

HOW WE INAUGURATED THE PRINCE CONSORT'S STATUE.

BY F. WILSON.

"As he lived peerless,
So his dead likeness, I do well believe,
Excels whatever yet you look'd upon,
Or hand of man hath done.

But here it is; prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death. Behold! and say 'tis well!"—*Shakspeare.*

NEW SOUTH WALES has just witnessed the grandest sight that has ever claimed the admiration of her inhabitants—causing their hearts to swell with loyal feelings, and their cheers to burst forth like things of life, free-willed and untameable. On Monday, April 23rd, the statue of "Albert the Good" was unveiled—to freshen up our memories, proud and regretful, for one whose merits claimed so large a meed of the people's love and gratitude. On that day his image was regarded by those aged ones of every clime who *must* ere long succumb to that irresistible power which sweeps before it the prince and his lowliest subject; it was looked upon by multitudes of vigorous men and blooming women, who may live long to cherish in remembrance this day of days; and thousands of children—when the now bright bronze has lost its lustre, weather-stained by the changes of many years—will recall to mind and tell their children's children how the people of New South Wales loved the memory of "Albert the Good!"

His was no life of silken pomp, wasted in splendour; his aim was ever the advancement of the people, and what his hand found to do, "he did it with his might." He was honoured for his wealth of mind—"not for triumphs in the battle and renown among the warriors," "but for profit of the people, for advantage of the nations"—and when men like him rise above the common ranks of human life to prove its benefactors—to teach how kingdoms should be governed—to advocate that firm, yet gentle, policy which binds the whole world together as friends and brothers—to probe into the causes of social and sanitary misery and to work their cure, and withal to do this in a modest, unassuming manner—I say, when such men as these depart from among us, we do well to pray the good old prayer—"Lord, keep our memories green!"

Well, the inauguration of the statue, after being dimly hinted at for some time past, and vaguely proposed for Easter Monday, was finally fixed for April the twenty-third—St. George's Day—and has been the topic throughout the city for the last few weeks.

Man being, as they say, "an imitative animal," of course I determined to do as all Sydney seemed intending—that was, to contribute myself as a drop in the great tide of humanity flowing towards the scene of the ceremony; and with this intention I waited on a couple of my old friends, so that we might go together "for the sake of company." The rules of the day, however, sadly militated against our unity in anything more than the spirit—for Charley Beckwith was an Odd-Fellow.

I do not mean that he was strange or eccentric in his ideas or habits, but he was one of that numerous body who incline to scarfs of blue, green, or crimson, together with sundry notions in the banner-bauble-and-stick-line; and he was therefore expected to duly represent, in part, the magnitude and majesty of his Lodge. He was an important member, too, and had passed several degrees which entitled him to various "N's" and "G's," and other letters, which made his name look like that of a member of parliament.

A good-hearted, jovial young bachelor, withal, was Charley Beckwith—one whom you might venture to call a friend without finding out your mistake in after days, as it is too frequently the case in these degenerate times; and among other acts of friendship (such as picking me up one day when I fell overboard at a pic-nic party, acting as my banker when my own funds have been low, etc.), he was one of the first to pay me a visit of condolence when I was married. "Congratulation," was it?—yes, I stand corrected; however, I knew it was one or the other, and I always liked Charley the better for it!

My other companion (that was to be), Tom Riversdell, was even in a worse fix than Beckwith; for "he had married a wife, therefore he couldn't come"—that is, as far as joint-fellowship with me was concerned. In former times Tom had been a great advocate for society—company—in short, anything that came under the head of "jolly companions every one!"—but, since marriage, his opinions had strangely altered—he fought shy of clubs, abjured his old song of "We wont go home till morning," as sung by him with the greatest success, and of all his old habits only retained a wavering love for the "weed;" for in this respect married life had wisely refrained from "putting his pipe out."

On application to him, he gently hinted that if he attended the ceremony at all (and, believe me, the doubt rested with his wife, not with Tom's loyalty), he would probably bring Mrs. R. with him, and Mrs. R.'s sister; and as it hurt the feelings of Mrs. R. and her sister to have themselves or their bonnets crushed and trampled on—so that perhaps they mightn't venture nearer to the affair than Elizabeth-street—he thought it would be better for me to go alone—that was, if I wished to see anything of the inauguration—and call at his house in the evening for any information he could furnish relative to that which might escape my own observation.

"I would be sure to find him at home," he said, and with this arrangement I was fain to be content.

