MR DOWNIE STEWART, a former Finance Minister of New Zealand and author of "Sir Francis Bell—His Life and Times", has written this new study of a New Zealand statesman with an intimate understanding of the political life of the Dominion at a time when some of its most important legislation was being initiated.

The story is of an Englishman born more than a century ago, who was driven by a passionate political idealism to seek a remote new country in which to give expression to his love of the human race. The struggle of this "just man tenacious of his purpose" to establish a true democracy under the Southern sun, his success and his failure, will make absorbing reading for all students of colonial development, especially for readers who hold that the British Commonwealth of Nations existed first in the hearts and minds of those Nineteenth Century idealists who forgot themselves in the service of the coming generations.

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WILLIAM ROLLESTON

TO MY SISTER

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William Rolleston

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WILLIAM ROLLESTON

A NEW ZEALAND STATESMAN

by

WILLIAM DOWNIE STEWART

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FOREWORD

In the preparation of this study I have had the good fortune to have access to the papers of the late William Rolleston which were kindly placed at my disposal by members of his family. I am particularly indebted to Miss Helen Rolleston who furnished me with valuable information on many points relating to her father's career and also made many helpful suggestions after reading through the manuscript.

W. DOWNIE STEWART

June 1940

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PREFACE

"We think our fathers fools so wise we grow
Our wiser sons no doubt will think us so."

I

Not long ago I listened to a speech broadcast by a New Zealand Cabinet Minister, in the course of which he said: "Let us recall the names of our great New Zealand statesmen of the past." But, to my surprise, his retrospect went no farther back than 1890, and, after mentioning Richard John Seddon and one or two of his colleagues or successors, the speaker's interest in, or knowledge of, other statesmen abruptly faded out. Now, it is true that a new epoch in New Zealand politics began in 1890, and that period is rightly regarded as a sort of political watershed; it is, however, an egregious error to regard the earlier political landscape as being wrapped in mediaeval darkness and to reserve all the sunshine and splendour for this side of the great divide. Without idealising the early statesmen, it is true to say that, at almost any given period before 1890, there were far more giants on the political stage than can be found at any given period since that date. This can easily be put to the test. Let the reader ask any reasonably informed citizen for the names of the Cabinet Ministers he can recall who have held office since 1890, and he will be hard put to it to mention more than two or three, apart from the successive Prime Ministers. The rest are, for the most part, vague and transitory shadows. On the other hand, it requires but a glance at our earlier history to see that the political sky was then studded with stars of permanent brightness and many of the first magnitude. Even if they are now merely dim ghosts to the present generation, all students of history

recognise that the men who patiently and courageously built the foundations of our modern State were such men as Sir Edward Stafford, Sir Frederick Weld, Sir Robert Stout, Sir Julius Vogel, Sir Harry Atkinson, Sir Frederick Whitaker, Sir George Grey, Sir Donald McLean, Donald Reid, W. S. Moorhouse, J. E. Featherston, Sir W. Fitzherbert, J. E. Fitzgerald, and William Rolleston. These men were progressive and far-sighted statesmen who, with few precedents to guide them, faced and solved problems of the greatest magnitude and complexity. Consider, for example, the many phases of the Native question and the Maori Wars, the early and varied provincial problems of land settlement and tenure, the control and government of the picturesque and turbulent population of the goldfields, and the long struggles between provincialism and centralism.

II

The story of William Rolleston is that of a man, well born and well educated in England, who desired in early life to escape from the trammels and conventions of the circle in which he found himself. He felt stifled and smothered by Old World restrictions. He saw in the young rising settlement of Canterbury the chance of freedom. But he also had a wider vision. He dreamed of the possibility in New Zealand of building up a new and better social order. It was natural that this ideal should appear readily attainable in a virgin country free from tradition and precedent. He once confided in a friend that, as a youth in England, he was considered "a terrible radical", and that it was dissatisfaction with English institutions as they existed and the hope of founding a political Utopia in a new world that impelled him to emigrate.

It was this call that led him to plunge into political life. He began in Provincial politics. He was at first a member of the Provincial Government, and later Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury. His occupancy of this post

during the last eight years of its existence coincided with its most halcyon days of prosperity and progress. During the same period he was a Member of Parliament, and later rose to Cabinet rank. In this capacity, for five years, he proved himself a constructive reformer and an administrator of outstanding ability.

Altogether he was in politics for thirty-six years, though during the last decade (1890–1900) his political fortunes were chequered, and, at successive elections he met with alternations of victory and defeat.

III

It would be pleasant if the narrative contained in this study of Rolleston should succeed in showing that his early dreams came true. From one aspect his career was highly successful, and at his death the whole Dominion rang with praise of his single-minded devotion to the public welfare and his steadfast adherence to the highest principles that should govern a statesman. But, viewed from his own standpoint, there was much to disappoint and disillusion him. This did not arise from any question of his own personal success or failure, as he was by no means self-seeking in public affairs. In like manner, his dreams of a new Utopia were not in fact achieved, or perhaps attainable; but he might well have been content with the rich contributions he himself made to the progress of the Dominion in the way of social and legislative reforms.

What robbed him of a fuller measure of success was his inability to adapt himself to the exigencies of political life, for, in trying to achieve his plans, he was baffled, thwarted, and frustrated by the constant need for compromise, conciliation, and party manœuvres. He could never reconcile himself to Lord Morley's dictum that the art of politics consists in the acceptance of the second best. Like Alexander Hamilton, he viewed politics as a religion, and never as a game. In private life, he was a genial and charming

companion, whose company was eagerly sought by men who loved good fellowship. But his public utterances were uniformly serious and sombre, so that he was often regarded as a gloomy prophet of evil.

This intense seriousness was part of his temperament. It manifested itself in an almost excessive conscientiousness —an intellectual scrupulosity which made his political path thorny and difficult. Gisborne, an acute and accurate observer, once declared that Rolleston suffered from "an excess of virtue". Even in his early days as a sheep-farmer, this trait in his temperament was in evidence. His old friend, Professor Sale, says: "Rolleston was almost unduly nervous and anxious about his sheep station and his business affairs. This anxiety was not due to any excessive regard for money, but arose from a desire to do the very best in whatever he was doing. It was in fact only another form of his distinguishing characteristic, conscientiousness." He quotes as an instance the fact that, one day, Rolleston, having promised a party of road-workers to supply them with mutton, made three attempts on horseback to cross the Rakaia River, which was in high flood. The task proved impossible. "The workmen saw him from a distance, and would have dissuaded him if they could have got within speaking distance; but they could not. They were in no danger of starvation, for, by walking a few miles, they could have secured supplies from the adjoining station. But they were none the less strongly impressed by Mr Rolleston's regard for his workmen and his conscientious determination to fulfil his promise if it were physically possible. They always spoke of him with love and veneration."

It was this same quality of extreme sense of duty that Rolleston carried with him through his political career. It is the key of his character. He was in effect Horace's "just man". "The Just man tenacious of his purpose and not to be diverted by any power from above or clamour from below."

This is not to imply that Rolleston was a political Pharisee. It only means that he was puzzled by the rapid shifting of both individuals and groups in the political arena. He forgot perhaps the truth that "the workers (and, we may add, the electors) have learned from the history of centuries that they may expect no less valuable service for their cause from the careerist than from the just and the upright."[1] The electors are not inclined to inquire too closely into the motives of politicians in their changes of front as long as they get the service they expect.

I have been at some pains to emphasise this cardinal feature of Rolleston's temperament, because it seems, in a broad way, to explain his political history. He could not bring himself to seek after popularity. This is partly the explanation of why it was that, while in his own election contests he was several times defeated, he was all the time rising in the esteem of the nation.

Regarded as a local politician and judged by election results, he was to some extent a failure. Regarded as a national figure steeped in the high traditions of the older statesmanship, he was a conspicuous success. In short, his career is a signal proof of the fact that a public man is ultimately judged in the eyes of the nation not by his attitude on particular measures but by his character. Thus it came about that, when he died, a leading journal that had always opposed his political views said: "There is scarcely a home from the North Cape to the Bluff in which his name is not held in grateful and affectionate regard. The secret of his popularity was that everyone trusted him."

IV

Apart from his own individual temperament, Rolleston represented a type that was much in evidence in earlier days, particularly in Canterbury. The chief characteristics of this group were that they were all the product of the

[1] Wertheimer, *Portrait of the Labour Party*, p. 143.

English Public Schools and Universities. To those who can recall the type of which I am speaking, it would appear as if those great seats of learning—the Universities of the Old World—produced at that time a finer vintage than the output of later years. They were men who were at once cultured scholars and men of affairs. Of simple habits, they dressed plainly, eschewed personal ornaments and all forms of affectation. They were of a peculiarly masculine type, and hated vulgarity and ostentation. Towards rich and poor, young and old, they displayed that grave and charming courtesy that was so marked an attribute of what were called "gentlemen of the old school".

I remember, for example, that illustrious and venerable old man, Sir Joshua Williams, who was a lifelong friend of Rolleston. When I was a mere office boy, he would raise his hat and sweep it almost to his knees in acknowledgment of my shy salute. In like manner he would treat a prisoner at the Bar, or a witness in the box, with such perfection of manner that it seemed almost a privilege to appear before him in any capacity.

There are others that might be mentioned of lesser calibre but of like courtesy and simplicity. When men of this class took an interest in public affairs, they naturally carried great weight and influence. It will be interesting to see, as years go by, whether in New Zealand we will reproduce this type or something as good or better.

V

Part of the paradox of Rolleston's career lay in the conflict between his social position and his political opinions. The landed squatters regarded him as their friend socially, but they viewed with bitter hostility his obstinate efforts to prevent aggregation of large properties. On the other hand, while he was sometimes called "the people's William" and "the idol of Canterbury", the more radical section of the community failed to take him entirely to its

heart because of his social friendship with the other sections of the community and because of his political associations.

These political associations were in the main with the party which ultimately came to be regarded as conservative; but he himself held radical views on many questions, and might most correctly be described as a Liberal of the old school. One of the main features of English Liberalism during most of the nineteenth century was its opposition to State interference. The historical explanation of this was the determination of the early English Liberals to free industry from the shackles imposed by the State. Hence when, in the 'nineties, there emerged in politics a fresh impulse towards State intervention and control, the principles of true Liberalism, as understood by Rolleston, were laid aside. To his astonishment and dismay he, who had started out in life as a Radical, found himself dubbed a Conservative. He thought that in due time the pendulum would swing. On some questions, as this narrative will show, it has after many years swung back to an approach to Rolleston's views; but it is probable that the political pendulum never oscillates fully to its opposite extreme. The law of periodicity never fully operates in politics. As Bertrand Russell truly says: "The movement of human society is partly cyclic, partly progressive—it resembles a tune played over and over again, but each time with a fuller orchestration than before. In this tune there are quiet passages and passionate passages, there is a terrific climax, and then a time of silence until the tune begins again."

Chapter I

ANCESTRY AND EDUCATION

"England would not be what she is without her system of public education and no other country can become what she is without the advantages of such a system"—CANNING.

I

In none of the letters and documents of Rolleston do we find any reference to his ancestry. Perhaps he was more interested in the future than in the past—more absorbed in the possibility of building up an ideal society in a new land than in dreaming of the long generations of squires, soldiers, and clergy from whom he was descended. If a dispute still exists between those who attribute the main influence in the life of an individual to heredity and those who lay most stress on environment, this dispute can hardly be settled by quoting the case of Rolleston, for he combined in his person the best of both factors. On the one hand his ancestry was the finest that England could give him, and on the other his environment in the new and virgin country of New Zealand afforded an ideal opportunity for the realisation of his dreams of a new society.

Nevertheless, those readers who find a fascination in family pedigrees cannot fail to be interested in knowing that Rolleston's ancestry can be traced in an unbroken line to the remote days of English history till we come at last to a William de Rolleston who lived at the time of the Norman Conquest. The famous Domesday Book records the Rolleston property as valued at 10*s.*, which might be the equivalent now of £10. Some writers tell us that the name is of Norse origin and means Rolvers Town. Others

find its derivation to be from the Saxon word *Hrothwulf's Ton*—presumably the township of some forgotten chieftain of that name.

Possibly Rolleston was originally a place name, as there are at present six villages in England and Wales bearing that title. If this be so—if some early Rolleston ancestor of many centuries ago took his name from a place in England—it is strange to reflect that, in modern times, the process has been reversed in New Zealand, and that, in honour of William Rolleston, we find in Canterbury such place names as Rolleston Junction, Mount Rolleston, and Rolleston Avenue.

II

From the time of the Conquest, Rolleston's ancestors lived close to the soil in a way that only people in the north of England can fully understand. They were scattered over the midlands, and were all outstanding in their own community. They were not very wealthy, and they did not mix in London politics. Some were squires, some entered the Church, and some were soldiers of a sturdy type.

In the time of Henry II, we find one Rolleston ancestor a ranger in Sherwood Forest. Later on they helped King John in his contest with the Barons. In 1310, John de Rolleston, Vicar of Beverley, had to bear the banner of St John of Beverley with the army against the Scots, and was granted leave of absence by the Chapter. In 1314, the Archbishop wished to send John de Rolleston with the banner as before. But the expenses of his journey were not forthcoming, and there is a quaint side-note in the Beverley Act book which reads: "Does this mean that the banner did not go to Bannockburn? If so, the cause of the English defeat there is easily understood!" However, the Rollestons were frequently in service in the wars against the Scots. In 1315 a Ralph de Rolleston was "Commissioner of Array" in Staffordshire and Shropshire for raising troops

for the Scottish wars. Later in the same century a John de Rolleston was serving in the French Wars at the time of Crécy, and, in 1316, he was in the retinue of Thomas, Earl of Warwick, Marshal of England.

They plotted in the cause of Mary, Queen of Scots, and were Royalists in the time of King Charles I. Their efforts to afford assistance to that unfortunate monarch and his army involved them in such losses that, in order to raise funds, they had to sell the ancestral home of Rolleston on Dove.[1]

III

After the loss of the old home, the family moved to Watnall Hall, Nottinghamshire. This property had come into the family in the time of Henry VIII through marriage with the heiress of the Binghams. In due course it was inherited late in life by John Rolleston, the Rector of Aston, Derby, who died in 1770. His younger son, Robert, migrated to London, where he became a successful wine merchant. Finally, Robert's son, George Rolleston, the father of our William Rolleston, after being educated at Eton and Merton College, Oxford, became in 1815 Vicar of Stainton and Maltby, in Yorkshire, and of Stainton, in Lincolnshire.

IV

We have thus, by a series of hasty leaps down many centuries, reached William Rolleston's father, the Reverend George Rolleston, M.A. He is certainly worthy of notice, however brief, for he represented a type that has never been seen in New Zealand, and may now be almost extinct in England. He was for over fifty years squire and vicar of the three parishes under his charge. His clerical duties sat lightly on him. It was his character of squire that

[1] The Dove River runs along the borders of Derbyshire and Staffordshire until it joins the Trent. It was the favourite fishing stream of Izaak Walton, and is still beloved of anglers.

engaged most of his time and attention, for he dearly loved hunting and country pursuits.

In the year 1825, this reverend gentleman came into the possession of a substantial mansion known as Maltby Hall, near the village of Maltby. It stood on a secluded plateau surrounded by forty acres of woodlands, shrubberies, and pleasure grounds. In these lovely grounds were to be found waterfalls, and even a little temple erected to "Diana or some other classical deity" amid the shady walks. The history of Maltby Hall goes back to the time of Charles I; but the house had been rebuilt about the middle of the eighteenth century.

It was here that William Rolleston was born on 19 September 1831.

When, thirty years later, Rolleston built for himself, on his lonely mountain station in New Zealand, a slab hut lined with cob and thatched with raupo, did his mind's eye ever recall the scene of his birthplace, with its parklands, gardens, and spacious rooms? If so, the contrast never caused him any regrets, for his English home and its surroundings had bred in him a love of the country and of the beauties of Nature that remained with him throughout his life.

V

The Reverend George Rolleston married Anne Nettleship, of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Some of her relatives acquired distinction as scholars and in other walks of life. Anne Nettleship is described as having been a gentle and lovely woman. Her son William applied to her the poet's words: "The sweetest soul that ever looked with human eyes." There were ten children of her marriage with the Reverend George Rolleston, of whom William was the youngest child but one.

One brother, George Rolleston, M.D., F.R.S. (1829–81), became a Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford; Assistant

Physician, British Civil Hospital, Smyrna, in the Crimean War (1855–57); Linacre Professor of Anatomy and Physiology, Oxford, 1860; F.R.S. 1862; a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, 1872; and he was the author of many learned scientific papers on anthropology, anatomy, and zoology. There is an interesting story on record which illustrates Professor Rolleston's great reputation as an anthropologist. It appears that while some workmen were digging near Marble Arch at the site where Tyburn tree once stood they uncovered three skeletons. A controversy arose as to whether or not one of the skulls was that of Oliver Cromwell. An appeal was made to Professor Rolleston, who examined the exhibit and replied: "If that is the skull of Cromwell it must have been when he was quite a young man!"[1]

VI

Rolleston received his early education at Rossall School in Lancashire. Some vivid recollections of his life at Rossall were contributed to the School Magazine by Rolleston in his old age, and I cannot do better than make some brief extracts:

When I reached Rossall (says Rolleston), I had never before seen the sea, and my first view of it made a great impression on me. That early seaside life is no doubt responsible for my having in later years finally fixed my abode on the coast of New Zealand. I used to watch the waves with delight from the old sea wall beyond the wreck-yard. On the one side was the long line of surf to the Blackpool Headland; on the other the beacon to the north and the breakwater from which we bathed. At times we saw the

[1] Many years later, when William Rolleston visited England in 1900, he attended a large dinner at St Bartholomew's Hospital, at which reference was made to the fact that Professor Rolleston had been a prominent member of Bart.'s forty years before. In replying for the visitors, Rolleston said that "as well in New Zealand as elsewhere in his travels, he owed more than he could express to the name and fame of his brother".

blue outline of Blackcombe "lone sentinel", at times the Isle of Man at sundown. For the most part, the outlook was bleak and invigorating rather than beautiful. The sea was everything to me. There it was that my purpose was formed to "sail beyond the sunset and the paths of all the western stars".

An emigrant ship, "Ocean Monarch", outward bound from Liverpool, was burnt at sea. The beach near Rossall was strewn with the wreckage and the corpses of those who were seeking a better country. The sad sight haunts my dreams to this day.

The trees about the old Hall were all stunted and storm-bent by the prevalent winds. They grew little taller than the high wall of boulders which sheltered them running from the old pigeon-cote (afterwards the first sanatorium) in the direction towards the lodge on the Poulton and Bispham Road. The whole had a wild and weird look to one who came from one of the prettiest villages in Yorkshire.

He relates that "the playground of the future was full of hares, and we amused ourselves by trying to surround them". Elsewhere in the same article he says:

> I have wandered for nearly forty years away from early friends and early associations, and in my seventh decade the truth of what the grand old poet who was present at our first prize-giving sang is more than ever borne in upon me—
>
> "The child is father of the man
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety."

This can only mean that Wordsworth was present, and it is interesting to reflect that Rolleston should have seen the great poet in the flesh.

At this school Rolleston was taught by the Reverend Dr Woolley, who later became Principal of Sydney University. The Reverend J. C. Andrew was also on the staff. In later years, Andrew came to Canterbury, where Rolleston renewed their early friendship.

Rolleston rose to be Captain of the School. He left it in 1851.

VII

All through his later life Rolleston maintained his interest in his old School. In 1900, while on a visit to England, he attended the prize-day ceremony, and was described in the local papers as the most notable of the old Rossallians present. He himself described the school as "the Marlborough of the North". On the platform were many eminent clergymen and the Headmaster of Rugby, Dr James, who was an old boy of Rossall.

> In a year (said the Headmaster) when the self-governing Colonies had done so much to help England in her hour of need, it is an additional privilege to welcome an old Rossallian from one of the Colonies, the Hon. W. Rolleston, an ex-Minister of New Zealand.

At this ceremony Viscount Cross, in presenting the prizes, told a story which is too good to omit about the Queen Dowager, Queen Adelaide. She had been watching a game of football at Rugby, and later on went to supper with Dr Arnold, who told Lord Cross that the Queen said: "Dr Arnold, all those boys are apparently so very anxious to kick at the ball, could not they afford to have two?"

VIII

In 1851, at the age of twenty, Rolleston entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He became a Foundation Scholar in the next year, and gained a second class in the classical tripos for 1855. His two brothers had gone to Oxford, and it is said that his choice of Cambridge was due to the fact that he felt overshadowed by their achievements at Oxford, and wished to make his own effort under different auspices.

After leaving Cambridge, Rolleston made use of his scholarly attainments to become tutor to Cecil Foljambe, afterwards Lord Liverpool, whose son was Governor of New Zealand from 1912 to 1917 and Governor-General of New Zealand from 1917 to 1920.

Chapter II

ROLLESTON BECOMES A SHEEP-FARMER

"It is an interesting speculation whether the necessities of the pioneering age produced in individuals the qualities required to meet them, or whether in fact former generations ordered their lives with a resolution now less common"—Anonymous book review.

I

In view of the prospects that lay before Rolleston of a life of comfort and security in the English countryside among influential connections, the reader may be curious to know why he should have foregone these prospects for the hazards and hardships of New Zealand pioneering life. Fortunately, we have on record a clear statement of the motives that influenced him.

Shortly before leaving England in 1858, he wrote to an old College friend, Duncan Mathias, who was a master at Uppingham School, confiding to him his hopes and plans. Duncan Mathias had a number of relatives who had already settled in Canterbury. He must have made a sympathetic response to Rolleston's confidences, for there is in existence an undated reply written by Rolleston which is worth quoting:

Your letter pleases me more than I can tell you, both as regards yourself and myself. It is most gratifying to find a man like yourself, rich in saving common sense, of greater mental endowments than myself, and far greater appreciation of and capability of enjoying all that is comprehended in the conventional terms—"Society and Civilisation"—approving my plan. You have no notion of the cant and rant and nonsense with which I have been deluged by people who at least might have known me to be *tenacem propositi virum*, and save themselves the trouble.... I know directly and indirectly at least a dozen edu-

William Rolleston with his father outside Maltby Hall, 1852

cated men in the Colony. I shall meet better heads, and, what I value more, better hearts than are to be met with in any county district of the Mother Country. Home and the University are the only society I care for. In England I am precluded from both. That is, unless I choose to do nothing, which I don't.

He goes on to say that he has a justifiable longing to make a home for himself,

and, if hard work and steadiness will do it, I will be a married man before I am thirty-five.[1] I am a great believer in the union of youth, marriage, and happiness. Mind you, this is written in cold blood. I am not in love, nor will I be till I see I can marry at once. What crimes society, respectability, position, and, not least of all, the intellectual mania of the present day have to answer for to him who looks on the heart.

