

OPENING OF MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY.

A QUIET RESTING PLACE FOR THE PEOPLE'S DEAD.

On Saturday last the extensive new burying ground situated near the northern boundary of the city, and known as Mount Pleasant Cemetery, was formally opened to the public. The cemetery fronts on Yonge-street and is two hundred acres in extent. At present about a fourth part of the ground has been laid out in burial lots, and more will be prepared for interment as the funds at the disposal of the trustees will permit. The land has been purchased for the use of the citizens of Toronto and the inhabitants of the surrounding country, and is under no denominational or sectarian restriction whatever. It is intended to be, in the most liberal and enlightened sense of the word, "the people's burying ground."

As the Trustees' report, which is given below, discloses the origin and history of the cemetery, the writer will content himself with giving a brief sketch of the general appearance of the new "City of the dead." On passing through the entrance gate off Yonge-street, the eye of the visitor is at once attracted by the handsome building known as the receiving vaults, occupying a place excavated in the face of the ground which faces the street. This structure is worthy of more than a passing mention. The vaults proper—there are two of them—are 100 feet long by 22 feet broad, built of brick and stone, the vestibule being built of blue granite, faced with Berea stone. Supporting the vestibule are four handsome pillars of Scottish granite, having beautiful carved capitals of Berea stone. Inside, the vaults are nicely fitted up, and lighted from above through three apertures, at equal distances in the vaulted roof. These vaults are fitted with framework of wood, divided into equal spaces, and numbered for the reception of coffins. Each of the vaults has accommodation for 300 bodies. When the trustees can afford it they intend extending the walls out from each corner of the front part of the building in a semicircle, an addition which will add considerably to the look of the place. A fountain will, in time, be placed in front of the vaults, to be fed by a lake dug on the plateau behind. Passing the receiving vault towards the south, one comes to the ravine, worn by the rivulet which passes through the cemetery on this side. The scenery here is very pretty, the landscape engineer, Mr. H. C. Engelhardt, having seized every advantage which the ground affords for improving the general effect. The water has been imprisoned in a series of tiny lakes, one or two of which have an island in the centre. These lakes are emptied from one to the other over a series of cascades, the natural declivity of the water course affording sufficient scope for this purpose. The various roads are carried over this stream by neat rustic bridges. The large plateau which occupies the centre of the ground already cleared has all been graded, a portion at the North-east part being already peopled with the dead taken from the Potter's Field last winter. In a mound here lie the bones of about 3,000 persons which could not be identified. The remains of old and young persons of every Christian denomination, coloured and white people alike, here rest together in one common grave. The eastern portion of the cemetery, between the plateau and the second ravine, is still underwood. This part of the cemetery will in time be made the handsomest in the whole enclosure, and is likely to be eagerly sought for as soon as it is graded and laid out in burial lots. The cemetery throughout is traversed by several hundred avenues, which in time will be bordered by belts of trees ten feet in width. The names of the principal avenues are Southern, Northern, Linden, Maple, and Elm. There is quite a network of roads branching off from these. The avenues range from 40 feet to 25 feet in breadth. The whole plan of the cemetery are the work of Mr. Engelhardt, who is widely known as holding a front rank among landscape engineers. Besides the present undertaking, Mr. Engelhardt has planned the following:—Oakwood Cemetery, Raleigh, North Carolina; Holtwood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia; and in Canada, Belleville and Port Hope Cemeteries, besides the Eastern and High Parks in this city. Mr. Engelhardt's ideas have been ably and tastefully placed on paper by A. M. Armstrong, the draughtsman employed by him for that purpose.

Subsequent to viewing the cemetery a number of the visitors assembled in front of the receiving vaults to hear the report of the Trustees read. Among these were the following members of the Board of Trustees:—Hon. William McMaster (Chairman), and Messrs. James Lesalle, A. T. McCord, John Paterson, Robert Walker, and Warring Kennedy. Captain McMaster was also present.

Hon. WILLIAM McMASTER read as follows:—

THE TRUSTEES' REPORT.

