**Castle Hill Now and Fifty Years Ago**

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No one will but acknowledge that the Castle Hill of to-day, and that of fifty years ago, is quite different in many respects. The employment, manners, customs and social position of the people are very different. The management, culture and products of the soil are also of a very different character. I shall here take a retrospective view of those old hands of fifty years ago and their means of livelihood. The people themselves possessed such characteristics that might in many respects be envied by the people of to-day, although we boast so much about the enlightened times in which we live. Our forefathers under notice were, generally speaking, hard-working and industrious, and possessed with a kind, neighbourly and sociable spirit, and given much to hospitality. In those good old days one had not (when journeying through the neighbourhood or paying special visits to his friends) any need to carry his lunch in his pocket, or even that of his horse, but the great difficulty then was to get away from your friend. You were taken in, the best in the house placed before you, not only invited to lunch or tea, as the case might be, but to stay for the night, or even longer. There are many others in this neighbourhood, who can testify these facts, that when one neighbour paid his friend a visit, who might be living some few miles off, say Pennant Hills or Dural, he was never expected to return the same day, and the same hospitality was shown when return visits were paid to Castle Hill friends. And again, I have seen what one never sees in these days, neighbours clubbing together to help and assist each other along with their work. In the early days spoken of, farming was the people's chief occupation. You would see as many as twenty farmers assemble in one neighbour's field assisting to garner his wheat and oats, and when finished in this field, adjourn to the next and so on. During these season of work the utmost good feeling prevailed, the good house-wives, assisted by those sweet, pleasant, smiling-faced lasses, whom we young fellows used to delight to look upon, did all that was in their power to make things go merrily and lives happy. Although there were many things done in those old days that would be thought by we people of to-day a serious breach of etiquette. Then there were many other traits in people's characters, that might be with advantage copied by the people of to-day. Of a truth in the early days there was little to be heard of the “Temperance Question,” high sounding Christianity, or religious morals, etc., as you hear of to-day, but I think that there was quite as much, if not a little more of that true neighbourly spirit — Do unto others, as you would wish to be done by. One thing I am certain of there were not many of those whited sepulchres to be seen walking about in these days, If the people were somewhat rough and blunt, in what to-day is thought good manners, they, generally speaking, were honest, straightforward and truthful, which latter qualification at the present time is not thought be essential, especially in all business matters. Yea, but some will say, do you mean to hold that there has not been any advancement for the better during the last fifty years or so? No! I should be sorry for anyone to have that opinion of us. There has been great advancement in education, which has opened the eyes of the people, enlightened their understanding, and placed the present generation in a far superior position in the world, to that of their forefathers. Again, in Christian morals, Christian teaching, etc. we of to-day are far ahead of those in the past, but then you know, there is a danger of us becoming in our own estimation too good, i.e., when we begin to think ourselves so much superior, or better, than our neighbours, putting aside that great commandment of the Master — Love ye one another, and love your neighbour as yourself, etc. Now this is what I contend stood out most prominently in the actions and doings of those individuals whom I have attempted to describe of fifty years ago. So that, if we of to-day, with all our boasting of the strides we have made in education, science, literature and Christianity, cannot stand the test of the crucible in this most important question, then I say all our boasting is vain, and that we have not made that advancement, and do not hold that superiority of position over those of our forefathers, that we would have the world believe we do. We might have all the honour, riches and learning that the world could heap upon us, but if we are void of that kind, loving, neighbourly spirit, we are but as dead letters in the world. I should be very sorry to insinuate that there are not any good ones amongst us, or to speak disparagingly of those who are striving honestly to do what which is right. I have only endeavoured to draw honest comparisons between those who cradled us, cared for us, and laid the foundation of the many comfortable and prosperous homes which are to be seen in our midst to-day. It is well for us at times to look back to those in the early days of this colony, who had to fight their way through the greatest difficulties imaginable. It might have been very different with some who are amongst us to-day, if they had pursued that path of industry, honesty and sobriety, which their fathers and mothers marked out for them in the younger days.

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