

Silver Jubilee

1903 Oct 23/ Oct 25

The memory of St. Andrew's Jubilee will not soon fade from the recollection of those who had the privilege of listening to the sermons and addresses which marked our commemoration.

A high note was struck by the Moderator of Synod, in the commemoration sermon on on Friday afternoon, and on that level the speaking was sustained to the close. We were blessed with favourable weather - was it not wonderful in such a season of storms and floods? The attendance on the Friday was good, considering the difficulties attending that day of the week. The congregations on Sunday were the largest since the church was crowded to hear Principal Cairns. If Sheffield at large had known the quality of the preacher we had in Principal Dykes, the aisles as well as the pews would have been packed. As it was the pews were filled with fine, appreciative audiences, who followed the preacher's closely reasoned discourses with absorbing interest. The music was in keeping with the dignity of the occasion as the crown of fifty years of worship. A choir, select as well as large, filled the platform, and led our praises with power and sweetness. Those who could remember the first services of the congregation would mark a great difference in the place given to music in what can no longer be called a "bald" Presbyterian service.

And yet the dominance of preaching was as manifest as ever, and the heart of it all was the message our Master's servants were charged with for us. While the past was not forgotten, the message was the dominant thought in nearly all the addresses as well as in the sermons. Its burden was that a jubilee is not so much an occasion for reviving the memory of the past as for reviving the life of the present. Dr. MacPhail in his powerful sermon, in an earnest and even passionate address, warned us of the mistake in spending our interest on the events of fifty years ago when the work of the present day is waiting for our renewed activity. Mr. Robert Whyte in his singularly beautiful and touching address gave use as the word he had come from London to speak "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Principal Dykes in his Sunday morning sermon brought a wealth of illustration to bear on the contrast between perishing nature and the enduring word of God. The outward vanishes as the years pass and the generations die but the spiritual word and the inward kingdom and the work for eternity remain - 'stand and rule and grow forever" in the appropriate words of our closing hymn. The true outlook of the Jubilee is therefore not backward but forward, with inspiration from the past, but energy for the future. It is the beginning of a new era rather than the close of an old. Because it belongs to the everlasting kingdom its vital interests are in the future, not in the past. What we have received from these fifty years is not a legacy on which to rest, but it is an inheritance in which to labour.

That message of the half-century of our existence as a church of Jesus Christ interpreted for us by so many servants of his and urged home upon our hearts by argument and illustration, and touching story and earnest appeal - can we forget it? Shall we miss it? Is it possible for us to rise to it as a new call of God and to make the new beginning of another fifty years a time of spiritual enthusiasm in the building up of the house not made with hands, such that St. Andrew's shall not forget the things that are behind a generation which in its first springtime built and paid for the noble house in which we worship?