

Research Room

The Progress of Canterbury, New Zealand.

A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

JOSEPH THOMAS, ESQ.,

*Late Principal Surveyor and Acting Agent of the  
Canterbury Association.*



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The Progress of Canterbury, New Zealand.

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## A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

JOSEPH THOMAS, ESQ.,

LATE PRINCIPAL SURVEYOR AND ACTING AGENT OF THE CANTERBURY  
ASSOCIATION.

On board the "William and Jane," Captain Thomas Hunter, bound from Canterbury,  
New Zealand, to London. Atlantic Ocean, June, 1856.

MY DEAR CAPTAIN THOMAS,

It is no uncommon thing to see issuing from the English press a work entitled "Six Weeks' Experience in New Zealand." Now, in contradistinction to this class of pamphlets, and having a few hours to spare, I have determined to amuse myself by giving you a sketch of my last week in Canterbury; and in this slight sketch I will include a few statistics, showing the progress of this highly-favoured settlement.

Believe me also, that to no one can I address this letter with greater propriety than to yourself; and I humbly think that my sixteen years' experience in New Zealand as an actual settler will entitle my opinions to some weight and consideration, the more especially as you are aware that in every movement for the commercial, agricultural, social, and moral progress of the settlements with which I have been connected, however little my influence may have been, it was always afforded freely, either in time or money, it being sufficient that the ultimate good of the colony was likely to be benefited thereby.

Of our early struggles in the settlement of Wellington I will say nothing: to all interested in New Zealand affairs they are now well-known, patent facts. Every one knows that by the united efforts of a few right-thinking, earnest men in the Wellington province (thwarted often by the representatives of Her Majesty's government, and sometimes by a venal portion of the local press), a liberal constitution was granted to the colony highly creditable to the colonial minister who granted it (Sir John Pakington), assisted as he was by several of our staunch old colonists at the time resident in England, who were always at hand to give the minister the right kind of information; and let this never be for-



gotten, he nobly adopted much of their valuable advice, and on this information principally he built the New Zealand constitution.

I will afterwards have a few words to say on the working of the constitution. It may be too elaborate for such a young colony, but it has commenced in the right manner, viz.—full responsible government.

While I was yet a resident in the province of Wellington, I will not soon forget the pleasant month I spent with you in Canterbury, varied a little by our jolly trip to Otago. Our delightful sojourn for a few days at Akaroa with the old noblerizing admiral and his quaint stories—our kind reception at Otago by Captain Cargill and the settlers at Port Chalmers and Dunedin—our return to Port Cooper in the old "Return"—my surprise in entering Port Lyttelton to see the great progress you had made in street and road making, emigration and other buildings, jetty (not yet equalled in New Zealand), sea wall, &c., &c.—all so well done and in so short a time, indeed I could not help naming you then and there the Napoleon of works. Then our ride over those high hills which surround the harbour (no bridle path in those days), our amusement at crossing the Heathcote, and to wind up that day's happiness—for it was a jolly day—the pleasure of spending the night at Riccarton with our dear old friend, that valued old colonist, the late William Deans. But I am travelling too fast, and have forgotten that rare goose, with the *etceteras*, which "one Cass of Auckland" had prepared for our dinner. Neither must I forget the ride we took over that portion of the plains where you had just finished laying out the future capital of Canterbury, the present Christchurch.—The following day has also a pleasant corner on memory's tablet. My delight on tasting the pure water of the Avon, running so coolly and clearly past the very door; our starting immediately after breakfast for the north, following up the base line until we nearly reached the Waimakariri; our pleasant ride over those splendid downs; the trouble we had with that wild colt, which nearly broke the leg of our guide Sam Taylor; our crossing the Ashley (which, by-the-bye, should have retained its old and significant native name, Wairakouhouru, or the water in the overturned forest); our reaching that bright little island in the centre of the Kowai, where we encamped just as the sun was setting over those snow-covered hills; our dinner under the Kowai bushes, enlivened by that roaring fire which we managed to create; and, oh! that storm which came on just as it became dark—wind, sleet, snow, and hail! our blanket tent, our opossum coverings, and our almost sleepless night; then the beauty of the following morning—bright and clear as a winter's

