

THE SHIPLAKE PLAYING FIELD.

OPENING CEREMONY BY SIR
FREDERICK ELEY, BART.

SPORT FOR EVERYONE IN THE PARISH.

There are very few parishes in England which have been so favoured as Shiplake in the provision of accommodation for its social and recreative amenities. A few years ago Mr. and Mrs. Mardon, of Haileywood, after a visit to their son's grave in France, determined on their return to do something to perpetuate the memory of those who gave their lives in the great war for freedom and liberty. That something resulted in the building of the handsome memorial hall and institute, the former being available for all and every kind of gathering associated with the pariah and the latter where the youth and men of the village may spend their hours of recreation in the pleasantest of ways. At the time of the erection of the hall a feeling was expressed what a nice thing it would be if the sport of the parish could be brought in close proximity to the hall and this has been enabled to be an accomplished fact through the generosity of Sir Frederick Eley, Bart., a former resident of the parish, who generously came forward and made a gift of five acres of land adjoining the hall and institute for recreative purposes. A couple years ago this piece of land was a ploughed field. To-day it is laid out all ready for various kinds of recreation, including cricket, bowls, football, tennis and putting, while there is still room for the introduction of other kinds of amusement. The villagers have been given their opportunity and it is up to them to see that these generous gifts of a hall, institute and playing field are taken full advantage of as is the intention and desire of the donors. On the playing field has been erected a commodious pavilion, erected on piles and reached by a flight of steps. From this pavilion a commanding view of the beautiful scenery in the neighbourhood is obtainable, while its usefulness is at once apparent. There are three rooms, the central one being a cloak room for the use of wielders of the willow, while one of the side rooms is fitted with lockers for the use of bowls adherents and the room at the other end is for the accommodation of tennis players. The side rooms will also be available in the winter

wherein football teams may change. Running round the front and sides is a covered platform which affords shelter for spectators from the rays of the sun or from showers. Underneath, protected from the weather, is ample room for providing teas and the serving of refreshments thus obviating the necessity of using a tent. Saturday last was set apart for the

OPENING AND DEDICATION
CEREMONY

The great lack of rain had made the ground very hard, but not so hard as not to be playable. The weather was scarcely ideal, a strong south-west wind blowing across the field, but it had this advantage in that the strength of the wind kept rain away until late in the evening. An archway of flags adorned the entrance to the field and shortly before three o'clock the Shiplake Troop of Boy Scouts (under Scoutmaster Smith) with their colours, the Shiplake Girl Guides (in charge of Miss Buckley) and the Shiplake Brownies (in charge of Miss Campbell) were drawn up at the entrance as a guard of honour to await the arrival of Sir Frederick Eley, Bart., (who was to perform the opening ceremony. On his arrival Sir Frederick was received by Mr. Frank Simpson (chairman) and the members of the Executive Committee. A procession was formed, headed by Mr. Simpson and Sir Frederick, followed by the members of the Committee, the Scouts, Guides and Brownies. The procession wended its way to the pavilion, which had been gaily decorated with flags. Mr. Frank Simpson presided, having on his right Sir. Frederick Eley, Bart., while supporting him were Mr. Eric Mardon, Mr. E. V. Robinson (hon. secretary), the Rev. J. N. Menin (Vicar), Mr. W. Cooling Lawrence, Mr. E. Morley Wood, Mr. C. F. Harding (Chairman of the Pariah Council). Mr. O. Burge, and others. There was a large assembly of villagers and visitors, who arranged themselves in front of the pavilion to listen to the speeches.

THE CHAIRMAN'S EULOGY.

Mr. Frank Simpson, who was greeted with loud applause, said they were assembled that afternoon for the purpose of celebrating an event which marked an epoch in the history of the parochial life of Shiplake and at the same time brought to realization an ideal which, to many of them was, only a few short years ago,

beyond the dreams of avarice, namely the opening of a public playing field and recreation ground in their midst - (applause). Sport and recreation in their good time had become part of their national existence, and it could not be denied, contributed very largely to our national efficiency and health. Therefore, if for only those reasons alone, it should be encouraged to the greatest extent - (applause). The opportunity for doing this had been given to them in Shiplake by the benevolence of Sir Frederick Eley, who so kindly presented them with the five acres of land which surrounded their Memorial Hall and Institute, with the idea of centralising their village sporting and social activities - (cheers). His gift was unconditional, and he had left it to them to develop the whole in such manner as they thought fit, so that their future, so far as sport was concerned, depended upon their own efforts. Various committees were set up, firstly for the development of the social side, by the organisation of entertainments, dancing, etc., during the longer evenings of the year, and last winter the task of developing the playing field was seriously taken in hand with the result they saw before them - (applause). They had, as they could see, a cricket pitch, a bowling green, a tennis court, a football ground and a suitable pavilion for the accommodation of players, which he ventured to think must be the envy of the surrounding parishes - (applause). Here he would like to place on record their appreciation of the manner in which the Shiplake Branch of the British Legion came forward with their co-operation and assistance in the matter of funds, to all others who had subscribed, and again, their thanks were due to Mr. Oliver for his professional services, given free, in supervising the work of planning and laying out of the ground—(applause). The object of the Management Committee was to so develop the undertaking that the amenities of the whole might be enjoyed by all in the parish and the surrounding district. Cricket, bowling, football and tennis clubs had been formed and were growing fast. The management of each club was in the hands of their respective officers and committee and had complete control of their own arrangements. The only qualification for membership was that the members must be members of the Institute as well, so that all might contribute something to the well-being of the whole—(applause). Unfortunately there