But at a much later date Rolleston states in retrospect even more clearly the reasons that prompted him to come to New Zealand. In a letter dated 27 April 1898, written to a journalist who had criticised one of his speeches, he says:

I notice that the article falls in with Gisborne's conception of my early views.[2] The truth is really somewhat different. I was brought up in the Old World among Conservatives and Ecclesiastics. I revolted from both at an early date, and was ill at ease among my surroundings. This had much to do with my desire for the freer life of a colony. Then, in the year 1873, I set myself as Superintendent of Canterbury to prevent aggregation of large properties by what I thought unfair wresting of the land regulations. (The records of this are Provincial, but there is a letter on the subject in the Journals of the Legislative Council, 1876.) In 1875–76, I was the first in a message to the Provincial Council to preach free, secular, and compulsory education. Where my conservatism comes in I have never made out. The Vogel era, with its worship of the Golden Calf, confused the issues of Conservatism and Liberalism. Since that, the socialistic phase has

[1] As he was then twenty-seven, and married seven years later in 1865, he achieved marriage at thirty-four.

[2] See Gisborne's *New Zealand Rulers and Statesmen.*

again confused issues. A new era, in which I shall be a looker-on, is coming and with, I trust, a broader, brighter light of day.

For some reason this letter was never sent to his journalistic critic, but it shows very clearly what actuated Rolleston in emigrating.

This craving to escape from Old World conventions was not peculiar to Rolleston. It was demonstrated in an amusing way by the conduct of G. S. Sale and some other young Englishmen who arrived at Lyttelton some time before Rolleston:

> They were all so delighted with the prospect of the untrammelled life before them that they felt it necessary to make some gesture of contempt for the conventions they had left behind, so the first evening ashore they built a huge bonfire, piled on it their top hats and tail coats, and danced in a ring round the blazing fire.[1]

II

On 15 July 1858, Rolleston sailed for New Zealand, and reached Lyttelton on 15 November.[2] The Canterbury settlement had then been in existence for eight years. It was the last of the settlements in New Zealand founded on the "Wakefield System".

That system has so often been described that it will suffice here to say that its main features were, first, that Crown Lands should be sold at a price sufficiently high to prevent speculation and to provide a fund out of which further immigrants could be brought to the Colony; secondly, that self-government, both Colonial and Muni-

[1] Extract from a letter from Mrs M. E. Orr, now living at Beaconsfield, Bucks, to the author, dated 29 December 1937. Mrs Orr is a daughter of the late Professor Sale.

[2] His ship called en route at Otago Harbour, and, speaking at the Otago Jubilee in 1898, Rolleston said: "Forty years ago, I landed in Otago from the Old Country, and slept—or rather did not sleep—my first night in New Zealand on the then unformed track between Dunedin and Port Chalmers." He did not explain why he slept out on the track—perhaps he had got "bushed", which would easily happen in those days.

cipal, should be part of the system; and thirdly, that, where possible, the Church should form an integral part of the scheme, because of the value of its spiritual influence and authority.

The Canterbury settlement was Anglican, and obtained Provincial status in 1853. It did not, however, exclude non-Anglicans. It was more successful than any other province in drawing to its settlement a large number of young men of the Rolleston type. A writer in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1867 said:

> The effort to transplant to Canterbury everything that was English led to its attracting a great number of young men of excellent family and education and of some means; and this, combined with the pastoral nature of the country, has brought about the strongly marked social distinctions more observable in Canterbury than anywhere else in New Zealand. Up to the present, there have been two widely distinguished classes—the gentry and the peasant—the sheep farmers and the labourers. It will require all the influence of the gold-fields to introduce that gentle graduation of ranks which render anything like an aristocracy unattainable.[1]

When he landed at Lyttelton, Rolleston was met and welcomed at the foot of the bridle track that led over the hills by C. C. Bowen, who had been Private Secretary to J. R. Godley. Bowen and Rolleston became fast friends, and worked together for forty years in Parliament, and on many public bodies. They both had a great love of the Classics, and in Rolleston's papers are many letters from Bowen, in Greek or Latin, discussing problems of philology or interpretation.

Rolleston stayed a short time in Christchurch, presenting his letters of introduction and getting advice from various people. He was fortunate enough to make friends with Mr George Arthur Emilius Ross, a well-known run-holder in Canterbury, whose name frequently appears in

[1] Quoted in the *Illustrated New Zealander*, 19 July 1867.

Mr Acland's valuable history of the early Canterbury runs.[1] He proved a staunch friend and adviser, and his name often crops up in Rolleston's letters and business dealings. It was while he owned the Lake Coleridge station that Rolleston became one of his shepherds.

Certainly Rolleston lost no time in getting to work, for, soon after his arrival, he wrote to his family in England:

I saw Mr Ross on Thursday last. He has very kindly kept a place for me at his station, and accordingly I am going up with him this week. I do not yet know exactly the terms of our arrangements, but he will let me have sheep on his run, and I shall be able to turn shepherd at once. I have thus fallen in with exactly what I wished, and indeed more than I had any right to expect. Ross thought at first that it might be well for me to think of Government employment, and, with that in view, we went to Lyttelton to make enquiries. We have decided against it. The office was one in the Customs. The work was pen work. Lyttelton a horrid place for a man to live in, as there is a range 1200 feet high between that and any society. Moreover, £200 in town does not go as far as the £50 I shall get up country. Still more, I will not give up my shepherding notions for a life of uncongenial drudgery. I took Mr Cookson's advice on the subject, and he said I should be utterly wretched, and most probably lose my health. Everybody says that sheep farming is the thing, and that I am safe to succeed. I have been staying two or three nights with Mr Ross at Mr Wilson's, one of whose daughters he is going to marry. They are a very nice family, most kind and hospitable. Indeed, I have found everybody so that I have met. I am here under very good auspices, otherwise I fancy a man may be here a long time without knowing anybody

[1] Ross had been a cadet on Henry Tancred's run, Malvern Hills, when that station was first started in 1852. In 1854, he bought Waireka station, and took into partnership Charles Harper, a son of the Bishop. In 1860, these partners bought Lake Coleridge station, and later took a lease of Four Peaks. They were ruined in the snowstorm of 1867. Ross was also the first clerk of the Canterbury Provincial Council, and later a member. He died in Christchurch in 1876 at the age of forty-seven. See Acland, *The Early Canterbury Runs*.

that is worth knowing. The Bishop has been very civil. I am going to a large party there tomorrow. A man may do what he likes up country, but, in town, etiquette is very strong. Hence, I look upon parties when in town as a necessary evil by way of making myself known. Mr Cookson insists on my coming down to the Anniversary Ball next month, in the necessity of which Mr Ross concurs, so I shall do as I am told. I have not yet got my things round from Lyttelton. The hill is a great barrier, impassible by carts, so everything has to come a long way round by water. Land is selling at an extravagant rate anywhere near town or the main roads. Unskilled labour 8*s*. a day. Beef 6*d*. a pound. Flour £18 the ton. House rents enormous. I am entirely satisfied that I have done the right thing in taking the step I have; but, of course, cannot yet speak as to the prospect of emigrants generally (except working men), especially as I have so soon fallen on my legs myself and have not had to make many general enquiries....

III

Rolleston stayed on Mr Ross's sheep station for about two years, gaining experience. Early in 1861 he acquired for himself a sheep station near Lake Coleridge, which lay between the forks of the Rakaia, Mathias and Wilberforce Rivers, and this run he called "Mount Algidus". Acland states that Mount Algidus consisted of runs 195 and 278, but, if an old diary of Rolleston's is correct, there were four runs included in the block, namely, 195, 278, 355, and 356.[1]

At the time when Rolleston acquired this station, the business of sheep-farming had been carried on in Canterbury for about fourteen years. During that period the number of sheep in the Province had expanded from less than

[1] The diary records the fact that run 195 had first been taken up in 1858 by James Phillips, and was sold and transferred by him to G. A. E. Ross in trust for Rolleston in July 1859, for £300. Run 278 was bought from J. J. Oakden for £250 in February 1860. Run 355 was taken up by William Rolleston in the name of G. A. E. Ross, and run 356, which was originally taken up as 255, completed the block. Finally, all these four runs were transferred to Rolleston on 25 March 1861.

10,000 to nearly 800,000, and all the Province east of the main snowy range had been explored and taken up. Sheep-farming was regarded as a highly profitable business, and the goodwill of licensees' interests were selling at from £50 to £100 per 1000 acres, irrespective of any values in buildings or improvements. In contemporary reports it is stated that sheep-farmers were generally making handsome profits.

Sir Frederick Weld in his book on sheep-farming in New Zealand said:

> I believe the profits of most sheep and cattle farmers over the last ten years, calculated at the end of the period, have been more than nearly 20 % than 10 % on their original outlay.

Various expedients were adopted by those who had insufficient capital. Sometimes they would buy sheep and arrange for a runholder to take care of the flock and give him half the wool and a third of the increase of the flock in equal moieties of males and females. Later on, a more common practice was for the runholder to pay the owner of the flock 2*s.* or 2*s.* 6*d.* per head in respect of the wool, and to guarantee 40 or 45 per cent of the increase.

At first Rolleston had insufficient sheep to stock his run. He began with a flock of 1500, but, of these, 900 belonged to Mr Ross, and, by agreement, were to remain on the station for two years. There still exists an early station journal in which Rolleston recorded with methodical care the daily life and work of the station. His first entry reads:

> February 12th, 1861:
>
> Appleyard and I started with two pack-horses from the head of the lake, and pitched our tent in the bush.
>
> Appleyard left (April 26th) having completed the house and yards.
>
> March 18th:
>
> F. Mathias brought 200 head of cattle on the upper run. He had hitherto been at Glen Thorne packing my things from thence to the head of the lake, where they had been left by Oakden's boat.

April 11th:

I took delivery of the sheep at the lake and drove them next day on the run with Shore, and camped down at the boat harbour. Balider and Slater helped us across the river. We left the boat-house at sun-rise, and the sheep were all across by 1.50 p.m.

During the first few months there was a monotonous succession of snowstorms which lay from 4 inches deep and upwards. But each year his flock and wool clip expanded. It is interesting to know that shearing cost 25*s.* per 100, with grog.

In letters to his family in England, Rolleston relates practical details of station life—how he has broken in a young colt to be tolerably quiet "without breaking any limbs or getting one fall". This colt he names Pendragon. He exchanges his mare, Rowena, for a horse and pack saddle, and he asks for advice as to "what in England would be a liberal allowance per head of sugar, tea, and flour".

Sometimes there are tragedies to record. In one letter he tells of a new chum from England who, on a lonely excursion, had fallen over a cliff, broken his leg, and lain unable to move till death ended his pains. "He had no food and only one blanket. He was far away from any track or station. He kept a diary. The accident happened on April 18th (1862), and the last entry was April 22nd. A more awful death it is hard to conceive. The fracture was a compound one of the thigh."

In another letter, Rolleston tells how he had employed a runaway sailor, who absconded after a week, but "got paid £1 for a week's work he had not done".

The most vivid sketch of Rolleston's life at Lake Coleridge station, and later at Mount Algidus, was written by his old friend, Professor G. S. Sale.[1] Sale had been a contemporary of Rolleston's at Cambridge, though they had not actually met there. He was a distinguished scholar, and, in later years, became Professor of Classics at Otago University.

[1] *Press*, 16 February 1903.

But before that, in true colonial style, he had followed the most various callings, being at one time a station manager, at another a journalist, and at yet another Administrator of the West Coast goldfields for the Provincial Government. He had also spent some time on the Otago goldfields in 1860.

The house (wrote Sale) in which Rolleston lived (on Ross's Lake Coleridge station), and which has since completely disappeared, was on a peninsula, and distant about 20 yards from the edge of the lake, and it consisted of a single low slab hut lined with cob and thatched with raupo, and divided into one small living room and two tiny bedrooms.

The table, benches, stools, and bedsteads were roughly shaped out of the local black birch by means of axe, adze, and plane. Sawn timber was an unknown luxury. The fare corresponded with the dwelling. Baked mutton, potatoes boiled in a bucket, station-made bread with dripping instead of butter, tea without milk, all served on tin dishes and tin plates, with pannikins for water or tea. Such was the spartan fare, and such was the homely lodging to which Mr Rolleston came from the comfortable, if not luxurious life of a Cambridge student, and he thoroughly enjoyed it; nor did he seek to alter it when he became his own master on his own station, the only point on which he showed any fastidiousness being in the matter of cleanliness.

After Rolleston acquired his own station in 1861 he invited Sale to stay with him, and the latter records many details of their life together. It is of historical interest to learn that Rolleston gave classical place names to his surroundings, and these still persist. The streams of Lake Coleridge run were named by him Simois and Scamander, and the largest hill Mount Ida. At Sale's suggestion, he named Mount Gargarus from Tennyson's lines "Behind the valley topmost Gargarus Stands up and takes the morning". Similarly, on his own run he called the wooded hill at the foot of which his hut was built Mount Algidus, recalling Horace's line "Nigrae feraci frondis in Algido" [On Mount Algidus rich in dark foliage]. Finally, an

island in the river bed was named Hydra, and three streams which run into the Rakaia were called Gorgon, Titan, and Chimera.

IV

When Samuel Butler (the author of *Erewhon*) was looking for a sheep run in Canterbury, he put up for the night with Rolleston. He gives an amusing description of his host as

> an exceedingly humane and judicious bullock driver. Every now and then (he says) he leaves his up-country avocation, and becomes a great gun at the College at Christchurch, examining the boys; he then returns to his shepherding, cooking, bullock-driving, as the case may be.... Under his bed I found Tennyson's "Idylls of the King". So you will see that even in these out-of-the-world places people do care a little for something besides sheep.

When Butler asked in the morning where he was to wash, Rolleston "with a shrug of the shoulders, and pointing outside, said: 'There is the lake'".[1]

There is a well-known and almost threadbare story to the effect that Rolleston swore at his bullocks in Greek. Whether the story is true or not, it is clear that his love of the Classics held to him throughout his life. I have heard it related that, long after his political career had passed its zenith, he could be met jolting along the country roads in an old spring-cart, reading his Horace as he went.

In later letters he tells of all the ordinary work of the station—breaking-in young colts, building a wool-shed, driving his bullock team, buying and selling cattle, mustering, and shearing sheep, and apparently all the time becoming increasingly prosperous. In the same year, 1862, the Government appointed him Inspector of the College in Christchurch. "So I get paid for examining, which is a good thing."

[1] *Samuel Butler* (1835–1902)—A memoir by Henry Festing Jones, vol. I, pp. 78–9; vol. II, pp. 334–5.

Rolleston sold his run in 1865 to Mr Neave at a good profit. During the last two or three years he had become absorbed in public affairs, and, as will be seen in the next chapter, he became in 1863 a member of the Provincial Council. Hence, during this period, his visits to Mount Algidus became intermittent. But his practical and successful experience on the land was to serve him in good stead in his long public career as an administrator and legislator.

V

It is also noteworthy that, in all Rolleston's letters and journals, we find no complaint of the hardships and difficulties of pioneering life. Probably the explanation lies in the fact that the life of a sheep-farmer in those years was one of well-grounded hope and financial progress. The same story repeats itself in the experience of Samuel Butler, who, after a few years as a sheep-farmer in Canterbury, was able to sell out and return to England with a substantial accumulation of capital. In this respect, both Rolleston and Butler were fortunate, for a few years later the value of breeding sheep had fallen from 25*s.* to 2*s.* 6*d.*, and many runholders were ruined.

But it was not merely the prospects of material success that shed a rosy hue over the world, and filled those early days with the joy of living. Perhaps, as life has grown more complex and sophisticated, we have lost the secret of their happiness. Professor Sale, who has already been quoted, is emphatic that the explanation does not lie in the fact that the pioneers were young men intoxicated by youthful hopes and dreams.

> There was a simplicity (he says), a freshness and a raciness about those early times, notwithstanding some discomfort, that made life far more enjoyable then than it is now, or ever will be again.
>
> Of course it is easy to say that we were all forty years younger then, and that those who at the present time are forty years

younger than ourselves also find the same delight in their life that we experienced when we were young. But we were not all young in New Zealand forty years ago, and those who were old or middle-aged seemed at any rate to enjoy, and probably did enjoy life far more than any of us old or young enjoy it now.

The difference is mainly this, that in those days our life was simple and unpretentious. Now it is for the most part absurdly pretentious. In those days we were away in a remote and beautiful country unknown to, and unnoticed by the great world. ...Our Arcadian simplicity has vanished, and along with it all the poetry is gone out of our lives. Nothing but prose remains, and for good downright dull flat prose New Zealand town life is probably not to be surpassed in the world.[1]

No doubt the worthy Professor exaggerates to some extent; but no student of early pioneering life can remain unconscious of the contrast between the buoyant optimism of those early days and the air of disillusionment that is now so widespread even among the younger set.

However, enough has been said to show that Rolleston succeeded in his ambition of establishing himself in life in the new young country, and did it by "the hard work and steadiness" which he had imposed upon himself before he left England.

[1] *Press*, 8 March 1897.

Chapter III

ROLLESTON IN PROVINCIAL POLITICS

"There is so great a vitality in local self-government that in spite of all obstacles it cannot but do much good"—GISBORNE.

I

ONE day near the end of 1863, while Rolleston was working on his run at Mount Algidus, he was surprised to receive a visit from Mr Samuel Bealey, the Superintendent of Canterbury. He appealed to Rolleston to help him in his difficulties with the Provincial Council. He alleged that those members of the Council who had pledged themselves to support him as Superintendent had now deserted him and left him in the lurch. Rolleston seems to have been convinced that there had been an absence of fair play and justice and accordingly he forthwith joined the Executive as Provincial Secretary and Treasurer. This in effect meant that he became the head of the Government under Bealey as Superintendent. Bealey is described as having been "a scholar and a gentleman with a large income". He was, like Rolleston, a Cambridge graduate.[1] Rolleston's new duties kept him fully occupied and thenceforward his visits to his run became more and more infrequent. He was now almost by accident launched on his long public career in provincial and general politics.

II

People who are inclined to think that New Zealand is overgoverned at the present day should remind themselves

[1] A large proportion of the early leaders of Canterbury were University men. J. E. Fitzgerald, Samuel Bealey, C. C. Bowen, and (Sir) Joshua Williams were Cambridge graduates; E. W. Stafford, Crosbie Ward, and Judge Gresson were of Trinity College, Dublin; Bishop Harper and J. R. Godley were Oxonians.

William Rolleston before leaving England

of the astonishing fact that, at a time when our total population was less than one hundred thousand, we had one Central Parliament and six Provincial Parliaments. Indeed, at one stage, when three new provinces had been created, we had ten separate Governments all operating at the same time. These Provincial Councils, which were really Parliaments in miniature, had for many years a more real power and influence than the Central Government. They built all their own roads, bridges, and railways, they were entitled to the proceeds of all land sales, and they maintained their own educational system and their own Civil Service. At the same time, they were entitled by law to a share of the Customs Revenue received by the New Zealand Government, and they watched with a jealous eye every incursion by that Government into the domain of provincial affairs.

The reader may smile at the pomp and ceremony with which these little Parliaments were carried on.

Anthony Trollope, when he visited New Zealand in 1872, thought the Provincial Councils in many cases better housed than the State Legislators in the United States, and was struck by the way in which they had imitated the British House of Commons with a Speaker's Chair, Reporters' Gallery, Strangers' Galleries, a Bar of the House, Cross Benches, Library, Smokeroom, and a "Bellamy".[1]

In 1856 a paper, called *The Auckland New Zealander*, described the Provincial Governments as "puerile imitations of the petty sovereignties of the long-defunct heptarchy assuming a semi-monarchial style for the democratic office of Superintendent".

This apparent redundancy of political machinery was not due to any haphazard choice or local vanity. On the contrary, it was the result of long thought and talk by the Imperial Parliament, and of innumerable, closely reasoned despatches between Sir George Grey and Gladstone and

[1] Morrell, *The Provincial System of Government in New Zealand*, p. 81.

other British statesmen. Before a final plan was achieved many alternatives were discussed, sometimes tending towards municipal self-government and sometimes towards two Parliaments—one for the northern part of the North Island, and the other for Wellington and the South Island; but these alternatives were all laid aside for the elaborate scheme which actually operated from 1853 to 1876.

The real reason which rendered necessary the Provincial system was that the various New Zealand settlements were widely scattered and geographically isolated by mountain ranges and rapid and dangerous rivers. In addition to this, they appeared for a long time to have no real community of interests, and centralised government was virtually impossible.[1]

Under this system, as Sir George Grey said, "Every great city had its Parliament, in which men were trained in the knowledge of affairs, in the knowledge of legislation, a Parliament which bred up and educated the men who have governed you to this day". There is great force in this statement. Most of the public men who afterwards played a leading part in New Zealand politics or in professional or civic life had first served in provincial politics. Moreover, the Provincial Councils had a great educational value; the citizens were initiated into public questions which they could hear debated in their midst, and it was many years before the proceedings of the Central Parliament could arouse the same degree of interest.

III

During his brief period (December 1863–August 1865) as Provincial Secretary, Rolleston carried much responsibility, and, in the debates, he is often referred to as the Head of the Government. As Provincial Treasurer, he prepared

[1] In 1851, Canterbury had no news from Otago for over six months; in 1852, Nelson, which was only 150 miles from Wellington, was without news for three months. Morrell, pp. 13, 14.

and presented the financial statements of the Province to the Council, he controlled the important Department of Immigration, and he occasionally sat as a Justice of the Peace. The multifarious administrative tasks that fell to his lot provided him with valuable experience which, a few years later, was to serve him in good stead in the wider sphere of Parliament.

What astonishes the modern reader is the variety and magnitude of the tasks undertaken by the Provincial Council at a time when the whole population of Canterbury was no larger than a secondary town of the present day. In 1864, the total population was only 28,000, yet it found monies for a vigorous scheme of road construction, public works, harbour works, railways, and immigration. There was even a vote for defence "to provide modern ordnance", and volunteer corps flourished in and around Christchurch. At the same time the Lyttelton Tunnel was under construction, and even the Christchurch Cathedral was being boldly proceeded with.

To complete the bewilderment of the reader, it appears that, up to 1864, in spite of all these heavy undertakings, there was, as yet, imposed no direct taxation by way of Land or Income Tax. For Rolleston in his Budget, after indicating that the voluntary system of hospital maintenance was proving inadequate, says: "A new feature of revenue was rates. He was perfectly aware that there existed a natural repugnance to the introduction of taxation in the minds of most people, but there was no doubt that, sooner or later, there must be a system of taxation introduced into the Province."

This financial mystery of how so small a population could carry on so extensive a programme is partly solved if we remember that the proceeds of land sales belonged to the province within whose boundaries the land was sold. For, under the famous "Compact of 1856", the General Government had been forced to make this concession to the Provinces.

