

IPSWICH SCENES

The Town Hall



PICTURES: DERRICK BANYARD

The Town Hall (opened in 1868) is on the Cornhill, which has long been the commercial centre of Ipswich. The busy Cattle Market was nearby. The Corn Exchange (inset picture) at the rear of the Town Hall accommodated ninety stands for corn merchants; but times change, and it now hosts public functions and entertainment. The Post Office has become a bank; the 'Butter Market' retains only its name; the 'Vintry' is Tavern Street, but most taverns have gone, as have 'Meat Market' and 'Poultry'. The scene is now of modern shops and stores stretching along the main street and the Butter Market, with here and there commercial institutions.

The open area of the Cornhill was where a number of Protestant martyrs were burned in the sixteenth century, in the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary. Nearby, in Tavern Street, stands the "White Horse" inn, dating to before 1571. Charles Dickens (1812-70) stayed there when reporting the Ipswich elections, and it became his setting for part of *Pickwick Papers*. Dickens gave readings at the Corn Exchange in 1859 and 1861, and in 1869 at the Public Hall, Westgate Street, where Christadelphians met until it was burned down in 1948. At different periods they also met in the Town Hall and in the Ipswich Museum. It is interesting that the last published work of Dickens was *The Life of our Lord*, from the handwritten gospel stories he told his children (seven sons and three daughters); in his letters to them he used to refer to the Divine Example. *The Life of our Lord* was written in 1849 but not published till 1934. Sadly, like so many parents through the ages, although Dickens held Jesus in very high esteem, he did not understand that his Kingdom will be established on the earth and that we are not promised happiness with Jesus in heaven after we die.—*Derrick Banyard*