were still some in the parish who had not yet thrown in their lot with them, but they hoped that, now they could clearly see what great opportunities were before them, their prejudices would soon be overcome, and that each and all would combine to make the scheme the great success which it deserved to be, and to realise that grand ideal—a better England—(applause). Addressing Sir Frederick Eley, the speaker said he felt sure it would give him great pleasure to see how much his benefaction was being appreciated, and on behalf of the committee and those present he asked him to declare the recreation ground open—(loud applause).

SIR FREDERICK ELEY'S ADDRESS.

Sir Frederick Eley, who was received; with cheers, said it was with great pleasure that he came amongst them once more, for he had very happy recollections of Shiplake and the times he spent there during his week-end stays - (applause). So far as his gift was concerned it must take a background to what had been done by many individuals. He took his mind back (and he regretted that Mr. Mardon was not with them that day) to when the scheme was thought of, and one thought in particular came to his mind; that was the unforgivable apathy which was shown towards it. He was, however, pleased to see so many there that day and he felt sure that those who for various reasons had abstained from associating themselves with the scheme, would now rally round it and help to promote what the Chairman had so aptly described - a better England - (applause). Since their scheme was organised there had been a great national scheme for the provision of playing fields up and down the county which he hoped would be for the future benefit of the country. It was a great delight to him to know that his little gift had functioned into something bigger and he had only to look around him to feel that success was not only assured but that they appreciated what had been done for the parish, which was largely due in the first instance to Mr. Mardon's noble and generous efforts - (applause). He had much pleasure in declaring the playing field open and wished it every success - (cheers).

A GIFT FROM MR. MARDON.

Mr. Eric Mardon tendered his apologies to Sir Frederick Eley for the absence of his

father, who was kept away by doctor's orders, which he could not very well disobey. On behalf of his father he asked Mr. Small to accept a handsome silver cup for competition in bowls, which was one of the oldest sports they had, together with tennis - (applause). They had been told that it was the great Drake who insisted on finishing a game of bowls before engaging in the nation's work, and should they, in the future, receive a S.O.S, from Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Baldwin or Mr. Lloyd George he advised the Shiplake bowlers to finish their game first before responding to the call - -(laughter and applause). In conclusion, he would like to recall to their minds a remark made by Field Marshall Robertson at the opening of the Memorial Hall and that was that in the playing fields let there be nothing petty amongst them, remembering that there was nothing petty in the actions of those whom they commemorated - (applause).

Mr. Small, in accepting the cup, thanked Mr. Mardon for his handsome gift, said that the Bowling Club had a large and, growing number of members and he was sure the cup would be keenly competed for - (applause).

THANKING SIR FREDERICK ELEY

Mr. Cooling Lawrence proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Sir Frederick Eley for having come there that day to see the result of his forethought and benevolence and to declare the playing field open. By his generosity Sir Frederick had given them an opportunity to follow a standard of recreation - that was sport - (applause). Education should fit a man for his work and for his recreation and he hoped the result of the provision of that playing field would be that the manhood of Shiplake would be better than that of any other county. Sir Frederick, when he was with them, brought sunshine into their lives, and if they continued to receive that, all discontent would disappear - (applause).

The proposition having been carried with cheers, Sir Frederick, in reply, said, "All I can say, is, thank you" - (applause).

The Vicar then offered prayer and gave the blessing, after which all present' joined in singing the National Anthem, led by the Henley Excelsior Silver Prize Band, under the conductorship of Mr. C. P. Godfrey.

The Chairman announced the receipt of apologies from Lord Phillimore and Lord Wargrave.

HOW THE AFTERNOON WAS SPENT.

Immediately following the opening, ceremony, Sir Frederick Eley proceeded to the bowling green and sent down the first wood, amidst applause. He then wended his way to the cricket pitch, where he batted an over to the bowling of Mr. Simpson, his hits being greeted with applause. All manner of attractions were subsequently provided. Undoubtedly the most entertaining was a gymnastic display by the Depot of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, by kind permission of Major Leggatt, O.C. The various movements were splendidly carried out and evoked tremendous applause. After this there was a cricket match, Married versus Single, while on the bowline green the Vice- Presidents tried conclusions with a team of members. In a small tent Madame Bonnchance (the Spanish Fortune Teller) had quite a large number of people anxious to learn their fortune. A tennis tournament was also played and there was bowling for a pig and for an umbrella. Hidden Treasure was well patronised and a stall presided over by members of the Women's Institute was a centre of attraction. Teas and refreshments were excellently served by Mr. Owen Porter, of the "Plowden Arms." In order to keep the juveniles amused two clowns were imported and their antics afforded much hilarity to both young and old. Sports for the children were also provided and the "Brownies" gave an excellent display of their drills. There were several other competitions and the Band discoursed a pleasing programme of music. In the evening there was dancing on the green followed later by a dance in the Memorial Hall the music for which was provided by the .Robin Hood Dance Band.