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OPENING OF THE BURWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL.

The ceremony of opening a newly-erected Public school at Burwood took place on Saturday afternoon, in the presence of a large number of the residents of the district, besides many gentlemen from Sydney. Amongst those present were the Hon. James Byrnes, Minister for Works, the Hon. Alexander Campbell, M.L.C., the Rev. W. Lumsdaine, the Rev. John West, the Rev. R. W. Young, the Rev. G. G. Howden, Mr. John Fairfax, Mr. Walter Henny, Dr. Garran, Mr. M. M. Cohen, Mr. John Lucas, M.L.A., Captain Burns, Mr. J. Cuthbert, Mr. R. G. Reading, Captain Challis, of H.M.S. Rosario, Mr. Charles Smith, Mr. W. Wilkins, Mr. G. A. Mansfield, Mr. F. Bridges, Mr. E. T. Penfold, Mr. Wynne. The school itself is a very neat gothic building, and is situated about 250 yards from the railway station. Its position is so central that the children of Homebush and Enfield will be able to attend it without the inconvenience of a very long walk. It stands in the centre of four acres of land, which has been cleared and levelled for a playground, &c., and well-fenced round. The schoolroom is 54 feet long, by 21 feet wide, and is of very good height. It will afford accommodation for about 200 children. There are two classrooms attached; and lavatories are also fitted up in a building outside. The ground is divided into two allotments, one of which is reserved for the girls and the other for the boys; and upon each allotment a substantial shed has been erected for the use of the children during play hours. There are underground water tanks, capable of holding sufficient for every purpose for which water may be required. In one corner of the school-ground stands a neat four-roomed cottage, with appurtenances, for the use of the master. The cost of the buildings, which are of brick on stone foundations, will be about £1300. Mr. G. A. Mansfield was the architect. The local board consists of Mr. Thomas Walker, Mr. William Deane, Mr. Wynne, Captain Burns, and Mr. E. T. Penfold.

THE LUNCHEON.

At 3 o'clock a numerous company of gentlemen sat down to a well-prepared luncheon. The Hon. Alexander Campbell, M.L.C., occupied the chair (in the absence of Mr. Thomas Walker), and Mr. John Fairfax occupied the vice chair. After lunch had been partaken of,

The CHAIRMAN proposed the toast of "The Queen." In doing so he expressed his regret that Mr. Thomas Walker, in consequence of a recent bereavement in his family, was not able to be present to take the chair. They were all aware of the great assistance which that gentleman had given towards the establishment of the institution in which they were assembled; they were aware of his character as a good colonist, and of his munificence to every institution that was established for the public good. (Cheers.) Mr. Walker was also an old resident in the district; and would have filled the chair far more worthily than he (Mr. Campbell) could hope to do. (Cheers.)

The toast was drunk with the customary formalities.

The CHAIRMAN then proposed a toast, "The Earl of Belmore." He said that his Excellency had great claims to the gratitude and respect of the people of this colony, for the interest he took in every movement which had for its object the public welfare. No one, he thought, would deny that his Excellency was entitled to great respect for the manner in which he governed this country, and he thought no one commanded greater respect than his Excellency did.

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The toast was drunk with cheers.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN proposed,—"The Parliament of New South Wales." In the course of his remarks, he acknowledged that there were many good statesmen connected with our Parliament; at the same time there were some gentlemen who could not claim that distinction. The Ministry now in power had before it a field of labour and of operations, which, if properly managed, would prove of great and lasting benefit to the colony. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN returned thanks on behalf of the Legislative Council.

Mr. JOHN LUCAS, in returning thanks on behalf of the lower branch of the Legislature, said he was always happy to say what he could for the Parliament of New South Wales. Although there were both good and bad men in Parliament, he thought that on the whole there were as good a lot as could be assembled. He believed that every interest in the country was well represented in Parliament—the squatters, the agriculturists, the merchants, the small tradesmen, the mechanics, and the labourers. He was a member of Parliament for ten years previous to the last dissolution; and during that time he never knew any vote proposed for the education or improvement of the people that was not granted in full. Money for the University, the Grammar School, or the Public schools was voted without a single objection. He thought that spoke well for the members. He believed they were really delighted whenever a new school was opened, and looked upon it as another step towards cultivating the mind of the rising generation. When we considered that the boys of to-day would be the rulers of to-morrow, he thought we could not do better than give every lad in the colony a good moral and intellectual education. On behalf of the Parliament of New South Wales he returned thanks for the toast.

