground, and sowed it with Christ's gospel. In all these cases the education was gratuitous, so that other arrangements were necessary to meet the large artisan class who were willing to bear part of the expense. Thirty years ago Mr. Endell Tyler, who was the Rector of the parish, erected the schools which they were about leaving, and it was determined that the new schools should be erected when the Government inspector reported that the old schools were deficient in plan and insufficient in accommodation. The site on which the new building was erected had cost £4000. The total cost of the building amounted to £12,500. A grant of £3000 had been made by the committee of the Council of Education, and £9000 had been promptly subscribed by the owners of property and the parishioners, leaving £500 to be subscribed. The Duke of Bedford had subscribed liberally to the schools.

The Chairman said that it was a matter of deep regret that Lord John Russell had not been able to attend. It had been his privilege for many years, as a member of the House of Commons, to witness the untiring zeal of Lord John Russell in the great cause of national education, the rapid progress of which was highly gratifying. He believed that if there were safety for a country it would be found in a sound scriptural education.

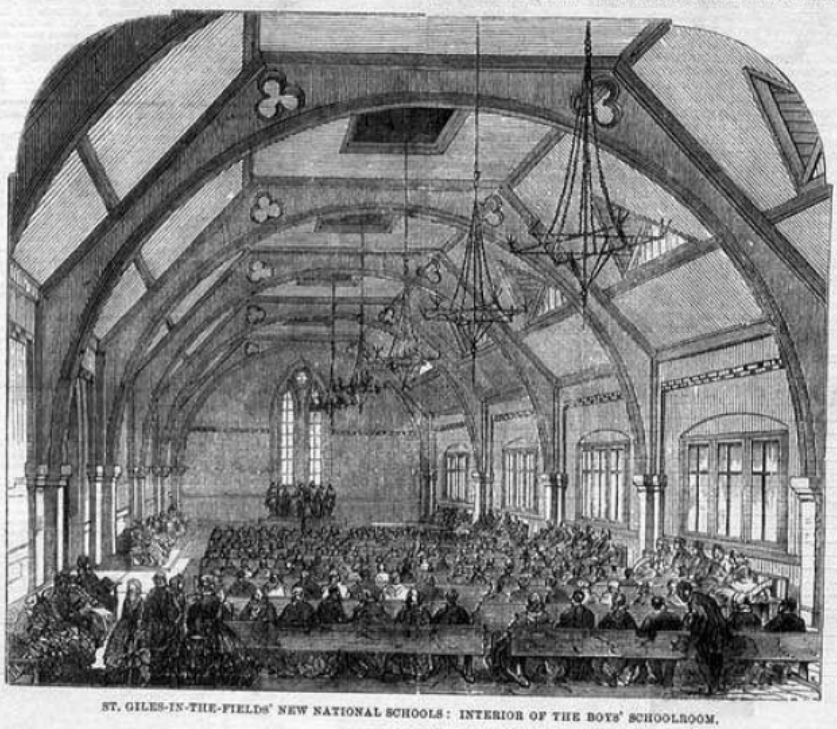
Sir J. K. Shuttleworth regretted the absence of Lord John Russell, because he should have been glad if his Lordship could have had personal experience of the way in which the difficulties of such a parish as this could be overcome by the combined exertions of the Rector and parishioners on the one hand, and the Committee of the Council on Education on the other. He described the parish of St. Giles as a cesspool of the metropolis and a foul ulcer in the body public. Through the medium of these schools he hoped its abandoned population might be effectually reached. The hon. Baronet concluded an eloquent speech by proposing a resolution which recognised the progress of public sympathy in the education of the poor, and expressing a hope that the owners of property in the parish, and the parishioners generally, would make provision for the permanent maintenance of the schools in efficient working order. The Venerable Archdeacon Sinclair, in seconding the resolution, earnestly advocated clerical and lay co-operation in the great work of education. The resolution was unanimously adopted.

Mr. Kinnaird having briefly returned thanks for a unanimous vote of thanks which had been passed him, the Doxology was sung and the meeting separated.

In the evening a tea-meeting was held, at which the Rev. Rector presided.

We give, from the *Builder*, the following description of the building and its appurtenances, which occupy a site, at the north-western corner of Endell-street and Broad-street, 75 feet long, with an average width of 60 feet; while a portion of the land, about 30 feet square, is set apart as a playground and a means of obtaining light and air at the back of the building:—

There are four floors, besides the mezzanines and attics over the staircases. The basement is proposed to be used for a soup-kitchen or for an industrial school. It is abundantly lighted by means of windows in the plinth of the



ST. GILES-IN-THE-FIELDS' NEW NATIONAL SCHOOLS: INTERIOR OF THE BOYS' SCHOOLROOM.

NEW NATIONAL SCHOOLS, ST. GILES'S-IN-THE-FIELDS.