"As much misunderstanding has prevailed relative to this important trust, a brief sketch of its origin, progress, and present position is desirable and necessary, not only on account of the trustees themselves, but for the satisfaction of the community at large for whom it was created. In the year 1826, upwards of fifty years ago, six acres of ground were purchased in Yorkville, as a cemetery, for the sum of £75, and this was raised by subscription from the inhabitants of the Town of York, now Toronto, and it was named 'The Potter's Field,' a place to bury strangers in." This was rendered necessary because of the unreasonable difficulties which frequently arose, by the refusal to bury strangers in what was called consecrated ground. About that time there were only two religious denominations, viz.: the English and Roman Catholics, who were empowered to hold ground for burial purposes. When the Potter's Field was opened it therefore became the common place of burial for all other denominations not being numbered with any sectarian restrictions. In 1849 and 1851 Acts were passed by the Parliament of Upper Canada, increasing the number of trustees and giving them limited power to purchase more land. Owing to the growth of Yorkville a petition was presented to the Legislature to have the Potter's Field closed as a cemetery, and arrangements were then made for the voluntary removal of the remains of the dead to lots appropriated for all who desired their removal to the Necropolis. The Necropolis was at first owned by a private company connected with the Presbyterians, but having been purchased by the trustees of the Toronto General Burying-ground it became the property of the citizens of Toronto. In 1864 the trustees availed themselves of the opportunity of enlarging the Necropolis, which embraced originally only about sixteen acres, by purchasing the ground adjoining, owned by the city corporation on the south side of Winchester-street. After much labour and expense preparing the ground and fencing it, the place was opened for interments, and partially occupied, when

the corporation arranged for its re-purchase from the trustees at cost, in order to form a part of the proposed Eastern Park for the benefit of that portion of the city. In 1871 an Act was passed by the Legislature of Ontario amending former Acts, and in 1875 another Act authorized the re-sale of the above mentioned ground to the city corporation, giving at the same time authority to purchase more land for burial purposes either in the city or township. In 1873 the trustees, after much careful investigation of the landed property about the city and neighbourhood, purchased the two hundred acres which now form Mount Pleasant Cemetery for \$20,000, and they have expended in the improvement of the front portion of the ground and the erection of the large receiving vault about \$30,000 more. In 1874 the Provincial Legislature passed an Act authorizing the removal of the remains of the dead to the new cemetery, which, after twenty years from the date of its being closed, had not been removed from the Potter's Field by relatives or friends. This was accomplished during the winter of 1875, both to the advantage of the town and the relief of the trustees. Mount Pleasant Cemetery is therefore the property of the citizens, and its affairs are managed by a Board of Trustees chosen according to law, who have no private interest whatever in the trust, and representing the principal religious communities whose custom or usage place no impediments to the burial of the dead without regard to the religious opinions they hold or to denominational ceremonies. Of the seven trustees named under the Statute 27 years ago only two remain alive; and the present Board consists of the following citizens, viz.:—Hon. Wm. McMaster, James Lesalle, Andrew T. McCord, John Paterson, Robert Walker, James Michie, and Warring Kennedy. The members of the Board of Trustees hereby notify the citizens generally and their representatives that the cemetery is now open for the inspection of all who may be desirous to see the arrangements made for the public convenience, or to select lots for the burial of their dead.

"By order of the Trustees,

"W. F. McMASTER,

"Secretary."

The hon. gentleman, after reading the report, adverted briefly to its contents. He said he wished particularly that the fact that the trustees had not the slightest interest of a private nature in the cemetery should be known, as some whisperings had got abroad that they had got an interest in the undertaking. This, he said, was incorrect, as they held the land simply in trust for the people, who were the sole owners; and to the people he had now, formally, to give the same over. At present, he said, there was but a small portion of the ground laid out; but it was not to be expected they could have all the ground fixed for occupation for a considerable time to come. They could at the same time congratulate themselves on being free from debt. By-and-by, when the state of the funds will permit of it, a chapel will be erected in the cemetery, where the burial service can be conducted if wished. The proceedings then terminated.