

OTAGO'S FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

—Footnotes to a Century of Settlement

ON Tuesday of next week—March 23—Otago will celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of its settlement. The story of the first hundred years has already been told in an imposing group of Centennial publications, and the articles which appear on this and subsequent pages—footnotes and sidelights to that story—are simply intended to present, in a relatively small space, something of the quality of province and people. Not all the writers belong to Otago, but all have lived there and they write not only with special knowledge, but with sympathy and affection.

THE FIRST DAY

By

Dr. W. P. MORRELL,
Professor of History,
University of Otago



THE founding of Otago was one of the most carefully planned of the colonizing enterprises of the Victorian age. Needless to say, it did not go precisely according to plan; but there was little of the misdirected effort, the sharp practice and exploitation of ignorance that so often accompany such schemes. The arrival of the first ships was a triumph over many obstacles and an event well worthy of commemoration.

Scotland, at a time when its handloom weavers were in deep distress, seemed ripe for schemes of emigration; but it took the disruption of the Church of Scotland to bring Scots to the province where they have ever since been so much at home. It was in 1842 that George Rennie, sculptor and politician, first planned a Scottish colony under the auspices of the New Zealand Company; but it would never have been founded but for the tenacity and faith of William Cargill and Thomas Burns, who at the same time transformed it into a Free Church enterprise. The Otago Block was selected and purchased in 1844, but the discrediting of New Zealand colonization by the Wairau Massacre and the quarrel between the New Zealand Company and the Colonial Office caused three years' delay and made heavy demands on the patience of the leaders. However, survey work was going forward. The towns of Port Chalmers and Dunedin were laid out, and on July 4, 1847, Kettle, the chief surveyor, wrote that "Dunedin is now almost deserted, there being only five houses inhabited, and we have for the present almost given up hopes of the arrival of the settlers."

AT last, however, the settlers were gathering together. In September tenders were called for vessels to convey them, one to sail from the Thames and one from the Clyde. The John Wickliffe, a comparatively new ship of 662 tons, happily named after the "Morning Star of the Reformation," was chosen to carry the stores and the London party under Cargill. She left Gravesend on November 24. Three days later, the barque, Philip Laing, an old stager of 547 tons, with the Rev. Thomas Burns and the bulk of the emigrants, to the numbers of nearly 250, sailed down the Clyde. The John Wickliffe made the faster trip. On March 19, 1848, the South Cape of Stewart Island hove in

sight. Early in the morning of the 22nd the ship was off the entrance to Otago Harbour. She fired a gun, and two boats with Maori crews put out, carrying Kettle, the surveyor, and Driver, the pilot. On the following day she anchored off Port Chalmers. Some parties went ashore there but Cargill at once set off in the ship's boat for Dunedin. On April 15 the Philip Laing arrived and rejoiced to see the John Wickliffe already in port.

Burns, in a letter, gives a vivid picture of Otago Harbour in 1848. "The harbour, through the entire 14 miles to which it extends, is one uninterrupted scene of most romantic beauty. Nothing but hills on both sides, steep and bold headlands, and peninsulas of various forms, descending to the water's edge and forming little bays of hard sand; all of them without a single exception densely clothed from the water up to their very summits with evergreen woods presenting an unrivalled scene of the richest sylvan green and alpine beauty." Long may the patches of bush on the harbour slopes of Signal Hill and Mihiwaka remain to give us some faint idea of the beauty that has passed! Only at the "head of the river" was the land more open. "This land," Kettle had written in 1846, "is mostly covered with high grass, and though in some parts there is surface water to be found, yet it is not at all swampy, the drainage being only impeded by the exuberance of the vegetation." Burns, however, swept away all these refinements, curtly referring to "the swamp at the head of the harbour."

In this soil the emigrants had to strike root. They had no experience of pioneering, and though Cargill had gifts of leadership, his army and banking career and his age, 63, hardly fitted him to give skilled direction to the working parties. It was fortunate that a few earlier settlers and the Maoris from the Heads were at hand to help. To supplement the ships' stores, the pioneer settlers could provide ample beef, mutton and potatoes.