The Rev. G. G. HOWDEN proposed "The Council of Education." They had, he thought, good reason to speak well of the Council for what it had done in the colony, and especially for what it had done for Burwood. They were greatly indebted to it for the kind manner in which it had met the proposals made in respect to the building in which they were now assembled. They did, most sincerely rejoice in what the Council had done throughout the land, in providing education for the children of the poorer classes. (Cheers.)

Mr. JOHN FAIRFAX responded to the toast. He was sorry that an older member of the Board was not present to respond. Professor Smith was on a visit to Melbourne, Mr. Arnold was in the country, the Hon. George Allen was unwell, and Sir James Martin was, he presumed, busy with the fortifications. He had only been a member of the Board for about a fortnight. He therefore was not in a position to speak at any great length of the operations of the Council; and he therefore contented himself by simply returning thanks for the toast that had been proposed.

Captain BURNS proposed a toast "Mr. Thomas Walker." In the course of his remarks he passed a high eulogium upon that gentleman's character as a colonist and a philanthropist. He thought there was not a charitable institution in the colony that had not benefited by Mr. Walker's munificence: he had contributed about one-sixth of the cost of that school, and had been most assiduous in helping to get the institution established.

The toast was received with great cheering.

The Rev. W. LUMSDAINE proposed the next toast, which was "Our Visitors."

The toast was accepted in due form.

The Hon. J. BYRNES responded. He congratulated the committee to whose persevering labours was mainly owing the erection of that school, and he also congratulated the residents of the neighbourhood, on having their desires for a Public school fulfilled. After alluding to the difficulties in the way of education in the early days of the colony's history, he proceeded to say that he was delighted to find that the colonists had risen [illegible]

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country a century, he proceeded to say that he was delighted to find that the colonists had risen as one man to insist upon a proper education being provided for the rising generation. The children would have to be thankful all their lives for the success which had attended the passing of the Public Schools Act. That Act was passed under the Administration of Sir James Martin, and ample provision had been made for educating the children of all classes of the community. He thought that the great success which had been achieved by the present system, should now cause all opposition to it to be withdrawn. (Cheers.)

Mr. Martin Kenny, in a few appropriate remarks, proposed "The Press of New South Wales."

The toast was responded to by the Rev. J. West and by Dr. Garran.

This concluded the list of toasts. The company retired for a short time whilst the tables were cleared ready for

The Public Meeting.

There was a very good attendance at this meeting. The Hon. Alexander Campbell was called upon to occupy the chair.

The Chairman remarked that it was with some reluctance that he consented to take the chair. It was hoped and expected that Mr. Thomas Walker would have presided, but owing to a domestic affliction he was unable to be present. He felt his utter inability to take the place of that gentleman; indeed there were few men in the country who could fill his place. He was sure the meeting all deeply sympathised with Mr. Walker, and regretted the cause of his absence. Mr. Walker had displayed his munificence towards the institution in which they were assembled, as he had done to most of the public institutions in the colony. He (Mr. Campbell) could not help congratulating the inhabitants of Burwood upon the opening of that very handsome and commodious school; nor could he refrain from expressing his opinion that great credit was due to the residents of the neighbourhood, few as they were, for the great energy they had displayed in bringing that building into existence. During his residence at Burwood he had himself witnessed a great deal of what had been done; and he was exceedingly gratified to find that in so small a space of time, and with such a small number of hands to work, so much had been accomplished. Whilst saying that, however, he did not forget the handsome manner in which Mr. Thomas Walker had given his assistance. But for that gentleman they would probably not have been able to congratulate themselves on the erection of the school. Now that the school was opened, he hoped that those who had children would not have to be reminded of their duties to them. A grave responsibility would rest upon all parents who neglected to perform their duty to their children. It was one of the greatest boons a parent could enjoy to have the means of educating a child at a cheap—he might say a nominal rate. And when he looked at the fact that the people of this colony were so much better off than the people of older countries, and had at their disposal greater facilities for educating their children, he might characterise the sum which education cost here as very trifling. He asked the meeting to join him in heartily wishing that success might attend that Public school. (Cheers.) He concluded by declaring the school open.