morning in New Zealand knows sometimes how to be; our hearty breakfast; our hunting up our strayed horses amongst the luxuriant toitoi and flax; our start; our gallop over the plains of Waipara; the ducking Jollie and I got in the Omi; our fatiguing ride over those ranges of limestone hills; and our delight when we reached the hospitable abode of our friend Caverhill, at Motinua. Neither must I forget our shouldering pickaxe, shovel, and spade, and starting on our coalmining excursion with Caverhill; our navy accomplishments against the sides of that high hill, with the Motinua stream meandering by; the cheerful coal fire we established; while we enjoyed our lunch—enjoyed the more by having only the waters of that pure stream to wash it down with. Then our long and winding, but pleasant ride homewards, visiting the outstation and sheep on those high hills, and the dark setting in upon us while yet on the top of nearly the highest—Caverhill very coolly leaving us for a time, so that we were obliged to grope our own way home. I must not forget our visit to the dairy and stock, especially that imported bull, which he informed us was so quiet; but how John did run when he saw the bull begin to paw and put its head to the ground! and how we laughed at his courage! Then the anxiety about the arrival of my schooner, which was to call for me and take me away; its detention at Lyttelton taking in shells for ballast; and your sudden departure for Oxford. I shall not soon forget Sam Taylor's reminiscence of Rauperaha's southern raid, when he nearly depopulated the province of Canterbury by his sanguinary proceedings; and the canoes laden with human carcasses which he landed at Kapiti. But here I must draw a veil.

For a few days after you left I was very wretched and restless, strolling down to the island every few hours, wondering all the while what was keeping the schooner. She came at last. The sea on the bar was considerable, but I was anxious to get home, and I risked crossing it. We called at the Kai Koras, where I spent two days looking after a small flock of sheep I had depasturing there, and taking in a quantity of oil. On again weighing anchor, the wind was fair, and in a few hours we were at anchor in the harbour of Wellington.

Now, my dear Thomas, with such a long preface to my letter, what length is my letter itself likely to be? Short enough, perhaps. We shall see.

Of the progress of Canterbury you saw but little, having left shortly after the arrival there of the first batch of settlers. *I have watched it narrowly.*

My sheep station at the Double Corner and my business in



Lyttelton required my visiting the province repeatedly until January, 1854, when I at last became what I had so often talked of becoming, *an actual settler*.

The selection of Port Cooper or Lyttelton as the harbour of the province, was a wise and judicious one. Banks' Peninsula has many fine harbours. That of Akaroa cannot be surpassed in New Zealand, if in the world—a wide assertion. But the harbour of Lyttelton is the *only* one convenient to the plains, the rest are all too distant; and the difficulty and expense of road-making would have been an insuperable barrier had you made any other choice. You made the very best selection. Besides, how convenient it is to Sumner, where vessels of 100 tons burden, if of light draught of water, can make; but this only at high water, and with certain winds. It therefore follows that Lyttelton or Port Cooper will always be made first by vessels arriving foreign.

The population of the town is now upwards of 800, and increasing. This is not, however, desirable, as the prosperity of the settlement is entirely dependent on the population stretching away into the country. Nevertheless, it has altogether the appearance of a bustling small port town, more especially when visited by the packet steamer, and when a few vessels from England direct are in harbour. The buildings also deserve some notice. A very striking edifice, belonging to the Church of England, had been partially completed, but since abandoned, so that the Establishment worship in one of the old emigration houses. The Wesleyans have also built a pretty little modest meeting-house on the side of the hill, just above the agent's house. There are also some very commodious dwellinghouses and several large stores.

Little has been done to the bridle-path, so that it is the bridle-path still. Yet dog-carts have been taken over it; but this was done, I believe, to save the risk of the Sumner bar. I may be wrong, but I have thought this same bridle-path might, at a little outlay, have been made available for bullock drays. Hughes, the surveyor and engineer, entertained the same idea.

The valley of the Heathcote, at the bottom of the bridle-path, on the Christchurch side, presents now a very cheerful appearance. Several very substantial dwellinghouses have been erected, and at least two hundred acres are under cultivation. The road to the base of the hill is in good repair, and carts, drays, and vans, are daily rolling along it.

