

Transcribed from an unidentified Bridgwater newspaper, late June 1927

PAGEANT SUNDAY.
GREAT DEDICATION SERVICE AT MARY'S.
WHAT THE PAGEANT MEANS.

"Almighty God, we ask Thee to bless and prosper the work of this Pageant to the honour and glory of Thy Name. Guide and protect all those who take part in it. In memory of our great past, help us so to live that we may hand on unsullied our heritage. May this effort, dedicated to Thee, bring real and true prosperity to our town. Let Thy Holy Spirit be the guide of those upon whom the responsibility for the government of this borough rests, so that all their efforts may tend to the advancement of true religion, and the furtherance of Thy glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

These words of the Pageant Prayer were the keynote of the great service of dedication to the event upon which Bridgwater has entered his week. The service was held on Sunday morning at St. Mary's Parish Church, and was attended by a vast congregation which filled the noble old edifice to its utmost seating capacity. The Mayor (Alderman W. Deacon), members and officials of the Corporation, together with many of the men who are taking part in the Pageant, accepted the invitation given them to attend in State procession, a large company leaving the Town Hall shortly before eleven o'clock. At the head were the Chief Constable (Mr. F. W. Pearce) and members of the borough police force, members of the Royal Air Force, the fire brigade (under Captain H. Goodman), the town crier (Mr. E. Nichols), the mace bearers, and the Town Clerk (Mr. C. C. Byers). The Mayor, wearing his robe and chain of office, was accompanied by the Pageant Master (Major Cely Trevilian), and the ex-Mayors present, also robed were the Deputy-mayor (Alderman H. M. B. Ker), Alderman F. G. Haggett, Alderman S. Berry, and Mr. F. H. Allen. The Rev. Seymour Berry, M.A., O.B.E. (vicar), and the Rev. S. Lano Coward, B.A. (curate), were also in the procession, which included some of the delegates in Bridgwater for the National Allotments congress. The procession was played to the church by the B. A. Christy's band, and was met at the west door by the churchwardens (Messrs. T. Perrens, F. Parr, M. Page, and C. Hoyal) and the choir. In the church, seats had been reserved in the central isles for the Pageant performers, the ladies of whom had already taken their place, while special accommodation was also allotted for the pupils of the County Secondary School for Girls, the lads of Dr. Morgan's School, the Girl Guides, and members of St. Mary' Boys' Guild.

The service, which was of an exceedingly impressive character throughout, began with the processional hymn, "Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven," after which the great congregation heartily sang a verse of the National Anthem. The Rev. S. L. Coward conducted the first part of the devotions, and in place of the Venite was sung a metric version of part of Psalm 68, by Brady and Tate. This was followed by the 122nd Psalm, and a feature of the service was the beautiful singing of the choir, with Mr. F. Docksey, Mus. Bac, F.R.C.O., at the organ. The first lesson was read by Major Cely Trevilian and the second by the Mayor. Then came that wonderful hymn, "O God, our help in ages past," which is to be rendered in the Pageant, and in which the descant was sung with striking effect by the girls of the County Secondary School, following which was offered the Pageant Prayer. Then came more of the Pageant music, a hymn, "O God, my strength and fortitude," the words of which are by Thomas Sternhold and the tune by Christopher Tye, dated 1500.

A DEDICATION TO GOD.

The Vicar preceded his address by saying that he had hoped that that morning the pulpit would have been occupied by the Dean of Wells, a great scholar, historian, and preacher. Basing his brief remarks on the words of St. Paul, "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans viii., 28), the rev. gentleman said: We have come here to our parish church this morning on a great occasion in the history of our town, as the first act of our Pageant, to dedicate it and ourselves to God, and it is because the Pageant is something which is really important in the life of our town that it is right and fitting that we should ask the guidance and the blessing of God upon that which we are now undertaking. Some one may ask, "What is a Pageant, and what is it meant to do?" First of all, a Pageant is a representation of certain historical incidents, in order that what we see may recall to us something in our past history. Thereby we get to understand not only from reading, but also from seeing, the historical events that have gone. We begin to understand the history of our town, the part that it has played in the history of this country, far more than we ever did before. The Pageant, I trust, will remind us in Bridgwater that we have a past which is great. To the ordinary person there are two great names connected with this town of ours, the one that of a sailor and the other that of a battle. The work which Blake did probably affected the whole history of this country and this great Empire of ours. The battle of Sedgemoor is famous not only as a battle, but because it was the last battle fought on the soil of England.

