
OUR NORTHERN HEIGHTS.

On Monday night before a full meeting of the Hornsey Local Board, held at the offices, Southwood lane, Highgate, Mr. Henry Reader Williams, the chairman, moved the following resolution: 'That the Board's solicitor be instructed to prepare a Bill for the next session of Parliament authorising the purchase by the Hornsey Local Board from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of the wood known as the Churchyard Boteom Wood for the sum of £25,000, provision to be made in the said Bill for a grant of £10,000 from the fund administered under the City of London Parochial Charities Act, 1883, with power to borrow the sum of £15,000, the repayment of which with interest to be spread over a period of 50 years.'

In reply to Mr. Reynolds, the Chairman said in the event of their failing to get the £10,000 under the Parochial Charities Act he should think the Board would not allow the matter to fall through.

Major Bird seconded the motion.

The resolution after some discussion was unanimously carried, and a committee appointed to carry out the details.

HIGHGATE WOODS.

At Monday night's meeting of the Hornsey Local Board, held at the offices in Southwood-lane, Highgate, Mr. H. R. Williams (the chairman) moved the following resolution, of which he had given notice:—"That the Board's solicitor be instructed to prepare a Bill for the next session of Parliament, authorising the purchase by the Hornsey Local Board from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of the wood known as the Churchyard-bottom-wood for the sum of £25,000, provision to be made for a grant of £10,000 from the fund administered under the City of London Parochial Charities Act, 1883, with power to borrow the sum of £15,000, the repayment of which, with interest, to be spread over a period of 50 years." In support of his motion, he said it would be remembered that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, with exceeding liberality, transferred to the Board the Highgate-wood known as Gravel-pit-wood, for the free use and enjoyment of the public for ever. That wood was now in tolerable order, and he was in hopes that the Corporation, who undertook the laying out of the property, would arrange for a public opening by the Lord Mayor. Already the knowledge of the wood being public had brought to Highgate on Saturdays and Sundays very large numbers of persons to enjoy the beauties and privileges connected with the place. He did not hesitate to say that a more beautiful spot could not be found within a hundred miles of London. It was altogether unique in its way, and he knew that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, at the time they gave the Gravel-pit-wood, expected that some effort would be made to purchase Churchyard-bottom-wood to make a complete property. It would certainly be a great misfortune as well as a reproach upon the parish if they allowed this magnificent piece of scenery to slip through their fingers. He found that in 1871 the district which this Board administered contained a population of 11,746, and in 1881 this number had risen to 22,475, or an increase of 91·43 per cent. The number of inhabited houses in 1881 was 3,665, but in the present year this number had risen to upwards of 6,000, and, of course, the increase in population was in proportion. The rateable value of the district in 1871 was £77,226, but the present rateable value was £258,795. That was a remarkable increase. The population of Hornsey, and also the rateable value, had not only increased much more rapidly than the population or rateable value of the metropolis, but also of outer or suburban London. The £15,000 he proposed to borrow would only increase the rates to the extent of three farthings in the pound. Every effort had been made to get private persons to give the sum required, but without success, and, after all, he did not see why the parish should not pay something for such an inestimable boon. He then quoted the prices paid by other bodies for recreation-grounds, to show that the sum the Commissioners had offered to sell for was a very small one. In conclusion, he expressed a hope that the Board would give an unanimous vote upon the question. In reply to Mr. Reynolds, the Chairman said in the event of their failing to get the £10,000 under the Parochial Charities Act, he should think the Board would not allow the matter to fall through, but would vote the other £10,000. Major Bird seconded the resolution, and declared that there was no part of London that was increasing so rapidly, and in which an extensive recreation-ground was more required. He agreed with the Chairman that it would be a disgrace to the authorities if they allowed this splendid piece of woodland to fall into the hands of builders. After some discussion, the resolution was unanimously carried.