IV

It was during his first short tenure of office that Rolleston was entrusted with the responsible task of organising the machinery for the government of the West Coast goldfields, for at that time Westland was still part of Canterbury and did not achieve separation until 1868. The outbreak of the gold rush in Westland in 1864–65 differed in its environment from all other gold rushes in Australia, California, or Otago. These took place in wide and easily accessible country. But in the rush to Westland thousands of miners landed on a wild and practically uninhabited coast clothed in dense and impenetrable forest with no means of access to the interior except by a few rapid and dangerous rivers. Nevertheless, within a short space of time, a township sprang up at Hokitika, whose population rose to 16,000 in the first year and reached 50,000 by the end of 1866.

This sensational development imposed an immense task on the Provincial Council of Canterbury. For the West Coast was separated from the rest of the Provinces by the high range of the Southern Alps, over which no certain route had yet been decided on. The old route used by the Maoris and the early mining explorers was by a pass in North Canterbury (known later as Harper's Pass) at the head of the Hurunui River. But this was a very circuitous pass. Hence constant search was made for more direct means of access.

It was therefore necessary not merely to establish law and order in the large and picturesque mining population that had suddenly flooded the West Coast, but to lay out townships and decide on the best route over the Alps for mails and transport. Valuable preliminary work had already been carried out by Mr W. H. Revell. In January 1864 he had been despatched to act as Government Agent at the mouth of the Grey River. When the rush broke out at Hokitika, he marked out the business sections for that

township, and, on the proclamation of the goldfields, he was appointed Warden and Resident Magistrate.

But Mr Samuel Bealey, the Provincial Superintendent, recognised that more elaborate provision must be made for the good government of the goldfields. Accordingly, in the same month as Revell was appointed Warden, he commissioned Rolleston to proceed to Hokitika with full authority to organise the machinery of government.

Rolleston arrived at Hokitika on 19 March 1865, accompanied by Messrs W. Seed and W. H. Revell. I have no detailed record of his activities in this novel task, but he could not have had time to do much as, hard on his heels in the same month, came the man who was to take over the permanent duties of General Agent or Commissioner for the Provincial Council. This was Mr G. S. Sale, who had probably been recommended by Rolleston for the post. Sale has already been referred to in the preceding chapter. On the goldfields to which he was now appointed he was a sort of dictator. Owing to his great ability and outstanding force of character, he came to be known as "King Sale". It is said that, when any miner refused to accept his ruling or proved unduly turbulent, Sale would knock him down with his fists. On one occasion he disciplined the future Prime Minister, Richard John Seddon, who was then a publican at Kumara. Many years later, when these two strong characters met again, Seddon greeted him with: "Well, King Sale—we meet again."

The following letter from SIR JOHN HALL to ROLLESTON at Hokitika, dated 29 March 1865, gives further details of the steps then taken:

Our arrangements are nicely completed for sending you Sale. He will probably start next week. We do not, however, quite understand what you wish us to do with Revell when you suggest that Sale should be appointed Warden and Resident Magistrate for the West Coast. We cannot depose the existing functionary without good cause. We purpose, therefore, to appoint Sale to be

another Warden for the West Coast goldfields, and to obtain for him a Resident Magistrate's commission, leaving you to locate both Revell and Sale as you may think best, Sale's salary to be £500 and actual expenses. We shall also write a letter to him, asking him to act as General Agent or Commissioner for the Provincial Government on the West Coast, leaving you before you leave the Coast to give him such authority or authorities as you may think fit, and also to give instructions to all heads of departments there to consider Sale as the representative of the Provincial Government, and either to report and receive instructions and authority from him, or to send him copies of their reports, as you may deem fit.

...As to the road, you will see by the papers that young Dobson having failed to find one, we have sent him back with his father, not to return till he does find one. In the meantime, the Hurunui track has got into such a state that we have sent forty men to repair it. Fitzgerald talks about getting drays through from the Waimakariri to the Arahura, and of starting with Harman and Browning to find a road himself. I believe that a Waimakariri route of some kind will be found. Actually greater difficulties than we had anticipated have presented themselves. Several private exploring parties have gone up the Rakaia; you may hear of them before we do. You will find that, on Pender's requisition, we have authorised five more constables for the goldfields.

Rolleston's work in the Provincial Council must have impressed his colleagues with a realisation of his abilities as an administrator, for, while he was still absent on the West Coast, a movement was on foot in Christchurch to urge him to become a candidate for the high office of Superintendent of the Province, which had fallen vacant through the resignation of Mr Bealey. Sir John Hall, in the letter previously quoted, says that, at Fitzgerald's instigation, a meeting had been held as to the next Superintendent "as Moorhouse and his satellites were canvassing hard". At first four men had been suggested—Fitzgerald, J. D. Lance, Cox, and Hall. It was decided that Fitzgerald had no chance, and Hall declined, and finally Rolleston had

been chosen as a candidate by a large majority. Requisitions were being prepared. Rolleston declined this flattering proposal, and finally Mr J. D. Lance was selected to oppose Moorhouse.

It is worth referring for a moment to the election for Superintendent held in 1866, not merely because Rolleston might have been a candidate had he so desired, but because it illustrates very graphically the old method of election by open voting.[1] Lance was defeated. Moorhouse 1479 votes, Lance 742, Travers 176. And, in an undated letter to Rolleston, Lance says:

> It was a curious election. If our men had polled earlier, as we wanted them, we should have run Moorhouse pretty close; but he had such a strong lead at 12 o'clock that some two hundred of my men who came there after that walked away without voting at all. Fancy educated men doing that sort of thing! But the pot-house influence was too strong for us. We were weak in black-guards—a most important element in an election; we had a few, but not enough. Every doubtful vote, of course, went with the winning horse, and there were some half-dozen men of whom we could find no trace and at last returned them as missing. These beggars all turned up, and the dead rose from their graves and voted for Moorhouse.

In the middle of 1865, Rolleston laid aside his work in provincial politics to become Under-Secretary for Native Affairs. This new and important post occupied his energies till 1868. But it will be convenient to postpone consideration of his work in that office until we complete the story of his service in provincial politics as Superintendent of Canterbury from 1868 till the abolition of the Province in 1876.

[1] Alfred Saunders described it as the most highly organised and expensive contest for Superintendent ever held in Canterbury. See Saunders's *History*.

Chapter IV

ROLLESTON AS SUPERINTENDENT, 1868–76

"If the work of other Provinces had been as well done as that of Canterbury provincial institutions might have remained in existence to the present day"

SIR JOHN HALL, speech at Leeston, 7 March 1894.

I

IN 1868 Rolleston gave up his position as Under-Secretary of Native Affairs, and returned to Canterbury. He must have made up his mind to this course some twelve months previously, judging by the following letter:

DR JAMES TURNBULL (Christchurch) to ROLLESTON (Wellington), 26 February 1867:

I am surprised at your entertaining an idea of again settling here. The opinion is gradually gaining ground that the North Island is the proper spot nowadays. Native leases and native freeholds have an attraction.... At any rate, it is an idea that good things are only to be done in the North. But, for any sake, don't let anything I say influence your movements towards here. You will be very welcome when you do come. I do not think your old popularity is much to boast of with the mob. In fact, I cannot ever remember your ever having much in that line.

"Mob" is not now regarded as a polite term to apply to a democratic electorate—it has a taint of snobbishness and superiority. But this statement by Turnbull that Rolleston's popularity was "not much to boast of with the mob" is interesting, for, as we shall see later, while his local popularity was never sufficient to make his seat continuously safe in Parliament, his reputation as a public man was always rising in the eyes of the nation. Victor Hugo, in one of his novels, describes Louis Phillipe as "always popular

with the mob but never with the nation". The exact reverse of this seems to have been the case with Rolleston. It may be that he never sought popularity, and in later years he was accused of devoting himself too much to national affairs and neglecting his constituency. But the truth was that he had none of the showy arts of popular appeal, and even when he could have shown his electors that he had fought in the Cabinet against some decision that aroused public hostility, he remained silent and accepted the blame. Nevertheless, he attained something more valuable than mere popularity. As Superintendent of Canterbury he earned the confidence and admiration of the people, and came to be trusted as a safe pilot in a storm. This was a greater achievement than that of acting the easy part of a fair-weather leader.

II

The position of Superintendent of a Province was one of great responsibility. It was rendered difficult by the fact that, like the President of the United States of America, he had no seat in the Council. He could not therefore explain his proposals in person, and could communicate them only by message.

It is easy to appreciate the fact that, under this system, the Superintendent was apt to be thrown at times into conflict with his Council. Hence it is not surprising that Rolleston's papers show evidence of frequent quarrelling and bickering with his Council, and even with his executive. Rolleston made various proposals for improving the machinery of government so as to make it work more smoothly, but without success. "The Superintendent", says Morrell, "had a threefold leadership—he was the principal dignatory of the Province, he was the real as well as the executive head of the Government and performed important administrative functions, and he was its chief political leader."

III

It was on 22 May 1868, from the balcony of the quaint wooden building known as the old Christchurch Town Hall, that Rolleston was proposed as Superintendent. There was no other nomination, and he was accordingly declared elected. His predecessor, William Sefton Moorhouse, had resigned a few weeks before in the middle of his term on account of pressure of private affairs.

As Rolleston and Moorhouse were the two leading figures of that period in the provincial history of Canterbury, a brief comparison of their aims and methods will be some guide to the reader in forming a true picture of Rolleston.[1]

The fame of Moorhouse chiefly rests on his initiation of the Lyttelton Tunnel, which, with fine vision and tireless energy, he caused to be undertaken against strong opposition.

But the alarm with which his spectacular policies were viewed by old colonists is well seen in Sewell's Journal, 10 May 1863:

> We have frittered away our strength on these provincial loans, the effect of which locally is mischievous. They give an artificial stimulus to everything. This is the Moorhouse policy which has had such a run of luck that it has beguiled the whole country into following his example.[2]

Rolleston, on the other hand, was cautious, prudent, and steady, and, while his mind was full of constructive ideas, he was constantly on guard against extravagance and indiscriminate borrowing. In this respect, he was akin to men like Donald Reid, Atkinson, and Sir James Allen. Moorhouse, on the other hand, was always exuberant, spectacular, ultra-progressive, and a super-optimist. In his

[1] It is an interesting coincidence that three leading Canterbury statesmen—Rolleston, Moorhouse, and Sir John Hall—were all Yorkshire men.

[2] Quoted by Morrell, p. 127.

attitude towards public expenditure, he was the forerunner of Vogel, Macandrew, and Ward.

This division of public men, based on the degree of speed which they wished to be applied in public expenditure, is a handy guide to the student. It runs persistently through all our politics, both provincial and national. In fact, until party lines gradually emerged in later years, it is the only practical generalisation that is of service to us. Other means of classification, such as centralist versus provincialist, or freeholder versus leaseholder, have all been transitory and temporary, and ceased to have much meaning once the issue was settled. A public man who would be branded one day with one of these titles would at a later date find himself forced to compromise or change in order to gain some wider or more immediate objective. But the types I have mentioned—the men of the Moorhouse and Vogel type on the one hand and the men of the Rolleston and Atkinson type on the other—seem both to have been necessary at different times to fit the changing moods of the modern democracy, and both had their uses. Sometimes the pendulum swings towards the one and sometimes towards the other.

IV

Thus it was that, when Rolleston took office in 1868 as Superintendent, his accession was welcomed by many who believed that "his natural caution and steadiness would counteract the ultra-progressive policy of Moorhouse".[1] It was when prices fell and bad times came that the public turned to Rolleston as their leader. So well did he carry out his onerous task that, in 1870, the public re-elected him, and turned a deaf ear to Moorhouse who loudly proclaimed that he was "the friend of progress" and Rolleston "the friend of stagnation". Moorhouse urged the claim that has since grown so familiar, that "as we increase indebtedness,

[1] *Encyclopedia of New Zealand.*

we are certain to have a more than equally increased power of paying taxes". In like manner, Vogel said in 1870, "we shall be told that these proposals will impose on posterity an enormous burden, but they will give to posterity an enormous means out of which to meet them".[1] In Vogel's case this might have been true, if his ideas had been carried out in their entirety. But they were mutilated and mangled by the cupidity of the Provinces. Rolleston expressed his views very clearly in writing to Stafford on 20 July 1871: "I believe there is a common 'platform' on which yourself and others who really are in earnest may meet and effect much good. The two cries under which all political parties sooner or later range themselves are those of the prudent (slowgoing conservative so called by their opponents) and the speculative (calling themselves progressive, but otherwise called gamblers)."

The first session of the Provincial Council lasted only six days, 3 July to 9 July, as business was expedited to enable Rolleston and other Members of Parliament to attend a meeting of the General Assembly. There was a wrangle with the contractors for the Lyttelton-Christchurch Railway, in the course of which the contractors closed the tunnel until the Council agreed to a settlement of their claims.

While in Wellington attending Parliament in 1868, Rolleston had a serious illness, and the Provincial Council did not meet again until November.

E. C. STEVENS, Christchurch, to ROLLESTON, Wellington, 10 October 1868:

> We only heard on Friday that you were so ill. Report now says that you are out of danger and only weak, so it only remains to give praise wherever it may be due for your recovery. I have come to the conclusion that Wellington is a pestilential hole. The very water is suggestive of deadly poison while one is drinking it, and every street is a cess-pool. Everything—trade etc.—is

[1] Morrell, p. 180.

very depressed here now, but no worse than three months ago. In short, the place is well enough. The fact is simply that there are too many people doing business in almost everything. This fall in wool is very serious. Congratulate yourself on having sold your run. I have thought for nearly two years that wool would sink, and, should Germany or Prussia go to war with France, it would temporarily fall lower. I believe that the only thing to do in wool is to grow for exportation a high class of it; but I am convinced that we must do something towards utilising our own inferior wool in the Colony and so save exchange, freight, and expense. Blanket manufacture I have thought of.

This serious illness of Rolleston's delayed the calling together of the Council for some weeks. But when the opening took place, he urged the importance of obtaining immigrants. Parliament had just passed the Immigration Act 1868, enabling Provincial Councils to use land revenue for this object. "The present and future prosperity of the province", he said, "depend so largely upon the introduction of population and the supply of labour suited to the requirements of existing industries that I have no hesitation in recommending you to make liberal provision for this purpose."

I have already stated that, when Rolleston took office in 1868, financial stringency prevailed. Several special factors contributed to this in Canterbury, including the separation of the West Coast goldfields and the catastrophic fall in land revenue from £200,000 to about £50,000.[1] Hence, when Rolleston announced his policy as one of patient economy, active administration, and unflinching retrenchment, it was well received by the public as being more suited to the times than Moorhouse's ultra-expansionist policy.

But it would be wrong to assume that his policy was purely negative. He merely wished to avoid what he called speculative schemes, so that, by a steady course of economy, they might recover a measure of permanent prosperity.

[1] Morrell, p. 177.

He considered it reasonable, in spite of the depression, to carry on public works, and he urged the need for various public institutions, such as an orphan asylum, a museum, and other necessary works. During his eight years of office, he pushed on vigorously with roads and railways, and constructed bridges over the great rivers so as to give access to the south. In short, remarkable progress was made in developing the rich resources of Canterbury, settling the land, and providing for education, immigration, and the various public requirements of an expanding community.

When Parliament passed the Immigration and Public Works Act 1870, the Provinces were largely relieved of the duty of constructing railways and bringing in immigrants. The idea contained in this legislation was that the Provinces should be consulted as to what railways ought to be constructed and immigrants brought into each province at the request of its Superintendent. Rolleston took a friendly view of this new move by the Central Government, and he anticipated that the construction of railways and the increase in population would have most beneficial effects on the commercial prosperity of the Province. Nevertheless, he apprehended that the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in Europe might cause the Government to postpone railway construction, and he therefore decided to push on the railways out of provincial funds which could be recouped by the Central Government later on.

V

At an early date, Rolleston saw clearly that the Provincial system would soon require modification. In his first year of office he suggested that the Council should discuss "what constitutional changes you may consider desirable or which there is reason to believe are contemplated by the general Government". The next year he urged that the machinery created in more prosperous times had outgrown the neces-

sities of government now that its legislative powers had been curtailed and many functions transferred to municipalities and road boards. They should not wait for reform to be forced on them from without.

The fact is that the Provincial system was now being threatened externally by the growing power of the General Government and internally by outlying districts within each Province which were dissatisfied with their representation.

In all the work of the Province Rolleston took a deep pride. Indeed, in many respects, his career in provincial politics was the most interesting, satisfactory, and successful of his whole public life. The depression which existed at the time when he took office soon lifted, and the confidence inspired by his careful handling of affairs enhanced his reputation. By 1870 his finances were flourishing, and both land revenue and ordinary revenue exceeded the estimates. In fact, he was now able to charge his education vote to ordinary revenue instead of land revenue. Moreover, local industries were springing up. The process of meat-preserving proved a great boon to farmers by providing a certain market for surplus stock. The grain industry was expanding, and flax export was under trial. How successful his railway policy had been is shown by the fact that working expenses for the year amounted to only 58 per cent of the gross revenue on a total capital of £611,000, and the net profit, after a contribution of 5 per cent to the Renewal Fund, was over 3 per cent of the total capital. In comparing these admirable results with present-day figures for the whole Dominion, we must allow for the low construction cost per mile on the open and level plains of Canterbury, except for the lengthy bridges over wide river beds.

VI

Sir John Hall once declared that Rolleston combined in his administration all the virtues of all the preceding Superintendents. At any rate, the conspicuous success which attended his efforts as Superintendent makes a pleasing picture. But his long term of office was not one of unalloyed triumph, and there were two things that marred his happiness. One was that each year quarrels and conflict with his Council became more and more frequent and serious. On more than one occasion his executive resigned, and left him to carry on the Government. We have already seen that these conflicts were almost inevitable under the peculiar system whereby the Superintendent had no means of personally defending his views in the Council meetings, and the same discord occurred in other Provinces. Rolleston tried to improve the machinery of government. He urged that the Superintendent should have frequent conferences with committees of the Council, or that legislation should be obtained to give him a seat in the Council. He sought for more direct and unfettered responsibility to the Council. But nothing came of these suggestions. No doubt these quarrels might have been avoided had Rolleston chosen to regard himself as a figurehead, and left his executive to construct the policy and carry out the administration. But he claimed, with good reason, that under the constitution the task of governing the Province was entrusted to the Superintendent, and that the function of the Council and the executive was merely to furnish advice and assistance. In fact, he expressly stated that he refused to be a mere cypher.

A study of these long-forgotten disputes would probably lead to the conclusion that Rolleston was unduly fastidious and sensitive. His later career in Parliament confirms this view. Sometimes trifling misunderstandings expand into quarrels that seem ludicrous in retrospect. For example,

when the Governor visited the Christchurch Races in 1873, Rolleston entertained him at lunch. His executive objected to the cost, not on the ground that it was excessive, but because it had not been authorised by them. In reply to which complaint Rolleston transmitted a formal memorandum gravely pointing out, first, that, as head of the executive, he had not called the Cabinet meeting at which the expenditure was objected to and the Cabinet had not conferred with him; secondly, that, on every previous occasion when a Governor had visited the Races, such expenditure had been authorised. He agreed with his executive that it would be better if the Jockey Club did the entertaining, "but, unless the country make over the course to them and enable them to charge for entrance so as to cover all expenses, they cannot fairly be expected to make such payments". Thirdly, that he had an understanding with the executive that any usual or necessary expense for His Excellency's visit would be concurred in. Fourthly, that he invited no one but the Governor's party, among whom Ministers must be reckoned. "I was asked by a member of the Jockey Club what places should be reserved, and I counted up the number and told him. The places were accordingly reserved, and the party went in at the proper time." All this seems a storm in a tea-cup, and perhaps if the executive had also been asked to the lunch they might have acquiesced in the cost.

But usually the disputes were more serious and protracted. One which caused Rolleston much vexation and distress occurred over a claim by the Bank of New Zealand over charges for interest and commission on financial transactions with London. Rolleston, after taking the advice of the Attorney-General and the Provincial Solicitor and with the concurrence of his executive, decided to sue for a refund of the amounts deducted. But, meanwhile, a new Council was elected which, after full inquiry, dissented from his views, and decided to resort to arbitration. Relations

between Rolleston and his Council became highly strained. In the course of long correspondence, the executive declared that Rolleston was striking at the root of responsible government. He tartly replied that, if they desired to follow that system, they should give him the opportunity of having advice from other members—which was an oblique way of saying they should resign. Finally, the claim was compromised, but how deeply Rolleston resented the disavowal of his action appears from some of his letters.

ROLLESTON to GILLIES, 4 February 1871:

I am still standing between the Province and the blackguard attempt to plunder it by the Bank of New Zealand, and also preventing other little jobs, and the effort of Canterbury members on whose toes I have trodden will be to make the Superintendent the creature of their Councils. I can imagine no worse evil. The Bank here would have its own nominee in the most important positions. I wish you would write and tell me what you think of these things. Unless the thinking and decent men are prepared to work together against the unthinking and indecent men next session, we may write Ichabod on the Colony.

My executive have just given me formal advice to carry out the resolution of the Provincial Council about the Bank of New Zealand claim. I have asked them for reasons, which they won't give. I am going to refuse. So I am in for a good fight. Pray for me that my strength fail not.

It is difficult at this distant date and without a full knowledge of the acts to know what lay behind Rolleston's intense hostility to the settlement of the Bank's claim. Nor would it be profitable for the reader to have set out for him the lengthy statements and correspondence recorded in the proceedings of the Council. Rolleston may have had knowledge of some scandal that does not appear in the papers. What is more likely is that he had not fully recovered from the serious illness that had left him irritable and more sensitive than usual. There must have been some such reason to explain the fact that such eminent men as J. S. Williams (afterwards the famous Sir Joshua Williams,

P.C.), who was then on the Provincial Council, took the opposite view to Rolleston.

To add to Rolleston's vexation, the Council voted a sum of £5000 (later reduced to £2500) as a grant to Moorhouse, and only £500 to the widow of Selfe who had given splendid service to the Province as its agent in London. This latter grant Rolleston considered entirely inadequate.

These details are necessary to explain the following extracts from a letter written by ROLLESTON to FITZGERALD on 4 December 1870:

I think it was Lord Palmerston who said he did not care for men who supported him when he was right; what he wanted was men who would vote for him when he was wrong. Your kind letter was accordingly all the more welcome that you don't altogether agree with me. On this point, however, I console myself with the thought that you don't know all.

First, with regard to Mr Selfe's death, I had intended to write to you about it, but I felt that I could not express myself in any way that would not be likely to fall far short of your feelings, and that "words weaker than your grief would make grief worse". Moreover, even in this matter, I have been horribly annoyed, and have been endeavouring to lose every thought but that of satisfaction that our friend has been spared much that would have annoyed him even in his connection with us, and that it is well that he should have passed from this wretched strife of tongues "to where beyond these voices there is peace" before his enthusiasm had been damaged by the change which is coming over all that we had here so hopefully worked for.