The Pageant has not only got what we may call a purely historical ideal, but it is also about life—life in every phase of its being, the serious and the sublime, the humorous and the ridiculous, the life of the child, the life of the grown-up, and the last great experience of life as we know it on this earth. It is because it is about this great adventure that it therefore has a very real religious significance, because, after all, religion is life, and therefore it is again fitting that the first act in this great work in this town's history should be that we come and lay the Pageant before our Great King. There are a certain number of people who dissociate the idea of laughter with religion, but it is probably true to say that the average man when he laughs cleanly and honestly is not far from the Kingdom of God. Therefore to you who are taking part in this Pageant I would say, go forth from your parish church with the realisation that you are not simply taking part in a show, but that you are doing something which is noble and good, that in the representation of the past you are helping us all, whether we be actors or witnesses, to realise the greatness of that past, and that it is our duty to hand on that heritage which we received to the next generation as great as we received it.

I cannot end this address (said the Vicar) without a word of very sincere and real appreciation of two persons to whom we owe this Pageant. First, its inception was due to our Mayor, who has worked and slaved in order that it might be brought to a successful issue. He has conquered innumerable difficulties, and he has done so with a real Christ-like tact. Your Worship, this week you will see this child of your imagination fulfilling- its purpose, please God, and fulfilling its way. The other outstanding figure is our Pageant Master, who has worked so hard, and brought to a successful issue the great ideals that underlie this Pageant. He has unstintingly given of those great talents with which God has endowed him for the pleasure and profit of Bridgwater. To those of us who have had the pleasure of working with him he has shown such extreme kindness that we can only hope that the tie which has been formed between him and Bridgwater will not only last through the Pageant, but will be a tie which will never be broken.

While the collection was being taken the hymn, "Glorious things of thee are spoken", was sung, and after the blessing the congregation sang the stirring composition for the Pageant, "Song of the Bridgwater Men."

APPRECIATIVE SPEECHES.

The procession having returned to the Town Hall,

The Mayor, in expressing the pleasure at having the Pageant Master with him at that unique service, said many of them who some time ago only knew Major Trevilian by name had got to love and reverence him, and they hoped that the Pageant would not be the end of that happy association, but the beginning of greater things to come. (Applause) Then they were also grateful to the Vicar for the excellent service they had had — (applause) — and his address was characteristic of all that was in their minds that morning. They wanted to feel that this Pageant, besides delighting them, would develop the life of the town in the very best sense, and that all who took part in it would be better men and women from their association with it. His Worship concluded by thanking all who had come to the service, and especially the representatives of the great allotments movement from various parts of the country, and their friends, of the Air Force from Westonzoyland, while they had been also delighted to have had so many of the young people, the representatives of "the future," at the service. (Applause.)

Major Trevilian, who had a most cordial reception, returned his sincere thanks, and paid a graceful tribute to the way the performers in the Pageant had undertaken their task, remarking that they had been so ably trained by their "gangers" that he almost felt ashamed of himself that he had been able to show them such a few things. The Major added that he could not say how touched he was at the words the Vicar spoke in church about him, and for himself he very much hoped that the friendships that they had started there would last for a very long time to come. (Applause.)

The Vicar, in his reply, remarked that any success attached to the service was entirely due to Mr. Docksey and the choir. They had practically never seen the Pageant music until about a week ago, and they had put in hours of work in order to get a service to that pitch of excellence which they always liked to have at St. Mary's (Applause.)

Alderman Ker, speaking on behalf of all those who were taking part in the Pageant, expressed their deep appreciation to the Mayor and Major Trevilian for all the great and beautiful work they had done in connection with it. "I should like to say," concluded the speaker, "how, under Major Cely Trevilian's guidance, everything that the performers have accomplished in connection with the Pageant has been a work of infinite pleasure, and we have greatly valued the guidance and instruction he has given us. It will be the hope of all those taking part in the Pageant that the result will be to Major Trevilian's and the Mayor's satisfaction." (Applause.)