The *Times* devotes a leader to the subject as follows:—"Mr. H. R. Williams, the chairman of the Hornsey Local Board, and the gentleman who has so often advocated in our columns the purchase of Highgate-woods for purposes of public recreation, has proposed and carried at a meeting of the Board a resolution empowering the Board to purchase the wood known as the Churchyard-bottom-wood from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for a sum of £25,000, and to raise the money for the purpose. The resolution was passed unanimously. By this public-spirited act of the Hornsey Local Board, a space of 120 acres of woodland will be permanently secured for the enjoyment of Londoners as a public park. The Churchyard-bottom-wood itself consists of about 50 acres, but it is adjacent to the Gravel-pit-wood of 70 acres, which in the spring of last year was presented by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to the Corporation of London for dedication to public uses. Mr. Williams addressed to us a letter at the time when this gift was announced, and pointed out the great advantage of securing the Churchyard-bottom-wood for annexation to the Gravel-pit-wood. There are other woods at Highgate which it would be almost equally desirable to secure, but the purchase of the Churchyard-bottom-wood was obviously the first thing to aim at. We congratulate Mr. Williams on the success of his labours in this enterprise, and we congratulate the people of London still more on the advantages he thereby secures for them. Hornsey and its immediate neighbourhood will reap the primary benefit of the purchase, no doubt, but no one will quarrel with this, since Hornsey proposes to contribute three-fifths of the cost of purchase, while London at large will be provided with one lung the more. It must not be supposed that Highgate-woods are too far from central London to be enjoyed by its inhabitants. They are within a short walk of the 'Archway' Tavern, which is reached by omnibus from Charing-cross and the Bank, and by tramways from the Euston-road, from King's-cross, and from Moorgate-street; and they are also surrounded by a vast local population which increases in density year by year. They are, in fact, as necessary to the well-being of the immediate neighbourhood, and indirectly to that of London at large, as Finsbury-park was a few years ago, and Victoria-park at an earlier period. The resolution carried by the Hornsey Local Board is, however, only the initial step in the process of dedicating the wood in question to public purposes. It is to be hoped that the remaining steps will be taken in due course, but they will require some time for their completion. The resolution empowers the Board to apply to Parliament for authority to purchase the wood, £10,000 of the purchase-money being obtained from the fund administered under the City Parochial Charities Act, and the remaining £15,000 being borrowed by the Board on terms which would spread the repayment of the capital and interest over a period of fifty years. Until, therefore, the proposed Act of Parliament is obtained, the purchase cannot, of course, be completed; but it may be assumed that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners will leave the bargain open, and will refrain from granting building leases which would impair the integrity of the wood. Meanwhile, as increase of appetite grows by what it feeds on, we cannot but hope that the success of Mr. Williams in securing another of the Highgate-woods, will stimulate others to further efforts for the purchase of those which still remain in the market. Bishop's-wood is already threatened by the laying out of a new avenue, with building plots attached, from Hampstead-lane, near the 'Spaniards'—an ancient tavern familiar to all readers of 'Pickwick'—to the neighbourhood of Finchley-station. If Bishop's-wood is to be saved, therefore, there is no time to be lost. Sooner or later, the builder will have his way, unless some public fund can be provided for the purpose of buying him off. The process is costly and difficult, but the success of Mr. Williams and the public spirit of the Hornsey Local Board, should prove a stimulating example to others."

A NEW RECREATION GROUND FOR LONDONERS.

This afternoon the Lord Mayor (Mr. Alderman Staples), as representing the Corporation of the City of London, took formal possession of one of the Highgate Woods, known as the Gravel Pit Wood, and dedicates the same to the use of the public for ever. The wood in question, which is one of several in the neighbourhood belonging to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, is nearly 70 acres in extent, and has been generously presented by the Commissioners to the Corporation for the express purpose to which it was publicly dedicated this afternoon. This most satisfactory result is mainly due to the energetic and well-directed efforts of Mr. H. R. Williams, the chairman of the Hornsey Local Board of Health and the Hornsey School Board, a merchant of the City of London, well and honourably known for his services in the ragged school cause, especially at the East-end. The public use of Highgate Woods has hitherto been seriously restricted by the rights of private ownership; and for some three years or more, foreseeing the danger of their being built over, owing to the rapid development of building operations in this growing district of outer London, Mr. Williams has warmly advocated by letters in the Press, as well as by speeches at the Local Board and at public meetings, the desirability of steps being taken for their preservation as public recreation grounds. In September, 1884, Mr. Williams wrote:—"The destruction of the Highgate Woods is now imminent. So far as sanitary and recreative purposes are concerned their fate is, I fear, sealed. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners have just acquired the whole of Lord Mansfield's leasehold interests in them, and they are again in full possession of their freehold rights, and are now free to deal with their immense estate, which extends from Crouch-end to the Spaniards, at Hampstead, covering, roughly, from 800 to 1,000 acres." This note of alarm aroused enthusiasm in the cause of their preservation. The Hornsey Local Board unanimously passed a resolution at the instance of its chairman declaring its opinion that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would, as administrators of their vast estate in the neighbourhood, "best consult the interests of the large masses of population likely to be their future tenants, as well as add to the value of their large estate, by dedicating the woods in question to the free use and enjoyment of the public." A copy of this resolution was forwarded to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners; and in November, 1884, a crowded and enthusiastic public meeting at Highgate, presided over by Lord George Hamilton, M.P., passed similar resolutions. At that time it was thought that the woods, or such portions of them as might be saved, would have to be purchased, Mr. Williams expressing his opinion, at the meeting referred to, that "if they could only find the ways and means for the purchase of the woods, there would be no difficulty in getting the Corporation of the City of London to undertake the maintenance of them in perpetuity for the people," adding that, after all, "we shall not, perhaps, have so much difficulty with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners as some people imagine." Mr. J. T. Bedford, a member of the City Corporation, spoke at the same meeting, promising the friends of the movement "every possible assistance that they could conceive from the Corporation of London." Lord George Hamilton, M.P., the next day gave notice in the House of Commons of his intention to move for a Select Committee to inquire into the question, which, however, was happily set at rest shortly afterwards by the announcement that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had offered to the Corporation of London, through Lord Stanhope, the chairman of the Estates Committee, the free gift of the Gravel Pit wood, "consisting of sixty-nine acres, one rood, thirteen perches," on condition that it should be kept "for the perpetual use and recreation of the people." The offer was accepted by the Corporation, and the ceremony of to-day seals, as it were, the generous gift nobly obtained and honourably granted for the benefit of the present and future generations."