The Heathcote is crossed by a ferry-boat about two hundred yards above the old one established by Hughes. Here there is also a fine large store for storing produce, and the river craft go

alongside a jetty, where they discharge and receive cargo. The Heathcote Arms is not far distant, built by Stewart, now mine host of The Royal, who is doing well, and deservedly so.

The road from the Ferry to Christchurch is a credit to the province; it is always kept in good order, and, colonially speaking, great is the traffic thereon.

There is no finer sight in New Zealand than to ride along this road towards Christchurch. On every side, and as far as the eye can reach, farms, steadings, farmyards full of stacks, and industry and prosperity everywhere. Let us now visit the capital, Christchurch. The area of the town being so large, it will be a long time before it is entirely built upon; yet it is filling up. There is a suitable modest English church, a Wesleyan chapel, and in course of erection a Scotch kirk, which will be an ornament to that part of the town nearest to Riccarton. There are also many substantial, excellent dwellinghouses, and three commodious hotels; a masonic hall, very creditable; two water-mills on the Avon; a tannery; and several very substantial, handsome stores. A good bridge has been erected across the Avon at the market-place; there are, besides, one or two foot bridges. The north road, which leads across the bridge at the market place, passes through Papanui. This is a highly-favoured district, and along the road it is nearly all enclosed and under cultivation. Cheerful-looking cottages abound; and in the village of Papanui there is a suitable and simple church.

The pretty little bit of forest here is melting fast away; but it has been of great use to the district, supplying them with building material and fuel; at the same time it has been a mine of wealth to the owners, the timber alone having been sold at the rate of £40 per acre.

Papanui has, however, one great drawback. From the village to the Styx the drainage is miserable; and until some deep-cut drains are made, the district will suffer very much from surface water. This will all be remedied in time, as there is sufficient fall to carry away all the water into the river Styx or the Avon.

The north road crosses the Styx, which has also been bridged; and then crosses the river Courtenay, at the island of Kaiapoi. Nearly all the land along this line of road has been purchased; much has been already enclosed. In passing through this district early and late I was much pleased to see with what energy a few Germans had commenced farming, by building, enclosing, clearing, and cropping, all within a few months. Success attend them! But it needs not my wish; it always attends honest industry in New Zealand.



Before telling you of Kaiapoi, I shall return to the Lincoln road, where the land is getting under cultivation very rapidly. The soil on the banks of the Heathcote, and away towards the lake Ellesmere, is very rich, and yields the husbandman ample returns for his labour.

I have as yet said nothing of Riccarton. Riccarton Proper, or the Deans' Estate, is the model farm of New Zealand. The whole property is well drained and fenced; and I think at least three hundred acres are under cultivation. The show of stacks in the farm-yard is wonderful. Everything on this estate is managed in first-rate style; but great judgment, as well as money properly applied, were always at hand when required. Of course, besides the Riccarton Farm, there are many others where superior management is shown—Compton's, for instance, on the Papanui road; but most of the small farms are well managed, and the farmers deservedly doing well. This I will come to by-and-bye. The offices at Riccarton are of a superior description, equal I imagine to anything of the kind in Scotland; and the barn, with its threshing machine propelled by water, is perfect. But Riccarton Farm is not Riccarton now; a large and populous village has sprung up in the neighbourhood of our old friend, and for miles around smiling farms and industrious farmers abound: abundance everywhere.

Now for Kaiapoi. You may remember the island in the middle of the Courtenay, lying south-east of the Kaiapoi bush; on part of this island and the north bank of the Courtenay it was intended to establish the town of Gladstone, under the auspices of Sir Thomas Tancred. The original idea dropped, but a settlement has been made by a few active, energetic colonists, which bids fair some day to compete with Christchurch in importance. A ferry has been established across both branches of the river, and buildings of a substantial description are springing up everywhere. A pretty little church was just being finished when I was last there, and even a bridge was talked of. Kaiapoi, so the village has now been named, cannot do otherwise than prosper. All the produce of the northern division of the province, as well as a large proportion of the Nelson province, must be sent to Kaiapoi for shipment, and consequently all the supplies must come through the same place. The harbour is superior to that of Sumner, and, if properly surveyed and known, I believe vessels of 200 tons burthen may yet anchor off the town.

