



St. George's Church, Semington

Leavetaking of the Rev. C. J. Down

Tuesday last was quite a gay day at this usually quiet village. The Rev. C. J. Down, (who is about to leave the parish, for his new living at Hemington) with his usual liberality, treated with cake and tea the whole of the children in the parishes of Semington and Hinton, and also of the Union Workhouse, numbering about 200. About 100 of the cottagers' wives of Semington were similarly regaled in a field. Tea being over, the children belonging to the Church School presented Mr. Down with a handsome silver vinaigrette. One of the children read a very suitable and touching address expressing their sorrow and regret at losing such kind friends. A very handsome photographic album was also presented by the pupils at Mr. Eyles's School, as a token of their respect and esteem. During the evening various sports and amusements were provided for the children, and the Melksham brass band varied the proceedings with some music. These gratifying proceedings were brought to a close about 8 o'clock, after a very pleasant evening being spent, and one long to be remembered by the villagers. Many of the leading families of the neighbourhood were present and added to the enjoyment of the party.

Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser, 30 August 1862

Testimonials and Address to the Rev. Chas. J. Down, Late Incumbent of Semington

In August last, the Rev. C. J. Down, the late Incumbent of this village was presented with the Rectorate of Hemington, Somerset and soon after departed. Immediately on the fact being known that Mr. Down was about to leave Semington, a general wish was expressed that some recognition of his faithful and affectionate ministrations for ten years should be made. An address, in the shape of a farewell letter, was prepared and circulated for signature among the parishioners, and a proposal submitted at the same time for some substantial testimonial. Never was a suggestion more cordially accepted, for young and old, rich and poor, eagerly volunteered their contributions. Circumstances delayed the completion of the project before Mr. Down's departure to his new sphere of duty; but on Wednesday last, a gathering of his friends and late parishioners was assembled at the school room, to meet their late pastor. There were present the Revds. E. T. W. Thomas, Robert Springett--Bodman, Esq., Mrs. King, Mr. and Mrs. Bruges

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and family, Mrs. Reynolds Gwatkin and family. The proceedings were opened by Mr. Gwatkin, who read the following address:-

Semington August 1862

To the Rev. Charles J. Down

Rev. and dear Sir,

The time is approaching when, in the purpose and providence of God, the relation so long subsisting between us of pastor and people, is about to be severed by your removal from us. A long and unbroken intercourse in the ordinary social conditions of life, might naturally awaken feelings of regret, in the prospect of separation, but, when we, the parishioners of Semington, look back over the past ten years, and recognise in you the diligent and faithful pastor, the sympathising friend, the cheerful neighbour, the ready counsellor and comforter, who during all that period, has with unwavering consistency maintained these relations towards us; and have found you always prompt and steadfast in promoting every good work, conducive to the temporal and spiritual advancement of your flock, these characteristics having won our love and esteem, call forth our united expression of sorrow. But while sensible of our own loss, we desire not only to submit to the purpose of Him who orders all things well, but feel we ought rather to rejoice that in your being called to an extended sphere of labour, therewith are added ampler means and power to enable you to carry out, on a larger scale, the various acts of liberality and benevolence, which have marked your ministrations among us, and therefore we should wish you God speed. Indeed, by the same principles of Christian love and forbearance, by which you have been enabled in this parish to draw all hearts to recognise the bonds of Christian brotherhood, so preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and thus effectually dissipating sectarian prejudice and disunion, we doubt not the like happy results, by the power of the Holy Spirit may follow your efforts in the new sphere of duty, being assured that in watering other the promise will be fulfilled in your own experience. May this hope encourage you amid the change of place, duties and friends, and call to your mind the scenes of your early labours, and the warm hearts wherein your memory will be cherished.

We pray that the God of all good may prosper your future labours, and shed His choicest blessings abundantly on yourself and family, and preserve them and yourself in all your ways in health and peace.

We are, Rev. and dear Sir

Your affectionate and faithful friends

Signed by about 160 parishioners

At the close of the address, an elegant silver epergne, from the chaste design and workmanship of Mr. E. R. Payne, of Old Bond Street, Bath, was uncovered by Mrs. Bruges, and presented in the name of the friends and parishioners to Mr. Down.

Mr. Down, who appeared affected by this unexpected proof of their kindness, made the following reply:-
My very dear friends of Semington.

I cannot fully express all the feelings in my heart, in reading the address which has been put into my hands, and receiving from you all, this very beautiful memento of your love and esteem. Believe me, I needed not this lasting token of your affection, to put me in remembrance of all the loving intercourse which has subsisted between us for the long period of ten years. This can never be effaced from my heart, however long God may spare my life; not at whatever distance it may please him that we may be separated one from another. Neither do I forget that it is from you *all*, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, that this memento has been received – nay, rather I feel that this, in my eyes, enhances its

value a thousand fold; because it tells in silent words that my labours have been blest by that Master, whom it is my greatest glory, my chiefest happiness to serve. To preach Him, to lead you to Him, has been my only aim; and ever remembering that His last prayer was for unity, - "that they may all be one," - to unite all in one common bond of Christian love, has been my chief desire, my constant wrestling prayer. I have never forgotten that differences have existed among us - differences I mean in our mode of worship and service - and these I know will always exist while this world remains; but I have felt with the great Apostle, that though there are differences of administrations, still "it is the same Lord." And when I see the names of those which are appended to this paper, I feel that that dear Lord is *the one*, - the common bond which has bound us together; that He is our Foundation, our Chief Corner stone - the one object of our faith, our hope, and our love; and thus when we are removed hence, and are no more seen, these little differences, which are as "wood, hay, stubble," will be forever removed, and thus we shall meet as one people redeemed by the same blood, to praise and worship Him forever. I know you will not forget him who has so long watched over you, and loved you with a single heart; but this is my last request, that above all things, you keep ever in remembrance the exceeding love of Him, whom I have preached. If I have not lead you to Him, my labour has indeed been in vain; but this I will never believe. With some of you I know He is precious; you "love Him (as I do) because He first loved us," May this company be an increasing one, day by day, and believe me, that removed as I am now from you by distance, never shall I be removed from you in heart; but amid increasing responsibilities - amid care, it may be, and anxiety - I shall ever cherish, as a bright spot in my life, the years I have spent with those I have loved at Semington.

In the base of the epergne is a chamber ingeniously constructed by Mr. Payne, in which was placed a vellum scroll, recording the names of Mr. Down's late parishioners, and the donors of this parting memento of their united regard.

On the shields of the epergne is the inscription:- "Presented to the Rev. Charles J. Down, B. A. by some friends and the Parishioners of Semington, 1862, in token of their esteem for 10 years of faithful ministerial duties"

Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser, 13 December 1862