

The Times. Saturday, July 25, 1868.

The City of London School.

Yesterday being the anniversary festival of this school, the prizes awarded to the more successful pupils were distributed, according to custom, in the theatre of the school, situated at the back of Cheapside, by the Lord Mayor, in the presence of the managing committee and other civic dignitaries. A circumstance, as will have been seen, had occurred to lend to this ceremony an exceptional interest. If there is one adjunct of its system more than another of which the corporation of the city of London is proud it is this great public school, which of late years, under its management, has attained a high reputation, and every succeeding Lord Mayor is proud of the opportunity of gracing its anniversary with his presence. The germ of it was sown about 480 years ago by John Carpenter, a man of obscure parentage, but who was far in advance of his time, and eventually became the Town Clerk of London and the chosen friend of his Sovereign. He lived in an age when education was unknown to the great body of the people, or was confined for the most part to the priesthood. "Darkness," it may be said, "covered the land, and thick darkness the people." Being one of the advanced guard of education, so to speak, he gave lands and tenements to the city of London, with the view of maintaining and educating the sons of four poor men for all time. For 400 years afterwards the letter of the gift was adhered to by the corporation, but the spirit of it was miserably misunderstood or neglected. By lapse of time the property designated by Carpenter to that pious use had become enormously enhanced in value; to an extent, indeed, of which the corporation itself—which like other institutions of the kind, according to a legal proverb, is supposed to have no soul—became ashamed, and between 1830 and 1835 the late Lord Brougham, co-operating with Mr. Alderman Hale, in conjunction with the corporation of London, and bent upon giving a wider scope to Carpenter's endowment, founded the present school on the site of what used to be Honey-lane-market, on the northern side of Cheapside, and in close contiguity to Guildhall. There now, as for many years past, upwards of 600 boys, without restriction except as to numbers, are being educated at a moderate cost. Through private and public beneficence many scholarships, some of them tenable at the school and others at the Universities, have been founded from time to time in connexion with the institution, and the sons of all classes of the citizens are admissible to its benefits, wholly regardless of creed or of any other consideration save the limited capacity of the school. In the report of the Public Schools Inquiry Commission it has been held up to public example, and of late years many of its pupils who have gone thence to the Universities have conspicuously distinguished themselves. Of these, the present Head Master, Mr. Abbott, was one, and he succeeded to that office with the full approbation of the Rev. Dr. Mortimer, who had retired from it a few years ago after a service of about a quarter of a century.

For years each succeeding Lord Mayor, as we have said, has been proud to lend his countenance to the anniversaries of the school, but this year, by a miserable incident

wholly unconnected with the institution, the ceremony of yesterday had nearly lacked the presence of the chief magistrate of the City. From questions addressed to the Lord Mayor in the Court of Common Council on Thursday it appeared that on a recent occasion a dignitary of the Church, in whose company he was dining, complained to him that the whole tendency of a sermon, which Mr. Abbott the Head Master had preached at one of the Sunday evening services in Westminster Abbey, was calculated to set the poor against the rich. Upon that information the Lord Mayor wrote a letter to the chairman of the School Committee (Mr. Alderman Hale), requesting to be allowed to peruse the sermon in question, stating, in effect, at the same time that unless this request was complied with he should decline to distribute the prizes at the City of London School. Through the chairman of the committee Mr. Abbott declined to accede to the request, but without assigning any reason. He is understood, however, to have declined on the ground that he was amenable to the Bishop of the diocese, if to any one, for his sermon, and not to the Lord Mayor. There the matter rested until Thursday last, when the Lord Mayor was sharply catechized on the subject in the Court of Common Council, and the explanation he gave was received with anything but satisfaction. Many of them vented their displeasure in unmistakable terms, and only one member of the Court, if we exclude Mr. De Jersey, who was not allowed to speak, ventured to defend him. In the result the chief magistrate of the City consented to preside at the ceremony, but not until Mr. Charles Reed, a highly respected member of the Court, had moved the suspension of a standing order to enable them to invite one of the City members to distribute the prizes should the Lord Mayor decline to do so. The incident appeared to leave a painful impression on the Court, and has been the theme of much conversation in the City since.

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Report of dignitaries who attended, prizes awarded, and inspections of the school.

At the conclusion of the ceremony a vote of thanks was accorded to, among others, Alderman Hale, the chairman, and the rest of the School Committee, and to the Lord Mayor for presiding on the occasion. While the latter was being put there were some decided manifestations of disapprobation in the gallery, but they were promptly repressed by the Head Master. Mr. Abbott, replying to a compliment paid to himself as Head Master, said he trusted in future years the school would never aim at brilliancy of scholarship alone, to which so much was sacrificed at present in the great public schools. This expression was loudly cheered.

In the evening the School Committee, with Mr. Alderman Hale, the chairman, at their head, entertained the Head Master, his assistants, and a select company at dinner at the Albion.