

In the minute-book of the "Society of Canterbury Colonists," which has been lent for exhibition, the Historical Committee of the Jubilee celebration have secured a relic of the beginnings of the Canterbury settlement of great value, and of absorbing interest. Within the parchment covers (one of which, by the way, shows signs of having been cut) of this foolscap volume are indicated the aspirations and ideas of the men who were the backbone of the infant settlement. The writing in which the minutes are recorded varies, but is still as legible as when it was penned. The minutes are really those of two societies—the Society of Canterbury Colonists, which existed prior to the departure of the Canterbury pilgrims, and of the Society of Purchasers of Land in Canterbury, which took the place of the other society when the settlers arrived at Lyttelton.

The inscription on the first page of the book reads:—"Minutes drawn up by the first body of the Canterbury colonists at their rooms, 1A, Adelphi Terrace." Then follows:—"The Society of Canterbury Colonists, April 25th, 1850." The first meeting of the minutes of which are recorded, was held on March 18th, 1850, and amongst the decisions arrived at was:—

"That meetings be held every Tuesday and Thursday at 12 o'clock for the purpose of making suggestions and expressing the opinions of the colonists upon matters relating to the welfare of the proposed colony."

Another resolution placed on record the colonists' high sense of the services rendered by Mr W. G. Brittan by his constant attendance at the rooms and the trouble he had taken in answering enquiries of persons calling and writing for information.

The minutes of the next meeting, held on April 25th, record the names of those present who were noted in the following order:—Messrs Hart, Sewell, Phillips, Rowley, & six, Wakefield, W. Laurance, James Townsend, Edward Townsend, C. L. Rose, Edward Ward, W. G. Brittan, Clifford, J. Longden, FitzGerald, W. F. Eldin, H. Diaper, Wm. Bendett, C. Fooks, C. B. Fooks, Carrington, Alfred Wills, J. B. Austin, J. J. W. Cookson, Dampier, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, Harman, Gerard, Spooner, Joseph Dickin, C. T. Moutle, H. F. Way, Rev. J. Pauson, Henry Ward, H. Le Cren, Edward Power, Captain Martin, Henry Barrett, Arthur Jackson.

At this meeting the Society apparently took definite form, and those present were constituted the first members, and the following were appointed a Committee of Management:—Messrs W. G. Brittan, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, James Edward FitzGerald, Rev. Dr. Rowley, Henry Phillips, C. L. Rose, Henry Sewell, and Edward Ward. The following, who were stated to have sailed for the settlement—though in subsequent minutes it is shown that at least the Bishop-elect had not sailed—were elected honorary members:—The Bishop-elect, the Archdeacon and clergy, Messrs John Robert Godley, Augustus Percival, F. Pollard, and Henry Tancred. At this meeting a letter was read from the secretary of the Management Committee of the Canterbury Association (Mr H. F. Alston) in which the Committee expressed their pleasure on learning of the formation of the Colonists' Society and offering them the use of the Association's rooms for general and Committee meetings. Having decided to form a library for the new settlement, the first gift of books, which was from the Rev. O. Mathias, was acknowledged at this meeting. Afterwards, when it was decided to have a library in connection with the proposed college, the Society resolved to hand over all the books they had received as gifts to the college library, on the understanding that the books would be accessible to the settlers. At the

next meeting gifts of books from Messrs Rose, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, and Vaux were received.

Mr Brittan was the chairman of the meetings, and the rapid increase in the attendance is shown by the fact that on May 16th there were about 50 present (including Lord Lyttelton, the Dean of Canterbury, Lord John Manners, and Sir Walter James); on June 15th there were 97 present, and a week later there were 112 in attendance.

At the meeting on May 16th a letter was read from the Association, announcing their intentions with regard to the endowment of a college. Lord Lyttelton addressed the society, and introduced the Bishop-elect, the Right Rev. Thomas Jackson, who also gave an address.