As to myself, I must plead guilty to soldierly propensities in general, and to "volunteering" in particular; and, though naturally a quiet

man, am so far averse to Peace Society principles, that if a fellow strikes me, I feel very much disposed to "hit him back again." From the formation of the present New South Wales Rifle Corps till now, I have stood the brunt of that "chaff" which seems to form part of our citizen-soldier's drilling. He is fated to pass the "fire" of urchins far too sharp for their age, and of those whose years ought to teach them better: but I had gone through the ordeal of these petty annoyances—these allusions to "ramrods deadlier than Enfield bullets," "buffalo hunters," etc., and possessing a smiling, immovable temper, at which no sort of fun could make a "bull's eye," I came forth unscathed. In my time, too, I have been great in the matter of parades, presentations of colours, and sham fights; which latter I specially delight in, for there is something so jolly in that you can have the thunder, and roar, and smoke of the battle without hurting anybody or being hurt yourself; and that you destroy your "enemy" by making him your friend—marching home together to discuss the merits of a hot supper. Of course, everything considered, I could not help "falling in," even if the events of the day were such that I should fall out with myself and everybody else before it was over. However, I was up at an early hour, furnishing arms and accoutrements, and brushing regimentals, and sallied forth with a most fixed determination to make the holiday a pleasant one.

The day itself presented a strange contrast to those which had preceded it; for while they shot down an unmistakable midsummer heat, this opened dull, cloudy, and rain-threatening. The weather was decidedly ill at ease with itself, and loomed darkly enough on all those who intended visiting the ceremony; in fact, the blue face of the heavens was as completely shut out from view by a drapery of clouds as the statue had been for the last few days by its covering of canvas. But when people with bright sunny faces came out defiantly, in large batches and small batches, and in continuous streams—when steamers, from the suburbs and adjacent village towns, landed their human freight—when panting, snorting locomotives, with their long *vertebra* of carriages, poured forth their crowds of country folk—when 'busses and vehicles of all sorts disgorged their living loads—then the clouds grew absolutely ashamed of themselves, and rolled and melted away, till the sun shone down right joyously, as the sun can shine in Australia!

Then, if you had gone into any quarter of the town, among the mansions of the aristocratic (and there is an old-world aristocratic feeling gradually pervading Australian society), or among the humbler habitations of the artisan and mechanic, you would have found all exhibiting preparations for the great event of the day. Volunteers of all ranks were hurrying by ones, and twos, and threes, to their respective parade-grounds; here the universal grey, with its distinctive facings of red and green, and there some artillerymen with their ferocious-looking "busbys," interspersed with one or two members of the rough-and-ready Naval Brigade, whose "white ducks" and serge jumpers form a pleasing contrast to the uniforms of their more military-looking friends.

Here comes a small volunteer, with an Enfield rifle as long as himself—and beside him a huge artilleryman, with a perfect plaything of a carbine—looking as if the pair had been armed on the principle by which ready-made clothing used to be distributed to the police, whereby all the short men got the long trousers, and *vice versa*. Crossing the road are a couple of firemen—the first a member of No. 1 company, with a shirt redder than the flames he is often called upon to quell; the other, a "No. 2 man," habited in sombre blue, piped with scarlet—an emblem of the darkness, edged with stray streaks of the fire he has conquered. Then come Foresters, Freemasons, Odd-Fellows, school children, and thousands of pleasant-faced, well-dressed people, whose appearance gives the lie direct to those who say New South Wales never enjoys a holiday. Of course, the centre of attraction at present is the Domain, to which the volunteers, having fallen in at Hyde Park Barracks, are now proceeding; and where various bodies have commenced to congregate, with banners floating sluggishly in the breeze. Everybody seems "standing at ease," and jest after jest is banded about from one company to another, eliciting smart repartees and peals of laughter, as is likely to be the case when such numbers of people—united in one common cause—leave their petty jealousies at home, and come out for once in their lives, determined to infuse—if they can—a little "peace upon earth, and goodwill among men."

The arrangements by the Inspector-General are worthy of every commendation, for it is no easy task to marshal into order such a vast concourse; but the head of the procession is formed at last, and off we start for Government House.

A detachment of mounted troopers—light and active-looking in their neat uniforms—clear the way in the extreme front with their sleek, well-groomed horses, who tread so carefully among the crowd they are required to disperse, that one might fancy them endowed with something more than mere brute instinct. Then comes the volunteer band, followed by the New South Wales Volunteer Artillery, presenting (though a rifleman, I say it) the most soldierly appearance of all our citizen troops.

Next in order, the long line of grey-clad volunteer rifles wound round the corner, company after company, till the spectator is fain to admit that the martial spirit of Australia has not died out in a mere burst of enthusiasm. One thing is evident—their style is rather loose when on the march; though on the present occasion, when the stiffness of military discipline is somewhat relaxed, and each has a feeling of being somehow out on his own account, a little of the general unsteadiness may be pardonable.

