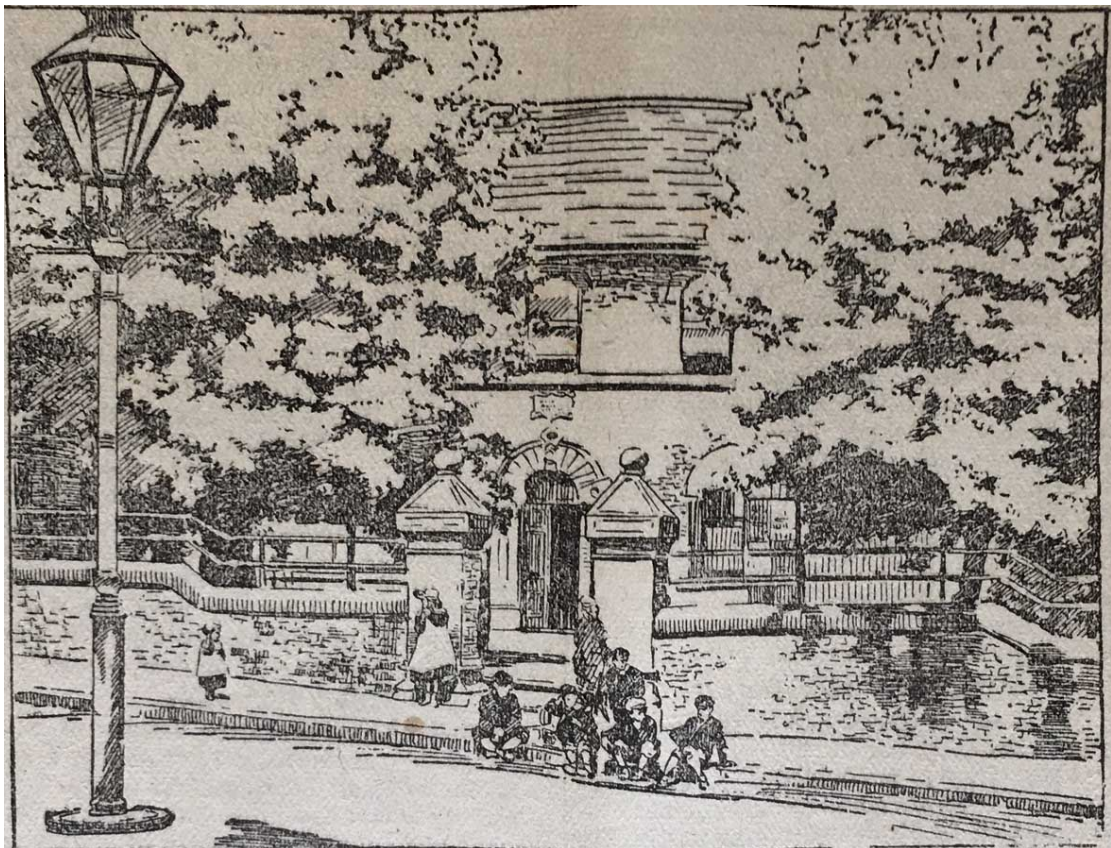


## MALTON ADULT SCHOOL

### A RECORD OF THIRTY YEARS' WORK; THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF CHRISTIANITY

It is almost a truism to say that the Adult School is the most progressive movement that Malton possesses. After briefly renewing the thirty years' history of the local school, we are not surprised at the success which it has attained. It certainly deserved to

succeed, and those who have taken a prominent part in bringing the school to its present state of useful prosperity have cause to feel gratified that their efforts, arduous though they may have been, should be so amply rewarded.



The Adult School is essentially a democratic movement, and, not being bounded by sectarian walls, it can claim – and has received – hearty and brotherly support from Christians of all denominations. Mr. George Cadbury, who in the Midland Counties has done so much for the movement, recently pointed out that its strength was due to the fact that the schools brought Christ's ethical teaching to bear upon national questions.

This is largely responsible for the success of the schools; they can be summed up in two words – applied Christianity. Their root idea is the practical utility of faith as a solvent of all the problems that appeal to thinking people. When it is realized that included among the Adult School members are men who, under ordinary circumstances, would not attend any place of worship, it is obvious that the teaching of such a grand truth must result in incalculable

benefit. It was recently said that, when Christianity becomes a touchstone by which the attitude of the nation towards other nations and manners of the home are alike infallibly estimated, it is revitalized. This is what the Adult School aims at, and a nobler moral object could hardly be conceived.

#### A Membership of Six

The Malton School was established in April of 1875, with a membership of about half a dozen. The work was commenced by the Society of Friends, who carried on the school for seven years in a very unassuming and quiet way. The object of the promoters of the local movement was – we are told in the “Gazette” of 25 February 1882 – “to give assistance in the way of elementary education to those adults who in their youth had not the scholastic opportunities of the more favoured ones and for this purpose classes are conducted for mental improvement and social converse and recreation. While, however, one portion of the tuition in the schools is intended to benefit the minds of those too long neglected, the whole tone of the teaching points to the greater and more important improvement for the future.”

