

THE JAMES CUMING MEMORIAL STATUE.

Last Saturday was by no means ideal in so far as the weather conditions were concerned for the important ceremony of unveiling the memorial statue, erected by public subscription, as an appreciation of the life's work of the late Mr James Cuming, J.P., at the Bowling Green Reserve, Napier street. Heavy rain in the morning gave rise to thoughts of postponement, but towards mid-day finer conditions prevailed, albeit the afternoon was decidedly unfavorable. The leaden sky and a cold south wind, however, did not deter thousands of local residents of Footscray, Yarraville and surrounding districts, together with a large number of visitors from Melbourne and other suburbs, being present to do honor to the memory of one who, in life, was respected and revered by all. In addition to the statue having been erected, the large assemblage gave proof of the people's appreciation of the deceased gentleman.

Proceedings opened by the Footscray Municipal Band rendering suitable hymns, "Nearer My God to Thee," "Lead Kindly Light," and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." The platform which had been erected around the pedestal was then occupied by the committee of the memorial fund, the members of Mr Cuming's family (with the exception of Mesdames Stewart and Campbell who were unable to be present through ill-health), and the various speakers. Cr A. McDonald, chairman of the committee, gave a brief description of the circumstances leading up to the erection of the memorial and paid a tribute of personal appreciation to the late Mr Cuming. He then asked the Hon J. G. Aikman, M.L.C., to perform the ceremony of unveiling the memorial.

Mr. Aikman, in an impressive manner, gave a resume of the many endearing qualities of the deceased gentleman, of his founding in a small way the now important and world wide known firm of Cuming, Smith & Co., his important public life, pointing out that although at all times a particularly busy man, he devoted years of his life to the promoting of the welfare of Footscray and its various organisations, in which he at all times took the keenest interest, and also to his many and generous benefactions to charity, not only in this city but throughout the whole of the state, in fact his generosity was not confined to the Commonwealth alone, as in all his trips Home and to America, he gave full play to his charitable tendencies and had his regular list to whom he extended his practical sympathy. With such a sunny nature, such a charitable and helpful disposition, and having the means to give effect to his desires it can be well imagined what a ray of sunlight this man was wherever he went. He gave out not only his money but the healthy and cheerful and encouraging spirit of the man also. He was a man of great depth of soul, having a wonder-

spirit of the man also. He was a man of great depth of soul, having a wonderfully well read and informed mind, the touch of the poetic nature always apparent. Continuing Mr Aikman said he remembered on occasions when writing from Scotland he would be at the scene depicted in the poem, for example "Tam-o-Shanter," and trudging along by himself in the open field with hat off, would give vent to his feelings by reciting aloud the particular poem attached to the place, an instance showing the truly poetic and responsive spirit within the man. Another fine trait that was always noticeable to his friends was the profound respect that he had for other people's feelings; he would never knowingly say or do anything to make another person feel uncomfortable. He was a great man for defending the absent ones, and a man's honor was always perfectly safe with James Cuming. With respect to his charitable gifts Mr Aikman remarked that among his many donations he made in 1903-4 and 1908-9, in all comprising just on £28,000. This sum included the Cuming Institute, special donations to all charitable institutions, orphanages, churches, University scholarships, special gifts to the Veterinary College in the University of Melbourne, and various other sections, and distributed it all on the broadest possible lines without respect to creed or religion. "I really think there was no section omitted." Apart altogether from these special donations his ordinary miscellaneous subscriptions amounted to an average nothing less than £500 a year, covering all forms of charity and legitimate sport. He was as broad in his sympathy regarding sport as he was in his charitable gifts, and assisted the whole of the clubs in the district with the benefit of his valuable advice and more particularly in a financial manner. His only condition in this respect was "that the game must be clean" as anything of a shady or underhand nature be abhorred. "It is better to lose by fair means than to win by foul" was his motto and his wishes in that direction were always respected. Mr. Cuming's purse was at all times open to the poor and needy and no deserving case was ever turned away and in this he had only one condition—"no publicity"—as that was one thing he never sought. In all his noble charitable work he had the whole-hearted and enthusiastic support of the late Mrs Cuming, one of the kindest hearted women who ever lived, and whose assistance to the poor of Footscray and Yarraville was proverbial. Mr Aikman drew particular attention to the forethought of Mr Cuming in setting apart a sum of money as an endowment the annual interest of which will last for years, to purchase coveted medals for the dux of the schools in the district, to purchase new books for the Mechanics' Institute, to assist the funds of the local Ladies' Benevolent Society and many other actions of a similar nature. Yarraville has its monument" said Mr Aikman "in that splendid edifice the Yarraville Citizens' Club—James Cuming Insti-

that splendid edifice the Yarraville Citizens' Club—James Cuming Institute." A monument of Mr Cuming's large-heartedness for the benefit of the people for all time, and one of which they are justly proud. Mr Aikman congratulated the people of the district for thus showing their expression of gratitude and concluded with the words "Genial, unassuming, charitable James Cuming has gone from our midst, and I feel I am expressing the wish of all present when I say I hope he has gained that crown in Heaven to which his deeds on earth entitled him, and I say from my heart I know of no man more worthy."