At the rear of the volunteers, the Freemasons form a large and gentlemanly-looking body, decorated with their gorgeous regalia, and numbering about 500. The procession having got thus far, is halted, in order that the other societies may form and fill in. Then the constables, with white covered caps on their heads, and white gloves on their hands, lengthen out at intervals along the entire line—as if taking the whole "in charge"—and, mingled with the sound of military orders, come the incongruous cries of the vendors of fruit, cigars, etc. "Company!—Attention!"—"Happles, six a shillin'!"—"By the right, quick march!"—"Cigars, an' a light!"—"Fine mellow pears,!" etc., combined with a variety of noises from other itinerant dealers, supposed to invite custom, but which "no fellow can understand" without an interpreter.

At length the whole procession is on the move. The Masons are supplemented by a train of Royal Artillery, marines, and soldiers—then a gap for the Governor and *suite*, after which come the Members of Parliament, walking on foot, as if (for once in a way) they condescend to be looked upon as common mortals. Then the clergy, followed by the members of the University, with their "mortar-board" caps and college gowns; and at the rear of these gentlemen of the long robe, who (in defiance of their various studies) he is wont to consider as of a general "sea-lawyer" species, comes Jack, or rather a whole ship's crew of jolly Jack Tars, bowling along as if before the wind, and sailing well up in the wake of their predecessors. These, again, are followed by members of the Horticultural Society, bearing an elegant device—an arch of evergreen, decked with the brightest blossoms of the season, surmounted by a large floral crown, and bearing the motto—"In Memory of Albert the Good." A tasteful design, well executed, and testifying the good taste of the society by whom it was borne.

Then come the Foresters and Odd Fellows—but shall I tell of them, with banners of dazzling colours, of crimson, blue and green, glittering in the sunshine, emblazoned with gold—of their scarfs, and stars, and medals—of the strange things they carry, like men's hands spitted ready for roasting; golden dumplings on long sticks; wooden battle-axes, and bows and arrows, which latter, somehow or other, associate their bearers with the death of Poor Cock Robin, as if they were so many homicidal sparrows.

Here, too, comes my friend Charley Beckwith, adorned with a blue sash and a white rosette on his breast; a *fac simile* of which, indeed, ornaments the breasts of a large number in the procession, making them look like so many prize turkeys set out for show in a poultryer's Christmas window.

Then come the Volunteer Fire Brigades with their new steam fire-engine in admirable order—a very gem of cunning mechanism—followed by the Sons of Temperance. And so the procession winds along the gravel walk intersecting the Inner Domain—in joints of red, and blue, and black, white and grey—as if the great sea-serpent had at last found a "local habitation," and was winding his tremendous folds towards Government House, for the purpose of paying Sir John a visit.

Here and there, among the foliage of the Botanical Gardens, you can catch a glimpse of the waves of Port Jackson—blue, trimmed with silver; while in Farm Cove the men-o'-war are gaily dressed with many-coloured bunting. How the music rolls and swells, and the drums beat with a lustier rattle, as with "advanced arms" we march past the Vice-regal residence, to the tune of "The Englishman!" How the bosom swells, and heart throbs, and the foot goes down with a firmer tread, as the strain reminds us of "that land that bears a well-known name, tho' it is but a little spot!"

And now the line having parted in the middle to receive the Governor's party, the whole advances through the guard-house gate, and is fairly in the city street: where crowds, with straining necks and expectant eyes, are craning forward to catch the first glimpse.

The mansions in Macquarie-street have their balconies filled with masses of book-muslin and pretty faces; while the footpaths are gradually thickening with human forms, and men and boys are perched like queer images on all manner of strange pedestals.

On we go—and the crowd, closing in, go forward with us, widening like the outlet of a river—past the Houses of Parliament, whose verandahs are filled with a merrier and more friendly "assembly" than is generally found within the walls; past the Infirmary (itself now getting old and infirm), with its balcony groaning beneath the weight of a vast concourse of (imp)patients, who have been for the last half-hour on the look-out for the procession.

Now the street is blocked from house line to house line with a surging sea of humanity, and we have arrived at the site of the statue, where a scene is presented that might stir the feelings of a very misanthrope. Every nook and corner is black with human heads, or white with upturned gazing faces; every niche or cranny affording a "rest for the sole of their foot" is dotted with human forms. Even the round holes in St. James's steeple are filled with the heads of spectators, and the windows near the ball, at its topmost height, have each their occupants; while the stands erected (and, perhaps, erected injudiciously) for the masses are crammed with every age of both sexes.