One can almost imagine the simmer of excitement at the next meeting (May 23rd), when the chairman announced that two ships "had been taken up," and recommended applicants to engage. The fares were stated to have been fixed at:—Chief cabin, £42; intermediate, £25; and, steerage, £15. Each passenger was to be allowed half a ton measurement of cargo space. At this meeting a letter was read from Mr Frederick Moore, on the subject of steam communication with New Zealand, and it was decided to recommend the subject to the Association. Subsequently, the society petitioned Parliament on the matter. Mr Brittan gave notice at the meeting, on May 30th, that he would introduce the subject of the name of the capital town of the settlement. He proposed, on June 6th, that the capital should be named Lyttelton, and mentioned that some objected to the proposal to call it Christchurch. Mr FitzGerald said that as there was to be a large college in the settlement, the name "Christchurch" had been chosen, and, also, partly because that was the name of the cathedral church of Canterbury. On his suggestion, in which Mr Brittan agreed, further discussion of the subject was postponed. On June 13th, Mr Brittan's motion was, on a show of hands, agreed to. The society then recommended the adoption of the name "Lyttelton" to the Management Committee of the Association, which arrived at the following decision:—"The Committee, although they do not, themselves, see the necessity or expediency for the change of name, in compliance with the expressed wish of the intending colonists, will readily assent thereto—it being understood that the college which will be established in the settlement will be called Christ Church." In the minutes of the Society of Purchasers of Land in Canterbury, the conclusion of this question is found when, on December 20th, on the motion of Mr Phillip and Ward, it was resolved:—"at this meeting is of opinion that of the two sites offered to their selection by the Association for the capital, that marked on the map by the name of Christ Church is the more eligible, and that Mr Godley be requested to declare immediately that the capital of the settlement will be fixed on that site."

On turning back to the minutes of the Colonists' Society, the following interesting entry is found in the record of the meeting of May 30th:—

"The Chairman read to the meeting the minute of the Committee of Management, of May 25th, explaining the present and future relations between the Association and the colonists.

"Mr Simeon, M.P., a member of the Association present, addressed the meeting on the principal object of the document just read, which, he explained, originated from the anxiety which the Association felt to give everything, and to place every power they could, into the hands of the colonists.

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cial self-government; the only principle on which he (Mr Simeon) would ever have taken a part in a colonisation society."

At subsequent meetings the question of the appropriation of the ecclesiastical and educational funds of the settlement was discussed, and at the meeting on August 22nd a lengthy communication was received from the Association, which dealt with the matter clearly and evidently satisfactorily.

The following items, taken from the minutes of different meetings are interesting:—

On June 13th a letter was read from Mr Luck, of Oxford, which accompanied the gift of a handsome alms-box for the use of the first cathedral church in Lyttelton.

July 18th—On account of the death of the New Zealand Association, the Canterbury Association were taking steps to get a Bill passed through Parliament giving them sole authority over the land in the Canterbury settlement.

August 1st—A letter was read from Mr Ravenscroft concerning the establishment of a paper in Lyttelton. The Chairman supported the suggestion, which he considered a most important one, and one which would greatly affect the future interests of the colony. After discussion, it was decided that a paper should be established.

August 22nd—The last meeting prior to the departure for the colony. A motion expressing the deep obligation of the colonists to the Association was passed. Mr Simeon returned thanks on behalf of the Association. At a meeting on June 27th a motion had been agreed to that after the sailing of the first ships the meetings of the Society shall be adjourned until the arrival of the first ship at Canterbury.

The first meeting, of which anything is recorded, held after the arrival of the settlers, was on December 20th, 1850, and it details the proceedings of the Society of the Purchasers of Land in Canterbury. The minutes of the proceedings of this Society have quite as much of interest in them, but space only permits of a few extracts:—

December 20th—Mr Godley, in reply to questions, stated—That Sumner was not reserved for a port town. That the Association's boats were let out to private speculators, who should be free to charge their own prices—the maximum only being prescribed, viz., 20s per ton to Sumner, 10s from Sumner to Christchurch, and 1s for passengers to and from ships in the harbour.

In a letter read at a subsequent meeting Mr Godley wrote:—"A run shall be considered as stocked if one breeding ewe for every twenty acres, or one head of breeding cattle for every 120 acres, be placed upon it."

The printing press was evidently not long before it started operations, for pasted in the minute book are the printed rules of the Society. The last minute recorded in the book is of a meeting held on January 22nd, 1852, and it briefly records that Mr W. G. Brittan was appointed President of the Society.

Minutes &c.

March 18th 1850. At a meeting of the Colonists.

It was moved by Capt. Bellairs.

BELLAIRS

Seconded by Mr Brittan.

BRITTAN

1. That a meeting of all the Colonists intending to join the Canterbury Settlement be held at these Rooms, every Tuesday and Thursday at twelve o'clock, for the purpose of making suggestions and expressing the opinions of the Colonists upon matters relating to the welfare of the proposed Colony: And that Minutes be kept of the proceedings.

2. That Mr FitzGerald be requested to act as secretary upon these occasions.

The following Minute was agreed to on Saturday last, and ordered to be recorded.

The Colonists feel it their duty to take this first opportunity of expressing their high sense of the services which have hitherto been rendered by Mr Brittan by his constant attendance at these Rooms and by the trouble which he has taken in answering the inquiries of persons calling and writing for information.

An advertisement was read, announcing the intention of the Colonists to form a public library in the Settlement and requesting presents of books for the purpose.

It was ordered.

That a thousand copies of this advertisement be printed immediately for distribution.

Resolved,

That notice of these meetings be sent to all intending Colonists.