Mr Aikman then pulled the cord and the veiling fell from the statue, and it is not too much to say the spectators were astonished at the excellence of the memorial, which is, without doubt, worthy of the gentleman to whom it is dedicated. Standing 13 feet high it is a fair sample of the artist's work, comprising as it does a granite base with a marble column, on each of the four corners of which is an allegorical figure representing Peace, Harmony, Plenty and Industry, they in turn supporting the bust of the late Mr Cuming. The whole of the work, with the exception of the pedestal, is carved in Italian marble, and the base bears the inscription: "Erected by the Citizens in appreciation of the life of the late James Cuming, J.P. His memory lives in the hearts of all who knew his worth." Singularly appropriate in its plainness to the memory of one who was a plain-living man, and a work of art that is a credit to the city, the artist, Miss Margaret Baskerville—the well-known Australian artist—has executed her commission in a truly artistic manner. Attention to detail and perfect detail mark the whole of the work, and she cannot be too highly congratulated upon the admirable result. The portrait bust is a faithful likeness of Mr Cuming, and the remark of one of the spectators "that it only wanted the ruddy complexion to be lifelike," was shared by all present.

After allowing a slight pause to enable the people to admire the monument, the gathering was addressed by

Messrs James Mathews, M.P., A. A. Laing (manager of the Royal Bank, Melbourne), Jas. Hall (Williamstown), and A. R. P. Crow (Yarraville), each of whom made reference to Mr Cuming's many good qualities, unbounded philanthropy and valuable assistance in many ways as a citizen. Mr Mathews aptly remarking that Mr Cuming in establishing and furthering the manufacture of artificial manures, was a most important factor in the wealth and improvement of the rural industries of the whole state, in fact said Mr Mathews he not only provided work for hundreds at Yarraville but to the country districts, his assistance in the cultivation of the cereals was only second to copious rainfalls at the proper season.

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Mr H. E. Caldecott J.P. (vice-chairman of the memorial committee) prefaced his remarks by apologising for the absence of Sir John Madden and Professor O. Masson owing to a function at the University, Mr J. Lemmon M.L.A. owing to ill health, and Messrs J. E. Fenton M.P. and E. C. Warde M.L.A. in consequence of other engagements. Mr Caldecott traced the history of the memorial committee's work, paid a feeling tribute to Mr Cuming, more particularly in regard to his connection with his duties as one of the honorary magistrates, dealt with his life in our midst in an appreciative and able manner, and on behalf of the committee and subscribers presented the memorial to the city as a spontaneous gift of the citizens, and stated the committee had considered it a privilege and a labor of pleasure in consummating the wishes of the subscribers.

The Mayor (Cr A. J. Pearce) on behalf of the council and citizens, thanked the subscribers for their magnificent gift to the city, and joined with the whole of the other speakers in congratulating Miss Margaret Baskerville on her magnificent work. In a pleasing manner he made reference to the picnic given by Mr Cuming (and referred to by Mr Aikman in his address) to the whole of the school children in the district, together with many of their parents, to Bacchus Marsh, in celebration of Footscray having been proclaimed a city. Mr Cuming on that occasion, as indeed on all occasions, had entertained in a most lavish manner, and the children (of whom he was one) to the number of about 5000 had a particularly pleasant and memorable outing, and one that had made a lasting impression on his mind.

Mr James Cuming thanked all connected with the erection of the memorial, on behalf of the family, in a thoroughly hearty manner. He assured one and all of his own and his sisters' and brothers' most grateful appreciation of their kindness. He gave an outline of his father's hard working life in his earlier years. He had gained his wealth by arduous and strenuous business principles, and took a delight in later years in spending a portion of his money for the benefit of those less fortunately placed than himself. The family were at all times proud of his generous nature, and kindly disposition, and they were delighted to know the people appreciated his worth, as shown by the erection of this beautiful tribute to his memory. He specially thanked the committee for their effort, and particularly mentioned the honorary secretary for his assistance in carrying out the matter to such a successful issue. Mr Cuming's remarks carried with them a decided impression of gratified sincerity.

The Rev. J. T. Baglin in a short appropriate address moved a vote of thanks to Mr Aikman, who made a brief response, and the proceedings which throughout were of a most impressive nature, were brought to a close by the playing of "The Heavens are Telling," and "God Save the King," by

by the playing of "The heavens are Telling," and "God Save the King," by the Footscray Municipal Band.

The committee of the memorial fund consisting of Cr McDonald (Chairman and Hon. Treasurer), Cr A. A. Harris, Dr. J. R. Webb, and Messrs H. E. Caldecott (Vice-Chairman), J. J. Mills, E. Ward, R. W. Smith, T. F. M. Smith, A. R. P. Crow, J. Hall, with Mr T. J. Evans as hon. secretary, are to be congratulated on having carried out the whole of the arrangements in connection with the matter in a highly creditable manner and are deserving of the thanks of all connected with the memorial for their fine efforts. The result of their work is a distinct advantage to the district, and the public will we feel sure do their utmost to protect the memorial, which is the property of the citizens, and all combine to preserve it in every possible respect. We cannot refrain from emphasising our tribute to Miss Margaret Baskerville for her magnificent work. (Whilst freely admitting we have drawn attention to the delay in the completion of the statue, in our columns, desire to say that although it has taken two and a half years to complete, we agree with the sentiment frequently expressed on Saturday at the unveiling, the result was well worth the waiting for, and will prove not only to serve in perpetuating Mr. Cuming's memory, but to decidedly increase the importance of the city and add to its attractiveness.