It is cruel to think that the public notice of him should amount to little more than an incorrect statement of his relationship to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that in Jollie's case it should content itself with a statement that he "introduced hops and had a model farm at some place in Nelson". I do not compare the two men, but in both "Justitiae soror incorrupta fides nudaque veritas" [uncorrupted good faith, the sister of justice, and downright truth] were conspicuous, and they wrought and fought for what they thought best for the Colony with an earnestness of purpose which was only rendered less effective in Jollie's

case by the absence of the enthusiasm and ability which belonged to the other.

The Government (i.e. the Provincial Executive) bought the House with this job and the arbitration job (Bank of New Zealand claim). They lent themselves to gross misrepresentation of an absent man who had no one to represent him, in order to obtain a political victory, and violated every principle which guides men in their ordinary intercourse as gentlemen, branding with the crime of indiscretion the two men who, knowing the facts, would not sit still and allow them to imply and state untruths to my prejudice.... However, the people are with me, and, on two public occasions since, have taken occasion to show this very demonstratively. As to my future course, you seem to think I have given way. I have not, and, what is more, don't intend. The Bank case will not go to arbitration. The wages of iniquity will be paid to Moorhouse and by him to his creditors. This I cannot help now, but I don't feel happy about it. I doubted about vetoing it and was damned. How horribly one suffers for these sins of weakness.

So difficult did his position become that in some letters he talks of quitting New Zealand and going to New Guinea. Evidently Fitzgerald had encouraged him in this idea, but Rolleston replies:

With regard to taking refuge elsewhere, I am not prepared to give in now I am in for a fight tho' I feel I may be driven into a corner any day, in which case I should like to go in for carrying out the old idea we had talked of. I have just had £600 left me, and I suppose in bad times my property here would realise about £3000–£4000. I don't like either encouraging you in isolating yourself. You are exercising your sane influence for good more than you can have any idea of yourself. What I might do a few months hence I don't know, but, if you have made up your mind, of course you must make up your party immediately. I am grateful to you for thinking of me.

VII

The rights and wrongs of these old quarrels are no longer of interest. But some reference to them has been necessary for the light they throw on Rolleston's character. His

anxious solicitude to do the right thing was interpreted by his admirers as the attitude of a firm and upright man, and by his enemies as due to an aloofness and obstinacy that exasperated them. One of his deepest disappointments occurred in 1875 when the Council passed an Education Ordinance running counter to his most cherished ideas on sound principles of education. But his views on this and other questions must be reserved for later chapters.

Of the general success of his policy as Superintendent there can be no question. During his eight years of office his candidature was only once challenged, and on that occasion his opponent was Moorhouse, whom he handsomely defeated. The policy he laid down when he assumed office was rigorously adhered to. He reformed the railway management; he cut down administrative expenses; he imposed strict economy and discipline in all departments, and at one stage reduced his own salary from £1500 to £800.

When he was elected unopposed in 1874 his proposer, Mr R. J. S. Harman, drew a striking contrast between the state of affairs when he first assumed office and those existing when he entered on his last term. Harman said that, by his economy and close retrenchment, he had put the Province in "a hard fighting condition". Prosperity and indeed great affluence had now come upon them. His careful proposals and active administration of a wise immigration policy had produced magnificent results, and indeed the Canterbury regulations for immigration had been copied by the General Government.

In spite of all the conflicts and disappointments of his life as Superintendent, Rolleston must have been gratified at the public recognition of his work by the people of Canterbury when the Provinces were abolished in 1876. On Anniversary Day a great fête was held in Latimer Square, and, in the presence of 12,000 people, Rolleston was presented with a gift of plate and money valued at

£800. He was described as the man who had watched over much of the progress of Canterbury "with the breadth of view of a statesman and the fidelity of a patriot". The *Lyttelton Times* said: "The educational system of Canterbury, the records of the Native Office, and the history of the Legislatures, General and Provincial, bear ample testimony to his great industry, his skill in administration, his zeal for the public service and the store of information and thinking power that he brought to it."

Chapter V

EARLY PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION

"I look back on the share I had in promoting a national system of education with more pride than on any other part of my public life"
ROLLESTON.

I

IN his Provincial days, Rolleston constantly preached that three things were necessary to create a happy social order, namely, close land settlement, a flow of well-selected immigrants, and a sound system of education. He thought if these three tasks were well carried out the State had fairly done its duty and the citizen was reasonably equipped for the battle of life.

His first public activity was in the sphere of education. In 1863 he was appointed as member of a Commission to investigate the condition of education in Canterbury. The other Commissioners were H. J. Tancred (Chairman), Dr Lillie (of the Presbyterian Church), and Mr Saunders (of the Wesleyan Church). At that time the control of education was in the hands of the religious denominations. The reason for this was that the first settlers looked to the churches to carry on the schools as they had done under the parish system in the Old Country. Hence, under the first Education Ordinance of 1857, funds were paid to the churches—£1100 to the Anglicans, £250 to the Wesleyans, and £250 to the Presbyterians. Before that, temporary appropriations had been made "until experience should have shown what might be devised as most appropriate to the conditions of the Province".

As these church schools charged fees and taught religion, we may say the system was neither free nor secular, and

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probably not very compulsory. In fact, on all points, it was the reverse of our present system.

The members of the Education Commission of 1863 visited the various schools scattered through the Province. Rolleston, as the youngest member, was allotted all the roughest travelling. In his old age he still recalled his toilsome journey to various parts of Banks Peninsula.

The Commissioners recommended great changes, which were quickly adopted. An Education Board was established to which the Commissioners were appointed to take the place of the churches. Education districts and school committees were soon created. Tancred and Rolleston prepared and passed the legislation through the Provincial Council—without abolishing denominational schools the legislation fostered the establishment of national schools.

Under the proposals of the Report, the teachers were not called on to give religious instruction further than that the schools were to be opened daily with prayer and Bible reading. If any denominational instruction were given, it was to be by approved ministers under special arrangements. "The Education Board", said the Commission, "should be, in short, an administrator, so to speak, of temporalities, not a director of consciences."

In later years further changes were made, but the three main steps in the system may be summarised as follows:

(1) Church control.

(2) State control with uncontroversial religious teaching.

(3) State control with no religious instruction except in so far as the committees allowed the use of the school rooms.[1]

Rolleston gave high praise to Tancred. "He was second to none", he said, "of New Zealand's public men in learning, knowledge of literature, and administrative capacity.... He showed the same soundness of judgment

[1] Education in Canterbury by Rolleston, *Press*, 15 December 1900.

as in every other office which he filled in the Provincial Council, in the General Assembly, and in the Senate of the University, apparently without effort and with no superficial display. Serving under him was my first introduction to public life."

II

By these means was taken the first step in Canterbury towards the fostering of our national system of education. But in 1875, shortly before the abolition of the Provinces, the Provincial Council, on the plea of economy, set back the clock. They abolished the Education Board, and increased school fees and taxation for educational purposes.

Rolleston vigorously protested against this reactionary step. In a long message to the Council he urged that the objects to be kept in view were:

First, continuity of administration unaffected by political changes but closely connected with the Government of the country.

Secondly, a certainty in the financial arrangements which should render the system as little as possible subject to alternations of parsimony and extravagance. Dependence on a fluctuating revenue from the sale or lease of Crown Lands must sooner or later lead to an enforced economy very prejudicial to education. "The stoppage of a road or bridge", said Rolleston, "may only temporarily stay the progress of a district, but you cannot neglect or impede the progress of education and take it up subsequently at the point of hindrance in the same condition as it was previously. Not to go forward is to go backward."

Thirdly, he urged that "our best policy would be to make education free in all Government schools, and such a result is but a corollary upon the adoption of any responsibility by the State in the matter".

It was this need for adequate and permanent finance and the inability of the rest of the Colony to create educational

reserves on the Canterbury model that helped to bring about the abolition of the Provinces and Bowen's Education Act of 1877. Rolleston described that Act as "a monument of industry in its compilation and of judgment and tact on the part of Bowen in steering its course through the Legislature". Bowen had been Chairman of the Canterbury Education Board, and, in framing his Education Act, he drew largely on his experience in working the Provincial system.

III

Before the establishment of a training school for teachers in 1872, Rolleston arranged with Lord Lyttelton and Mr Selfe to select teachers in England with a view to maintaining a high standard. One of those selected was Mr H. Hill, who later became a school inspector in Hawkes Bay. Rolleston's letters to Mr Hill discuss many educational problems, but his most constant cry, even as late as 1884, is against false economy.

ROLLESTON to HILL, 17 May 1884:

As to the educational system generally, what is coming? Are the propertied classes going to combine with the churches—the former to save their pockets, the latter in the vain idea that they will increase their power and importance—to pull down the national system? I hope the people will not be led away under the influence of temporary pecuniary difficulties, or at the instance of any class of politicians or financiers to abandon what they have built up at so much cost of "toil of heart and knees and hands".

He goes on to argue that education must be maintained out of the General Fund in the same way as the Army, Navy, and Police. At all costs education must be kept efficient.

IV

In University education, the part played by Rolleston has been fully recorded by various writers.[1]

[1] G. E. Thompson, *History of the Otago University*, and J. C. Beaglehole, *History of the New Zealand University*.

At the time when he was invited by the Prime Minister to become a member of the first University Senate, Rolleston evidently had good grounds to question the financial integrity of some of his proposed colleagues. For, after some inquiries, he sent the following startling and almost blasphemous reply to the Prime Minister: "Let this cup pass from me—why should I be hanged between two thieves?" However, the matter was smoothed over, and Rolleston became one of the most useful members of the Senate.

It is a curious fact that, while Canterbury in its early days had in her midst a large number of graduates from British Universities, it was in the Scotch settlement of Otago that a University was first established.

The Otago Provincial Council in 1869 passed the University of Otago Ordinance, and created endowments to supplement the funds set aside by the Presbyterian Church for the same purpose.

This practical action by Otago forced the hand of Parliament, which had been for some years debating the problem of higher education. A storm of controversy arose, and, in the long debates that ensued, Rolleston and other men who had been trained in English Universities denounced the creation of the Otago University root and branch. "To them a University was purely an examining degree-giving body under which were ranked training colleges." At an earlier date, they had argued that New Zealand was not yet ripe for a University. They had favoured a system of granting scholarships to New Zealand students to be held in English Universities. When legislation created a New Zealand University, it provided for amalgamation with the existing University in Otago. But lengthy negotiations proved futile, and, in the final result, the New Zealand University was created as a purely examining body on the lines urged by Rolleston and his colleagues, and the Otago University became one of its affiliated colleges.

It was owing to Rolleston's enthusiasm for education that many rich endowments were set aside by the Provincial Council for the maintenance of primary and secondary education. His name is closely associated with Canterbury College, the School of Agriculture, the Library, the Technical School of Science and the Museum. It was he who caused to be engraved over the entrance to the Museum the words: "Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him?"

All through his career Rolleston was frequently called on to speak on educational questions and in his speeches he dealt with every aspect of the subject. Sometimes he emphasised the need for technical training and showed a remarkable knowledge of all that was being done in other countries. At other times he dwelt on the great value of the Classics. For example, at the Jubilee of Christ College he said:

> There are two great books without a knowledge of which the rising generation will be very different from their fathers—the one is Homer and the other the Psalms of David. I think these two books are typical of the classical education which I hope will always prevail in Christ College. The time is coming when the public will realise that it is monstrous that people should grow up without the equipment furnished by a knowledge of Latin and Greek.

V

Enough has been said to show that Rolleston was one of the pioneers in bringing about our present system of free, secular, and compulsory education.

To conclude this chapter, I will quote extracts from a remarkable letter written by Sir Frederick Weld, a former Prime Minister, in which he sets out his views on education. Weld came of an old English Roman Catholic family, and his views are naturally coloured by this circumstance.

SIR FREDERICK WELD (Government House, Tasmania) to ROLLESTON, 24 July 1875:

I quite go with you in thinking that railroads and national prosperity are not the main things in a nation's life, though they are valuable accessories. My opinion of the highest national life is public spirit, patriotism, self-sacrifice, justice—all that can raise mankind in this world and prepare it for the next. The union of the State with true religious principle; the Statesman and the Churchman walking hand in hand and not interfering with each other's province. This was the ideal of the Christian brotherhood of nations rudely shattered by the Reformation. This was the ideal of Alfred the Great and Charlemagne and of the greatest Popes and of such men as St Thomas Aquinas and St Bonaventura, whose wonderful intellects seem to have solved so many problems that are still disputed over by those who scorn to refer to any but 18th century lights, and reverence only the infallibility of doubt, uncertainty, and their own crude theories.

Now you would remedy this by "Education". So would I, but my education would not mean teaching the mass of the people to read and write (good things in themselves) and a smattering of "ologies", which is the very most that the people as a mass can be possibly taught; but in civilising them and making them know that there is something higher than money and worldly advancement, making them good Christians with a knowledge of their duty to God and to the State as constituted by God, and a sense that the dignity and happiness of man is not to be measured by wealth and position, but by fulfilling duties, respecting superiors, equals and inferiors—as being placed in their respective positions by God—as being part of the order He has established—as all being equal in His eyes—as being, if they worthily fulfil their duty in this world from proper motives, all alike called to a reward in that world in which a poor beggar's state may be greater than that of "Solomon in all his glory".

You will never do this by dissociating religion from education, or by any State panacea—no secular education can properly do it—no theoretical moral axioms can do it—only faith can. It is quite true that my ideal—the Christian Catholic ideal—is impossible at this moment. We must accept facts, and, accepting them honestly and loyally, work out the best honest compromise

we can. But bureaucratic secular education is to my mind not at all the best compromise. It handicaps the religion of the majority for the benefit of the doubters, the irreligious, and the unbelievers—the minority, I hope.

The family is the basis of society and the State. By the law of divorce and repudiation of marriage as a sacrament, and by ignoring the authority of the parents in education and confounding instruction with education, States are uprooting day by day the very foundations on which they rest. Surely men must be blind who look around and do not see this.

Sir Frederick Weld goes on in words that might have been written to-day instead of in 1875:

> Europe applauds the spoliation of the Pope, that is the attempted deposition of the representative of moral power—it condemns his utterances unread or misconstrued, utterances which are really the exponents of the principles of moral power. Treaties and guarantees are logically enough of no value, and millions and millions of armed men—Europe converted into a barrack of slaves torn from their families—attest the triumph of modern "civilisation" and the substitution of might for right, of doctrinaire theories for Christianity. . . . Can anybody believe that State schools and teachers, machines with colourless souls, will remedy this?

Chapter VI

PROVINCIAL DAYS—IMMIGRATION AND LAND SETTLEMENT

"Land settlement and the creation of home life is at the root of the future prosperity of this country"—ROLLESTON.

I

EVERYONE admits that New Zealand is still seriously under-populated. Moreover, in some parts of the country the rural population is actually diminishing, and there is a steady drift to the town. This may be partly explained by the fact that farm labour is being replaced by modern machinery; but there are other causes, and the trend towards urban life is world-wide. Hence the prospects of rapid expansion of rural population are negligible, even if such expansion took the form of peasant farmers who would accept a lower standard of living than at present obtains.

When we turn to the industrial population, the sources of supply of skilled labour are more restricted than is popularly supposed. And so long as there remains any substantial body of unemployed workers the problem of any large-scale importation of migrants remains politically thorny and difficult.

If, however, the time ever comes when New Zealand can resume a vigorous policy of immigration, her rulers might well pay regard to the principles and policy laid down by Rolleston.

II

Both in his Provincial days, and later as a Minister of the Crown, Rolleston constantly urged the importance of a vigorous and well-regulated system of immigration. Land

settlement—education—immigration—these three items were for many years the cardinal principles of his policy. In some respects, his problem was simpler than that of the modern administrator. In his day there was more land awaiting settlement, and there were more people anxious to migrate. But, on the other hand, transport facilities were more primitive, our export trade in primary products was still in the struggling stage of development, and our manufactures were almost negligible.

Hence Rolleston realised the dangers of indiscriminate importation of large masses of people. He saw clearly that the migrants must be carefully selected, that constant vigilance must be exercised to see that the shipping accommodation was adequate, that on the long voyage the matrons, doctors and other officials must keep a watchful eye on the health and morals of young and old, and that, after their arrival, the immigrants must be housed and cared for until they were settled on the land or in other occupations.

"Colonisation", he said, "is not the importation of labour to make roads and bridges, but the creation of a united people bound together by personal ties and by the love of the same laws and institutions." Merely to pour immigrants into the towns in large numbers, with no provision for their welfare, would inevitably lead to evil consequences.

In spite of the utmost precautions, there were occasional lapses and failures. But that has been true at every period of large-scale migration. The letters of the English Agent of the Canterbury Provincial Government (and at a later stage the letters of the Agent-General) show with what ingenuity chronic invalids or bad characters sometimes managed to evade the regulations as to health and character.

Also on the long voyage to New Zealand scandals occurred in spite of the strictest regulations. "Please note", says Rolleston on one occasion, "that there were millions

of lice on the people who came by the ship S——. Some of the girls were not virgines sanctae, but on the whole they were a wonderfully good lot."

Rolleston took a deep personal interest in the welfare of the immigrants, visited their ships, minutely inspected their accommodation and their diet, and took vigorous action to remedy deficiencies.

III

He made so great a success of his Provincial immigration policy that he came to be regarded as an expert. Indeed, when at a later date the General Government took up the question, it adopted wholesale his regulations and methods. He told Dr Featherston he was somewhat mortified that the Government made no recognition or acknowledgment of the fact that they had copied Canterbury methods.

In 1868 Parliament had authorised the Provincial Councils to use part of their land revenue for immigration. Rolleston eagerly availed himself of this power. "The present and future prosperity of the Province", he said to his Council, "so largely depends on the introduction of population and a supply of labour suited to the requirements of existing industries that I have no hesitation in urging you to make liberal provision for this purpose."

Two years later he declared that nothing but stagnation could result from neglecting our duty to promote immigration. His next step was to urge the Government to allow free passages to immigrants nominated by their friends. There was no response by the General Government, so he initiated the plan himself.

The Immigration and Public Works Act 1870 largely relieved the Provinces of the duty of constructing railways and bringing in immigrants. Rolleston foresaw that, if this Act was wisely administered, it would have most beneficial effects in reviving commercial prosperity. In his view it was by this means, and this means alone, that the great and

growing burden of the public debt could be made tolerable. He was therefore well pleased when, for example, in 1874 no less than twenty-six immigrant ships came to Lyttelton, containing ten thousand and ninety immigrants to Canterbury. Owing to his fine organisation, these were all readily absorbed.

But he warned the Government that a large influx of immigrants might lead to a reduction of wages. Therefore the utmost caution should be exercised in selecting immigrants and looking after their welfare after arrival. He complained that Vogel's policy ignored these precautions. Hordes of unskilled labourers were imported without any plan for their permanent absorption.

> We have a lot of unemployed (he wrote), the result of Vogel's order to Featherston to send ten thousand immigrants at once. The difficulty is increased by the selfish, niggardly determination of the large landholders to have no married people and no cottages, and by their refusing accommodation to swaggers.
>
> However, another halfpenny on the property tax will liven them up, though this of course works another way in deterring capital. Go to! ye rich men, and howl, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. What shall it profit?

Both in Provincial days and when he was a Minister in the 'eighties, he was pestered by people who wanted a free trip to England on the plea that they would secure many immigrants by lecturing and canvassing. It usually ended by their expenses far exceeding the allocation. This led to criticism in Parliament, and Rolleston found it wise to leave the selection to the Agent-General. The latter complained of one self-appointed agent's mischievous interference, and Rolleston, with biting sarcasm, replied: "He is a tortuous, scheming little creature, but, since he affects the society of dukes, earls, and princes, it is blasphemy to speak ill of him."

Again, on 18 April 1882, he wrote to his brother, the Reverend Robert Rolleston:

There is a fossicking, ferreting kind of fellow here called P— come from your part of the world. I have supplied him with no end of information, but I don't intend to entrust him with the task of speaking for the government. These lecturing people sacrifice truth to effect, unintentionally but none the less mischievously. Real agricultural labourers are the only people who must get on. I mean men who can plough, use ordinary agricultural implements and be generally handy. Families with girls in them who are certain of high wages need have no fear, but any of your neer-do-wells are sure to do worse here. I should be glad to see any Church movement which brought out people with a common bond maintaining the reverence which is much destroyed by the freedom and licence of a new country.

IV

After the collapse of the Vogel boom, immigration was in abeyance for some years. But it was renewed in a modified degree in 1882, while Rolleston was Minister of Immigration. He aimed to bring in about five thousand nominated immigrants a year. The modern housewife, in constant despair over her inability to get domestic help, will be tantalised to learn that each year one thousand girls selected for this purpose were included in the list of assisted immigrants. But the picture is not so rosy as might be supposed. These girls were not the highly trained and qualified servants that the housewife dreams of, but they were the best New Zealand could hope to get in competition with nearer countries, like Canada and America. They were drawn from the very poorest homes. Sir Dillon Bell, the Agent-General, was filled with pity and dismay at their condition:

I don't suppose (he wrote to Rolleston privately) you ever saw an arrival day of a cargo of men, women, and children assembled for a ship. Some of them swarm with vermin, and have never known what it is to be without lice in their life. Others come with itch from head to foot. Others smelling of every conceivable ordure. Don't imagine for a moment that these things

are contracted in the depot. They are brought there. It is at times horrible beyond words. On the whole the wonder is that there is not much more serious trouble in the shape of large numbers of girls who are anything but sanctae virgines, poor things.

Sir Dillon Bell fought hard to improve the system. He made a deep study of the problem, and, although he was overwhelmed with office duties, he frequently visited the embarkation depots, wrangled with ships' captains, doctors and matrons, and promoted many reforms. But even so, the whole thing was a nightmare to his kindly soul. After one visit to a depot where the ship had been delayed, he says:

> The people are there without guide—strangers, ignorant and voiceless. The "use and wont" of the depot and the shipping work and worry make even good officers rough with them. A kind word, on the contrary, goes far; they are so unused to it! They swarm round you if you will only let them think you have the least human regard for them. Their lives in their own hovels are so dreadful and so hard. Then all the sympathy of women's societies etc. seems always to be for the fallen. No one seems to care for the girls who are good and want to keep so. Modesty, of course, in the sense you and I use the word, you can hardly look for; but decent regard for themselves is plain, only it is so hard for them to realise that any sympathy can be felt for them by the classes that are above them in the world.

He advocated that all the Colonies should unite to form a depot of their own, under proper management, with reading rooms and proper arrangements for the care and comfort of the women, girls, and children. Rolleston agreed with him that the state of things was horrible, and between them they did much to improve it.

