

**VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY.**

**UNVEILING THE FOUNDATION-STONE.**

Not the least important of the ceremonies which took place in Perth yesterday was that of the unveiling of the foundation-stone of the new Victoria Public Library in Beaufort-street. The building, a full description of which has already appeared in these columns, is expected to be completed in about eight months. The ceremony was performed by His Excellency the Governor, there being also among the large crowd present the acting Premier (Mr. E. H. Wittenoom), the Director of Public Works (Mr. F. H. Pesse), the Commissioner for Crown Lands (Mr. G. Throssell), Sir J. G. Lee Steere (Speaker of the Legislative Assembly), Messrs. G. Randall, M.L.C., G. Leake, M.L.A., G. T. Simpson, M.L.A., H. J. Saunders, M.L.C. (Mayor of Perth), H. E. Petherick (town clerk of Perth), M. E. Jull, C. H. Oldham, M.L.A., Dillon Bell, J. H. Grainger, B. Woodward, Colonel Angelo, Captain Hope, Captain F. Moore, and Colonel Phillips.

Sir James G. Lee Steere, the chairman of the committee of the Victoria Public Library, said that it gave him great pleasure to ask His Excellency to associate his name with the unveiling of the foundation-stone of that library and museum. Perhaps there were many present who would not understand the expression "continued loyalty" to be seen on the stone when it was unveiled. The speaker then sketched the history of the movement that had led to the foundation-stone being removed from St. George's Terrace, where it was laid 10 years ago, on the occasion of the 50th year of the reign of Her Majesty, to the present site. He took some credit to himself for having been instrumental in the formation of a public library for Perth. He had been so impressed with the advantages

which such institutions bestowed on the people of the eastern colonies that he had suggested the matter to Governor Broome, who had agreed that no more fitting memorial than a public library could be adopted to commemorate the 50th year of the reign of Queen Victoria. As the colony had advanced in importance, the library in St. George's Terrace had proved inadequate for the attendance, and so it had been determined to erect a much more capacious building, the foundation-stone of which would be unveiled by His Excellency that afternoon. He quoted statistics to show how the Victoria Public Library had increased in importance. It was opened on January 26, 1889, when the number of books on the shelves was 1,100. Now they had 16,200 books. (Applause.) During the first year of its existence the attendance was 10,000; in 1896 the attendance was 47,078, of whom 587 were ladies; and during the first five months of this year the number of persons who visited the institution was 25,703, 419 of whom were ladies. (Applause.) There were volumes in that library that any city might feel proud to possess, and with the prospect of a very much larger building in which to place them the institution would become doubly important. The erection of that building would show that the Government was not unmindful of the intellectual advancement of the people of the colony. (Applause.) He hoped that as time went on the museum and art gallery would be more appreciated. He was happy to say that an art gallery had been started, and he trusted that owing to the liberality of the Government the attractions of the gallery would be increased. (Applause.)

His Excellency the Governor said that he felt proud to associate his name with that great work. The stone which he was about to unveil was removed some little time ago from St. George's Terrace, where the ceremony of laying it was performed by Governor Broome in 1887. He deeply regretted that Governor Broome

Broome in 1887. He deeply regretted that Governor Broome had not been spared to witness the removal of the stone to its present site and the prospects of the establishment of a large library, in the inauguration of which he had taken so prominent a part. The erection of that library was one of the beneficial results which had accrued from self-government. Even if they had discovered their great mineral wealth when they constituted a Crown colony, difficulties must have arisen in the development of those resources which were simplified by the blessings of responsible government. In performing the ceremony for which they had met together, they did so in grateful recognition to Almighty God of the blessings which He had showered upon the empire, and upon this colony as an integral part of that empire, during the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. There was no doubt that the progress of this colony must be continuous and increasing. Their Ministers were practically chosen by the voice of the people. They had representative institutions of a character which, in experience extending over many hundreds of years, had shed undimmed lustre and enormous prosperity on the empire and upon Great Britain. (Applause.) It only

remained for the people of this colony to be law-abiding, industrious, and sober to ensure increased prosperity to their children, so that they could look back on the 60 years of Her Majesty's reign with feelings of infinite thankfulness to the Great Architect of the Universe. (Applause.) The colony owed a debt of gratitude to men like Sir James Lee Steers for taking such a prominent part in promoting educational and intellectual development of the people of the country, and he thanked that gentleman on behalf of the Queen and people of Western Australia for the self-sacrificing labor and energy he had displayed in having originally started a new library. He hoped that the institution would prove a source of advancement to the colony. His

advancement to the colony. His Excellency then briefly reviewed the moral and intellectual development of the empire during Victoria's reign, pointing out the advance that had been made in medical science, electrical science, &c. He spoke of the spread of education during that period, and the beneficial results which had accrued to the nation thereby. The movement in regard to libraries was a comparatively recent one. Some "burning questions" had been raised in connection with the matter in England, but, happily, they had disappeared. The advantages of libraries could not be over-estimated, as they enabled the young to develop into self-respecting, intellectual, and useful citizens. He believed that he occupied the position of Governor of a great people, and he asked their assistance in the discharge of his onerous and responsible duties. He would be stimulated by the example of the great men who had preceded him.

Amid applause, His Excellency then unveiled the stone, which contained the following inscription:— "This stone of the Victoria Public Library was laid by His Excellency Sir Gerard Smith, K.C.M.G., in commemoration of the completion of the sixtieth year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and as a memorial of the continued loyalty and devotion of the people of this colony to Her Majesty's throne and person. June 22, 1897." Resting beneath this stone is the old stone containing this inscription:—"The colonists of Western Australia, moved by loyalty and love, inscribed this foundation-stone of a public library with the name of Her Majesty Queen Victoria on the jubilee day of her beneficial reign, June 21, 1887."

Cheers were then given for the Governor, after which the gathering was photographed by Messrs. Clarke and Son.