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The Advertiser 29th March 1898

THE LATE SIR THOMAS ELDER.

That gratitude is one of the most pleasing characteristics of South Australians has been once more exemplified. The magnificent bequests of the late Sir Thomas Elder to public institutions of the colony excited intense admiration at the time of his death, and the general feeling has now culminated in the movement so enthusiastically taken up, and so successfully inaugurated on Monday afternoon, when His Excellency the Governor and the Right Hon. the Chief Justice warmly recommended the proposal to erect a statue in honour of Sir Thomas, and spoke in high terms of praise to the munificence of the deceased benefactor. A strong influential committee was formed, and the work will now be briskly forwarded.

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A STATUE TO SIR THOMAS ELDER.

The desire to do something to commemorate the public generosity of the late Sir Thomas Elder took concrete form at a meeting held in the Mayor's reception-room on Monday afternoon, when eloquent addresses on the munificence of the deceased gentleman were given by his Excellency the Governor and the Chief Justice. The latter speaker pointed out that we owe it to ourselves and our posterity to leave some tangible public memorial of a man who has done so much for the public institutions of the colony. Sir Edwin Smith, who was appointed treasurer of the undertaking to erect a statue to Sir Thomas Elder in some prominent part of the city, pointed out that if the recipients of his bounty would devote 1 per cent. of the amounts received towards the fund the sum thus obtained, together with private subscriptions, would reach the required figure, some £1,200 to £1,500. A number of subscriptions were announced and an influential committee was appointed to carry out the proposed work.

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THE LATE SIR THOMAS ELDER.

RECOGNITION OF HIS SERVICES.

A PUBLIC STATUE.

A public meeting of those desirous of recognising the munificence and public services of the late Sir Thomas Elder, G.C.M.G., to the province, by the erection of a statue in his honor, was held at the Mayor's Reception-room, Town Hall, on Monday afternoon. His Excellency the Governor, who was accompanied by Miss Buxton, Mr. Barclay, and Captain Wallington, presided over a good attendance. Apologies were received from the Bishop of Adelaide, the Mayor of Adelaide, Sir Charles Todd, his Honor Mr. Commissioner Russell, the Hon. J. L. Stirling, M.L.C., and J. Warren, M.L.C., Drs. Way, Lendon, and Martin, the Rev. Dr. Paton, Messrs. J. H. Symon, Q.C., J. L. Bonython, R. K. Thomas, and A. S. Davey.

The Right Rev. Dr. Harmer wrote:—"The great munificence of the late Sir Thomas Elder appears to me thoroughly to deserve the recognition of a public statue, and I shall esteem it a privilege to help forward the movement in any way in my power. You may put down my name as a subscriber of £10, and my only regret is that owing to the variety of claims upon me I am unable to be a contributor to a larger amount."

His Excellency said he supposed he might assume that those present were either friends or personal acquaintances of Sir Thomas Elder, and in that way he was perhaps the least-qualified person in the room to take the chair. In one way, however, he might be considered fitted for the task, and on account of his representative office he might take upon himself to state, on behalf of the people of Adelaide, how much they esteem the memory of their late fellow-citizen. (Hear, hear.) He was sure they desired to recognise and acknowledge how greatly they had benefited by his public spirit and munificence during his life as well as at his decease. Sir Thomas became acquainted with the great difficulty of overcoming the vast distances which the interior of South Australia offers and he tried the experiment of introducing the camel-trading not only the risk of a secretary but also of being recharged

with the gambling spurs or in seeking to make a mean profit. Even so recent a newcomer as he could appreciate how wide was the sympathy which Sir Thomas showed. He displayed his sympathy for the sick by giving large sums for the support of homes and hospitals for those failing in health or overtaken by old age; he showed his appreciation of education and his desire to bring it home to those of the well-to-do classes and of the whole community, and if he especially directed his gifts to the use of the University it was because he appreciated and recognised the fact that the University is a machine for the benefit of the whole community. (Hear, hear.) Sir Thomas gave large sums to provide the best training in music. He gained pleasure and relief from music, and he desired so to encourage music in our midst that it should be still further disseminated, and that education in this subject should be brought home to the masses. He gave largely to the churches of his own communion—the Scottish Kirk—but they knew that the churches of his brother Christians were not forgotten, and he was sure those who belonged to the Church of England recognised how great and splendid was his munificence and how valuable would be the gifts to the Cathedral, which was a pride not only to the members of the Church of England but to the whole community. (Hear, hear.) He was sure Sir Thomas Elder's gifts were appreciated by all, and they must acknowledge the sympathy and goodwill which had marked the attitude of his relatives to these bequests. It was a great gratification and pride for him to be present and to show his esteem for one whom he never knew but whose work he had learned to appreciate during the short time he had been in Adelaide. (Cheers.)

