

OUR PARISHES AND CHURCHES.

No. 28—CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, HAMILTON, ONT., DIOCESE OF NIAGARA.

THIS parish has had a comparatively short but very eventful history. There are few parishes that have gone through so much in so short a time.

Previous to the erection of this parish, Christ Church was the parish church for the whole of Hamilton. As the place grew it became imperatively necessary that additional accommodation be supplied for the ever increasing Church population. A site was soon selected in the southern portion of the town for the new church. The lot was purchased by the late Richard Juson, Esq. It is somewhat singular that this lot was offered as a grant for the site of Christ Church by the late George Hamilton, Esq., as far back as 1835, but was not accepted being considered not sufficiently central. On this site the foundation of the new Church of the Ascension was laid on Ascension Day, 1849. Fred Cumberland, Esq., of Toronto, was the architect.

It was the original intention that the new parish should be kept under the control of the mother church of Christ Church as a chapel of ease. This idea, however, did not commend itself to those who were instrumental in building the new church, so they petitioned Bishop Strachan, of Toronto, under whose jurisdiction Hamilton then was, to set the new parish apart as an independent one. This was done and the new church was opened early in June, 1851.

The first nomination to the new incumbency was placed in the hands of the Rector of Hamilton by Bishop Strachan, in consideration of his efforts to erect the new church. Then it was hoped Rev. Mr. Ede, at that time curate at Christ Church should become the rector, but Mr. Ede was far from well, and was obliged to go south for his health. Rev. John Hebden, M. A., and family were, through the illness of Mrs. Hebden, detained in Hamilton (that winter) on their way to London, Ont., where Mr. Hebden hoped to engage in missionary work. Throughout the winter he assisted the Rector of Christ Church in Mr. Ede's absence, and at that gentleman's death, which occurred in Demarara, shortly afterward was appointed to the pastorate of the new church. The first churchwardens were Messrs. H. C. Baker and Richard Juson. Rev. Mr. Hebden's incumbency was a long, successful and honored one. For nearly twenty-seven years he faithfully labored in this parish. He was assisted for several years by the Rev. Mr. Haensal, of Quebec, and our history would be imperfect without mention of this godly, earnest and devoted man who did so much for the Sunday School of the parish.

The church prospered signally under its first pastor. Improvements were made from time to time in the church edifice. The organ and choir

were moved from the western gallery, where they originally stood, to a new gallery built over the northern transept and there remained till 1884. A handsome and commodious rectory was built for the rector and family in 1861, chiefly through the energy of the ladies of the congregation, who have always shown in the most active way their interest in all Church work. A beautiful and substantial school house was erected on the grounds adjoining the church, and the crowning work of finishing the tower was completed and a chime of bells set in place a few years before Mr. Hebden's death, which occurred early in 1878. Three years previous to this the Diocese of Niagara was set apart and Archdeacon Fuller, of Toronto, was consecrated first Bishop. In October of this year the church was consecrated by Bishop Fuller. Mr. Hebden was succeeded by Rev. James Carmichael, of Montreal, in May, 1878, who remained for nearly five years. Mr. Carmichael's rectorate, though short, will never be forgotten by a warm hearted and affectionate people. He succeeded in uniting the congregation as they never had been before. The church was found too small for the increasing congregation. A gallery was built over the southern transept to provide additional accommodation. The school house was considerably enlarged in 1887 to meet the same want there. It was with deep regret the congregation received Mr. Carmichael's resignation in September, 1882, upon his acceptance of the rectorship of St. George's, Montreal, where he had formerly been curate. He was succeeded in December of the same year by the Rev. Hartley Carmichael, M. A., curate of Highgate, London, Eng., who is the present rector. One of the first efforts of the new rector was to replace the old organ by a new one. Towards this object there was a bequest of \$1,000 by the late Chas. Freeman, Esq. The new organ was built in the north-east corner of the church, and the old one sold, the northern gallery, in which it stood, being fitted up with pews so as to provide additional accommodation.

In January, 1887, what seemed then one of the greatest of calamities, but which has since proved in many ways under Providence a great blessing, came upon this congregation. The beautiful little church, the pride of both city and diocese, which had for thirty-six years sheltered the congregation as they bowed in worship, and had endeared itself to their hearts by many sweetly solemn associations, was burnt to the ground. Fortunately the school house was saved, and there for upwards of a year the people were drawn by their common misfortune more closely together in the bonds of Christian brotherhood.

The burning of the church only roused the congregation to renewed efforts, and in little more than a year a new and enlarged church was ready to receive the exiled people to worship once more upon the same hallowed spot. The new church was consecrated on March 1st, 1888, by Bishop Hamilton. A new three manual organ was placed