Rangiora is a very important adjunct to Kaiapoi, and progresses

perhaps not so rapidly as it deserves; but its beautiful timber forest will always make this a favourite and favoured district.

No agricultural farmer has as yet ventured across the river Ashley. The whole northern part of the province is nevertheless fully occupied.

You will remember that the limits of the Canterbury Block to the north was the Waipara and its forks; but by Sir George Grey's division of the islands into provinces, the boundary of the Canterbury province was extended north to the Hurunui.

This fine district north of the Ashley, the greatest part of which you and I traversed together, is now entirely taken up by the squatter: Clifford and Weld at Stonyhurst, Sidey and Mason on the Hurunui, Caverhill, or rather Greenwood, at Motinua, Mallock up the forks of the Waipara, your humble servant at the Old Corner, now Teviotdale. But my country has been sadly cut up—a Mr. Moore, from Van Diemen's Land, having purchased all those fine plains which were in my squatting lease, as well as part of Sidey's and Caverhill's: altogether he bought 58,000 acres; and making his selection so well, that many thousands of acres on my run became useless to me, and now form part of his extensive run.

Again, being outside the Canterbury Block, although in the Canterbury province, and coming under Sir George Grey's land regulations, he only paid 10s. per acre for this beautiful tract of land. A new law has lately been enacted, fixing the price of all waste lands within the province at £2 per acre; but it only came into operation on the 1st April, being a few days after I left New Zealand. I think the new Act will work well, and I think it was equally well received by pilgrims and shagroons. This part (the northern) of the province is now fairly stocked with sheep; and I believe that in five years from this time, unless fresh discovery of country is made to the westward, it will be overstocked.

I will now describe to you what I saw of the country in paying several long-promised visits to various settlers, before starting for England. I crossed the Waipara on a beautiful morning in March, calling on my neighbour, Charles Hunter Brown (he had only returned the evening before, having failed in ascending to the source of the Courtenay). The sun had not long risen; and as I had promised to be at Mount Grey to breakfast, I here bade a hurried adieu. The ride from the Waipara to the Kowai, over Brown's Downs, is a pleasant one—the whole plains opening to the south, Mount Grey and the snowy range of mountains to the west, and away to the south and east Banks' Peninsula—often



cloudcapped, looming away off to sea. Brown's run is not to be equalled in the whole Canterbury Block for its compactness, and also superior herbage—the broad rolling Southern Pacific Ocean being his eastern boundary. After crossing the Kowai, at a point much lower than where we crossed it, I reached Mount Grey, Mrs. O'Connell's Station, to breakfast. This station was first chosen by Captain Mitchell, and afterwards purchased by the late Major O'Connell. Do you remember our galloping through groves of cabbage trees, the Ti Ti of New Zealand. This was upon the Mount Grey Downs, all fine land, but towards the sea light and swampy. This station is entirely a cattle one, and they have left but few of the Ti Ti trees standing. Mrs. O'Connell, who manages admirably here, has generally 50 cows milking, and makes large quantities of cheese equal to any now made in the Port Cooper district.

On leaving Mount Grey and its kind family, I felt again as if tearing myself from home. This run extends to the river Ashley, which I crossed, and passing Rangiora, where Boys was busy harvesting, I turned towards Oxford. This district was all new to me; I pulled up at Mr. Robert Chapman's, on the Moeraki Downs, where I was hospitably received, and, starting again after an early dinner, I reached Oxford a little before the sun went down. With the Moeraki Downs I was delighted. I had this day passed the stations of Messrs. Sanderson, Higgins, and some others. The country about Oxford is well adapted for agricultural as well as pastoral farms, the forest at Oxford being also invaluable. Excepting Otaki, on the northern island, I have seen no place where country residences could be so beautifully placed as in this district. Wood, water, hill, valley, and plain, all at hand. One spot had all the appearance of an English park. Nature has been prodigal here. After enjoying the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth Cookson, I made an early start and reached Mr. Pearson's station, just under the high hills, in time for breakfast.