The Right Hon. the Chief Justice thanked His Excellency for his attendance and expressed the gratification which he felt at seeing his daughter also in the room. (Hear, hear.) This act proved that his Excellency's sympathy with South Australia was shared by every member of his family, and Miss Buxton by her presence had very gracefully shown that this was a lady's as well as a gentleman's question. (Hear, hear.) His Excellency was accompanied by a distinguished visitor—Mr. Barclay, of the venerable city of Norwich. (Hear, hear.) He would tell him that the citizens of Adelaide are proud of the city in which they live, and he did not think any of them would be prepared to dispute the statement that Adelaide is the admiration of all beholders. (Laughter and hear, hear.) If the Federal capital were to be fixed on the score of beauty, the golden apple would fall into the lap of fair Adelaide. (Hear, hear.) But there was one want which frequently struck the notice of visitors to our city, and that was the absence of public statues. (Hear, hear.) His Excellency had travelled in both hemispheres, and would bear him out that in every city of the old and new world one would see monuments to those who have done the State service placed in almost every square and street. In the city of Adelaide we had three such monuments. There was the truncated monument to Colonel Light, and it was our only ruin. There was the monument to Robert Burns, which we owed to the Caledonian Society; and there was the fine monument of her Majesty the Queen, which we owed to the patriotism of his friend Sir Edwin Smith. (Cheers.) But they were not met that afternoon to supply this want. The services of our late fellow-colonist, Sir Thomas Elder, would mark him out for distinguished recognition even if our Pantheon were crowded with memorials of the illustrious dead. If he had to describe the late Sir Thomas Elder in a word he would call him a "Merchant prince." (Hear, hear.) His Excellency had very happily gone over the principal phases of his acts of munificence, and they would all agree that if there was any man who could claim to have been his own executor to the public it was the late Sir Thomas Elder, and yet, when his will was opened about twelve months ago, it was found that he had given £155,000—or, with legacy duty £170,000—to those public objects which during his long life had shared so largely in his generous munificence. It had always appeared to him that this last act of Sir Thomas Elder was like placing the capital on the finished and symmetrical column of his honorable life, and it had certainly cast a beautiful after-glow on the whole of his patriotic career. (Hear, hear.) It might well be said that the institutions which Sir Thomas Elder founded and which he contributed to so liberally were his best and most enduring monument. It might also be said that he was a man who did good for its own sake without any thought of reward, or reputation, or fame. But his munificent gifts did not escape the notice of his Sovereign; they received her gracious approval, and was it not due to ourselves that we should show our appreciation of our gratitude to our late distinguished fellow-citizen for his munificence? Was it not due to posterity that we should hand down to them a monument of one who has set an example for all time of patriotism and of munificence? (Hear, hear.) He might mention one or two practical matters. The reading of Sir Thomas Elder's will recalled many of the great gifts which he had given for the benefit of South Australia. A private citizen, Mr. George Wilcox—unconnected, he believed, with any of the institutions which had shared so largely in Sir Thomas's generosity—set to work to give effect to the general feeling that something ought to be done to recognise these great gifts. He nominated a small committee, but when they met they felt that a honor of this kind should not be monopolised by a few, but that it ought to be taken up by the general body of the public, and therefore they determined to enlarge the small committee which Mr. Wilcox had nominated, and they were confident that with his Excellency at the head of the movement it would result in a spontaneous and splendid monument, not merely of our gratitude to Sir Thomas Elder, but would show that South Australia appreciates good service by its citizens. (Cheers.) He had much pleasure in moving the first resolution as follows:—

That it is desirable to recognise the munificence and public services of the late Sir Thomas Elder, G.C.M.G., to South Australia by the erection of a statue in his honor.

Mr. F. CHAPPEL, B.A., B.Sc., in seconding the motion, said he supposed it was thought he represented in some sense the recipients of these great gifts. He shared in the general appreciation of the character and generosity

of the late knight, whose memory they desired to perpetuate. South Australia desired to be grateful to him—(hear, hear)—and the institutions which had been so wonderfully helped by him wished to express in some way more than mere words their obligation. The feeling throughout the University was one of satisfaction with the splendid gifts which had been received. (Hear, hear.) They had all admired the public spirit, the generosity, the business ability, and the kindness of Sir Thomas Elder. (Cheers.)

