

WILLIAM LITTLE J.P.

(An extract from the book Ballarat and Vicinity
page 55, describes the life and activities of William Little.)

Standing out pre-eminently amongst the leading public men of the city of Ballarat is Mr. William Little, J.P., a man possessing exceptional attainments. A native of Cumberland, England, he was born in 1839, and landed on these shores on Christmas Eve, 1851. The National School, Geelong, was where Mr. Little received the first portion of his education, and some years later he became an undergraduate of the University of Melbourne. His first occupation in the colony was that of an officer in the Custom House at Geelong, and then he occupied positions in several mercantile houses at the same place, until, at the invitation of Mr. James Oddie, he came to Ballarat, in order to take up the position vacated by Mr. J. Noble Wilson in Mr. Oddie's office. Mr. Little proved himself a faithful and conscientious employé; to how great an extent can be judged by the fact that he remained with Mr. Oddie for a period of twenty-one years, during a portion of which he was personally interested in the business. In 1880 he parted company with Mr. Oddie, and commenced business on his own account as an auctioneer, estate, finance, and insurance agent, and sharebroker. Under Mr. Little's direct management and supervision the business prospered from year to year, until we find to-day, in one department alone, that the rents collected by him, on shops, houses, houses, offices, and lands, represent no less than a sixteenth of the entire rated property in the city, this proportion being exclusive of rents collected in Ballarat East, and on farms and lands in other parts of the district. In all other departments a similar state of affairs is in existence, and is a proof of the reliance placed by thousands of people on the integrity and stability of the business conducted by Mr. Little.

People were not long in discovering the man he was, and as a natural consequence he was solicited to become a candidate for municipal honours. After due deliberation Mr. Little gave his consent, and contested and secured a seat in 1883 in the Ballarat City Council. Just as he worked honourably in his own business and private affairs, so did he do his best for those who had solicited his services and had placed him in a seat of power. In 1889-90 he was elected Mayor of the City, and never was the Council business conducted in a more capable manner than during Mayor Little's term of office. With calmness, dignity, and graciousness he ruled firmly and at the same time gently, and with thorough impartiality. That year (1890) will ever be marked by an occurrence of a noteworthy character, when on the 23rd May there was an Arbor Day celebration, and 1250 trees were planted in Victoria Park by all the leading politicians, public men, and ratepayers of the day. His Worship planted an English oak on the occasion, and also planted two trees on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, who graciously, through Lord Knutsford, Secretary of State for the Colonies, acknowledged the kindly action of Mayor Little.

Towards the close of his connection with the City, a great conflict arose between that body and the Salvation Army. A number of the men and women soldiers were placed in gaol for marching through the streets. Mayor Little counselled moderation on the part of the civic authorities, and went so far as interviewing His Excellency the Governor, the result being that the "soldiers" were released. After that there was more moderation displayed, and an irritating public event terminated. One other matter worthy of record shows the thorough business qualities of Mayor Little and the methodical manner in which he acted while a member of the City Council from 1883 to 1892. During the whole of that time he kept a faithful record of all the transactions which took place at the Council table, and these are to be seen in book form at his office in Lydiard Street. Interested to a considerable extent in out-door recreation, Mr. Little is a prominent figure on the Central Bowling Green, and there is no more capable exponent of the game than he. It is customary for a Mayor to give a ball during his term of office. In the case, however, of Mayor Little he has conscientious scruples against such a form of amusement, and in place of the usual dance, he engaged the Victorian Orchestra, from Melbourne, under the leadership of Mr. Hamilton Clarke, and a high-

class concert was given in the Alfred Hall, greatly to the enjoyment and edification of the large audience in attendance. The citizens of Ballarat decided upon giving a return concert to His Worship and the Mayoress, and this social function too, place in the same hall, the Ballarat Liedertafel having been engaged for the occasion, and like the former it was a decided success; Mayor Little and his family being highly delighted at the form which the compliment took. The citizens also presented Mayor Little with a massive silver tea and coffee service; also plate; while the Mayoress was made the recipient of a gold diamond-studded watch and chain.

One position held by Mr. Little must not be overlooked, and that was when by twenty-two councils in the western portion of the colony he was elected first representative on the Central Board of Public Health. In 1881 he was gazetted a Justice of the Peace, and on the Bench as elsewhere he has acted honourably and impartially. Mr. Little is a man who takes an interest in the moral and religious welfare of his fellow creatures, and he is a prominent figure in connection with the Lydiard Street Wesleyan Church, and for several years was an officer thereof. The Town Mission is a cause which has benefited to a very considerable extent by his efforts on its behalf, both in a pecuniary sense and from the fact that he held the position of secretary and treasurer for many years. He is a member of the Old Colonists' Association.