There is as yet no cultivation on this part of the plains, but until the population has greatly increased the land is as profitably occupied; for in no part of New Zealand is the wool so well got up as the farmers manage it here; and the country about is fairly stocked. After inspecting the various improvements at Mr. Pearson's homestead—his woolshed is an admirable one, and capable of storing his hundred bales of wool—we rode over a great part of the run, especially that portion which abuts on the Courtenay. It is a fine run; and there is at hand abundance of timber for every

purpose. I crossed the Waimakariri, at Mr. Watts Russell's station. The soil on this part of the vast plains is splendid; but as yet no part of this land is under cultivation.

My poor mare broke down with me here. I managed, however, to reach Mr. McFarlane's station, where I was treated with the usual hospitality. Mr. McFarlane was absent, but the kindness of his son made up for the absence of the father. I was also kindly lent a horse here, so that soon after breakfast I was off for the Malvern hills, passing on my way the out station of Mr. Watts Russell. The improvements upon this station are very perfect, but on a small scale. A little to the west and under the hills are the coal fields, now being worked by the Messrs. Knight. The expense of the carriage of the coal is a great drawback, but many of the settlers as well as the residents of Christchurch are using it at a cost of £6 per ton delivered. From Mr. Russell's station I skirted the hills leading south, and reached the dairy station of Homebush, belonging to the representative of the late Mr. Deans. This station is ably managed by Mr. John Cordy. The stock-yards, milking sheds, and farm-yard improvements, all very complete; and the dairy, which has just been started by Mrs. Cordy, is highly creditable. I was shown here their first season's cheese, which will not disgrace the Port Cooper name. After lunch I started over the hill country for Rockwood, guided by Mr. Cordy. We passed the coalfield on the Selwyn, which had been partially worked by Messrs. Knight, but at present abandoned; also the stations of Mr. Tancred and Mr. Norris. The range of hills which we ascended I found principally were of a quartz formation; and it was over this ground which I was travelling that the gold seekers directed their investigations. They had no success. I pocketed a few small samples of the quartz, that I may get the opinion of some scientific person in England as to whether it is related to the gold-bearing quartz or not. The view from the summit of these high hills was really grand; but of this I will have to say more hereafter.

Just as the sun was setting I reached my destination, Rockwood, the hospitable abode of Mr. Henry Phillips. As I said, the sun was setting, and its rays were gilding forest and rock, and before me was a landscape which I have not seen equalled in New Zealand. I had often heard of the beauty of Mr. Phillips' selection; it far excelled my expectations. A beautiful bright stream meanders round the garden; and while all nature looked so cheerful and bright, I must not forget the house itself. Timber costs nothing here but the labour of sawing; so that the house is



large and commodious, and well adapted for the fine large family which inhabit it. The hearty welcome which I here received was also of the right kind.

All which I have now been describing was wilderness when you left. Much of it is so even now. But here was I away far amongst the New Zealand hills, and found in so many places civilization throwing its gentle covering over the wilds around.

It was my intention to have returned to Christchurch the following day, but Mr. Phillips tempted me to a walk with him over his hills; and I am glad that I was persuaded. We wended our way through the forest behind the homestead, and here I saw the effects of a New Zealand tornado. A strip of forest about 50 feet wide, the length I cannot tell, was literally torn up by the roots—a clean sweep. We trod the banks of a pretty little stream, which was bounding from rock to rock. The stream was overhung by dense foliage, and the rocks, often rising one hundred feet, were towering over us. Here also I saw many plants and shrubs which I had not seen in my wanderings in other parts of the New Zealand bush; and I secured some few branches, which I intend sending Sir William Hooker, and if they are new to him I can easily send him the plants. But the hill was before us; and, leaving the shelter of rock and wood, we took kindly to it. Opposite to us, but across the Rakaia, was the famous Mount Hutt, and our object was to get on the range of hills on the north side, but they were not so high. Here again many small shrubs abounded of varieties that I had never seen before; but my great delight was to gather the New Zealand snowberry, which was scattered around everywhere. This little pure white berry is here in abundance, and on such a day as this was it was a delicious cooling treat. The fruit pure as snow, the leaf and plant like the Scotch blaeberry; and the gathering reminded me of my school-boy days in the woods at home. I never met with this berry before; but the hills here are much higher than my hills at Teviotdale, so I suppose it is only found on hills of considerable altitude.