Mr. John Fairfax said, as he had only been a member of the Council of Education for a very short time, it would be out of place for him to presume to give the meeting any information which he had not from time to time derived from printed reports. He might say that from the time the old National Board was instituted it always had his sympathies, his respect, and what little influence he possessed from his connection with the public Press. The Board of Education, however, which was established four years ago, had certainly had additional claims to his support; and that support he had given in every possible way. He believed that the present Public school system was destined to become prevalent over the whole of this great colony. He did not wish to say a single word against the Denominational schools as they existed. They were doing a great work. And he believed that the clergy and gentlemen who supported these schools were consistent in their support. Those who were in favour of the other system desired their support, and he believed that in the course of time it would be given. He believed the time would speedily come when the supporters of both systems would work harmoniously together for one general system of public instruction. He thought that the teaching of religion to children devolved first of all upon parents. And he regarded it as most extraordinary that throughout all the discussions which had taken place with regard to education during the last four years, parents, to a large extent, had been put on one side, or lost sight of altogether. Religion should be first taught at the mother's knee. But the teaching of religion in Public schools had not been overlooked. Certain hours had been set apart in order to allow ministers of the various Denominations to attend the schools, and teach the children the doctrines of the Church to which they belonged. There was no interference with the tenets or beliefs of any Denomination. All were treated alike. If any one would take the trouble to look through the lesson books used in the Public schools, they would find that extracts from both the Old and New Testaments were continually being read by the children. It was quite true that the different dogmas of religion were not taught by the lesson books. It was objected by some that the whole Bible was not allowed to be used. But the main truths of religion were taught by extracts from the Old and New Testaments; and, therefore, it could not be truly said that religion was entirely ignored in our Public schools. He believed in the Public school system most thoroughly. And he believed that those gentlemen who were opposing it, or holding back from it, would in the course of a few years be amongst its foremost friends, and would become most diligent and faithful workers under the system. (Cheers.)

Mr. W. Wilkins (secretary to the Council of Education) having been called upon to address the meeting, said it was very difficult for him to make a speech inasmuch as he was not his own master, and from that circumstance he was precluded to a great extent from expressing his own opinions. He had to deal almost exclusively with questions of fact. He would, however, endeavour to say something to the audience which it would regard as new and interesting. Perhaps he could not do better than point out a few particulars in which the educational arrangements in this colony contrasted with those of the mother country. He had already stated in public his strong belief that in such a contrast the advantages were wholly on the side of this colony. In the first place, if we took the amount of money expended upon education, it would be found that our Parliament was liberal beyond all comparison with that of Great Britain. (Cheers.) He believed that if, in the mother country, they spent upon education in proportion to their wealth to the same extent as was done in this colony, instead of spending some £800,000 per annum, they would have to spend something like £10,000,000. He thought it redounded to the credit of the colony that the Parliament should be willing to vote the large sum which it did every year, and that the people should not only not object, but actually approve. Then, if we went into the details of the question, we should find that the extent of education given here was vastly greater than it was in England. Practically, to the great bulk of the children, instruction was limited to the three fundamental subjects—reading, writing, and arithmetic. It was true there existed another organisation which had for its object instruction in science and art; but from the very nature of its constitution, the board which had to do with those matters could do nothing directly, and could exercise no great amount of control or stimulus over the teachers. Practically, then, the great body of the children who went to school in England learnt only reading, writing, and arithmetic; and that instruction was of an exceedingly meagre and mechanical kind. He spoke from his own personal observations in the model schools of England, and from reading the reports of inspectors and the report of the Committee of Education in England. If it was necessary to produce any circumstance or fact in proof of what he had said, he might allude to the introduction of the Education Bill into the British Parliament. Not a single member opposed it on the ground that it was not necessary. On the contrary, it was admitted on all hands to be extremely necessary, and that if steps were not taken to improve the education of the people of England, that country would soon sink to the position of a third-rate power in Europe. Such was the character of education in England. Now

