

to a thousand pounds, besides two hundred pounds annual subscriptions which were promised at the same time.

The donors included noble names and honoured citizens, amongst whom not the least eminent were the worthy founder, Dr. Ash, Matthew Boulton, partner with James Watt in the historic Soho Works, and John Baskerville, the great printer. There was one donation of deep significance for the future of the new Institution—viz., a sum of ten guineas from the Musical Society of Sambroke's, in Bull Street, who also became annual subscribers of two guineas. As Mr. Bunce observes, "From the humble association above-named, we may possibly trace the germ of those great festivals from which the Hospital has derived such essential assistance." And we know that in ancient mythology Apollo was the god of music as well as medicine. From £1,000, the donations to the new undertaking soon swelled to £2,000, and the annual subscriptions to £600, and the promoters, feeling themselves justified in commencing active operations, held another meeting on Christmas Eve, 1765, when provisional rules were confirmed and a committee appointed.

The next business was to select a site for the proposed building, and this important duty was entrusted to Dr. Ash, who selected the land in Sumner Lane on which the Hospital now stands. The extent of the land purchased amounted to about eight acres, and the price paid was £120 per acre. The eminent Hutton, author of the "History of Birmingham," and a contemporary of Dr. Ash's, characterised the site as "very unsuitable," being in a narrow, dirty lane, with an aspect directing up the hill, which should ever be avoided. This far-reaching criticism is true to this day. Time has only accentuated, not diminished, its force, for, view the General Hospital from any point you may, you become aware of the

fact that it stands in a hole, and one of the most convincing arguments adduced for the removal of the present structure is the absolute necessity for a better site. The building of the Hospital was speedily commenced early in the year 1766. It was designed to accommodate one hundred patients, and to cost about three thousand pounds. Matters went on fairly well until November, when funds fell short, and operations had to be suspended for nearly six months.

In May, 1767, an attempt was made to arouse an interest in the progress of the Hospital by appealing again for subscriptions; but it was all in vain, and few and evil seemed likely to be the days of our budding Institution.

Until February, 1768, no further note of progress appears since the last-recorded meeting of the Board, and the finances were in a worse condition, if that were possible, than before. Another appeal for help was made in the April of the same year, stating that the building was covered in, and that the rooms for patients were being fitted up. At a meeting held on May 3rd, the Board resolved that a musical entertainment should be established, and appointed a committee to conduct the undertaking. This first musical entertainment was the forerunner of the famous triennial festivals, which, commencing ten years afterwards, have continued up to present days. The following extract from the historic programme will not be without interest to my readers:—

"On Thursday morning, September 8th, 1768, will be performed in St. Philip's Church, at ten o'clock, Mr. Handel's Grand Te Deum and Jubilate, and his celebrated Coronation Anthem. And the Messiah or Sacred Oratorio, at the same place, on Friday morning, the 9th." These performances met with considerable success, "being attended by brilliant and crowded audiences," and on Thurs-

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"I take a basinful every night, and as I have taken no other kind of nourishing food, I am sure it is that which has done me so much good. I was taking oatmeal before, but had to give it up on account of its heating properties.

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