At last we reached the highest peak, and from this point we had a glorious sight; and only from such a position as I now stood upon can you estimate the great extent of the Canterbury plains. To the far south Timaru was only dimly visible; below me the Rakaia and the Cholmondeley were winding their devious courses through the plains to the sea; the sea also visible, and the dim outlines of the Peninsula like an island far away at sea. From the position I stood on, Double Corner and the north

country were shut out from view; but to the west that glorious range of hills, the southern Alps, stretched away as far as the eye could reach, and covered with almost everlasting snow; and what I prized perhaps most of all was the unique view I had of the pretty lake Coleridge, with the solitary rata tree on its margin.

From these hills the vast extent of the great plain of Canterbury can only be fully realized. I had ridden over twenty times the northern portion, but I never had a proper conception of their vastness until I stood on these hills with the broad Rakaia at my feet.

Here also I gathered specimens of copper, which, if rich in quality, will be wealth to New Zealand perhaps some day, soon as a road equal to any old English highway can be made through these plains at little expense—indeed Nature has already made it. We also picked up several of the gizzard stones ejected from the stomach of the now extinct moa, so the story goes. Every day, however, comes to an end, and this, one of the pleasantest I have spent in New Zealand, came to an end also; and, oh! how tired I was. The dodging round rocks and precipices, and scrambling over others, very nearly knocked me up. But the time for my departure from New Zealand was at hand; so the following morning, accompanied by Mr. Phillips, we started for Lyttelton. We reached Messrs. Aylmer and Perceval's station to breakfast; after which we started again, passing through the Messrs. Bealey's and Mr. Lake's station, and remained to partake of an early dinner at Parbly's Inn. A great part of the land, after leaving Aylmer's, was much lighter and poorer than any I had hitherto passed over, and here the entire want of firewood is a heavy drawback. The coalfields will always be available for the settlers in this district, and especially beneficial to those who can draw their own coal. On leaving Parbly's, the ride to Riccarton is through a part of the plain, which will soon be covered with smiling homesteads. As you near Riccarton this is already the case; but the moon had risen, and except the outlines of houses and the barking of the watch dog nothing could be seen, but all indicating the steady march of civilization; and I can bear testimony to the rude plenty that is found everywhere, from the cottage to the mansion.

After spending a pleasant hour at Riccarton we started again, and reached Lyttelton at midnight; it was a beautiful ride, winding over those hills—the moon shining brightly over hill and plain. South of the Rakaia I have not been, but every acre of land to the extreme south of the province has been squatted upon, and the various stations are being rapidly stocked. The country



about Timaru is highly spoken of, and many parts of it are beautifully wooded. Much of this country is adapted for the agriculturist; and although there is only an open roadstead for shipment of produce, I have no doubt it will be found sufficient for all the requirements of the district. A rather novel mode of discovering a road to Otago *inland* was made a short time ago. The Messrs. Rhodes missed a large number of sheep out of one of their flocks, and in tracking them a new district in the interior was discovered, now called the Mackenzie Country, a man of this name having stolen 600 of the sheep and was made prisoner while driving them through this route into the Otago province. The description of the country which I rode over during the last few days I was in the settlement can only give you a faint idea of what has been done since you left New Zealand; but as part of the country which I have described was part also of what we rode over together five years ago, you will at a glance see the various and great changes that have taken place.

There have arisen since you left there considerable interests; and considering this has taken place in the short space of five years, you will admit that the province progresses and prospers.

The interests I class thus:—

The Squatting;  
Agricultural; and  
Commercial.

First, I consider that at present the squatting is the most important. There are 70 sheep farmers in the province, with runs varying from 10,000 to 60,000 acres; and in looking over a list of them which I have beside me, I find that almost every run is more or less stocked; and unless fresh districts are discovered to the westward, the remark I made referring to the northern part of the province will apply generally, that the province will be overstocked in five years. The yearly increase of the clip will in part explain this to you.