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soon sink to the position of a third-rate power in Europe. Such was the character of education in England. Now what did we attempt to do in this colony? In addition to the three elementary subjects, we endeavoured to give some instruction in grammar and geography. He believed that the emigration movement in England was checked to a great extent by the utter ignorance of the lower classes with regard to Australian geography. They had little idea of where Australia was, or of the nature of the country. Before we could induce people to come here, it would be necessary to give them some information about the colony. A knowledge of geography was of the greatest importance to the people of this country. We should soon be carrying on a great business with all the islands which lay so near to us, and with the opposite continent of America. A knowledge of geography would help our colonial youth in understanding the position and character of the countries with which we might trade, and of what products we could buy from or sell to them. These were some of the most obvious reasons for teaching geography. But we went further. We were very fond of teaching singing in our public schools. And he might mention that the master who had been appointed to superintend that school was a very successful teacher of singing. Music cultivated the taste and sentiment, and morals, and even religion. He recollected when he came to Sydney some twenty years ago the favourite song of the nuresgirls, as they walked about the streets with infants in their arms, was "Oh, Susannah." But now we were sure to hear them singing some nice little song, the words of which conveyed some great truth or useful sentiment. The humanising and civilising influence of teaching music was of incalculable value. Drawing was also taught in the schools without extra charge; and he would again remark that the gentleman appointed to that school was a very successful teacher of drawing. Strange to say, drawing was the one subject which was most likely to be useful to a man in any rank of life. Suppose a boy was to be an artisan—one of the most difficult, and yet one of the most common, requisites was that he should be able to make a straight line. If he was to be a ploughman, his master would not approve of his work unless he could make a straight furrow. If he was to be a blacksmith, he must be able to make a straight bar of iron. Then again, the children attending the Public schools were also instructed in mathematics, in Euclid, and algebra; and the teaching of a little Latin was even attempted. The result of all this was, that if a boy only remained long enough at school, until, say sixteen or seventeen years of age, he had got a far better education than could have been obtained a few years ago in any but very expensive schools in any country where the English language was spoken. Having said thus much about what was taught in the Public schools, he would like to impress upon those ladies and gentlemen present, who had children to send to school, what appeared to him to be an obvious conclusion which they should draw. Here were the means of education placed close to their hands; a commodious schoolroom provided with all necessary books and other appliances of instruction; a master appointed, who was distinguished in his profession, who was devoted to it, and who was to make it the business as well as the pleasure of his life. The result remained to a large extent with the people themselves. As the proverb said, "one man might take a horse to the water, but forty men could not make the animal drink." If parents in the neighbourhood of that school did not take advantage of the means which had been placed within their reach for educating their children, no one could compel them to do so. He would just add one observation, not to show the value of education, but to show how easily persons could deprive themselves of it. Education was a process continually going on in school and out of school. It went on in the child's mind by almost imperceptible degrees. You could not measure the length and breadth of what a child learnt during the day. But he acquired something every day, his mental faculties had grown stronger, had expanded, and had become of more use to him. But if parents kept their children away from school for a few days they broke into that process of development, the children lost something. They did not stand still, but every day lost was a step backward, which had to be made up again. The child would fall behind the others of the class, and the instruction which would have been given to him in common with others would have to be given separately, or not given at all. It was, therefore, important that children should be sent with great regularity. Of course to do that would demand a great sacrifice on the part of many parents. But the trouble they experienced would be repaid to them by the progress which the children would make in learning, and fitting themselves for the duties of life. After speaking of the importance of parents placing implicit confidence in the teacher of their children, Mr. Wilkins remarked that he had known the master who had been appointed to that school from boyhood; he knew him to be very successful as a teacher, and one in whom the greatest confidence might be placed by the parents of the children.

The Rev. J. West briefly addressed the meeting, and in a few humorous remarks contrasted the facilities which parents now had for giving their children an education, with the difficulties which existed many years ago.

On the motion of Mr. E. T. Penfold, Mr. Campbell left the chair, whereupon it was taken by the Rev. W. Lumsdaine.

Mr. John Dawson then proposed, and Captain Brenes seconded, a vote of thanks to the chairman.

The motion was carried by acclamation.

The Hon. A. Campbell having in a brief manner acknowledged the compliment, the meeting separated.