

THE GODLEY STATUE.

THIS Statue, after great delay, was inaugurated on August 6, 1867, and the people of Canterbury are now permitted to look upon a figure which recalls to the minds of those who knew him the features of John Robert Godley. But among the thousands who were congregated in Cathedral Square on the day of inauguration, there were very few indeed who could claim that they had even seen the founder of Canterbury while he yet lived and worked, fewer still who could say that they had known him, not one who was conspicuously associated with him in the work of colonization. Among his friends and intimate fellow-workers there was no one to pronounce his eulogy. His most celebrated disciple and biographer even was absent, but it was in the service of the colony, this portion of which the dead and the living toiled to make worthy of the country whence it sprung; and John Robert Godley's life, coupled with the ceremony of August 6, is a lasting proof that the path of duty only, steadily and unswervingly pursued, will lead to such honours as men have it in their power to bestow.

Although the memoirs of John Robert Godley have been written by at least two who were among the number of his most intimate friends, there are not many of the general public who know much beyond the fact that he was the founder of Canterbury; that the province, at whose birth he presided, over whose earliest days he watched with infinite solicitude, whose faltering and uncertain steps he wisely and firmly guided has, while yet in its minority, deemed him worthy of a statue. For the benefit of these, we shall give a brief sketch of his life. We have heard it asked of late, by those who measure a man's merits and mete out his deserts in the ratio of his popularity. Why should John Robert Godley have a Statue? The answer is plain and cannot be gainsaid. John Robert Godley deserved a public statue because he set before an infant colony an example of spotless integrity, and of thorough devotion to honest, manly work; because to him we owe much of the prosperity we have enjoyed, and the high position Canterbury has always held among the various provinces of the colony. We cannot estimate too highly the advantage to Canterbury—then, now, and in all time to come—which was conferred by the example and precepts of John Robert Godley. For the materials of the following sketch we are indebted to the memoir prefixed to the "Writings and Speeches of John Robert Godley," published in Christchurch in 1863, and edited by Mr. FitzGerald.

John Robert Godley was born in 1814, in a rank of life in which the great talents he was endowed with were certain to find every means of development. He was the eldest son of Mr. Godley of Killigar, "a gentleman of good landed property, in the county of Leitrim in Ireland." His mother was sister to the Bishop of Cashel. After receiving the rudiments of education at a local school, he was sent to Harrow, where he distinguished himself by gaining two scholarships of some note. From Harrow he went to Christ Church, Oxford, and while there gained the Fell Scholarship. He graduated in 1835—having just attained his majority—taking a second class in classics. He adopted the law as a profession, and was called to the English bar in due course. His biographer informs us that he held few briefs, caring little for the practice but much for the principles of his profession. He devoted himself more particularly to the study of politics, in the widest sense of the word. He did not study the position, traditions, and principles of parties, but made himself conversant with the art of governing men under various conditions of life. He travelled a good deal, and in 1844, being yet a young man, published a book, entitled "Letters on America," which is said to have merited and received the notice of politicians in America as well as in England. During the terrible famine in Ireland he brought forward a scheme for the relief of his suffering countrymen. This scheme brought him more prominently before the public and stamped him as a man of large, practical ideas, founded on sound principles of political economy. The scheme was rejected by the Premier of England, although it received almost universal commendation from the public press. In 1847 Mr. Godley was a candidate for the representation of his native county in Parliament. He was defeated, entirely, as it would seem, on account of local prejudice against the portion of the county to which he belonged. It is right to add that Mr. Godley, previous to his return to England in 1852, received letters from home in which he was assured that the seat he had unsuccessfully contested in 1847 awaited his acceptance. He declined the proffered honour.

The conception of the work to which Mr. Godley devoted three years of his too short life—the foundation of the Canterbury Settlement—and which he successfully accomplished in spite of difficulties, which, to ordinary men, would have been insurmountable, dates from his introduction to Mr. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, whose name will for ever hold a prominent place in the history of New Zealand as being the actual founder of the colony. Mr. Godley, we are told by the biographer already quoted, was the author of the particular design on which Canterbury was founded—though there is every reason to believe that the idea originated with Mr. Wakefield—and especially of that distinguishing feature of the settlement which required that ample funds should be provided out of the proceeds of the land sales for the religious and educational wants of the community about to be established. He was also to enjoy the singular privilege of being the executant as well as the designer of the scheme. He became a director of the New Zealand Company, with the view of becoming eventually the local managing director of the Canterbury Association. During the two years which it took to mature the arrangements for founding Canterbury, Mr. Godley's influence and abilities were exerted to the utmost, not only in furthering this particular scheme, but in all that related to the good government of the British colonies. He left England for New Zealand in December, 1849, although, on account of his health, he had been advised to spend the winter in