The extracts quoted above show how fallacious it is to suppose that, in the 'eighties, there were thousands of healthy, rosy-faced, highly trained immigrants eagerly waiting to embark for New Zealand. On the contrary, many of them were half-starved, poor, and miserable. But on the voyage, as Bell says, "they waxed fat and lusty",

and in the healthy environment of New Zealand life they rapidly gained their self-respect and independence. In short, they became admirable citizens, and their descendants were among those who helped to save the Empire in its hour of trial.

It is not necessary to give a detailed history of immigration. Enough has been said to show how much New Zealand owes to Rolleston for his wise administration of a vigorous flow of immigrants. Perhaps if his policy were revived to-day with the same precautions as he observed, New Zealand might make progress in solving one of her most urgent problems.

V

The foregoing has dealt with Rolleston's general views on immigration. I will conclude it by inserting an interesting letter with regard to immigrants from Alfred Domett, who was Prime Minister in 1863. He was the original of Browning's "Waring", and his poem "Ranolf and Amohia" was described by Browning as "a great and astonishing performance of very varied beauty and power. I rank it", he said, "under nothing that has appeared in my day and generation for subtle yet clear writing about subjects of all others the most urgent for expression and the least easy in treatment." Tennyson gave it similar praise. The letter is interesting for its reference to Browning and his wife, and the early association of Domett and Rolleston in Native affairs.

25 Upper Phillimore Place,
Kensington, London, W.
26th June, 1873.

My dear Rolleston,

I have been requested by Robert Browning (the poet) to give a letter or two that might possibly be useful to a married couple about to migrate to New Zealand (Canterbury), in whom he is much interested.

The husband, *Henry James Chapman*, is "a smith—a fitter—whatever that may be" (I quote Browning), who wants to get work on the railways. Browning says he "has the highest character for sobriety and industry".

The wife, *Helen Chapman*, was a servant of "Arabel Barrett", sister of Mrs E. Barrett Browning (the poetess), who wishes to get employment "as cook, housekeeper, or what not"—(Browning again). He says he knows her to be "of absolute honesty, conscientiousness, with every talent requisite for ordinary employment—and really superior education".

I am convinced you may rely on Browning's sincerity in his recommendation of these good people, and therefore I do not hesitate to ask you as a favour to me to do what you can to put them in a way of getting their livelihood in Canterbury, or elsewhere in New Zealand should they not stay in your province. I have not seen Canterbury papers lately to be certain whether or not you are still Superintendent—but whether or *not*, I am sure your good work and position would be amply sufficient in influence to secure the accomplishment of their *reasonable* wishes for employment....

I always have a pleasant reminiscence of the days when we two used to do public business together, or *concurrently* at all events, in connection with the "Hairybogines" (aborigines)—and, I think, found ourselves almost always coinciding in opinion, both theoretically and practically.

With all kinds of good wishes—

Believe me,

Yours ever sincerely,

ALFRED DOMETT.

HON. W. ROLLESTON, ESQR.

VI

LAND SETTLEMENT

It was not until Rolleston became Minister of Lands in 1879 that he began to concern himself with forms of land tenure, and thereby raised a storm of controversy which did not die down for nearly a quarter of a century. But

during his Provincial days he was chiefly engaged in seeking to prevent land aggregation and land monopoly. Two different problems arose, one relating to the land within the Canterbury block originally granted to the Canterbury Association (the Canterbury block ran from the Waipara to the Ashburton—the Province of Canterbury from the Hurunui to the Waitaki), and the other regarding the pastoral lands within the Province but outside this block. Within the Canterbury block the price of land had been fixed under the Wakefield Scheme at £3 an acre, but after the Provincial Council was constituted, it reduced this "sufficient" price to £2 an acre. At a later date, suggestions were made for still further reducing this price, but this proposal did not meet with favour. Rolleston was always opposed to any reduction because of his view that such a course would play into the hands of large capitalists. He pleaded that the land was "a sacred heritage", and that the large landowners should be kept out "as the glory of Canterbury is its working population". The lands of the Canterbury block were therefore disposed of on this basis.

Mr W. P. Reeves has claimed that this price was not sufficiently high when land values soared through railway construction and the influx of population. In his view these changes completely negatived the original policy. The people, he says, very foolishly neither raised this price nor imposed settlement conditions on purchasers, and hence the land fever destroyed the completest trial of settling land at a high price without settlement conditions.[1] But it is difficult to see how any mere fixation of land prices could prevent speculation or give priority to the small settler, for whether the price be low or high the advantage still lay with the large capitalist, and the higher it is the more likely is he to be the only buyer. Moreover, if the price of farm products determines land values, any fixed price may be too high or too low. In short, market values of land cannot

[1] *State Experiments*, vol. I, p. 214.

be made to coincide with prices as fixed by law. Our land laws are studded with many wearisome efforts to regulate land settlement, to impose conditions requiring personal residence, and to restrict aggregation. But it is probable that economic changes, such as the rise of the dairy industry, have been more powerful factors in promoting closer settlement than all the well-meant efforts of Parliament.

In the pastoral lands outside the Canterbury block still more interesting and difficult questions arose. Here the Pastoral Leases were controlled by the general land regulations issued in 1853 by Sir George Grey. These regulations reduced the price of rural lands to 10*s.* an acre, or, when certified by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, to 5*s.* an acre. Grey's motives have been defended by his biographer, but the merits and demerits of his plan have always aroused fierce conflict of opinion.[1] In Rolleston's opinion, these regulations opened the door to all the evils of land aggregation, and he always strongly denounced them.

The many ingenious devices invented by the squatters for keeping out the small settlers have often been described. They were dealt with in detail by Rolleston in a Memorandum to the Land Board in 1873. Briefly, these schemes were all directed to pre-empting key positions, so as to render access of settlement by the small settlers impossible. For example, the gorge of each river where it came out upon the plains was the only means of access to large tracts of back country. "Take the gorge of the Rakaia," said Rolleston, "which is the key to a large amount of back country containing coal and other minerals, and up which will ultimately lie means of communication with the West Coast." Anyone who bought the mouth of a gorge could remain master of the back country without the expense of purchasing it. This evil had already arisen in the gorge of the Waimakariri. Rolleston urged that main lines of roads should be laid down in every direction over the plains,

[1] See Condliffe, *New Zealand in the Making*, p. 101.

communication should be kept open with the passes and gorges of the rivers, and in all hill country the approaches through the valleys should be maintained open as well as such other lines of road as are suggested by the nature of the country. "Take the Peninsula," he said. "A rider once on top of the ridge should be able to keep there so as to come into any of the bays, or to pass any of them without being obliged to go down." In short, he urged that a system of free selection before survey is utterly obstructive of settlement.

Other forms of spotting consisted of pre-empting the only land with a supply of water so as to render adjacent land of no value to anyone but the owner of the water. Squatters were also entitled to certain areas of land for every chain of fencing erected or shepherds' huts, and, by an ingenious distribution of these, they obtained the first right to buy all the most desirable sites.

"Gridironing" consisted in buying a series of twenty-acre sections along a road frontage in such a way as to leave eighteen acres between each twenty-acre section. Under the Land Regulations these eighteen-acre blocks could only be bought at auction, and they were therefore almost certain to fall into the hands of the capitalists.

But there was another side to the story. The squatters contended that they had to adopt all these expedients of spotting and gridironing in self-protection. They complained that otherwise small men or speculators would come in and buy key positions controlling a whole area, and then blackmail the squatter by demanding large sums before they would grant access or egress for his stock.

Chapter VII

ROLLESTON AS UNDER-SECRETARY FOR NATIVE AFFAIRS, 1865–68

"Administration is to my mind above everything else"
ROLLESTON.

I

THE principle of responsible government existed in New Zealand from the year 1853 as to all ordinary colonial affairs. But it was not until 1863 that the control of Native problems and Native policy was taken out of the hands of the Governor, as representing the Imperial Government, and entrusted to the Ministry of the day. This final step in self-government was initiated by a notable despatch, dated 26 February 1863, from the Duke of Newcastle. In this despatch he issued instructions that, in future, the Governor would be generally bound to give effect to the Native policy recommended by his responsible Ministers.

Following upon this important change, when Sir Frederick Weld became Prime Minister at the end of 1864, he launched his famous "self-reliant" policy, under which the Imperial troops were to be withdrawn from New Zealand as soon as was reasonably possible. This no doubt led to the decision to create a new post, namely, that of Under-Secretary of Native Affairs. Hence it was that, soon after Rolleston returned from the West Coast goldfields, he received a letter from the Prime Minister, Sir Frederick Weld, which led him into this new sphere of work.

Wellington,
May 11th, 1865.

My dear Rolleston,

I write in a great hurry to say that I hope to be able to find possibly an Under-Secretaryship for you, but when I visit Canterbury, as I hope to do in a fortnight for a day or two, I shall be able to speak more definitely. From what Stevens says, you want to take a more political office—so of course you will not be in the "Lords", as that would ban an Under-Secretaryship if I establish an extra one, which I am considering. Allow me to congratulate you on your marriage.

Yours very faithfully,
FRED. A. WELD.

During the short tenure of office of Sir Frederick Weld, the Maori War was still dragging on in desultory fashion in various districts; but under Weld's new policy the colonial troops were almost uniformly successful. Weld issued a proclamation of peace and amnesty to the natives, except in the district between Wanganui and Taranaki. There, owing to the fanaticism of some tribes, said Weld,

we confiscated that territory, intending to put self-depending settlements upon it, and to induce as many as possible of the former owners to settle down between them on grants of land with individualised titles. We sent Mr Parris, a gentleman distinguished by his love for, and his knowledge of the native race, to negotiate with them to this effect. We had reason to anticipate success from his efforts, though the worst section of the fanatics treacherously murdered envoys bearing the proclamation of amnesty sent to them by General Waddy.

II

About the time Rolleston took office as Under-Secretary there was a change of Ministry, and Stafford became Prime Minister for the third time. Mr Sewell in his diary, dated 29 November 1865, says:

Met Rolleston, the Under-Secretary for Native Affairs, a new man imported by our late Government from Canterbury. He was

Provincial Secretary there and a very capable man; a great addition to the staff of the Government. He is a brother of Dr Rolleston, of Oxford. He tells me that Native affairs are being sadly mismanaged—and no wonder. . . . Rolleston expresses great alarm at the probable effects of the mismanagement of Native affairs by the present Government and the real danger there is of a revival of war.

The opinion expressed about the mismanagement of Native affairs seems to have been well-grounded, for when he left office a few months later, Mr James Mackay, on his way to Tauranga, wrote to Rolleston:

I note what you say about writing less savagely—it is quite true. I fear another six months under R. would have made me hate the whole service. I know what you have gone through, and God forbid any of us ever go through another such ordeal. I know you have always tried to put things square when you saw any of us were doing our best for the service. I felt perfectly miserable, and as savage as any bear during the last few months. When I heard R. was out of office, I felt a millstone removed from my neck.

Mr Parris, who played a notable part for many years in Native affairs, was at this time what was called a Civil Commissioner.[1]

Rolleston's correspondence makes it clear that he soon won the confidence of the various Civil Commissioners, Native Agents, and missionaries. They wrote to him freely

[1] According to Fitzgerald (1865 Hansard, p. 579) these Commissioners were not appointed under any law or statute. In fact, the office was an anomalous one which arose out of the District Regulation Act. This Act divided the Colony into districts for the internal and social government of the natives. "He is an officer", said Fitzgerald, "who may be described, without meaning any slur, more or less as a sort of Government spy. He does all the Government work among the natives, communicates with them, and keeps the Government informed as to what is going on among the natives, friendly or otherwise. Some of these Civil Commissioners were nothing more or less than resident magistrates (I think on the change of Government in 1866 the office lapsed and they became resident magistrates)."

on Native affairs. Their letters reveal the deep concern these officers felt at the political bungling and maladministration of successive governments, and it is clear that Rolleston fully shared their indignation.

III

A few extracts from Parris's letters will be of interest to those who have studied Native affairs, as they at least show that no charge of lack of sympathy with the natives can be laid at his door.

On 8 November 1865, PARRIS wrote to ROLLESTON:

I exceedingly regret that a change of Ministry should have been necessary at this momentous juncture of our relations with the Maori race, who do not understand our political institutions and believe such changes a sign of weakness and a defeat of the line of policy affecting themselves, and encourages them to renew their opposition.... I sent you some time ago a letter about the Moturoa Reserve through which the south road was taken, for which the native owners were never yet paid their compensation. The natives are constantly applying for it, and fancy they are never to be paid.

Again, on 7 February 1866, PARRIS wrote:

Truly may you say that the state of things is very disheartening. Never since the War began have I been so disheartened as I am at the present time, the cause of which my official letters will in great measure explain. You are no doubt well aware of the trouble I have taken in endeavouring to bring the natives back to their allegiance to the Government, never for one moment supposing that, by doing so, I should render them liable to the treatment they have received during the last fortnight. Whether the proceedings are sanctioned or not by the Government, of course I am not aware, but I should hope not. I have not mentioned in my official letters the fact of Te Ua having been made prisoner at Wanganui. I reported to your office about a month ago that I had been to Opunake and made arrangements for him and the Chief Hone Pihama to stop at or near Opunake, promising them that they would not be molested there. This will

now be regarded as treachery on my part, and that I knew what was to take place. I assure you I feel it most painfully. Had the Government wished to have Te Ua examined, I would have induced him to go even to Wellington, without making him a prisoner for the purpose and subjecting him to military parading. Should he be taken on to Wellington and liberated there, I should be glad if you could prevail on the Native Minister to send him back to me by steamer.

You will no doubt hear glowing accounts of the General's expedition, but pause before believing them all. It is true they drove the rebels out in several places, but, as to the number killed, it is very doubtful, for many said to have been killed were living a few days ago. I have heard to-day that, since the force left Ngatiruanui, the rebels have punished that part of the native contingent which was left at Waingongoro. Two are said to have been killed and several wounded. This does not look as if they were much cowed.

If ever persecution was in force, it is now in this district. I trust not with the sanction of the Government.

PARRIS (Wanganui) to ROLLESTON, 10 August 1866:

Since my arrival here, I have had a conversation with Hori King and Aperaniko about the late occurrence at Pokaikai, which they severely censure and denounce as treacherous murder, there having been a friendly communication with the same natives by which they were thrown off their guard and betrayed into the belief that an attack would not be made upon them, so much so that they were going to bring a present of potatoes into camp the next day. A white flag and a ball cartridge had also been sent for them to choose which they would prefer, when they kept the white flag and sent back the ball cartridge, after which there was further communication, and the natives sent in word to the camp to say that Matanahira had gone to New Plymouth for me. This appears to be the only pretext for the night attack. As to the report about an ambuscade, Aperaniko, who was present with the forces, assures me that nothing of the sort occurred. Mr Booth assures me that the natives regard it as the most disgraceful thing that has occurred during the War (but they don't know all).

Many other letters couched in similar terms might be quoted. But these would require a great many explanatory

notes to render them understandable even to students familiar with Maori history. Enough has been quoted to show how deeply concerned Mr Parris was to secure justice for the Maoris, and to keep faith with them.

IV

The experience gained by Rolleston in his new office as Under-Secretary gave him an intimate knowledge of many aspects of Native affairs. In 1867 one of his most important tasks was to visit all the native schools and report on them to the Honourable J. C. Richmond, who had now become Native Minister. This necessitated a great deal of travelling, and he visited schools as far north as that of Bishop Williams at Paihia, Bay of Islands, and various schools in Auckland, New Plymouth, Otaki, Maketu, and Wellington. These schools were controlled by various denominations, such as the Church of England, the Roman Catholics, and the Wesleyans.

Rolleston's Report was published in 1867, and is drawn up with his usual painstaking care. Indeed, it is still a valuable document as a study of a most difficult problem. In his opinion, the general results, after a large expenditure of public funds in subsidising native schools over a period of nearly twenty years, could not be regarded as satisfactory. Too much of the Government grants was being used to improve the property of private religious bodies. The early missionary school had spread through the country a knowledge of reading and writing in the Maori language; but, in the existing native schools, there was little success in giving even the most elementary English education. The Maoris were keen to have their children taught English, as they realised their handicap arising from their ignorance of our language. Hence Rolleston concluded that the Maoris would hail it as a great boon if they could have English teachers who knew enough Maori to enable the natives to learn English. He not only tested the knowledge of the

individual pupils, but he inspected their food, their dormitories, and their living conditions. In one school with fifty-three pupils only nine could write to dictation, and then very imperfectly, the most simple sentences of one syllable. In some of the better-conducted schools the pupils showed good progress and were clean and healthy, but he came across one school which was no better than an ordinary pah, with the children sleeping on mats spread on fern and having as their sole teacher a boy of fifteen.

All the knowledge thus gained by Rolleston left a lasting impression on his mind. When in 1868 he became a Member of Parliament, his speeches on Native Affairs show how deeply he felt the failure of successive Governments to establish friendly relations with the natives, and the rapid deterioration that was going on in the Maori character. In 1869 he moved to set up a Commission to inquire into the causes of the unsatisfactory relations between the European and native races, with a view to restoring harmony. He thought that one duty of such a Commission should be to report on the possibility of restoring part of the confiscated lands of the rebels. He claimed that in all previous wars with the Maoris we had been able to make prolonged peace because of the fact that we had not confiscated their lands. He quoted great authorities on native customs, such as Mr Clark and Mr Parris, in support of the doctrine that the natives in their own tribal wars had never confiscated land except where the conquered tribe had been exterminated. Hence the original proprietors in tribal wars look forward from generation to generation to retaking lands which had been won from them. They could not therefore be expected to understand our practice whereby the lands of the conquered tribe were permanently confiscated.

> We found here (said Rolleston) a race uncivilised, but having great capabilities for cultivation of the mind, with all the reasoning and debating powers which in modern European nations was the result only of great labour and study, a race deeply imbued

with ancestral pride, with a love of military conquest, a keen feeling of disgrace and degradation, a love of their country which is surpassed by no nation in the world, a deep attachment to the soil on which they lived their daily lives, pervaded with religious sentiment and controlled even in minor details by customs of almost pharasaic stringency. And, Sir, how have we dealt with these natives? We have taken away their pride in martial conquest by the establishment of British law, we have destroyed their chieftainship, and we have made no provision to supply them with anything to take the place of the associations to which they are most closely bound.

The Prime Minister, Fox, complained that Rolleston had failed to realise the earnest and honest efforts made by successive Governments to establish friendly relations with the natives, and he described Rolleston as speaking "in the style of a young member of a debating society endeavouring to flesh his maiden sword". It was perhaps unfortunate that Rolleston brought forward his proposals at a time of crisis, indeed at a time when the Government was seeking to persuade the British Government to allow one regiment to remain in New Zealand owing to the threatening aspect of affairs, and it does seem to have been the case that the conflict then raging was unavoidable. Mr Maning, of the Native Land Court, and author of *Pakeha Maori*, was a great authority on Native Affairs. His view was that the natives were determined at all costs on trying their strength with us, and no possible action or line of policy could have had the slightest effect in averting the war. "As to the actual war itself, the natives knew that for years before it commenced they had themselves determined upon war, and that the long series of aggressions gradually increasing in seriousness which preceded the actual commencement of open warfare were deliberately planned and perpetrated with the set purpose of wearing out our patience and causing us to shed the first blood."

It will be seen later on, when we come to the Parihaka incident, that, had Rolleston's wise advice in 1869 been

followed, the lamentable conflicts of later years might have been avoided.

V

One of the most terrible atrocities in New Zealand history is known as the Poverty Bay Massacre. This occurred in the year 1868. A band of Maori prisoners of war had been shipped to the Chatham Islands in 1866 under an armed guard. In 1868, under the skilful leadership of the famous Te Kooti, they surprised and overpowered the guard, seized a schooner, and sailed for Poverty Bay. There they proceeded to massacre all the Europeans they could find, sparing neither man, woman, nor child.

An astonishing and painful echo of this tragedy occurred thirty-one years later. One night in Parliament in 1899, the Prime Minister, Mr Seddon, in the course of a heated debate about other matters, suddenly startled the House by declaring that Rolleston was responsible for the Poverty Bay Massacre. Indeed, he declared that Rolleston's name was execrated by widows and orphans because, while Rolleston was Minister of the Department, the guard on the Chatham Islands had been reduced, thus enabling the native prisoners to escape. In point of fact, Seddon was in error in alleging that Rolleston had been a Minister of the Crown in 1868. He did not attain office until the year 1879. On this being pointed out, Seddon very properly said he had made the charge hastily, and withdrew it. But this does not conclude the incident. Although Seddon withdrew his accusations, his colleague (Sir) James Carroll, a half-caste native, repeated them in another form. He alleged that Rolleston, as Under-Secretary of Native Affairs, had recommended the reduction in the guard in 1866, and that the Native Minister, Colonel Haultain, had acted on his advice. Now the fact is that the guard was varied on more than one occasion, so that a brief chronicle of the sequence of events is unavoidable if we are to know

whether Seddon or Carroll was right in his attack, though wrong in his facts.

Originally in 1866, one officer, two non-commissioned officers, and twenty-five men were sent with the first batch of prisoners. Some months later, Captain Thomas, the Government representative at the Chathams, was instructed to withdraw the military guard with the exception of four men, who should be assisted by the friendly natives. The instructions were sent by the Native Minister, Colonel Haultain, and the letter was merely signed by Rolleston as being sent by direction of the Minister.

Later on, another batch of prisoners was sent to the Islands, and the guard was increased. The prisoners were so well-behaved that they were treated as practically free men, and were allowed to take employment and payment from resident settlers. In 1868 the Government desired to grant an amnesty to most, if not all the prisoners, but Sir Donald McLean advised caution. It was thereupon decided to release the best-behaved prisoners if Rolleston, on visiting the Islands, was satisfied that they had earned this indulgence. Rolleston visited the Islands and selected those who were to be given their liberty. On his return, he furnished a report on the condition of the prisoners. Incidentally, he reported that the soldiers of the guard were a public nuisance, and were the chief support of the two public houses. He doubted if they would be any use in case of difficulty. He suggested that a smaller number of efficient, well-proved men would do the work better than the existing guard, which afforded no example of discipline or order. In fact, it was due to them that drunkenness and other lawless habits had sprung up in an otherwise quiet and orderly community. Rolleston was careful to add that he gave his opinion with diffidence, having no knowledge or experience of military matters. His advice seems sound enough, but was not acted on.

However, the fact that Rolleston was in no way to blame

for the reduction of the guard seems to be put beyond all doubt by the following evidence:

First, I find among Rolleston's papers a telegram sent to him by Mr J. Marshall, who had been Quartermaster-Sergeant of the guard in 1868. He was still living in Coromandel when Rolleston was attacked in Parliament in 1899, and sent the following telegram:

> Just read report Chatham Island debate. Kindly read to House that guard was reduced to seven men and myself considerable time before your arrival.