In 1854 the clip was 1050 bales;  
1855       "       1570       "  
1856 estimated at 2250       "

but when I left the shearing had not been completed: thus the increase in quantity being more than doubled in two years. Now, assuming the bale of wool of 360lb. to be worth £18 per bale in New Zealand, the value of this year's clip will be £40,500—a goodly sum to export to England; and how rapidly you observe it is likely to increase.

The sheep in the province are principally the Merino breed,

a large proportion being exceedingly pure—my neighbour, Mr. Moore, having alone imported 6000 of the best blood from Van Diemen's Land, well known there by the brand, viz., the three legs of Man. It is worthy of note that the sheep which yields a fleece of 2½lb. in New South Wales or Van Diemen's Land gives a 4lb. fleece in New Zealand, the staple being also longer; but this is a result of nature adapting the fleece to the climate, New Zealand being much colder than New South Wales.

The squatting question has in other colonies been a vexed one. I don't think from the nature of the land regulations it will ever be so in New Zealand, as the population and wealth increases. The whole length and breadth of the land is open for purchase, and the largest run holder has only a pre-emptive right over his homestead and improvements, and I think limited to the extent of 80 acres. I have not got the land ordinance by me. Sheep farming would be profitable enough, but it has expensive drawbacks. First, that pestiferous disease the scab: when a flock is once infected the expense and labour to eradicate it is enormous. There is a little in Canterbury; that little I hope is fast disappearing. The second great drawback is the present high price of station and other labour, shepherds getting from £40 to £60 yearly with rations. The only remedy for this is the importation of a large number of shepherds as well as country labourers, who soon become shepherds and useful men on a station. I may here mention for your information, that on a well-managed station the yearly increase upon the breeding flock varies from 70 to 90 per cent., and it has sometimes reached even 100 per cent.

At present I class the agricultural interest as second to the squatting one; but the vast plains of Canterbury are so well adapted for cultivation, that I have not the slightest doubt it will become paramount; and with such a climate as it is blessed with and the richness of its soil, it is fully capable of providing grain and produce generally for all the colonies in the southern hemisphere.

The farms vary of course in extent, from 5 acres to 100—a few from 200 to 500 acres; but few, if any, of the large ones, Riccarton excepted, are as profitable as they deserve to be: this is entirely owing to the scarcity, and consequent high price of labour, which enables the industrious sober man to purchase out of his savings of 12 months his 5 or 10 acre block; and I have known some labouring men who have offered £12 per acre for 50 acres, which they themselves had leased and brought into cultivation.

While labour continues so scarce and high, there will be little

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encouragement for the gentleman farmer unless possessed of considerable means; but such a state of things must alter. At present while the industrious man receives as much in one day as he would receive in a week in England, he naturally looks out for a freehold of his own; at all times, if steady, he will find no difficulty in renting a farm and a friend to help him in time of need. Until last season Canterbury required to import flour largely; the tables have now turned, and considerable quantities of flour and wheat are being exported to the various settlements in New Zealand as well as Australia, paying the farmers well, even taking the high rates of wages into consideration. The export of potatoes, oats, and barley, was also very considerable. The estimated value last season, 1855, was £20,000. This was exclusive of what was retained in the province for home consumption.

Intimately connected with the two foregoing interests is that of the dairy farmer, no insignificant one. Now the dairy farm is sometimes joined with the sheep run, but oftener with the agricultural farm, and they are found to work better together.

The cheese of Port Cooper has already become famous in all the Australian colonies, and it is much appreciated. The cheese made on Banks' Peninsula was well known before you left; and you will not have forgotten Mrs. Gibbie and Mr. Manson, who still continue to take the lead in quantity and quality. Many others now follow hard upon their wake; and last year 40 tons were exported, besides at least 12 tons were used in the province. The value of this cheese is 1s. per lb. in Lyttelton, so that the money value is already very considerable, and the number of dairy stations continues to increase.

There is very little butter made, cheese having been found more profitable, and it always finds a ready market.

The last of the three growing interests which I have pointed out is the commercial one.

