

THE RAIKES CENTENARY.**PROCESSION AND TREE PLANTING.**

The concluding ceremony in connection with the Raikes Centenary took place on Friday. In the afternoon the principal business establishments were closed in order to allow everyone who was desirous of witnessing the arboricultural ceremony an opportunity of doing so. At two o'clock the children assembled at their different school-rooms, and two trees were planted in the ground attached to the respective churches. They were planted as follows:—For Christ Church, by Mrs. Innes and Mr. Fetherstonhaugh; for the Presbyterian, by Mrs. Macmillan and Mrs. Thomson, sen.; for the Wesleyan, by Mrs. Wiggins and Mrs. P. Learmonth; for the Baptist, Mr. Louis Wyatt and Miss Julia Murrant; and for the Primitive Methodists, by Mrs. Heathershaw and Mr. Naveau. At three o'clock the various schools assembled at the Town Hall under the care of their superintendents. The number of children from each school, with the names of their superintendents, were given as follows:—Primitive Methodist, 50 scholars, Mr. Naveau; Baptist, 161, Mr. H. McDonald; Wesleyan, 70, Mr. F. Giles; Presbyterian, 100, Mr. Thomson; Church of England, 105, Mr. A. Greed. A few minutes after three o'clock, preparations were made for the processional march, a large number of townspeople being present, and evidently watching the proceedings with interest and pleasure. Mr. Bromley, the marshal, marshalled the schools in the order given above, the Episcopalian Sunday School having the place of honor assigned to it on account of its seniority, being the oldest established school in Hamilton. The ministers of the various denominations marched at the head of the procession. In front, the Hamilton Brass Band led the way, discoursing exhilarating marching airs up and down Gray-street, and thence by way of Thomson-street to the Botanical Gardens, was the order of the route. Entering by the southern gate, the assemblage progressed along the paths until reaching about the centre of the gardens, near the rotunda, the scene of the ceremony. Two English oak trees had been obtained for the occasion.

Proceedings commenced by singing the Commemoration Hymn.

The Rev. Mr. Cummins having engaged in prayer, the Mayor said that in virtue of his position as Mayor of the Borough of Hamilton he had been requested by the Committee of the Centenary Celebration to plant the commemoration tree. He assured them it gave him great pleasure indeed to do what was required, and he was only sorry that some one more able to address them than himself had not been called upon to fulfil that pleasant duty. They were aware of the reason why this week had been set apart for the services, meetings, and practices for the service of song. He wanted them to take a look back one hundred years ago

at that time there were no Sunday schools established, children were allowed to wander about as they liked, there was no one to tell the young ones that if they allowed themselves to be led away it was extremely likely they would walk in the ways of the wicked. That if they followed only the bent of their own evil desires, and had no one to bring out their better natures they were liable to go astray. This was the case one hundred years ago, when one who had a great amount of the milk of human kindness in his heart was wandering about the streets of a large city and saw the stray children, ill-fed, and ragged, who had no interest in glorifying God in their hearts. He saw that they were given to cursing and swearing, and he thought "Is there nothing to be done: are there no means existing to bring these children to praise and glorify God, instead of cursing Him as they now do." That man was Robert Raikes, who had been honoured by God in being the instrument of establishing, not only the Sunday schools in Gloucester, but the branches which spread all over the civilised

only the Sunday schools in Gloucester, but the branches which spread all over the civilised globe, and even beyond into heathen lands were Sabbath schools erected. How great was the progress of the seed from this Sunday school tree, with branches all over the world? As he had been asked to plant the commemoration tree he held in his hand, he had much pleasure in doing so. He was delighted to see all the children of different denominations united, and if he could have his way he would like to have a centenary every year, showing the interest taken in Sunday schools. He would now proceed with the work of implantation. Mr. Thomson then placed the root of the tree carefully in the ground, and held the tree there until the rich black soil was laid all round, holding it firmly in its place. He then called for three cheers for the tree, which were heartily given.

Rev. J. K. Macmillan followed, and said he would only speak for a few minutes, as the grass was damp after the late rains, and it was not desirable for the young ones to stay long that afternoon. At the same time he was delighted to be present on that interesting occasion, which he might say was the most important that had yet occurred in the history of Hamilton. In connection with Sunday schools, that noble institution founded by Robert Raikes, just one hundred years ago, he would like to say a few words. The rev. gentlemen then referred to the imperative necessity of Sunday schools in Australia, more especially as secular education was the law, and religious instruction could only be effectively imparted in the Sunday schools. That being so, he urged the parents of Hamilton to look after the home culture of their youth, and do all in their power to let them have the blessed seed which was sown in the Sunday school, and not allow them to perish for the lack of that "knowledge which leadeth unto salvation." The ministers and teachers were deeply anxious for the children's religious welfare, and he sincerely trusted if he were speaking to any parents who had children, and did not attend Sabbath schools, that they would not be neglectful of that duty any longer. Ministers and parents owed a deep debt of gratitude to the Sabbath school teachers. Their labours were invaluable, they had rendered eminent work in the past, and they were rendering eminent work at the present time. May God bless them for the good they had done and were doing. He concluded by calling for three hearty cheers for the Sabbath schools in connection with all denominations in Hamilton.

The Rev. Mr. Smith said he felt now the necessity for the possession of a voice like unto a trumpet, in order that all might hear it. He could do no more than cordially endorse the remarks of the previous speaker. Many there standing around might recollect the jubilee 50 years ago. Some of them might also take part in another celebration 50 years hence. They might be grandfathers and grandmothers. Ten years hence they might, perhaps, be dispersed abroad throughout the world in all directions, and Sunday schools live but as in a dream. They were not there that afternoon to erect an obelisk or monument of a passing event, but to celebrate a sign or symbol of a living fact that was flourishing and would yet flourish in the future. Let them thank God and take courage in the progress of the work, and pray that that oak tree would grow and flourish as a sign and symbol of the cause it represented.

The Rev. Mr. Heathershaw said he was pleased to be there that afternoon and express his sympathy with the object which had brought them together. A monument would be erected in London, and he supposed one would also be raised in Melbourne, to the memory of Robert Raikes, but here in Hamilton they were not in a position to erect a monument of polished marble, as they were not in possession of the money to do so. They had, however, by the hands of the Mayor, planted an oak tree, not only commemorative, but emblematical of the strength and progress of the Sunday school work. The rev. gentleman, after a few more appropriate remarks, concluded by calling for three cheers for "Ourselves."

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Rev. J. K. Macmillan pronounced the benediction, and the large concourse gradually dispersed, after all had joined in rendering the National Anthem.