Secondly, Sir John Hall also telegraphed saying that he had been a Member of the Cabinet in 1868, "and knowing all the circumstances intimately I am positive that the idea that you were responsible was never even suggested by any member".

Thirdly, a letter from Captain Thomas, the Resident Magistrate at the Islands, affords proof that it was, in fact, the failure to follow Rolleston's advice that made the revolt of the natives possible.

CAPTAIN THOMAS, R.M., to ROLLESTON:

Waitangi (Chatham Is.)
17th December, 1868.

I have been so upset by the view the Ministry have taken regarding myself in regard to the escape of the prisoners that my private correspondence is largely in arrears. I am now getting a little reconciled to their imputation of blame, viz. want of judgment and carelessness. At one time so hard did I feel all this that I determined to request an investigation; but, after mature thought, have remained quiet.

By your visit here, you saw the link that was wanting, viz. another officer with me who should understand Maori. I verily believe, if your suggestion had been carried out, the prisoners would be here now, because then I should have received warnings, of which I received none—three letters were written by Te Kooti to another prisoner who was in the employ of Ritchie, the purpose of which was asking this other prisoner for money, and telling him to come into Waitangi, which exactly corresponded with the

instructions I had given for them all to come in and cultivate their crops. I had, moreover, no Non-commissioned officer worth a rap. Applied for an officer but was refused, and was in a helpless position.

If I had only received warnings, even with the small force I had, and calling on the settlers, I think I could have marred their plots. But what vexes me also is the successes the brutes have had since their escape. If they could have foreseen those successes, we should be none of us alive here now. It is sad indeed to hear of the losses of such good men as we have sustained, both on the West and East Coasts, but no doubt can be felt as to McLean's management now.

The unfair and belated political attack on Rolleston proved a fiasco, and its chief result was to win for him a widespread measure of public sympathy and admiration.

VI

ALFRED COX in his *Reminiscences*, p. 130, says:

When Rolleston was Under-Secretary in the Native Department, he was constantly to be seen hovering about the Speaker's Chair in the House of Representatives. He thus became well-known by sight to all the members of the General Assembly, and, being a capable man, he was utilised in many ways by the Government. He was commissioned to examine into and report on the condition of native schools in the North Island. He performed that work thoroughly after his accustomed fashion. He was sharply criticised in some quarters for what he had said in the Report, but he could see no reason to retract anything he had written.... When Under-Secretary, he was a splendid man to go to for information upon almost any question coming before Parliament. He seemed to have all Parliamentary records by heart, was, in a word, the most complete political encyclopedia within reach, and was always more than ready, as well as capable to give all information sought.

Enough has been said to show that Rolleston achieved a great success in the Native Affairs Department.

Chapter VIII

ROLLESTON IN PARLIAMENT

FALL OF THIRD STAFFORD GOVERNMENT
1868–69

"The men of each age must be judged by the ideal of their own age and country and not by the ideal of ours"—LECKY.

I

In the year 1868 Rolleston was elected without opposition for Avon as a member of the New Zealand Parliament and in the same year (as we have seen) he was elected without opposition as Superintendent of Canterbury. This dual appointment kept him exceedingly busy. The Superintendency was the more arduous and responsible task, but being a conscientious and painstaking worker Rolleston did not fail in his duty in either role. In both spheres the position was complex and difficult.

Enough has been said in earlier chapters of the cumbrous and disjointed working of Provincial Government from a constitutional point of view. But the whole system was under challenge and it was becoming clearer each succeeding year that it must be either mended or ended.

II

In colonial politics dissatisfaction with the Central Government and the conduct of the Maori War had reached an acute stage. There was a growing clamour for separation—by which was meant the creation of a separate parliament for the South Island. This had already been a burning issue in the Otago Provincial elections of 1867, where every member returned had declared himself in favour of separation. The more moderate urged that at least the finances of

the two islands should be separated. Others went further and demanded a separate parliament. This discontent was also making itself felt in Canterbury and Auckland.[1] Two years later we find J. D. Ormond of Hawkes Bay writing to Rolleston (20 April 1869):

I hear with extreme regret from yourself and others that the separation cry is being again brought forward as the question of the day in the south. In that miserable cry I see the greatest difficulty we have to contend with in the amalgamation of parties. Already Richmond in addressing his Taranaki constituents has seized upon this point of weakness and without doubt Stafford will make the most of it.

III

But the problem that overshadowed all others was the war with the Maoris, which had begun in 1860 and was still dragging along in a desultory, inconclusive and expensive fashion. This war had already caused the downfall of several ministries and damaged many political reputations. In the course of eight years there had been no fewer than eight different holders of the portfolio of Native Affairs.

On the whole (says Gisborne), looking back to the seventeen years from 1853 to 1870 I do not think that there is any other country which during that time presented in kind apart from extent more difficult political problems for solution by public men, and comparatively speaking was so severe a test of statesmanship.[2]

This observation by so competent and accurate an observer as Gisborne should constantly be kept in mind. It is no exaggeration to say that at the period when Rolleston entered politics New Zealand was passing through the greatest crisis in her history.[3] It was not that her statesmen were inadequate or lacking in courage, but that their problems were quite unprecedented and far more complex than any that their successors have had to face.

[1] *Otago Daily Times*, 26 March 1867.
[2] *History of New Zealand*, p. 167.
[3] See Harrop, *England and the Maori Wars*.

IV

When Rolleston entered Parliament in 1868 (Sir) Edward Stafford was in power for the third time. All historians have accorded Stafford a high place as a statesman. Gisborne declared that he was the best leader of a party when he was in power that has been known in New Zealand, and that he and Fox were the only natural born Prime Ministers who had appeared in his experience. This opinion is confirmed by Saunders, who says of Stafford "as a politician, legislator and organizer New Zealand has never yet seen his equal in power".

Yet there is a touch of burlesque in the events which led up to Stafford's assumption of office. Towards the end of 1865 Sir Frederick Weld, who was in bad health, resigned from the Premiership. He had not been actually defeated, but he gave as his reason the fact that Parliament had failed to give enough support to his financial measures to enable him to carry out his policy of self-reliance. His chief assailant was Vogel, who was now rapidly rising as a political star of the first magnitude. But Vogel was disliked and distrusted by Weld, who accordingly persuaded the Governor that Stafford was the man most likely to be able to form a Ministry.

If, however, Weld was eager to lay down his office Stafford was equally reluctant to take it up. In doing so he made this astonishing statement:

> We have taken office under peculiar circumstances, from no desire or wish of our own; we have neither desired nor attempted to eject our predecessors from office. . . none could more willingly retire than we will when the country has declared that it no longer desires our services.

This is surely the strangest declaration ever made by an incoming Prime Minister: "we have neither desired nor attempted to eject our predecessors from office"!

These strange political quixotries are so much a feature of the period that the reader must accustom himself to them

if he is to understand the puzzling situation in which Rolleston found himself. His temperament was ill-suited to such flexible and indeed fluid political conditions as existed, and he was many years in finding an anchorage. He was desperately anxious to find some leader to whom he could give allegiance and some party to which he could attach himself.

The instance I have quoted of Stafford's reluctant entry into office occurred before Rolleston entered politics. An equally amusing episode occurred in 1866. In that year Moorhouse defeated Stafford on a no-confidence motion by 47 to 14, but immediately declared that he wanted Stafford to continue as Prime Minister. Consequently, when the Governor sent for Moorhouse that gentleman solemnly advised His Excellency to send for Stafford, whom he had just defeated.

If the times had not been so critical and serious we might regard all this as political comedy.

V

Let us now return to our narrative. The indispensable Stafford created a Coalition Ministry and took in some members of the opposition, including Fitzgerald, J. C. Richmond and (Sir) John Hall. It was known as the third Stafford Ministry and was still in office when Rolleston entered the House in 1868. About this time the redoubtable veteran (Sir) William Fox returned from England. Even here it is difficult to avoid a sense of the ludicrous, for before a seat in Parliament had been found for Fox, his opponent Stafford declared that his presence in the House was so important that if no other seat could be found for him he—the Prime Minister—would gladly give up to Fox his own seat at Nelson! These and other incidents seem to me to disprove the accusation that Stafford was a man who clung to office. They also show him to be a man of chivalry and courage; for to assist in the return of Fox as leader of the

opposition was to bring back a man who was renowned for his powers of invective and trenchant vituperation.

VI

During the session of 1868 the Stafford Government was almost continuously under attack. It was challenged to state its policy on the relative powers of the Central and Provincial Governments. It was also under fire on the ground that it had met with no success in handling the thorny problem of native disturbances and native affairs. Like most Coalition Governments it sought refuge in compromises designed to appease ministers whose views were in conflict.

Rolleston was not slow to join in these attacks on the Stafford Government. His recent occupancy of the post of Under-Secretary of Native Affairs had furnished him with much useful information and he had formed strong opinions as to how the native problem should be handled. He denounced Stafford's native policy as futile and ineffective. His exasperation was increased towards the end of the session when war was openly declared by Stafford on the Provincial system which Stafford said "has been tried and found wanting and cannot long survive". Not that Rolleston was by any means an ultra-provincialist. Indeed, when we remember that he was himself a Provincial Superintendent his attitude was singularly judicial and impartial. He recognised that the whole Colony was over-governed and that the antagonism between Provincial and Central Government must be brought to a close as soon as possible. "No thinking man", he declared, "looking into the future can doubt for one moment that sooner or later there must be one Government throughout the Colony working harmoniously in all its parts." But he foresaw with prophetic vision that unless some proper system of local government replaced the Provinces the result would be extremely mischievous, and all our later experience has justified his

wise foresight. "I never have been an ultra-provincialist," he said, "and on the other hand I am no centralist, if by that is meant the attempt to govern entirely from Wellington."[1]

Though Stafford survived the attacks of the opposition for the remainder of the session there was widespread discontent throughout the country. At hostile public meetings the cry was "Down with Stafford".

VII

It is therefore not surprising to find early in 1869 further plans being evolved by opposition members to bring about the downfall of the Government. Various suggestions were put forward as to how this could be achieved. Here is an interesting glimpse of politics behind the scenes.

J. D. ORMOND (Napier) to ROLLESTON (Christchurch), 20 April 1869:

Stevens in his letter to me proposes to form an independent party in the House separate from the extremes of either side. But with all deference to his view I fear that we should be only playing the enemy's game. We have seen that Stafford cares nothing for the reversal of any measures he brings forward so long as he can stick in office. In most cases any man or set of men would be satisfied with forcing the adoption of their views upon the Government—but of what value would that be in Stafford's case? It seems to me that the first object we should set before ourselves is to turn out the present men and that for this end we should sink so far as necessary all personal feeling. We may have our opinions of Fox or of Vogel, but we *must* associate ourselves with them for the purpose of turning the Government out. For let us not blink the fact we cannot do it without them. Judging from the position of parties last year and considering the result of the election since, a vote of want of confidence *would* be carried now. It would be unwise, nay it would be impossible for any particular set of men to enforce their own individual views in their entirety. Both McLean and myself are prepared to make large sacrifices, and depend upon it, if we are to save the Colony from the utter

[1] Hansard, 16 July 1869, p. 530.

destruction which the present Government are bringing upon it, we must all be prepared to do the same. I am writing now amidst continual interruption, for we are still living amidst the turmoil of war, and I cannot discuss at length or thoughtfully the points of policy quoted in your letter. I agree with a great deal you write, but viewing as I do our present critical, almost desperate position as created mainly by this Government, I look to the termination of that as the first point to be achieved. We are drifting hopelessly at present. Our Government is devoting its energies more to sowing the seeds of political dissension for their own miserable and selfish purposes than to the work of the Colony. I say let us first end that, and then I have hope for ourselves. The difficulties we have to contend with are not insuperable if they are ably and zealously met. As to the policy we are to put forward it is impossible, idle at the present moment to present it. No one can say what may occur in those six weeks that have yet to elapse before the meeting of the Assembly.

You will have heard all particulars of the present movement into the interior by the Colonial forces. On the result of that movement much depends. It may, and probably will, face with open enemies the King and the King natives. They have always told us that the occupation of Taupo would be viewed by them as a challenge. I need scarcely say that should this prove the case it is impossible to foretell the consequences. I am sorry to write so indefinitely as I feel I have done—it is not from not holding defined views—it is because I see that practically myself and others must be prepared to concede much before we can hope to turn the present tide of ruinous mismanagement.

VIII

This proposal to make use of Fox to oust Stafford bore fruit quickly. Soon after Parliament met an attack was launched and in June 1869 the Stafford Government was defeated by a large majority, of whom Rolleston was one. He declared that he had consistently voted against the Government because he had no confidence in them. He denounced their native policy and their lack of policy in Provincial matters. "The Government", he said, "is ruling on sufferance; protracting a wretched existence in spite of the loss of their

principles, of their self-respect and of the respect of the country at large."

But although he denounced the Government in these strong terms it is clear that he was taking a leap in the dark, in fact he admitted that there was no clear alternative and added: "Let us know whether there are other men in the House who would command greater confidence. I do not say that there are." In short, the change over to Fox and Vogel does not appear to have enabled Rolleston to see any clearer line in politics or to have afforded him any satisfactory alternative. "Rolleston and other Canterbury members formed a kind of Cave of Adullam, showing little more inclination to support Fox than Stafford. Many predicted that some sort of coalition would ultimately be formed. It was not realised that the whole Colony would soon be dancing to Vogel's tune."[1] Perhaps the dilemma created for Rolleston and his colleagues consisted in the fact that Fox had secured as his Native Minister Sir Donald McLean, who was the one indispensable man if the Maori War was to be brought to a peaceful conclusion. Peace was imperative if the Colony was not to be ruined financially. McLean's mana among the Maoris stood incredibly high. His powerful influence worked like a charm and he soon brought about that peace which had been so long desired. The reader may therefore regard the native problem as having been got rid of for ten years, or more. So far as Rolleston is concerned it did not arise again till the Parihaka incident of 1882.

In a letter to Selfe, Rolleston describes McLean as "extravagant and without an idea except that of palavering people into peace. The day for that is gone by." Now whatever McLean's shortcomings may have been it is undeniable that he was brilliantly successful in "palavering" the Maoris "into peace" and that no one but him could have done it. But at the time of which I am writing even McLean,

[1] Morrell, p. 192.

in spite of his great success in pacifying the Maoris, does not seem to have been acceptable to Rolleston. Hence if Rolleston continued to denounce Stafford and his colleagues on the one side and Fox, Vogel and McLean on the other, it was obvious that members of the House would hardly listen with patience to his plea that they should "sink all party ties and unite for the good of the country".[1] That plea has been urged by independents at many times in many parliaments but seldom with any result. The times were indeed sadly out of joint for a man of Rolleston's fastidious temperament. The constantly changing groups and factions —the confused and varying issues—the absence of clear party lines—the need to compromise and to make strange political bedfellows—all this perplexed and dismayed him. Moreover, intolerable as he found the position at this stage worse difficulties were soon to follow. Indeed, it was not long before he found himself thrown back into the arms of Stafford whom he had so recently helped to overthrow.

[1] Hansard, 16 June 1869.

Chapter IX

THE TRIUMPH OF VOGEL, 1870

"More men and money! that's the cry
To set our pulses beating high
And never mind the bye and bye—
Says Vogel."

I

EARLY in 1870 Rolleston realised that Vogel had become the man of the hour and that Fox, a nominal Prime Minister, was too complacent to exercise any effective control. It was a curious trait in Fox that while in opposition he was merciless and aggressive, once in office he became apathetic and indifferent, except on rare occasions when he was forced to fight. He played a great part in New Zealand politics and we owe a deep debt to his memory for his magnificent and arduous labours in the early 'eighties as one of the Commissioners for the settlement of native land claims. But his persistent advocacy of unpopular views on total abstinence seriously handicapped him as a political leader.

On 28 June 1870 Vogel announced his great public works policy. But some months before that sensational development occurred Rolleston was already alarmed on other grounds.

ROLLESTON to SELFE (London Agent for Canterbury), 18 February 1870:

I don't like to close my letter without saying a word about Northern Island matters. I am told on very good authority that things are in a terrible mess. Vogel is a strongheaded, wrongheaded man who wants to get the Government into Auckland where he has an engagement as newspaper editor. He has always

been a separationist and no doubt sees that a double purpose may be served by the promoting or "sitting" of the Assembly in Auckland and the removal of portion of the Government there. His popularity and success depend on establishing good moorings in a new place, having failed to win any real respect in Otago. His postal arrangement is no doubt good and tends in this direction. Fox is malleable to the last degree, MacLean extravagant and without an idea except that of palavering people into peace. The day for that is gone by. I wish you understood me better, you would (excuse my vanity) understand better the real state of the native question. This perhaps is putting the cart before the horse. I only pray you to use your influence to prevent any reversal of the Imperial Policy. Lord Grenville's Dispatch is the most clear and statesmanlike view of our position which I have seen.[1]

The abandonment of untenable positions, the recognition of Maori authority and the maintenance of a good and effective force, small but well trained are the keys of the difficulty. We were told in 1862 the consequence of occupying territory we could not ourselves hold and ever since all disinterested lookers on have seen the evils which must follow on the course we are pursuing. The reoccupation of Patea is simple madness. There will be no massacres where they are not unnecessarily invited. What in the world Bell and Featherston are going to do I don't know.

Ministries are constructed as it seems not to govern by united council but to scatter themselves over the Colony and have one or two on a pleasure trip in England. I shall go in for supporting the next Ministry and getting a trip to England! I hope you will see that Lord Grenville's creed and that of our party in the Colonial Parliament are very similar. This is some comfort. We are the only people in the House who have any creed so far as I can

[1] Lord Grenville's despatch is dated 7 October 1869. Grenville's patience had been exhausted by the grasping attitude of the colonists. Hence he refused to allow British troops to remain in New Zealand. He considered their employment by a colony possessing responsible government was objectionable in principle. He also objected to the extent to which confiscation had been carried and the alleged neglect of New Zealand Governments to raise their own forces to carry on the war. (Appendix to *Journals*, 1870, A.I.A. p. 10.)

see. You will excuse my writing somewhat vaingloriously. I don't feel happy that you misunderstand my action in the Assembly. You must therefore excuse a little self-assertion on my part.

The proposal mentioned in the above letter to shift the Government to Auckland raises a side-issue. But it caused Sir George Bowen, the Governor, to seek the opinion of Rolleston, whose reply is of sufficient interest to warrant us delaying for a moment consideration of the main issue which was Vogel's public works policy.

In reality the efforts to remove the seat of Government from Wellington, where it had been located since 1865, never reached serious proportions. But what Rolleston saw clearly was first the growing jealousy of the North Island against the national wealth and progress of Canterbury and Otago, and secondly the growing confusion under a double system of government—central and provincial. At this stage he denounced the cry of separation—that is the idea of having a separate government for each Island—as "a futile and childish agitation". But within a year he became so alarmed at the growing signs of centralisation on the one hand or ultra-provincialism on the other that as we shall see later he began to favour the idea of a separate administration for each Island.

ROLLESTON to SIR GEORGE BOWEN (Governor), 10 February 1870:

With regard to the question of the meeting of the General Assembly in Auckland, I wish I had had more time to think of what has come upon me somewhat suddenly, but as you are good enough to invite an expression of opinion from me I shall write my first impressions freely.

(1) With regard to the general principle that it is desirable that the Parliament should meet elsewhere than in Wellington with a view to the political education of the people. The Assembly has formally decided at its last session that a change should not take place at least to any place in this Island, and I am strongly of opinion that the witnessing the disorder of the Assembly

would have no good effect on the people generally. The remedy lies as I think, much deeper. The people of the Colony will never look upon the Assembly as anything else than a place in which to scramble for loaves and fishes by log rolling or other forms of purchase as long as the present double Government exists, and until a Minister boldly takes up the question and places the Provinces in a position which renders them incapable of doing the mischief they are doing. No amount of political education will do any good. I hear on all sides rumours of the Provinces coming up next session to get what they can out of the Colony. We shall shortly be borrowing to pay interest on our loans. The prospect is terrible.

(2) The argument that the native disturbances renders the presence of Ministers necessary in Auckland seems an argument in favour of Ministers remaining there permanently as we seem to be still pursuing our aggressive policy. I thought with regard to the late Ministers that their distribution over the country was most mischievous. If there should be alarms at Patea, which when the settlers become short of ready money there will be, Ministers will be required as much at Wellington as at Auckland.

(3) Unless it is immediately announced that the session will be in Auckland a number of southern constituencies will practically be disfranchised, for I am satisfied that from here at least our members would not go to Auckland.

There may not be much in the above objections, but there is an objection of paramount weight with me and that is

(4) The removal of the Assembly to Auckland will most certainly revive the old cry of separation. Every argument in favour of the one tells in favour of the other. Members from the extreme south will support the measure in hopes of promoting this result and northern members with similar views. The Colony will again be torn with this futile and childish agitation. I do not write hopefully on the aspect of affairs generally, but I would rather throw up all connection with politics than lend any assistance to a step which would assuredly promote this result.

I have written hastily and I hope you will excuse my expressing my opinions very plainly. The personal question as affecting yourself is one in which of course I sympathise with you. The Colony is bound to see that you have proper accommodation and to provide for any extra expense entailed by your having it.

The reader has so far only seen Rolleston in his most serious vein. But that he was also capable of writing in a more amusing and whimsical way will be seen from this short note to J. D. Fenton, Chief Judge of the Native Land Court, who was at this time also a member of the Legislative Council. The subject is again the proposal to move the Government to Auckland:

Christchurch,
February 17th, 1870.

My dear Fenton,

"My soul is even as a weaned child." "What peace so long as the whoredom of Jezebel continue?" Why tamper with my virtue? The heifers of Canterbury will not be ploughed with by the Auckland schemers or unequally yoked with unbelievers.

This move will revive the cry of separation and distract the Colony again from the real issue. Surely it is enough that you Aucklanders have carried on war at our expense these seven years and you must needs invite us to come and see the results.

Wellington is very damnable, but your company and the sweet counsel we shall take together will reconcile me even to this *passi graviora dabit deus his quoque finem*.

Remember me kindly to Carleton and all whom I love in the Lord. Things are going on well here. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.