Permanent houses could hardly be built for lack of sawn and seasoned timber; and Maori guidance must have been invaluable in the erection of a thatched storehouse and, in particular, of the emigrants' barracks, long, low buildings of grass, rushes, fern and small timber. When the ships sailed—the John Wickliffe on May 19, the Philip Laing on June 15—the barracks and a few whares built by the men were ready for the reception of their wives and families, who had hitherto stayed on board. It was high time, for early in May the weather had broken, though Burns tells his brother "the natives said we had brought the bad weather with us, for they never had the like of it before." Centennial visitors may still hear the same remark. Much had still to be

done. The rural lands of the Taieri, the Tokomairiro and the Clutha had to be broken in to the plough. Church and school had to be erected, the institutions of a province developed, and the province itself built into the structure of a British Colony very soon to be self-governing. But the founders of Otago had faith in the future, and time has proved that the foundations were well and truly laid.



SCOTLAND IN THE SOUTH

By the Very Rev.
G. H. JUPP

★

AT the moment in the programme at which it is customary to play in the haggis and then to hear the panegyric on that glorious "pudden," the Dunedin Burns Club found itself in a dilemma at their anniversary concert on January 24. There was no haggis. The president was equal to the occasion and in a humorous little speech exhorted the audience to use their imaginations. And they did, unquestionably, as

Fair fa' your honest sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the pudden-race!

was declaimed in "guid Scots," braid and fu'. The word for us who are taking part in the Centennial of the Otago Settlement is similar. We must use our imaginations.

Why did so many men and women come in small sailing ships over so many miles of stormy water to this new land? They left many comforts, relatives and friends, circumstances which they understood, for strangeness, problems they could only guess at, toil and trouble of a sort they were unable to gauge. A few of the early settlers were men of some worldly substance; most had but little or no wealth. It had been agreed that work would be found, for those who wanted it, at 3/6 per day. No homes were to be ready on arrival but sites would be marked out and, within limits, a choice would be offered. The nature of the land was almost unknown and without doubt many were not a little daunted when they saw the hills clad with thick bush and realised the labour which clearing would entail. Some had come because adventure called; others in order to secure for themselves and their dependants a house and land which was their own; others, again, because they saw little future in Scotland. There would be some who had not got any special reason for coming. But the majority knew why they had left the hills and lochs and rivers of their homeland and, even if daunted by the hard work entailed in making a new home, the reward they saw before them was sufficient payment.

HAS the result justified the sacrifice?

No one can travel over the province and remain in any doubt. The typical citizen, south of the Waitaki, is not given to boasting. He is something like the Scot who had been remembering Robbie and was making homeward in the wee sma' hours. "Gaein' hame, John?" asked a friend who overtook him. "Aye. Whiles," was the reply as John took two steps backward for each three forward. That Otago is prosperous, her climate no' that bad, her citizens comfortable, will be acknowledged by all with an, "Oh, aye. Whiles."

No typical Otago man or woman would think of boasting about his or her share of the Dominion. The pioneers set to work to prepare a home for wife and weans. The first were but poor and lacking in many comforts. But each felt that his home was his own property and to it he returned at the day's close.

His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonnille,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wife's smile,

The lispin infant prattlin on his knee,
Does a' his weary kinaug and care beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

The wife, to use the word in the *Cottar*, had planted in the front of the house flowers such as she had grown at Home, roses, sweet-william, foxgloves, stock, lily of the valley, gilliflowers, which include wallflowers, carnations, and stock. Heather, too, was prized even as it is to-day. Dunedin has been laid out to reproduce, as far as possible, the plan of Edinburgh. The homes of the city to-day remind one of the Scottish homes from which the passengers on the first four ships came. The newer flowers have a place but the old ones are there also. "Mother grew them and loved them before she came out to New Zealand." That explains everything. Those early settlers would have said with W. H. Davies,

With this small house, this garden large,
This little gold, this lovely mate,
With health of body, peace at heart—
Show me a man more great.

Some eight years ago an Englishman, a planter from Malay, unable because of the war to spend his furlough in England, came to Dunedin, and was taken through the Early Settlers' rooms. Greatly interested, he spent quite a long while examining the articles and gazing at the portraits. Coming away he spoke of the priceless nature of all he had seen and expressed the hope that it would be possible before long to build a larger place so as to display the articles to advantage. Then, after a pause, "Do you know, the portraits of the women give me a sense almost of masculinity." His friend replied, "I knew quite a number of those women. They were, in most cases, quite aged then, but they were essentially feminine." Yet the visitor had noticed the outstanding feature of the men and women who colonised Otago. They were people of strong character. We know that quite clearly.

But it may be asked if we recognise that their descendants are worthy of their parents. They are, though some will doubt the truth of such a statement. The underlying sense of the over-ruling guidance of the Divine Being and the value of social worship are still recognised. The value of a