Mr. Little is a lover of art, not only in his own home but in his office, for hung on the walls of the latter are to be seen works from the brush of artists which take a first rank in art circles. Mr. Little loaned about a third of the collection which was exhibited upon the occasion of the first Art Gallery being opened in Ballarat. It is generally acknowledged that Mr. Little leads in this regard, his collection embracing many handsome and valuable works of art. The following is a brief sketch of some of the oil paintings he possesses. It will be seen that many of them are real works of merit, and have a historical value :- "Beatrice di Cenci" (the prison scene), painted by Achille Leonardi, was purchased by the Hon. William Wilson when in London some years ago, and exhibited at the first Intercolonial Exhibition held in Melbourne. It is valued variously from £250 to £500. It is a charming production, is without doubt a picture of great merit, and tells a peculiarly plaintive and well-known story of a by-gone age. The celebrated portrait of Cenci, ascribed to Guido, is, as most people know, in the Barberina Palace, and is regarded of almost incalculable value. "Prospero, Miranda and Caliban," by H. Fuseli, R.A., from the first act of the "Tempest," and also a companion picture painted towards the end of last century by J. Opie, R.A., from the last scene in "Winter's Tale," where Hermione descends from the pedestal, are prominent features in the gallery. Both these studies are engraved in "Boydell's Shakespeare." These paintings were restored with great care by Mr. Flintoff, and valued by him at not less than £250 each. "The Gipsy Fortune-teller" is believed to be the second picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The first was in the possession of Earl Amherst, at Knowles. A repetition of this picture was purchased at the sale of the Marchioness of Thomond's (niece of Reynolds) pictures in 1821, by Colonel F. G. Howard, for £252. The first picture was painted in 1784, for £367 10s; since then it has, of course, greatly increased in value. "View of Ballarat," from an elevated point near the Little Bendigo Church, by Knut Bull, is a clever panoramic painting; so also is the one of "Lake Wendouree," by the same painter. Both have a special value from a public point of view, and it is fortunate that Ballarat possesses valuable productions of such local interest. "Moonrise on the Coast," by Arthur Gilbert, S.B.A., is a pretty little painting from the London Art Union. "Rocky River Scene, North Wales," by F. Creswick, R.A., is a good specimen of landscape painting. "View in Wales," by E. J. Niemanne, was a choice production of this deceased artist, whose later paintings are much sought after. "Mountain Stream," by F. R. Lee, R.A., an artist who some years since visited Australia, and as a memento of his visit he presented the Melbourne Public Gallery with a picture which is greatly admired. "On the Arno, Florence," by F. Moltimo, is a fine illustration of the Turner school. "Old Farmhouse, Wilts," by Shelton Lewis, is an especially valuable painting from the Dudley Gallery Exhibition. "A Receding Tide on a Broken Shore," a fine water-color by G. L. Hall, of London. Pair of cleverly painted dog pictures, said by the secretary of the London Art Union to be the early production of Richard

Ansdell, the admitted successor to Landseer. "The Connoisseur," after Messonier, is a well executed example of this great master, whose original paintings are of immense value. "Rapids," by H. Van Soon, is a striking piece of painting with a free brush, and good effect. Three recent pictures, by Xiley, from the round, represent a quite modern school of painting of a very exacting nature. "Oaks" (large), by Henbraumer, is a very conspicuous picture. The collection includes a landscape by Webb, a scene "On the Yarra" by Williams, a coast view by Muir, and a miniature by Lazarus of Christ crowned with thorns. In addition to the above the collection includes some fine examples by Rolando (of Melbourne, lately deceased), and J. H. Scheltema. The "Changing Pasture," a cattle scene sketched in the Western district, was the joint and probably the best production of these two artists. It is truly colonial, and the loan of it is much desired by the local gallery authorities.

Mr. Little and his family have always been identified with music, the lady to whom Mr. Little was married in 1862 being Miss Cazaly, exceedingly well known and popular in musical and other circles. She has officiated in the capacity of organist of Harmonic Societies, which at the time were conducted by Mr. A. T. Turner. This was over thirty years ago. There are three children by the marriage, two boys aged twenty-one and nineteen respectively, both of whom are engaged in the office in Lydiard Street; the third, fifteen years of age, is a girl. The whole of the family stand out conspicuously as being passionately devoted to the study of music. The two sons have taken honours at the Musical Society of Victoria, and they lately went up for examination at the society named for second honours in organ, clarionet, and violin performances, and were awarded diplomas. The family now play between them no less than fifteen instruments. Professor Marshall Hall, of Melbourne, writing with reference to the performance by Mrs. Little of "Sonata Pathetique," said that he had not heard better artistic execution since coming to the colony. A criticism from so high and recognised an authority is indeed a fact to be proud of. Mr. William C. Little passed intermediate theory honours of the Tonic Solfa College, he being the youngest pupil in the colonies to accomplish such a feat, his age at that time being only thirteen, and he is now honorary organist to the Neil Street Church two-manual pipe organ. As a family they have ever been ready to grant their assistance in the sacred cause of charity, and the recollections of those who have had the pleasure of listening to them are of the most pleasant character.

Mr. Little is well-known in Masonic circles, he being one of the early Past Masters of the Yarrowee Lodge, No. 10, E.C., is Past Z., and Past Grand Junior Warden of Victoria Lodge, and representative of the Grand Lodge of the Republic of Liberia.

In addition to the multifarious duties connected with the public offices in which Mr. Little takes part, and the conduct of his own thriving and extensive business, he finds time to wield the pen, and wields it with such advantage that we must class him as a *litterateur* of the first order. A perusal of that excellent little sketch, at the beginning of this work, dealing with Ballarat's birth, 1837, and Ballarat's jubilee, 1887, well repays the time devoted to the reading thereof. Brightly written, sometimes grave and at others gay, at all times readable and interesting, one can only say that the sketch is a masterpiece; and his Real Estate article, elsewhere, is a most interesting memorial of the past and present. Mr. Little's contributions to Ballarat and other news-papers have at all times been read with interest, and the opinions set forth have always been respected by the thinking portion of the community, who owe a debt of gratitude to him for his literary efforts. It seems hardly possible to find words which will adequately convey to the mind of the reader who has not the honour of Mr. Little's acquaintance the esteem and regard which Ballarat holds for him. Mr. Little stands forth as a bright, cultured, intelligent man of the times; one who has the respect of all who know him and the good wishes of the community in general. He may be classed as a thoroughly sincere, honest, straightforward gentleman in private and public life alike, and one who deserving fame, prosperity, and respect, has gained it.

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