A semicircle of poles immediately fronting the statue are decorated with ferns, palms, and garlands of flowers festooned from post to post; while in the centre stands the statue, enveloped in the royal standard, which drapes the figure, and hangs in graceful folds about the granite pedestal.

The carriages roll up and deposit the Vice-Regal party, who again are surrounded by various portions of the now disjointed procession. A

small stage to the right of the statue accommodates the Lyster Opera Company; while a similar one to the left is devoted to the members of the combined German societies. In the plantation at the rear, the school children of the national, denominational, and various other systems—numbering, in all, about eight or ten thousand youngsters—are caged in, with sunburnt faces and exuberant spirits, "turning to mirth all things of earth, as only boyhood can," or, as Ingoldsby says:—

"The urchins are there, escaped from the rule
Of that 'limbo of infants'—the National School—
Whooping and bawling, and squalling and calling,
And crawling on : creeping, and jumping and leaping"—

to such purpose that people near them have a very remote idea of when the ceremony is going to begin, or whether it is already half over!

By this time the sunbeams shoot down, and dance and quiver upon everything in a glassy livid heat, so that one person near me remarks that "it is almost as hot as Christmas!"—rather a misty comparison to an English mind, but expressive enough to an Australian, I can tell you.

The proceedings are initiated by the German Societies singing a hymn to the memory of Albert the Good; and as it is sung in their native tongue, of course it is not very easy for anybody who doesn't understand German to tell what it is all about. However, there are two or three translations of the hymn, one of which runs as follows:—

"Let us join the solemn cortege,
And with hymns the day be hailed,
For Prince Albert's noble image
To our homage is unveiled.
As in life, serene and thoughtful,
See him from his proud height bend;
May his spirit hover round us,
Blessings e'en in death to spend.

Like a gem his name is shining
Near Britannia's mighty throne,
For Germania's son we're weeping,
All the good claim him their own.
His illustrious deeds and virtues,
Nations mourn from zone to zone,
And have rear'd a fond memorial,
Worthier far than bronze and stone."

At the suggestion of the Governor, the Lord Bishop of Sydney now offers up a prayer amid the hushed silence of that vast congregation; and then the Governor, finding the table provided as a platform deficient in height, steps over the trident-headed railing, and stands on the elliptical stone basement of the statue, amid the cheers of the multitude; while the eight young ladies chosen to unveil the image are arrayed on either side—"dight in white, a comely sight; fringing the path to the left and the right."

To transcribe all that his Excellency is now saying—and justly so—in praise of him whose memory the people of New South Wales have thus congregated to honour, would be inconvenient; for the simple reason that, in consequence of the universal hubbub, I cannot catch three consecutive sentences. He is now speaking of St. George and the Dragon, and of that order of knighthood coveted by so many nobles of the land; "but who (he says) will say that the inscription upon that pedestal is not a more enviable distinction it bears, inscribed to Albert the Good? The epithet 'good' conveys the highest praise that can be given to man, the worthiest title that can be borne by mortal, when it is conferred—as it is conferred in this case—deliberately upon approved desert by the free, unbiassed voice of the people."

A cessation in the general uproar—as the Governor pauses for a moment—enables me to understand that something momentous is about to take place; and now I hear his Excellency, in clear, distinct tones, commanding—"In the name of the people of New South Wales, I now direct that the same be unveiled."

No sooner is the word given, than the eight young ladies appointed to do so detach the cords binding the flag about the statue, which bursts—a noble work of art—upon the sight of delighted thousands; while the Royal Standard of England ascends to the masthead, and floats proudly in the breeze! At the same time the thunder of cannon comes borne on the trembling air—agitated by the prolonged and triumphant cheers of the multitude, and the grand strains of "God Save the Queen," sung by the Lyster Opera Company.

Everyone is acquainted with that good old song, though perhaps not so well with the German National Anthem, which commences—

"Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?"

and which is now being sung by the German Association.

The applause attendant upon the effective manner in which this was performed is beginning to subside, and the enthusiasm of the crowd breaks out in a new place with "Three cheers for the Queen!" Such cheers! Bursting from the immediate vicinity of the statue, they circle out, as if a stone had been dropped in the human ocean!—circle after circle of loyal voices take it up, and at last it reaches down Macquarie and King streets, to the struggling extremities of the crowds; and people who have been jammed up in corners far out of sight of the statue (though it has not been out of their minds for all that), frantically wave their hats and handkerchiefs, and shout and cheer in a manner fearful to hear, as if the first sentence of the Governor's speech had just reached them!