Madeira. Captain Thomas, on behalf of the Canterbury Association, had preceded Mr. Godley, and when the latter arrived at Lyttelton he found that the work of surveying the new settlement, so far as it had proceeded, had cost more than the Association anticipated; the embryo colony was already in debt. It seemed to Mr. Godley that only one course was open to him. He stopped all works at Lyttelton, and proceeded at once to Wellington, where he resided during the remaining portion of 1850. While waiting at Wellington for the arrival of the first body of Canterbury settlers, Mr. Godley devoted himself with characteristic energy to thwarting Sir George Grey—then as now Governor of the colony—in his attempt to introduce what has been called a sham constitution. In this he was successful, and on this score the whole colony owes him a debt of gratitude. Mr. Godley remained in New Zealand from December, 1850, till December, 1852, and was really the supreme authority in all matters relating to the settlement he had left England to found. It is not too much to say that Canterbury owes her prosperity—humanly speaking—to his practical wisdom and wise foresight. Mr. Godley was requested to become the first Superintendent of the province, but he had made arrangements for returning to England at the end of three years, and he left the province in December, 1852. Before leaving he was entertained at a public banquet held in a large *marquée* in Hagley Park. Of those present on that occasion there are now few in Canterbury. A race has sprung up who know the story of Mr. Godley's life—if they know it at all—through tradition. To them this brief sketch may prove of some interest, and may serve to show that there is a nobility which men do not inherit, and higher titles than those conferred by king or kaiser.

After Mr. Godley's return to England he held several high appointments in the public service, literally dying in harness as Assistant Under Secretary at War in 1862. Although he had left Canterbury he did not cease to be strongly attached to the settlement. In 1854 he was appointed English agent for the province, but resigned in 1856, in consequence of his connection with the public service.

The statue which was inaugurated on August 6, was suggested by Mr. Moorhouse, in opening the session of the Provincial Council on October 1, 1862. He said:—"It is my intention to request your approval of the erection of a pedestal and statue commemorative of the services of the venerated founder of the Canterbury settlement." On October 28, the Provincial Council passed the following resolution unanimously:—"That this Council, desiring to record its deep sense of the loss which the Province of Canterbury has sustained by the death of its founder, and deeming it right to preserve for ever amongst the inhabitants of the province the memory of labours to which it is so deeply indebted, as well as an example of worth and excellence in private life, and of wisdom and uprightness in the administration of public affairs, resolves—that a Statue of the late John Robert Godley be erected in the City of Christchurch on such public place as his Honor the Superintendent shall direct; and that his Honor the Superintendent be respectfully requested to take such steps as may be necessary to carry this resolution into effect; and this Council undertakes to make due provision for the cost of such a work out of the public revenues of the province." In accordance with this resolution a commission was given to Mr. Woolner for the Statue which is now placed under the guardianship of the City Council of Christchurch and the public of Canterbury.

When completed, the Statue was exhibited in London for a short time, and was pronounced by competent judges to be a life-like representation of Mr. Godley, as well as a highly successful and characteristic production of the artist. The Statue was brought to Canterbury in the ship *Talbot*, which arrived in Lyttelton on August 1, 1866. The erection of the pedestal—of stone from the quarry of Messrs. Ellis, and from a design and drawing by Mr. Woolner—was entrusted to Mr. Brassington. When completed, the top of the pedestal was found to be smaller than the base of the figure, and the work had mostly to be done over again. The figure was finally placed on April 3, 1867, and up to August 6 was allowed, without any apparent reason, to stand encased in a canvas wrapper, surrounded by some rough boarding.

The following brief description of the Statue appeared in the *Athenæum* of September 3, 1864:—"The work is of bronze, and was cast by the Coalbrook Dale Company. It is stated that when Mr. Godley landed in New Zealand he was so impressed by the appearance of the country, and by the feeling of responsibility which lay with himself as founder, that he remained a long time absorbed in contemplation and thought of the possible future of the nation he had come to seat in a new land. Mr. Woolner, who has always been heedful of the leading points of his subjects, has seized this moment, not only because it was apt to the occasion of his work, with regard to its being a public expression of gratitude for services received, and to stand surrounded by the results of the subject's action in life on the lives of other men, but because it afforded a theme epic in character, extremely well fitted to sculpture, and wholly free from the merely conventionally dramatic elements of expression and attitude. As was right in treating a modern man in art, Mr. Woolner has relied less upon the attitude or expression of the limbs, than upon the facial expression of his subject. When, however, we have studied the face, the absorbed character of the attitude is displayed, and the figure becomes extraordinarily effective in its supreme harmony with the features. There is no strain, but much intensity, in this work; consequently it grows upon the spectator, whose mind receives it with extraordinary force. Its simplicity soon becomes grandeur, superior to conventionality of design; its repose grows into immense emotion, surpassing the power of the mere limbs to render by their action. The emotion being mental, the face gives it most. With such an idea of his theme, and power enough to express it in art, it is almost needless to say that the sculptor eschewed all studio traditions with regard to the transmogrifying of modern costume into a sort of pseudo-skin to a man, such as we have seen put in force even in public statues with regard to armour (of conceivable things the most unfit for such a display of pedantry), and which often supply the last refuge for sculptors who adhere to scholasticism rather than art. Still less has Mr. Woolner clothed his statue in Roman or Greek garments, or in