To the merchant the squatter is often obliged for supplies and money in advance upon his season's clip of wool; the agricultural farmer also, while he is putting in and while gathering his crops; and the whole import and export business of the plains is managed through a few merchants in Lyttelton and Christchurch—the success of this last interest being entirely dependent on the success of the two first. May all three go on and prosper!

Before I close, perhaps you would like to have my opinion as to the working of the New Constitution, which has been in operation now nearly three years.

Of the General Assembly it would be premature to venture an

opinion, as the new Governor, Colonel Gore Brown, had lately arrived, and had only completed a tour through all the provinces, and he was not to meet his Council until about two months after I left New Zealand; but from various expositions which he had made to the colonists at the different settlements, of his liberal views of conducting the New Zealand Government, sanguine expectations were entertained that all would go on smoothly.

Of the Provincial Government I can say more. Mr. Fitzgerald was chosen the first Superintendent. His election was contested by Colonel Campbell and Mr. Tancred. I think the settlers elected the best man, and at the same time I believe he is the most talented man in the settlement. I have heard him objected to because he is Irish, and that all the patronage of the Government is distributed amongst his countrymen; but this, you will allow, is natural, although it may be only a report after all; yet, I remember that several of the officials belong to the Emerald Isle. His Council, chosen by the people, is a mixed one, but apparently it works well; and I fancy the colonists are very fairly represented, at least the Council retained the confidence of the electors up to the day I left.

I must here say that I think the expense of managing the Provincial Government is too expensive, and the machinery too complicated for such a limited place—too much spent in salaries—too little in opening up new country, or improving the partially-made road tracks of the old. One thing the Superintendent believes in, and this, I know, will please you—that is, the necessity of completing the Sumner Road. Sir George Grey had also faith in this road: the completion of it will solve that vexed problem—Will cart labour or boating be the cheapest? I believe the latter. The whole road is open for equestrians; and you will, I know, like to hear what has been done. Your old line, as far as Polhill's Gully has, of course, been adopted, but at this point a lower gradient has been taken. Yours led over Evan's Pass, the new one stops at Gollan's Bay, about 150 feet from the summit, and here the hill has to be tunneled. The tunnel will come out at the head of the Sumner Valley; and the line of road down to the beach, or nearly so, takes the opposite side of the valley to the line which you laid out. I think this an improvement, but only made available by the tunnel. I have not gone round farther than Sumner, so I cannot say what state the road is in to the Heathcote. I believe it is passable for drays; and, as I informed you already, the whole line is open for equestrians. A small steamer began to ply between the port and the river, which



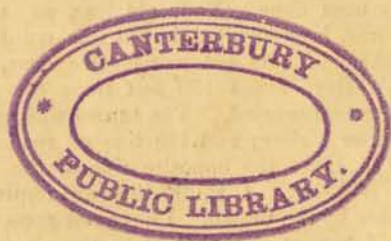
promised well, and caused the boats which had long plied in this trade to reduce their exorbitant charges ; she unfortunately, however, went upon the rocks at the Sumner Bar, and became a total wreck. Steam for this trade will pay handsomely, but as yet there has been no second trial made.

I have thus, dear Thomas, in rather a rambling manner given you these rough notes of what was likely to interest you, of what I had observed during my last week in Canterbury, and they will give you some idea of that settlement, which owes its existence, I will say, to your good judgment; for I remember well when you were advised strongly to place the Canterbury settlement in the valley of the Wairarapa or in the Hawke's Bay district ; had you adopted either place, it would never have been more than a second class settlement ; now it is predicted that the exports of wool alone, in 1860, not very long to look forward to, will be more than the united exports of all the other provinces combined; and I have not the slightest doubt but this will be the case also with regard to agricultural produce, the only limit to the latter being the scarcity of labour.

Now, in conclusion, I have much pleasure in saying to you, that every one in the province who knew you, and were cognizant of the difficulties you had to encounter in paving the way for their arrival, speak of you in the highest manner, many of them affectionately; indeed they will never see your like again : such is their feeling.

It will be long, dear Thomas, before the remembrance of the pleasant days you and I have spent together can be obliterated from the memory of your old and sincere friend,

ROBERT WAITT.



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