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COMPLIMENT TO A VENERABLE CHANGE-RINGER.

The public generally is perhaps unaware of the progress of bell ringing, an art which, in its connection with our own town at least, has been developed within the present century. An event in itself probably of limited importance has, from its recalling the fact, been invested with considerable interest. Mr. John Hand, of the firm of Messrs. John Hand and Son, cabinet makers, of Bold-street, and father of one of the churchwardens, entered upon his 88th year on Saturday. The occasion, which was marked by the ringing, at intervals during the afternoon, of the bells of St. Peter's and St. Nicholas's churches, derived its interest from the fact that Mr. Hand is the oldest change-ringer in the town, having commenced his career nearly seventy years ago. At that time there was only one peal of eight bells at St. Peter's, and another of six bells at St. Nicholas's church, the old tower of which fell with such fatal effect in February, 1810. After several years' practice at a period when the opportunities were of course extremely few, Mr. Hand and his associates, under the incorporated title of the Liverpool College Youths (derived, by the way, from a society of the same name in London) succeeded in ringing at St. Peter's, on the 9th November, 1800, the first peal of 5040 grandsire triples rung in the town or in the county. The time occupied in its performance was three hours and seven minutes. Mr. Hand conducted, and the art of change-ringing being then in its infancy in this part of the country, it was considered an extraordinary feat. Subsequently the body of which he was such an indefatigable member extended its efforts not only in this town but in various parts of the county. In May, 1809, he assisted in ringing a peal of 5040 changes at Croston in Lancashire, the first performed on the bells of that place; and in November following he formed one of a party engaged to ring on the occasion of his Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester's visit to this town. The inauguration of Nelson's monument in the year 1813 called for considerable rejoicing on the part of the inhabitants, and the ringing of the parish church bells formed no inconsiderable portion of the public manifestation of feeling. On that occasion Mr. Hand assisted. Subsequently, on the 12th July, 1815, he officiated at the opening of a new peal of bells at Christ Church, Liversedge, Yorkshire. At a later period of his life the requirements of a gradually extending business as a cabinet-maker prevented him from devoting so much time to his favourite pursuit; still, he ever watched with interest the progress of the art of change-ringing. Not only was he in the habit of attending the inauguration of peals of bells in this town, but at times he has visited other places with that object. When upwards of 80 years of age he was present at the opening of a peal at St. James's Church, West Derby, about five years ago.

Doubtless he must have been much gratified at the progress made since the period of his first becoming a change-ringer. Not only had the art been greatly advanced, but the science of change-ringing had been developed, so that many of the most intricate peals were performed frequently and with the utmost facility. On the 9th November, 1850, a jubilee

peal, consisting of 5111 changes, was rung on St. Peter's Church bells as a compliment to Mr. Hand, who was the conductor and then the only survivor of the band which on the 9th of November, 1800, accomplished the first peal rung in Liverpool. Mr. John Heron, sen., conducted. On the same day there was rung at St. Nicholas's church a peal of 5000 changes, conducted by Mr. William Thistlewood, jun., making two peals in one day - a feat previously unaccomplished in this town.

As a townsman Mr. Hand has made himself useful in public affairs, having been for nearly 30 years a member of the select vestry. Upon the termination of his connection with that body his son, Mr. William Hand, was elected to the office of vestryman, and now holds the onerous one of churchwarden of this extensive parish,

The ringers of Liverpool, anxious to testify their respect for so venerable a ringer as Mr. John Hand, proposed to ring the bells of all the churches during the greater portion of Saturday, but, in deference to his wish, they only rang, as has already been stated, those of St. Peter's and St. Nicholas's, at intervals, in the afternoon.

With his accustomed liberality, Mr. William Hand, the churchwarden, desirous of reciprocating the kind feeling thus displayed towards his father, invited them to dinner, which was provided in the evening at Mr. Holt's, Sir Thomas's Buildings. Mr. William Thistlewood occupied the chair, and there were present about 40 of the bell-ringers connected with St. Peter's, St. Nicholas's, and St. Luke's churches. After the cloth had been removed, the chairman gave the usual loyal and patriotic toasts, followed by the toast of the evening, "The health of Mr. John Hand," whom, he said, they all knew and highly esteemed. Although he had already lived beyond the allotted existence of man, he (the chairman) trusted - and he was joined by the whole of the company in the hope—that Mr. Hand might yet live to witness several anniversaries of his birthday. (Applause.) The toast was drunk with great enthusiasm, accompanied with musical honours, Mr. Henry Wright, as the representative of Messrs. John Hand and Son (in the unavoidable absence of Mr. William Hand), returned thanks. He said he had been acquainted with Messrs. Hand for many years, having originally been an apprentice in their service, and he could speak in the highest terms of Mr. John Hand. During that time he had frequently been associated with him in important matters of business; he had travelled with him, and been a guest at his table, and on all occasions he had received the greatest kindness at his hands. He held him as an example, more especially to the young men around him, of what might be accomplished by a persistent course, of honest and persevering industry. (Cheers.) The Chairman next gave "The health of the Churchwardens, Messrs. Denton and Hand." Mr. Wm. Maybrick, who responded, remarked that during the time he had been associated with the church he had never been brought in contact with Messrs. Roberts, Wilson, Coller, and Hand, who gave a selection of glees, &c., in excellent style, as well as by the performances of members of the company with the hand bells, a peal being performed in imitation of the memorable one of the year 1800.