

spreading west and north, in due time meeting other squatters, who were spreading south from Sydney. Moreton Bay had been discovered a few years before by the intrepid Leichardt, and was then a penal settlement,—a small township having been founded up the river Brisbane, under the name of Ipswich. While South Australia, as a colony, only existed in the minds of English statesmen, who were then discussing its foundation.

Some idea may be gained of the character of the population from the fact that the total free population only amounted to 15,000 persons, while 3,000 convicts were being annually landed on our shores. The proportion of the sexes was of thirty women to one hundred men.

Fifty years ago Sir Richard Bourke was Governor, and by his enlightened policy the country was passing through beneficial changes. In his reign public discussion was allowed in the Legislative Council, transportation was abolished, better land laws were introduced, and what concerns this meeting most, valuable measures were adopted in respect to the churches and to education. In 1826, King George IV. had granted one seventh of the whole land of Australia for the support of the English church in the country. This was found to be impracticable and was dissolved by order of King in Council, just fifty years ago. Sir Richard Bourke, in this year (1833), sent a despatch to the Home authorities urging that there be no one dominant state church, but that aid be given as requires to the three sections, representing, I suppose, the three nationalities of the United Kingdom—the Church of England, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian. This was acceded to, and as a result certain grants of land were made for religious and educational purposes—grants since known to many of us as the Church and School Estates, and within the last few years wholly dedicated to education.

It was at this time—fifty years ago this month, (the month of May)—that a small devout band of Christian worshippers assembled in a modest looking edifice, known as Pitt street Independent Chapel. We picture to ourselves, the building with its old-fashioned windows of small squares of glass, its lamps of oil, its plain brick walls, and with that air of comfort common to many of our churches of that period. The building, though somewhat altered, still stands as a lecture room of the present School of Arts; which, it may be noticed in passing, was established in the same year, though the original building by the side of the chapel was not erected until a few years afterwards.

The foundation stone of this chapel had been laid in April 12, 1830, by Mr. Hayward, and old South Sea Island Missionary, and described in the journals of the day as the oldest Independent of the colony. There was some delay in completing the building, for it was not opened for worship until February 15, 1833, when one of the sermons was preached by the Rev. C. Price, now of Launceston. Indeed, Mr. Price had been asked to take the oversight of the infant cause, there being considerable doubt whether any minister was coming in response to an invitation sent to England. But a short time after, the Rev. W. Jarrett arrived and Mr. Price retired in his favour. Mr. Jarrett, therefore, presided over the little band of Christians already referred to—eight men and four women—who as they united in church fellowship presented their

testimonials from such churches in England as the Revs. Rowland Hill's, E. Mannerings, J. Stratton's, and J. Campbell's. With many prayers this little company pledged themselves to Christ and to each other, voluntarily associating themselves in church fellowship, and declaring that they recognized no ecclesiastical authority extraneous to themselves. So far their principles were sound, but in the light of our modern theories one is somewhat startled to read that they actually made application in 1835 to His Excellency the Governor for a grant to aid them in paying off the debt on the church—an application which was happily—most happily—declined, on the plea that funds were only available for the Church of England and the Presbyterians.

Let it not be supposed that this first Independent church in Australia was the first congregation gathered by an Independent minister. As early as in 1798—now nearly one hundred years ago—an Independent minister from the I-lands, the Rev. J. Cover, preached to congregations both in Sydney and Parramatta. Other missionaries afterwards did the same, but no one of them seems to have settled down as a permanent pastor of the church, though early Independency unquestionably owes much to their labours. Of these missionaries special reference may be made to the Rev. L. E. Threlkeld from Raiatea, who, in 1824, undertook a mission to the aborigines at Lake Macquarie.

It is also due to our Tasmanian friends to note that while Pitt street was the first church formed in Australia, it was not the first formed in Australasia, for in 1830, a church was formed in Hobart under the pastoral care of Rev. F. Miller, who arrived previously from England in the same year. Indeed, in the early minute books of Pitt street, there is recorded a touching correspondence, which passed between these two young churches, so far away from each other, and so far away from home.

Pitt street church flourished for a few years, when troubles arose, and Mr. Jarrett resigned. Another application was then sent for a minister to England, the building being let meanwhile for £20 per annum, and on certain conditions, to the Rev. Mr. Dougall, an Irish Presbyterian minister. In response to the church's invitation, there arrived, in 1840, from England, the minister, by whose piety, ability and zeal, our denomination was able in due time to take its true position in the colony—the Rev. Dr. Ross.

From this time Pitt street made steady progress, men of honoured memory, such as George Allen, Ambrose, Foss, David Jones, Joseph Thompson, Robert Garrett, and John Fairfax, helping in the good work. Then plans were soon entertained for establishing other Independent churches about the city. The first to be erected, mainly owing to the liberality of the members of Pitt street, was the building at South Head, the Rev. L. Threlkeld being appointed the pastor in 1841; but he left a few years after, to undertake the Mariners' Church, where he laboured until his death, which took place in 1859.

The next church erected, also mainly under the auspices of the Pitt street friends, was that in Redfern; and while in course of building, the Rev. J. Beasley, of Tasmania, was invited to become its pastor. In September, 1847, the first Redfern Church was