Mr. W. B. ROUSSEY said Sir Thomas Elder's character was one of many facets. His guiding hand was evident in his splendidly conducted business, but more than this, he was never deaf to an appeal made to him in any public cause. His grand legacies, which had been but the coping stone of the arch, had been the fitting close of a noble life; they would speak of him for all time, and South Australia would be lacking in self-respect if she did not contribute to their commemoration. People in Glenelg, not very well off, had assured him how gladly they would contribute their quota towards this work. He had some leisure just now, and he would be most happy to do all he could to further the object in view. (Hear, hear.)

The Hon. J. H. HOWE, M.L.C., said it had been his privilege some 40 years ago to travel in the northern bush with Sir Thomas Elder, and on that memorable trip he came to the conclusion that he had never travelled with a shrewder or more capable man. Sir Thomas took in every situation at a glance, and at once said, "This is the land for camels," and the result was the importation of those useful animals. A Scotchman, Sir Thomas loved his native country well; but he also loved his adopted land, and he had proved that affection by the most splendid generosity. (Cheers.)

The Hon. Dr. COCKBURN, Minister of Education, said as one who was intensely interested in the institutions towards which Sir Thomas Elder's generosity was directed he would like to say that he thoroughly agreed with the noble oration of the Chief Justice and with his statement that we owe it to ourselves, as we value our educational institutions, to show a just appreciation of the worth of the deceased gentleman. He would like also to say that he hoped every opportunity would be given to invite subscriptions from every direction, and no matter how small. (Hear, hear.) As he came into the room a president of one of our country institutes told him that he hoped an opportunity would be given to allow the members of country institutes to contribute towards a memorial of one who had done so much for the noblest institutions of which South Australia can boast. On behalf of the educational institutions of South Australia he would like to say a word of gratitude, and many a thankful prayer would go up to the memory of Sir Thomas Elder from the inmates of those charitable institutions towards which his munificence was also directed. The future citizens of South Australia, every time they entered the Art Gallery of the future, would have the beneficent legacy of Sir Thomas Elder impressed upon their minds. He wished to express the deep interest which his colleagues and he felt in this movement, and to say that they would do everything in their power to make it a success. (Cheers.)

The motion was carried.

Mr. G. K. SOWARD (Mayor of Glenelg) moved—

That a committee be formed, including the provisional committee, to carry out this object, and that the Right Hon. S. J. Way, LL.D., Chief Justice, be chairman.

When he remembered the great statues which existed in the other capital cities of Australia he felt that we could not do better than raise a memorial to so distinguished a citizen as Sir Thomas Elder. With his honor as the working head of the committee and with the assistance of the gentleman he saw around him, he was sure they would have no difficulty in carrying the matter to a successful issue.

Sir EDWIN SMITH, who seconded the motion, said it was his pleasure to know Sir Thomas Elder since the early fifties, and to have in him a very kind friend. To have a statue worthy of the man they wished to honor they must expend £1,200 to £1,500, and he knew of no better place for its erection than the reserve beside the University, an institution for which he had done so much; and if they could in time erect a number of statues along the reserve from Government House to the Botanic Gardens it would be a very good work. (Hear, hear.) The Chief Justice had asked to be put down for £25, and he (Sir Edwin) would be glad to put his name down for a similar amount. (Hear, hear.) The Blind, Deaf, and Dumb Asylum, had received £2,000 from the trustees of Sir Thomas Elder, and he had suggested at the last meeting of the institution that if all those who had been fortunate enough to receive special bequests were to give 1 per cent. of the amount it would produce a very handsome total. The gifts were free of legacy duty, so that the Blind, Deaf, and Dumb Asylum, instead of receiving £1,800, obtained £2,000. The proposal to give £20 towards the statue was, he was glad to say, carried unanimously. At the next meeting of the Zoological Society he would move in a similar direction, and he believed they would get £30 there. He was sure that the Chief Justice would see that the University contributes a handsome sum. Mr. George Wilcox handed him outside subscriptions to the extent of £100, so that they could now say they had in hand one-sixth of the amount required. (Hear, hear.)

The motion was carried.

Mr. J. DARLING, JUN., M.P., moved a vote of thanks to Mr. George Wilcox, the hon. secretary of the provisional committee, who, he said, had been indefatigable in his efforts to initiate this movement. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. H. C. E. MURCKE seconded the motion, which was carried.

Mr. G. W. HAWKES moved that Sir Edwin Smith be treasurer of the committee. In other countries the cities were beautifully adorned by statues of distinguished citizens, and there was no better way of commemorating the efforts of those who had given time and wealth to forwarding the interests of their adopted country.

Mr. A. MELROSE seconded the motion, which was supported by the Chief Justice, and carried.

Mr. J. Moulle was appointed hon. secretary to the committee on the motion of Mr. J. T. SCHREIBER, M.P., seconded by Mr. A. McDONALD, M.P.