Then come cheers for his Excellency, and cheers for Lady Young, with "the same as before" for the eight little beauties in white, and then cheers for everybody, and "another little one!" for everybody who may have been left out by mistake.

And so the crowd begins to melt at last; not rapidly though, for although the heat has dissolved many portions of it—who have run off to reward their loyalty with "drinks round"—yet lumps of people (like hailstones under a hedge) won't melt, but stand gazing at the commanding bronze figure of the prince, with its golden inscription—

THE PEOPLE
OF
NEW SOUTH WALES
TO
ALBERT THE GOOD,
PRINCE CONSORT
OF
QUEEN VICTORIA.
1866.

Having "fell out," I came upon my esteemed friend Tom Riversdell and his no less esteemed partner, with her equally-esteemed sister, who, since the commencement of the ceremony, have been stuck round the corner of St. James's Church—being chary of venturing nearer, as the sister avers, "for fear of being scrooged to death!"

Tom has been amusing himself all the morning by trying to count the number of umbrellas over the dense sea before him; he has been studying the style of architecture of various buildings about the neighbourhood, until he could almost superintend the erection of any one of them from memory; and he has been cheering tremendously at intervals of five and ten minutes, under a vague impression that something was going on that ought to be cheered. However, Tom "has been to the Inauguration," and is quite contented; moreover, I do not believe that any three among the 40,000 loyal hearts present at the ceremony enjoyed it more than Charley Beckwith, Tom Riversdell, and your humble servant.

THE WIFE OF OUR NEW MINISTER.

THERE has been a pastoral change in our congregation. The people, after a ten years' trial of good old Mr. Wharton, and his amiable, compliant wife, came to the conclusion that a different kind of preacher, with a different kind of wife, would vastly improve their spiritual condition. There was a lack of strength about Mr. Wharton (so it was alleged), and certain prominent ladies in the church had wished (aloud) so often that Mrs. Wharton were less old-fashioned in her ways, that change, sooner or later, had come to be a settled thing in the minds of a majority. It was simply a question of time; and time settled the question. The change was made. Old Mr. Wharton and his wife retired, and Rev. Mr. Newton and his wife took their places in the pastorate of the congregation—I say "Mr. Newton and his wife," for our people think, or used to think, that, when they "hired a minister," they hired his wife also, and regarded her duties among them in quite as high a light as they did the duties of her husband.

I happened to be away from the village at the time this change was made, and did not return until after Mr. Newton and his wife had been doing duty for something over three months.

"How do you like the new minister?" was among the first of my inquiries. "He's a charming preacher," was the reply I received on every hand. Yet I saw, by the manner of my friends, that some drawback existed.

"How do you like his wife?"
Ah! The little mystery was explained. Mr. Newton was well enough. But his wife!

"What kind of a woman is she?" I asked.
"Don't know. Can't make her out," was the vague answer received.
"Is she anything like Mrs. Wharton?"

"Oh dear, no. I only wish she was. Why, she doesn't take a particle of interest in the church. Hasn't been to one of the monthly concerts for prayer; nor to the weekly sewing-circle; nor even to the Sabbath-school. We calculated entirely on her taking the senior girls' class, which Mrs. Wharton taught for so many years; and a committee of ladies waited on her with an invitation to do so; but she actually declined, saying that she had neither *taste* nor *aptitude* for teaching! Now, what do you think of that for a minister's wife! Did you ever hear the beat of it?"

I saw, at a glance, that there was trouble ahead; for Miss Phœbe Lane, who made me this communication, was an active "circulating medium" in the congregation. She knew everybody's business, talked to everybody, and acted as opinion-maker to a large majority of ladies who had too much to do in their families to have time for independent thinking in church matters.

I must confess that I felt a sort of liking for Mrs. Newton on this representation of Miss Lane. Mrs. Wharton had been such a pliant subject in the hands of my spinster friend, and a few like her, that an involuntary respect was created for a minister's wife, who, in coming among us, could from the beginning show that she had an individuality of her own, and meant to hold on by it.

Two or three days' intercourse with the members of the congregation satisfied me that Mrs. Newton would not do for the Church of St. Charity. When and where this lady was sainted I have never learned. I have my suspicion that Miss Phœbe Lane, who christened the church on the occasion of building our new church, was not particularly well read in the Saintish Calendar. But let that pass. Ours was the Church of St. Charity. Mr. Newton was a delightful man! Such a preacher! So active in all the interests of the society! So pious! So humble-minded! But his wife! No woman could be less suited to her condition. It was even doubted whether she were a professor! Phœbe Lane was positive about it; and averred that