Soon after the formation of the school the meeting-place was transferred to the old Friends’ Meeting House on the site of which the Adult School building now stand. This old meeting-house was of ancient date, and it is probable that George Fox, the first Quaker, preached within its walls. In his journal, George Fox mentions several visits he paid to Malton. In 1651 he was twice in Malton “where he had great meetings.” On the occasion of the second visit during the year named, Fox was invited by a local clergyman to preach in his “steeple house,” and on Fox complying with the invitation, there was an angry scene in the church because the Quaker would not go into the pulpit, but persisted in

addressing the people from “a high seat.”

When the first anniversary of the commencement of the school came round, the membership had grown from six to nearly 100. In connection with the school had been started a savings fund, a library, and a cricket club, while a night school was held throughout the winter months. A drum and fife band and singing classes were also formed. The membership continued to increase, and before another year had passed a reading-room was opened and a temperance society formed in connection with the school. Owing to the success of the reading-room, it was afterwards found necessary to utilize two rooms for this purpose. The fourth annual report showed a further increase in membership, with an average attendance of 48. In 1880 a women’s class was established, and in a year the membership had reached 85, while a savings bank and temperance society were formed in connection with the women’s branch.

In 1882 the present Adult School was built, and the membership was augmented by 59. In successive years till 1887 there were small fluctuations in the numbers of members in consequence of deaths and removals, but at the annual meeting in 1888 the committee were able to report an increase both in the men’s and women’s classes. The number admitted since the commencement of the school was then said to be 828. In 1888 a meeting was held in favour of international arbitration, and at this meeting Mr. Cremer, M.P., gave an address. In 1890 the Industrial Exhibition was first spoken of, and in the autumn of that year the first exhibition took place. Eventually the exhibition was taken over by another society, and it is not yet decided whether it shall be continued, in some consequence of the deficit on the last exhibition.

## The Great Unwashed

In the report for 1891 a somewhat curious paragraph appeared. "The great unwashed question has lately agitated us, and some members, remembering the old adage that cleanliness is next to godliness, have discussed the possibility of erecting a couple of baths, but we are sorry to have to report that the question still remains in abeyance, the necessary funds not being forthcoming."

In 1896 the school celebrated its "coming of age" by holding special meetings, which were well attended. Among those who took part in these meetings were Messrs. A.H. Taylor, D. Crisp, and the Misses Clough, two talented young ladies who could perform on almost every musical instrument. This year saw an increase in membership and a successful session of the Social Society, which has since been such a useful and important branch of the local school.

The autumnal show was first held in 1900, and was continued till the present year (1905) when the show of flowers and vegetables was superseded by a successful picture postcard competition.

On "Peace Sunday," 23 December, 1900, extracts from John Bright's speeches were read; and during this year's session of the Social Society we notice that the subjects dealt with ranged from spring cleaning to electricity. The next year, 1901, saw schools started at Kirbymoorside and Pickering, largely through the efforts of Malton friends.

At the last annual meeting the number of members was 119, making a total of 1,422 admitted since the formation of the school. Since April a social club has been established, and schools have been opened in Norton and Bulmer. The club has been an unqualified success, and it has been found necessary to make additions to

the present building to accommodate the large number of members. Mr. C.H. Shannon, architect, has prepared plans for the new premises, and, as the plans have been approved by the Council, it is expected that the work will soon be put in hand. Of course, all the various subsidiary branches of the school centre is the Sunday morning class, and it is hoped that the attendances will be increased as a result of the social club and the other efforts connected with the establishment. If only considered from an educational point of view, the Sunday classes are of considerable benefit.

## Of Immense Benefit

As Macauley says:- "The education of the people conducted on those principles of morality, which are common to all the forms of Christianity, is highly valuable," and in this respect the Adult School movement has been of immense benefit to the nation in creating a desire for betterment in the minds of those whom the usual agencies of religion do not always reach.

Adam Smith strongly advocated education for the people because, he said, "the more they are instructed the less liable they are to the illusions of enthusiasm and superstition which, among ignorant nations frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders." "An intelligent and instructed people," he says again, "are more disposed to examine and more capable of seeing through the interested complaints of faction and sedition; and they are, upon that account, less apt to be misled into unnecessary opposition to the measures of government. In free countries, where the safety of government depends very much upon the favourable judgment, which the people may form of its conduct, it must surely be of the highest importance that they should not be disposed to judge rashly or capriciously concerning it."

The Adult School is deserving of support from the fact that it helps to make its members citizens who are capable of forming an intelligent opinion on important questions. If, as a consequence of this hurriedly-written

survey of the local movement, an extended interest should be shown in the school, we are sure it would be most gratifying to the local ladies and gentlemen who are prominently connected with the movement.