Yours fondly,
W. Rolleston.[1]

II

A few months later the whole Colony was startled and dazzled by Vogel's bold proposal to borrow £10,000,000 over a period of ten years and to spend the borrowed money upon bringing emigrants to New Zealand and constructing

[1] The squabble over the seat of government went on for some years. In 1871 a resolution was passed by the House of Representatives in favour of holding the 1872 session in Dunedin, but the Legislative Council turned it down. In 1872 there was a movement to have the capital removed to Christchurch as part of a scheme for separation—one government for each island.

roads in the North Island and railways in the South. As is usual in such cases various public men claimed what credit there might be for having been the first to suggest the famous Vogel policy. At a public meeting the Mayor of Dunedin said "the public works and immigration policy originated in the fertile brain of James Macandrew".[1] On the other hand Moorhouse in Canterbury said: "There was a change of policy in 1869. I was in favour of that policy long before 1870 and I communicated my ideas on immigration and public works to Sir Julius Vogel. After cogitating the matter over in his own mind he brought it to a head and afterwards sent me a copy of his public works speech in 1870." Finally, one writer seems to attribute part of the idea to Sir Donald McLean, for in a sketch of his career he says: "It was a condition on which he joined the Ministry that a progressive policy should be adopted—one of public works and immigration. The works thought of were mainly roads and bridges; the railways were a subsequent conception of Vogel's. But immigration was part of the programme of Fox and McLean."

All these claims may be correct. The time was ripe for such a policy and no doubt it occurred simultaneously to various public men.

Writing to SELFE on 3 August 1870 ROLLESTON says:

I do not know what you will think of New Zealand and its financial policy. I shall do my best to prevent the destruction of our provincial agency and I cannot conceive that the General Government is in a position to do the work half as well as we are doing it. The House appears perfectly beside itself and it is impossible to say what will be the result. If Vogel gets his scheme through, which is doubtful, it will be by the aid of the centralist opposition—Stafford, Stevens and co., who are desirous of destroying the Provinces.

However, Rolleston did not offer blind opposition to the proposals. Indeed he expressed his thorough approval of

[1] Saunders's *History*, p. 375.

the principle that the Colony should undertake immigration and public works throughout the Colony. But where the proposals were of such unprecedented magnitude he thought full plans and estimates should be put before the House detailing how the money would be spent. Otherwise the scheme might be productive of most ruinous results. He voted for the second reading in the hope of getting the scheme modified. He feared, too, that the effect of it would be to take away the administration of the Land Fund from the Provinces in the South Island, and throw the Fund into the common stock. He also objected to the Central Government overriding the immigration policy which had been working so well under provincial administration. In a period of fifteen years Canterbury had brought in 14,742 migrants at the rate of about one thousand a year. The total passage money had been £216,072, all of which had been repaid except £27,275. He specially objected to bringing thousands of immigrants to the South Island while land was locked up in the hands of large holders. These objections raised by Rolleston all seem reasonable grounds of criticism, and it would have saved much subsequent waste and confusion had Rolleston's views been adopted.

In February 1871 a General Election was held. As Rolleston had predicted Vogel had found "new moorings" in Auckland and was elected for that city. The result of the election was a majority of from twelve to fifteen for the Fox-Vogel Ministry and this was naturally interpreted by Vogel as an endorsement of his policy. He was now to all intents and purposes a dictator, and Rolleston having failed to get the public works scheme modified or any safeguards provided turns again to Stafford and urges him to take his place again as leader.

ROLLESTON to STAFFORD, 20 July 1871:

Now as to politics. I am satisfied that you must come out now or never if you are to take your place again as leader, and I am satisfied that if you do a considerable number of men who now

hold aloof will rally round you. But no wretched compromise will do, still less schemes of village settlement or plans for unsettling men's minds as to the stability of property. You cannot think what an uneasy feeling your "utterances" at Timaru have made. However I believe there is a common "platform" on which yourself and others who really are in earnest may meet and effect much good. The two cries under which all political parties sooner or later range themselves are those of the prudent (slowgoing conservative so called by their opponents) and the speculative (calling themselves progressive, but otherwise called gamblers). I agree with Gillies that we are not drifting but driving headlong to the Devil under the progressive policy. Are you going to be leader of the other party? I look for much good to come from a union of Munro, Curtis and yourself with Richmond in prospect and if a party can be formed with fairly defined principles who will swear to reverence their leader and stick to their principles I for one will sink my private opinions and join them. The heads of my individual creed are:

(1) Borrowing by the Colony on specific securities, not as in the present scheme borrowing first and determining the works afterwards, but borrowing with a lien on the work, taking the lender into your confidence.

(2) Abolition of provincial charging, but temporarily making for the purpose of works and immigration a financial separation of the Islands. I don't say I like this, but I see no other way of opposing a strong party to a gambling policy. That wretched cry of the Land Fund, which of course with a good Government vanishes, is one which cannot but enter into the calculations of a party going in for safety and binding the selfish and unselfish together by all means in their power, short of abandonment of their creed.

(3) The abolition of Provincial Councils and Superintendents and the substitution of a new system with government agents in the principal towns controlling the Departments of Government under instruction. I entirely agree with you that it would serve no good purpose for you or anyone to take office on the shoulders of discontent, to be put in the saddle simply for the purpose of displacing its present occupants. It must be as the leader of an homogeneous party with common aims and objects who will stick to you both before and after taking office.

A month later he writes to STAFFORD again on 30 August:

I am very glad you are not going in for coalitions. They are simply damnable. A good opposition is as necessary as a good Government. My idea is that McLean for what he is worth should be made permanent, that is till the bubble bursts, and that at any cost we should stop the imminent insolvency and horrible corruption which is overshadowing us. I wish you saw your way to a modification of Macandrew's Resolutions. I am satisfied that some *deus ex machina* is required to save us now; but of course we are not going to stand three Colonial Governments. Stevens showed me his letter to you. He is not constructive.

Hall...thinks he can stay corruption by making a "strong" Government at the expense of every principle on which Government is possible. Let us at any rate draw lines, *quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum* [above and below which propriety cannot exist], and act within those limits. Daylight will come in its own good time. Did you read my sermon on education which was in that style?

I pray you worship not the golden calf which Vogel hath set up nor commit whoredom with the children of Moab. The produce of these unnatural crimes are "red ruin and the breaking up of laws". Rather let the worst come and the reaction will be the more complete.

At the same time he is alarmed by rumours that Sir John Hall is likely to join the Fox-Vogel Ministry. He felt some responsibility in the matter, as he himself some time before had urged Hall to stand for the Heathcote seat. In doing so he said: "It won't look well to go in for some *otium cum dignitate* seat, and I am satisfied you will easily get in and without a contest."[1] Hall had been a member of the Stafford Ministry. He had resigned on the grounds of ill-health, but in doing so said that he had worked in perfect harmony with his colleagues. It was natural therefore that Rolleston should be astounded by the rumour that Hall was about to join the Fox-Vogel Ministry.

[1] Rolleston to Hall, 28 February 1870.

ROLLESTON to HALL, 25 August 1871:

I trust in the name of all that is good and right you will not so far lose yourself as to join the present Ministry. It would damn you for ever as a public man. It is all very well for people to press it on you who are afraid of the Government unless they can get the security afforded by your joining, but you are not called upon to sacrifice every principle that should guide a public man because men of narrow perception in their own selfish interest press it on you, careless of your character if they save uneasiness for the time. Do you think that your joining would enable a Government like the present to deal otherwise than it has been dealing? All Government has for some years been rendered impossible by the last coalition. I pray you do not so wickedly again. I am glad to see that Stafford has refused. You know you have no sympathy with this damned gambling. Why tamper with it?

It is unfortunate that Sir John Hall's reply is not available. He probably hoped that if he took office he might exercise a restraining influence on Vogel. Whatever his reasons might be the fact is that when Parliament met in August 1872 we find that Hall had resigned his seat for Heathcote to go into the Legislative Council as a member of the Fox-Vogel Ministry.[1]

Although Rolleston fought hard against Vogel and his methods in later years when Vogel had become High Commissioner and Rolleston a Minister of the Crown they corresponded on the most friendly terms. The late Mr C. A. de Latour, who was a Member of Parliament in 1876, furnished me with some interesting recollections of the men of that period.

Vogel's real strength (he wrote) lay in his vision and his unique faculty of adopting and adapting the ideas of other men. This laid him open not quite fairly to charges of plagiarism. He reached the highest position by sheer force of genius, unaided by the goodwill of the men with whom he was associated, but all of whom except Sir Donald McLean not too willingly accepted the priority due to his ability.

[1] See Saunders, p. 298.

Of Rolleston Mr de Latour says:

Smooth-faced and so in those days exceptional, with square hard jaw and deeply wrinkled forehead, he could when roused make a telling speech. At other times he appeared to be nervous, and at a loss for the right word and the wrong word was never allowed utterance however long might be the delay. He had no enemies and had all the charm of a highly educated gentleman. When he became a Minister in the government of Sir John Hall his great value was as an administrator.

Chapter X

ROLLESTON AND STAFFORD AGAIN, 1871–72

"The best sort of Tory turns to the best sort of Radical"
GEORGE ELIOT.

I

WE have already seen from Rolleston's letters written in 1871 that he was looking to Stafford as the only possible man to check the unrestrained power of Vogel. It is clear that uneasiness was growing in various quarters. Sewell, who was a member of the Fox-Vogel Ministry with a seat in the Upper House, resigned on 27 October 1871 owing to his disagreement with the Government's policy. Moreover, Waterhouse, who replaced him, said frankly that he had agreed to act only until the end of the session in the hope that thereafter a stronger and more permanent administration might be formed.

During this period there was a growing note of pessimism in Rolleston's letters and speeches, and he found himself in constant conflict with the members of the Ministry. His chief complaint was, not so much against the public works policy as a policy, but that Vogel was plunging ahead without any real attempt to reconcile the programme of the Central Government with any proper system of local administration. Rolleston saw clearly enough that the central public works policy necessitated a complete review of the system of Provincial Government. He argued that unless that system was carefully recast to fit in with the new policy the result must be the centralisation of all power into the hands of the Central Government. "This", he said, "is calculated to cripple the energies and destroy the individuality and enterprise of the people of the

country. Every new Government function converts more and more the active and ambitious part of the public into hangers-on of the Government." Indeed he shared the view which was widely held that if the powers and duties of the central and local authorities were not clearly defined the only alternative left would be the separation of the two islands.

As time went on his attacks on the Fox-Vogel Ministry became more and more violent. For in his view they had gained office by false pretences. They had come in professing to be the friend of the Provinces and a policy of prudence and caution and abstinence from borrowing. But in Rolleston's view they had entirely departed from the policy upon which they came into office, and subsequently carried measures of a totally different character.

These persistent attacks called forth a bitter reply from the Premier, Mr Fox. He jeered at Rolleston's

> doleful and gloomy vaticinations, for it is a faculty of that honourable gentleman that he is always brooding over what is doleful and lamentable; ever lugubrious and filled with the gloomiest anticipations....During his career as a Provincial Superintendent and as a member of a Provincial Council as at the present moment it was always the same dolorous cry; the same dreadful forebodings of evil and woe. Never anything cheerful. Never anything of the true spirit of the colonist. Nothing British. Nothing manly or energetic. Always croaking and foreboding.[1]

These are strong words. But it would be a mistake to suppose that Rolleston was a voice crying in the wilderness or that his views did not find ready support. It is of particular interest to note that he found a strong champion in Stafford. This again illustrates the kaleidoscopic changes in political grouping in view of the fact that only two years before Rolleston had helped to oust Stafford from office. Nevertheless when Rolleston was thus attacked for his doleful views we find Stafford complimenting him on his

[1] Hansard, 1871, vol. xi, p. 1096—Debate on Appropriation Bill.

"superb foresight" and expressing a desire to associate himself with the views and forebodings uttered by Rolleston. Stafford solemnly declared that during his long and continuous public career he had never felt so despondent about the future. But Rolleston was not so much concerned with Fox as with Vogel. On one occasion he stated that every member of the House recognised Vogel's earnestness and honesty of purpose, his indefatigable industry and great ability, but added

having said this much it will be readily believed that I have no personal feeling in saying that I look upon him as the impersonation of all that is reckless, of all that is mischievous in the Government of the country.... One of the greatest evils that has ever befallen the country.[1]

In his reply Vogel passed by Rolleston's commendation of his earnestness, industry and ability and uttered some vitriolic sentences about his critic:

He (Rolleston) is one (said Vogel) who is never pleased or satisfied with any party, with any person, or with any section of the community or of the House. He is nothing if he is not at war. I really believe that if fate should cast him an Enoch Arden upon some desolate island he would quarrel with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and even with the fishes of the sea. He could not be at peace.... If he ever gets into power he will again set out on that weary mill-road of fault finding to which he has devoted himself ever since he entered the House.[2]

Finally, it is interesting to quote the opinion of Gisborne, who was a member of the Fox-Vogel Ministry, and afterwards wrote an admirable book entitled *New Zealand's Rulers and Statesmen*. Speaking in 1871 he spoke of Rolleston's "spirit of conscientiousness" as being perhaps too potent for him and added:

Why! Since my honourable friend has taken a seat in this House he has been the proteus of politics. Three years ago he joined the party then led by the honourable member for Rangi-

[1] Hansard, 1872, vol. XII, p. 702.
[2] Hansard, 1872, vol. XII, p. 728.

tikei (Mr Fox), whom he now vilifies in opprobrious terms. After having succeeded in turning out the Stafford Ministry he for a time, like Achilles, sulked in his tent, and now from the midst of his former foes he turns his guns upon his former friends. I have no doubt my honourable friend always acts with the best intentions and errs from excess of virtue; for good men whose goodness is not tempered with discretion; who have no practical knowledge of the world; who make no allowances for the comparative failings of others are apt to occasion more mischief than persons of far inferior stamp in character and ability.[1]

This criticism by Gisborne is extremely interesting, because, although it was made in the heat of debate, he undoubtedly came near to the truth when he attributed Rolleston's attitude to too great a spirit of conscientiousness and what he calls "an excess of virtue". Rolleston's speeches and letters show again and again that he possessed a degree of intellectual scrupulosity that made his political path thorny and difficult. At this time the Press of his own city complained that he was becoming a political Jeremiah. There was certainly plenty of evidence to support this charge. It is true that in later years his friends declared that throughout his life he was a persistent optimist. But there is little sign of optimism in the following letter.

ROLLESTON to FEATHERSTON (Agent-General in London), 15 February 1872:

I have scarcely known what to say about public matters, being thoroughly disgusted with the Government, the Assembly and politics generally. Were it not that socially in respect of institutions and other things affecting the happiness of a large number of people one's position enables one to continue an influence not altogether barren of good results, I should throw up the whole connection with public affairs. I have not time today to write much, but I will state the matters on which my spirit is most vexed.

(1) The Brogden (railway) contracts. Vogel dealt wrongly with the country and wrongly with Brogden in leading him on as

[1] Hansard, vol. XI, p. 1101.

he did and the engagements which if report is true are now being made are simply flagitious.

(2) Government is flooding the country with officialism, ignoring existing authorities, neglecting no opportunity of overriding and putting affronts upon the heads of Provinces who don't support them and is allying itself to the basest order of men in order to compass its end.

(3) There is little doubt that the railways are being so scattered and made the subject of political scramble that there is not a chance of any one of them paying.

(4) It is actually proposed to introduce Chinese to do public works. I shall take the first opportunity of appealing to the public sympathy against so gross a wrong to what has been variously called the "heroic", "noble", "great" policy of colonization.

I cannot understand how the people of this island can tamely submit to such a state of things. The Resident Minister's appointment is a practical admission of the impossibility of management from Wellington. The only choice will be between ultra-provincialism and separation. My own mind runs in favour of the last. The Government is entirely overridden by Vogel.

Efforts were now being made to rally together sufficient forces to oust the Fox-Vogel Government. To accomplish this object men of the most diverse views came together. Stafford was leading the official opposition which was made up of the remnants of what was known as the Old Colonial Party. As we have already seen he favoured abolition of the Provinces. On the other hand Sir William Fitzherbert was the leader of the ultra-provincialist party. The union of these two parties enabled them to overthrow for a few weeks the Fox-Vogel Government.

Rolleston's letters to various correspondents throw some light on these curious negotiations.

ROLLESTON to WAKEFIELD:

May 29th, 1872.

I have your letter marked Private and Confidential. My own opinion in respect of a union of Stafford and Fitzherbert is not favourable, but of course I should wait to hear from Stafford

before expressing any opinion. Reader Wood speaks of a "coalition" of Stafford and Fitzherbert with some of the present Government, which would be worse still. For my own part I see no light until taxation commences when *the people* will awake and make themselves felt in a fresh election.

ROLLESTON to STAFFORD:

June 8th, 1872.

I have held for some time past that till the money is spent no honest man can meddle with public life. It does not seem to me that to help Fitzherbert to make useless railways at the expense of the south in union with Bunny would redound to anyone's credit. However, I will suspend judgment till I hear from you. I should like to know the programme which is to be put forward. If it is merely a question of the part of the country where money is to be wasted, I don't see anything to be gained by turning out one set of men to put in another and do the same thing.

Please let me hear what is intended.

ROLLESTON to STAFFORD:

June 12th, 1872.

I have your letter upon the present political position which is a very peculiar one. My own position is this, that I have a strong distrust of the present government thinking that they have taken office under false pretences, have held their seats by unparalleled purchase, and are utterly incapable of giving effect to the proposals they have initiated. I intend to speak my mind very plainly in the House in opposition to the Government on those grounds. At the same time I have felt for some time past that Central Government from a centre taking upon itself local administration as well as matters of general concern has been rendered impossible. The alternative seems to me to be *Insular Administration* (to which I myself strongly incline) and an *ultra-provincial revival*. Sooner or later the people will assert their right to have a more direct voice in their own Government than they have now and they will strongly rebel against the monies raised by these taxations being spent under such monstrous Acts as the Immigration and Public Works Acts which practically remove all control from the people. No other cry than that of local control in one or other of those forms will satisfy the people when the inevitable taxation comes

on. The present Government have committed themselves to *centralising* in Wellington and I shall not cease to oppose them. I should like to go in for an *Island* policy but I doubt whether that is sensible in the present state of the House. Failing that, I believe that some modification of Fitzherbert's proposals is the only cry that can be raised to oppose the wasteful expenditure of the present borrowing heresies. They must go (that is the monies) and until they are gone there can be nothing but confusion. The repentance which will come afterwards may be turned to good account. In the meantime anything which tends to lessen the number of the Provinces whether to two or five is a step to the good.

There seems to me to be no hope of a satisfactory party until we can get a dissolution. I wish you saw your way to leading an Insular Party. I see nothing ahead as yet but a certain prospect of being tumbled up with atrocious sweeps.

What does Monro say to this? Since writing the above I see that "he also has come into this place of torment". It would be a great mistake to take any action without him. Your position would be very strong with him in accord with you. I think you should be very careful to have it understood that Fitzherbert comes in to you, not you to him.

June 14th.

Stevens has just shown me his letter to you. It is clear and he has the advantage of speaking without trammel and *ab extra*. He appears to me to have come to the same conclusion that I have by a different process, viz. that Insular Administration is on the whole the only real change which would be a profitable move; that any modification of present Provinces, however good, would be merely matters of detail, but could not be dignified with the name of a policy.

The real facts we have to deal with are that the South Island looks (and rightly I think) on the Provinces as their last tie to their land and the south will not give up either its land or its local government at any one's lead. Vogel is taking them away by stealth and Otago and Canterbury are basely trying to get temporary help out of this "grand scheme" and to keep their land. This requires to be exposed clearly and the insular policy follows. I don't agree with Stevens as to a general education scheme, that

Bill of last year is damnable, nor do I believe in reducing all parts of the country to one level and with one uniform administration destroying individuality and reducing the different communities to the position of a flock of sheep to be fleeced by a central tyranny.

You will understand that I am entirely desirous of working with you to counteract a policy and a Government which I mistrust and believe that a party can be found of great weight for the purpose. We must however thoroughly understand what we are going to do. Please write again when you have thought it out. I will come up at the beginning of the session.

II

The culmination of the negotiations was that in September 1872 Stafford challenged the Fox-Vogel Ministry and after a long and bitter debate he succeeded in ousting them. But his triumph was short-lived, as in the following month Vogel turned the tables and again took office.

It is not clear why Rolleston did not join this short-lived Stafford Ministry in view of the fact that he had been in close and friendly correspondence with Stafford for some months preceding the successful attack. Probably the reason was that he would have had to resign his position as Superintendent of Canterbury. He himself had declared that the holder of such an office had no ambition to take any place on the benches occupied by the Government.[1] It is true that three members of Stafford's Ministry were Superintendents of Provinces, but Stafford announced that they would resign during the session or at its end. It is also possible that, had the Ministry survived, Rolleston would have joined it at a later date as Stafford declared that his Ministry was incomplete and that further appointments would be made. Perhaps also the strong terms in which he had denounced Stafford in 1869 were a source of embarrassment to him and they had been very effectively

[1] Hansard, 27 August 1872, vol. XII, p. 697.

quoted by Vogel in the course of the no-confidence debate.

ROLLESTON to FITZHERBERT, 6 December 1872:

The second point is one in which Stafford is principally concerned as representing the old colonist feeling as opposed to the carpet bag and paper collar adventurer party. There ought to be no room for doubt in the mind of the public that we mean to stick to the country. Now an injudicious remark of Stafford's as to selling his properties has done much harm. I hear it among working men and all classes. He ought to explain this as soon as possible. So far as I recollect it was a loose expression and did not convey what is generally understood. I believe Stafford to be a thoroughly good colonist and that his whole action belies any intention of abandoning New Zealand. It would be easy in a well prepared speech to his constituents to dissipate this impression, and I think he should meet his constituents as soon as possible. I have not met my constituents and do not intend to do so if I can help it. They are prosperous and careless of politics and it is better to let events mature a little. We shall have a great howl here for want of labour in a few weeks. The General Government works are not employing many hands, not above 200 at most, but the increased available capital from wool and the borrowed money which has been scattered abroad is leading to a larger increased area of cultivation and to increased building in the towns. Stafford should arrive down here soon but not attempt to enunciate a policy. It is an evil and corrupt generation that seeks after a sign.

Writing to MAJOR RICHARDSON on 11 December 1872 ROLLESTON says:

I saw your kindly notice of Canterbury which was very grateful to my Superintendental heart. I send you my address which bears a rosier hue. It was not my duty as Superintendent to bring in a discussion of general politics which would have turned the Provincial Council into a bear garden and I did my best therefore to inspire provincial patriotism as an antidote to the wretched greed which animates our Central Assembly. We have abused, distrusted, degraded and bribed the Provincial authorities till all idea of local government, any notion of freedom and being guided by the popular voice is gone. The infatuation of Canterbury and

Otago is somewhat disheartening. You will see that Tancred the other day pronounced the scheme of the General Government a failure. Coming from an outsider, as Tancred now is, the attack was very useful. H— is spending his time here instead of doing his colonial work, defending Ministers in the Provincial Council and assisting a very corrupt executive with which I am saddled. Without initiating jobbery he has ever said to corruption—thou art my sister.

Chapter XI

THE WATERHOUSE INTERLUDE, 1872–73

"Local Government—Provincialism if you like to call it so—is the essence of successful democracy"—ROLLESTON.

