

The Hamilton Centennial

By An Observer.

HAMILTON, Ont., had a solid week of delirium ending last Saturday night. It was the Centennial of the time when a man named Hamilton first staked off the town into building lots—which is a pastime that has gone on ever since with a few years of interruption. And in August 1913, the city under the "mountain" surely cut loose from care and became a Mardi Gras of merriment. Six days and six nights, the length of a Cree thirst dance, the carnival went on. And it was carried out in a style that only Hamilton of all cities and towns in Ontario at least knows how to do.

Toronto has tried twice to have a carnival; in both cases failing miserably. Toronto is too big and too coldly critical. Hamilton with its near 100,000 population and its sudden revival into what is called the "Birmingham of Canada," is just the right size to transform itself at a day's notice into a crowd with a single impulse—which was to have a devil of a good time without let or hindrance for the benefit of thousands who came from almost the ends of the earth in Canada to see what the big town had been doing since they left it.

NOBODY knows how many went back to the old town. Nobody cares much. The city was crammed full. The streets were a Midway Plaisance of fun and fancy. Gore Park was a swirl of sensation. The market was a fair. James St. was a panorama of pandemonium. Police were content to stand back and let the show go on. There was more good nature to the square foot in Hamilton last week than in any other city in America. There never was known such an eruption. The factories kept on running but some of them were short-handed. Why not? Down at the two big armouries and the space between were packed 167 exhibits of things made in those factories; the finest aggregation of made-in-one-city products ever gathered together in one place in this country. The inside show alone was worth a trip to Hamilton to see. The outside show—could be heard like a Niagara of merry making for miles, up the mountain and across the bay.

It was the pure American idea of celebration. It was almost a miniature Fourth of July—minus the cannon-crackers. It was the outburst of local patriotism in an upheaval of uproarious fun that didn't bother itself with ideas or fine sentiments or history, but just went rollicking ahead to show the rest of Canada that factories and business and invested capital are not everything; that the people who toil and those who go away from home to come back again are more. It was not just an Old Boys' Reunion. It was the spirit of modern Hamilton expressing itself through kazoos and marching bands and tin whistles and toy parasols and neck-ticklers and decorated automobiles and bunting and flags and street-side fakir shows, popcorn and peanuts and pistol-shooting at targets, booths and Mayfairs and midways—anything that enabled as many people as possible to swirl up and down the streets, and swarm over the Gore and back again to where they came from without knowing why.

The exposition was all right. Everybody was proud of it. The street show—some said it was all wrong. But it was a grand good time. It broke clean away from the old Scotch idea that kept Hamilton nailed down so tight for generations. It gave even the critics a thrill or two. All it lacked was a touch of history and a bigger idea in management. It was too much in the hands of a mob. There was nothing behind the show. It was a play without lines. And the critics who know what was wrong with it should have got busy long ago to see that besides a carnival of merriment and a riot of fun, the people



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