WHEN Vogel ejected the short-lived Stafford Ministry in October 1872 he announced that the Premier (Sir) William Fox was not prepared to resume office. He took the opportunity of paying a glowing tribute to his retiring chief, in which he said: "It has been under the honourable member for Rangitikei (Fox) that I have gained whatever position in politics I have achieved."

There is an interesting note about Sir William Fox in some manuscript recollections of the 1876 Parliament sent to me by the late Mr C. A. de Latour. "A pleasant picture lingers," he says, "a burly old man, tall and straight and of a homely demeanour with a very little shrunken old lady clinging to his arm as a sure support, walking along to a half empty Methodist Church near the House." It is interesting to know that more than twenty years later Sir William Fox, then an old man in retirement, was responsible for inducing a future Prime Minister, Mr W. F. Massey, to enter politics.

Vogel now induced Mr G. M. Waterhouse, who was in the Legislative Council, to become Premier in the reconstituted Ministry, Vogel himself being content to hold the portfolios of Colonial Treasurer and Postmaster-General.

It has often been remarked that during most of his political career Vogel, like Whitaker, was satisfied to put forward other men as nominal leaders while he himself retained the substance of power in an ostensibly inferior position. Perhaps the true explanation of this curious

practice was that Vogel used the high reputation for prudence, caution and integrity of men like Fox and Waterhouse as a cover to protect from assault and suspicion his own "daring and selfish projects".[1] Nevertheless, it is to the credit of Vogel that he did not seek to surround himself with weak colleagues in order to make easy his own domination; on the contrary, he always selected the ablest men available. His incredible ascendancy was due to his own strength and brilliance rather than to the weakness or incapacity of his fellow Ministers.

Waterhouse was an able man of high character and sound views, with a fine record of public service. He was the only public man in our history who enjoyed the unique experience of having been a Premier in an Australian State (South Australia) and at a later date Premier of New Zealand. This is a remarkable record. What is almost equally striking is that he only arrived in New Zealand in 1869 and yet became Premier in 1872. However, it was not long before he found that he was in a false position. He could not acquiesce in the development of Vogel's policy; accordingly, after holding office for about five months he resigned on 31 March 1873 while Vogel was absent in Australia. Pending the return of Vogel, Fox again stepped into the breach and thereafter Vogel became the nominal as well as the real head of the Government (8 April 1873).

Of these rapid changes in the personnel of the Ministry Rolleston was an interested observer and his letters throw some light on the course of events.

ROLLESTON to SIR DAVID MONRO:

March 28th, 1873.

The cry of economy is an excellent one but it does not apply to individual cases. I have never believed that the folly of the (public works) scheme would be apparent till the decree goes out for all the world to be taxed. The people will then make themselves felt as they don't now, our Government being the worst

[1] Saunders, vol. II, p. 482.

form of oligarchy living by purchase. Your election is one of the most hopeful signs of the times.[1]

The more I think of it the more assured I feel that the support of the runholders has been given to Vogel and Macandrew simply in the hope that their scheme will keep the power centralised in Wellington in the hands of the few who can afford to spend three months there yearly and will choke the growing cry of the people for the utilisation of the public lands. I think there must be something more than we know of in the matter of Waterhouse and shall expect that he will make statements which will to some extent make his case better than it now appears. Reeves' charge of disingenuousness against Vogel is very amusing. Strange that he should have sat still and allowed Vogel's compliments to pass in the House. He was severely handled by his constituents. If the Legislature stand the return of Fox to the Ministry they will stand anything. I am not hopeful and my tendencies are very provincial.

The reader will notice that in this letter Rolleston refers to "the few who can afford to spend three months yearly in Wellington". This points to an important fact that we are apt to forget. In those days there was no annual salary for members but a sessional payment and travelling allowance. Hence it was only men with private means or some other source of income who could afford to enter politics. For example, presumably Rolleston was helped by the fact that he had a salary or honorarium as Superintendent of Canterbury. But no doubt the power of the large runholders of which Rolleston so frequently complains was due to the fact that they were almost the only class that could afford to enter politics without pay and could spare time to be absent during the winter months while there was little work on their runs. Another factor that helped to make politics a close preserve was the restricted franchise. Before 1879 there was a property qualification of £50 freehold with certain other miscellaneous voting rights for miners,

[1] Monro had been elected for Waikouaiti in place of (Sir) George McLean, who had resigned.

business licenses, etc. Most of these were swept away in 1879 in favour of a residential qualification of one year in the Colony and six months in the electorate. Even then plural voting was not abolished till 1889. It would be interesting to know if plural voting had much real effect in elections. I have heard from old settlers amusing stories of men of property dashing about in buggies from one electorate to another to record their votes.

The reader may begin to think that the course of the narrative is being obscured by too many extracts from letters. But I am anxious to allow Rolleston to speak in his own words where possible. Accordingly I insert here extracts from a letter to Mr T. B. Gillies, who was Superintendent of Auckland Province and served in several ministries. He became a Judge of the Supreme Court in 1873 and died in 1889. Gisborne, says Gillies, was "shrewd, logical and incisive in thought and in speech. In politics he had not much breadth and liberality of view...he had too strong an individuality ever to become a good party man." He was, however, undoubtedly able and within its range his mind was strong and accurate.

ROLLESTON to GILLIES, 24 April 1873:

All Colonial matters are becoming so distasteful that I am always glad to keep out of them and devote myself to what is more congenial in local administration. I have just been in Wellington and have heard a good deal of political gossip, but truth is very hard to arrive at. *Re Waterhouse:* I think his crime is weakness that in an ill-advised moment he yielded to the very improper pressure brought to bear upon him by the Governor and that all his future false steps hang upon that; he has a sensitive conscience, knew all the while that he was in a false position and fretted himself from bad to worse. I am sure from what he told me that he was right to get out of it but he floundered in doing so. He confided a good deal to me, but evidently not all. I believe that if the whole truth could come out there would be a good deal of sympathy with him and the statements circulated by the other Ministers infringing his veracity are so wrong that

there must be a reaction which will save him from utter annihilation. I told him that the country would not take as an excuse that Vogel had a stronger will than he when Parliament had left him in the same position and that anything will be forgiven in public men but the letting down of their office. It is quite untrue that there had been no difference in the Cabinet and from all I gathered that letter of the other must have been and was disingenuous and suppressive of much. I have heard what would fill pages but the stories are hard to reconcile. My feeling is that Vogel attempted to force on the Cabinet a cut and dried scheme for making MacLean the nominated Superintendent of the North Island and carrying out some form of separation. (This mind you must not be quoted as a fact or as coming through me.) Waterhouse did not tell me this but I heard it on good authority—and what Reynolds explained to me of his personal views and the manner in which he insisted on their being his personal views only confirms it. Waterhouse told me that he declined to entertain new policies as being pledged to administrative reform. Of course Vogel's game will be to dazzle by something startling and withdraw attention from what is practical and pressing. I don't understand Pollen's joining except that he has previously come on in the fifth act. He is a good administrator, fond of administration and sick of the mess which everything is in around him from causes for which he is not responsible, and so joins he does not quite know why. I find that many men argue "Policies are all swamped. The country through its representatives has twice affirmed the borrowing policy, it has tasted the sweets of money gained without effort. The direction of this policy will be limited by the gullibility of the moneylender and the possibility of borrowing. What is the use of kicking against the pricks?"

You asked me what I think as to the shadows moving ahead. There are several ugly contingencies in prospect on which I don't care now to speculate, but I will tell you what I think myself as briefly as may be.

The conduct of immigration and public works from a centre has broken down. The loss of the money does not much signify, we can bear a good deal of that. What we cannot bear is the utter destruction of all real government throughout the country. The people who are supposed to have the power in their hands are not represented in the General Assembly. With the exception of the

Superintendents who are looked upon as black sheep, the *classes* represented are

(1) *The squatters* whose single view is to keep power away from the people who here as elsewhere in the world are turning their attention to the question of utilising the public land,

(2) *The Merchants*—omnivorous birds of prey—in the South, squatters' agents—elsewhere generally desirous of "keeping the people green to feed as they have fed them".

(3) *The loafers and billet hunters.* Besides these there are a few old settlers and men really interested in the welfare of the country who are becoming fewer yearly from sheer disgust. These last are chiefly men of the Old Colonial Party whose objection to the Provincial Government was that they *centralised* power and expenditure in the chief towns and neglected the development of the country. They have (I mean the would-be Colonial Party) been so long intent on what have been looked on as antiprovincial measures that they lent themselves to the destruction of the only safeguard against a far worse form of centralism as developed by Mr Vogel. We have now therefore a Government subsisting by purchase and corruption in no way representing the real interests of the people. What we want is to return to local self government as provided for by the Constitution. The only party cry that can now be raised which will meet with responses as against speculation and demoralisation is *decentralising*. The conduct of the public works and immigration (with certain conditions) must be given to the localities. I cannot see why this should not be done under the general control of the Colony in the same way that our Road Boards act under the general control of the province in the expenditure of funds for which they come to the provincial chest. It is objected that the provinces will job. No doubt they will. It is human nature, but there is a swifter adjustment of accounts and a quicker retribution than in provincial jobbery. That this decentralisation must come I can entertain no manner of doubt. The possibility of being governed by Reynolds, Bathgate and O'Rorke with an occasional interval of Vogel snatched from postal intrigues cannot last long. The line of the change is uncertain. If we are content to return to our Constitution the change will be administrative, if not it will be revolutionary and take the form of separation. Many, myself among them, hold it better to go into life halt and maimed than

with both hands to destruction. I cannot see why borrowing, except for certain Colonial undertakings limited in number and which might be definitely fixed, should not be upon special securities, as in the case of the municipalities. No lender is thus consulted as to the paying power of the undertaking which is not the case except nominally in London.

The present office of Colonial Minister is one that no one can be ambitious of, thus anyone is eligible and the work is not done; but if the mass of work which is now attempted were relegated to the Provinces, really national legislation would require and obtain men to do it.

I have written what you will think a curious rigmarole. It indicates generally the bent of my mind; but no desire to detach myself from party ties. If the opposition is to have vitality it needs must have a positive creed and we followers must as between ourselves freely interchange our views. Have you had any communication with Stafford as to his views and intentions?

The following month in a letter to FEATHERSTON, the Agent-General, ROLLESTON says:

We meet in Wellington on 15th June when there will no doubt be a good deal to say re Waterhouse. . . native matters etc., but there will be *no change* of ministry as no one is prepared to take office. If the works of these men have a successful issue they will deserve much credit which no one else will. If not they will be bound to work it out to the bitter end. No new prophet will arise till the decree goes out for all the world to be taxed.

Chapter XII

ABOLITION OF THE PROVINCES, 1874–76

"At the time the Provinces were abolished no other four men could have been found in public life who were the superiors of Sir George Grey, Wm. Fitzherbert, Rolleston and Macandrew—the Superintendents of Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago"

C. A. DE LATOUR to the author in 1890.

I

THE rapid progress of events which led to the abolition of the Provinces has been fully recorded in various New Zealand histories. But it is often not recognised at what an early date the seeds of their future destruction were sown and how inevitably linked up were all the successive changes in policy which led to their abolition. For it did not become a simple contest between those who believed in centralism and those who believed in provincialism until the final denouement. The root cause of abolition can be traced back to a date far anterior to the period when it became a dominating issue in politics.

When a demand arose in the early 'sixties for the taking over from the Imperial authorities (as represented by the Governor) of the control of Native Affairs this raised a question of national and not merely provincial importance. Colonial self-respect was urgent that this great question of native policy should be controlled by its own politicians. It was not perhaps realised at the time that all the Provinces were concerned and that this was in fact the first step towards unifying the nation.

Again, when the Provincialists demanded in 1865 that the seat of Government should be removed to Wellington for greater convenience and accessibility they perhaps did

not realise that this in turn helped to defeat provincialism by making it easier to develop the powers of the Central Government.

Finally, the various Provinces entered on a borrowing policy and some of them became embarrassed financially. In due course the Central Government had to take over or guarantee their liabilities. At the same time it laid down the rule that in future Provinces must not borrow without the consent of the Central Government. This restriction of Provincial borrowing naturally called for some substitute in carrying out public works and immigration. Thus by an inevitable process we reach the introduction of the Vogel public works and immigration policy of 1870, not as a matter of choice but of necessity. Once this stage had been reached it was easy to argue that the reason for the existence of the Provinces had ceased to operate. In short their abolition was the natural culmination of all the preceding steps.[1]

II

It is doubtful, however, if anyone but Vogel could have precipitated the abolition of the Provinces on so slight a pretext as proved sufficient for that powerful autocrat. In 1874 he brought in a Bill to establish a proper system of forestry conservation. The Bill met with no serious opposition and indeed was passed by both Houses without a division. But in the course of the debate some criticism was offered as to whether the legislation might not restrict the control by Provincial Councils of such areas of land as might be affected by forestry activities. To the surprise of the House, Vogel seized on this criticism to make open war on the Provinces. In an elaborate speech he moved a resolution to the effect that the provincial form of government in the North Island should be abolished but that

[1] See "The unification of the Colony", *New Zealand Magazine*, 1876, David Bruce.

localisation of the land revenue should be continued in accordance with the compact of 1856.

This resoltuion was launched with such precipitate haste that his own colleague (Sir) Maurice O'Rorke made a violent attack on the Premier and said that the proposal had never been discussed in Cabinet; not only so, but he announced his own resignation and dramatically walked across to the opposition benches. However, the majority in favour of the resolution was so large that it was clear the time was ripe for a general measure abolishing the whole system of provincial government in both islands. Accordingly when Parliament met next year (1875) this task was taken in hand. A Homeric battle raged between centralism and provincialism in a classical debate that lasted for three weeks. Vogel must have regarded the result as a foregone conclusion, as he had gone off on another financial mission to England. He left (Sir) Harry Atkinson in charge to bear the whole burden of piloting the Bill through the House. This Atkinson did with great skill, sagacity and patience. At some stage in his long career he earned the reputation of "wearing hobnailed boots", that is, of forcing legislation through the House. But on this occasion he showed himself to be reasonable and tactful. Sir George Grey had emerged from his retirement in order to lead the opposition to abolition. With him were Rolleston, Macandrew, Stout and other champions of the Provinces.

III

Rolleston in a lengthy speech traversed the achievements of the Provincial Councils and reiterated the beneficent results of "a healthy conflict between localism and centralism as essential to good government". As indicated in an earlier chapter, though he was fully alive to the defects of the provincial system, he urged that what was wanted was not abolition but economy and simplification "leaving to

the localities such functions as they could best perform, with the Central Government still exercising a general superintendence and control without destroying, without abolishing and without tyrannising".

He denounced the inefficiency of the Central Government and their gross neglect of the gaols, asylums and other social institutions. He ended a lengthy and well-reasoned speech by saying: "Do not let it be said of us all that we hastily sanctioned a measure resigning our privileges and all that we have worked for at the instance of one who chose to say that he was tired of the Provinces." The Bill finally passed by a large majority, but was not to operate until Parliament met again the following year. In the meantime an election was held (in December 1875) and it clearly proved that Parliament had correctly gauged popular opinion in legislating for the abolition of the Provinces.

IV

Sir David Monro was out of politics at this time, seeking to regain his health by a quiet country life. Although he was a strong supporter of abolition he was in full accord with Rolleston's opinion on Vogel and his borrowing policy.

Sir David Monro to Rolleston, 15 July 1874:

I have been reading a speech of Waterhouse's. It is very clever and amusing. I had no idea that Waterhouse had so much fun in him. There are some capital hits in it—what a pity that Sewell left the Legislative Council. I fancy Vogel wants to drive Featherston out of his office (as Agent-General). These letters of his are exceedingly coarse and offensive and when one thinks of Featherston's antecedents and public services it is deplorable to see him bullied by such a snob as Vogel. The career which Vogel has cut out for himself I can fancy to be as follows; he will go home as Agent for the Colony and after a year or two he will endeavour to get into the British Parliament. He has brains enough to see that the time for leaving New Zealand is drawing nigh.

I am told that at the present moment the credit of the Colony is very high in England and that we can get any amount of money

we choose to ask for. This must come to an end before long. The Colony is living at a fearful pace which is becoming faster... there will be lots of money for everybody and the goal will be reached all the sooner....

I suppose there is no opposition and I really think there would be very little use in having one. The Colony cares only about one thing and that is money—no matter where it comes from so long as there is an ample supply.

SIR DAVID MONRO to ROLLESTON, 11 December 1875:

On one account, if not on more, I am not sorry that I was not in the House of Representatives last session, for if I had been there although on the great majority of questions I should have been by your side, still on the great question of the elimination of the Provinces I should have been obliged to differ from you; and I can assure you with all sincerity that having the greatest respect for your political views, and with very great admiration of the independence and honesty with which you express them in the Legislature I should have separated from you on this question with much pain....

The question of one Parliament for the Colony or ten parliaments is one that has been in my mind ever since the Constitution of 1853 was launched, and I never could come to any other conclusion than that in the multiplicity of legislation and the extreme subdivision of the colonial resources there was created a most unnecessary amount of machinery and a conflict of interests. All this appeared to me to give to the colonial parliament the character of a body compound of a number of squads pursuing local objects and rendered it quite impossible that it should exhibit those characteristics of strength and public spirit, without which a parliament is hardly entitled to any respect whatever. I have the most affectionate respect for the institutions of the old country and feel perfectly certain that its machinery of local self government is at the bottom of its strength and success in the higher efforts of legislation. But local self government as understood in England means nothing more than the administration by a locally constituted body of a law made by the one parliament of the country. Such a thing as the manufacture of laws for the British people by ten parliaments never entered I should think into the

head of the most locally minded British subject. I don't think there is the smallest reason to fear that we shall have a sufficient amount of local self government.... What I fear most is the bribery of the General Government and the corruption thereby engendered....New Zealand has been demoralised by the Vogel policy. Little of its self-respect is left. Backstairs influence and log rolling and successful beggary are the influences which are invoked....

Is the credit of New Zealand nearly exhausted? I fancy that it is: and I am very happy to think that such is the case. Without borrowed money Vogel is nobody; a Samson without his locks. The collapse of that mountebank is not very far distant and his name in a very few years will be mentioned in a very different tone from that in which it is sounded at present. But alas for the poor Colony. It has an awful millstone round its neck: and will have to pay dearly for its reckless gullibility.

Vogel arrived back in New Zealand in February 1876 after sixteen months' absence. He was fêted and banqueted by immense crowds and was hailed with unrestrained enthusiasm as a national hero. He resumed without question the Premiership and reconstituted his Cabinet.

J. E. Fitzgerald, first Superintendent of Canterbury and William Rolleston, last Superintendent of Canterbury

Chapter XIII

THE INTERMEDIATE PERIOD: SIR HARRY ATKINSON'S FIRST MINISTRY, 1876–77

"Atkinson gained office before the time was ripe for his really liberal views. At heart a man of the people he accepted office among men who looked upon progressive views as dangerous" (letter to the author from C. A. DE LATOUR, ex-M.P.).

I

THE reader is now in a position to gauge with some precision Rolleston's political temperament and attitude. He was in effect, as already stated, Horace's "just man". He was not an extremist in politics. It is easy to be an extremist. The difficult role is that of the man who tries to be constructive and to remedy evils without destroying what is worth saving. Hence we see that Rolleston was not a blind opponent on either of the two great questions that came up for decision between 1870 and 1876, namely the public works policy and the abolition of the Provinces. His powerful qualities as a critic are apt to obscure the fact that his criticism was not merely destructive. If proof is required let the reader recall the fact that he approved of the borrowing for public works and railways. But he wanted safeguards to avoid waste and extravagance. He wanted definite plans and calculations submitted to the House as to how loan moneys would be spent. He saw clearly that once public works' expenditure ceased to be provincial and passed under the control of the General Government it would not be long before the Provinces lost their jealously guarded land funds. A still graver peril threatened his own highly successful immigration policy,

to which he had devoted so much patient care. For the key to his system was that migration should dovetail into closer land settlement. But if a flood of immigrants was rushed into Canterbury while land was locked up in the hands of large squatters it must inflate the wealth of the squatters and leave the migrants landless. "The more I think of it", he wrote to Monro on 26 March 1873, "the more assured I feel that the support of the runholders has been given to Vogel or Macandrew simply in the hope that their scheme will keep the power centralised in Wellington in the hands of the few who can afford to spend three months there yearly and will choke the growing cry for the utilisation of the public lands."

These were surely sound and reasonable objections, and the glamour of Vogel's bold and spectacular proposals should not blind us to Rolleston's wise caution.

The same applies to the hasty abolition of the Provinces. The failure to substitute a well-planned system of local government has led to many mischievous evils that persist to this day. All modern proposals for remedying our system of local government bear a striking resemblance to Rolleston's schemes of over fifty years ago.[1]

[1] Indeed Sir John Salmond when Solicitor-General in 1912 drew a Local Government Bill which in effect recreated the provincial system with twenty-four provinces. The Provincial Councils were to control hospitals, education, harbours, roads, rivers and bridges, etc. But the scheme was considered too ambitious. Later attempts to amalgamate local bodies in regional areas have so far been thwarted by local jealousies. The time to have created a sound system of local government was, as Rolleston urged, on the abolition of the Provinces in 1876. But his advice was ignored, and we have paid the penalty ever since. Could we have combined Vogel's bold imagination with Rolleston's patience in working out administrative details the results would have come nearer to perfection. But unfortunately it was impossible to yoke these two men of such opposite temperaments in the same Cabinet. Both had their contribution to make—and the part played by Rolleston was the more difficult.

II

Although Rolleston fought hard to secure a modified form of Provincialism or some adequate substitute, he had the good sense to recognise that the battle had been lost. He knew well enough that the large squatters of Canterbury had supported abolition in order to get rid of his persistent efforts to promote closer settlement and check land monopoly.

But since abolition had become an accomplished fact he told his constituents: "It is the business of Canterbury members to do their utmost to make the change work satisfactorily in the interests of the public."

To assist in this object he loyally acted as Commissioner or Agent for the Government in winding up the affairs of his Province. It was natural that in doing so he cast many wistful glances back over the admirable results he had achieved as Superintendent of the Province, and the healthy state to which he had brought all its institutions. Some die-hard Provincialists resented what they regarded as his too easy acquiescence in so revolutionary a change, and they murmured at his wise and public-spirited patriotism.

His acceptance of the inevitable by no means implied that he had abandoned his convictions or his right to criticise the Government. What aroused his irony was to see his old colleagues changing their political allegiance "in order to swim with the tide". "I found it necessary", he said, "to strike out on a line of my own; sometimes supporting the Government and sometimes the Opposition." Although he strongly believed in party government and loyalty to a party he could find no leader who would hold to a steady course. Vogel's sudden volte-face against Provincialism he could never forget nor forgive.

> He (Vogel) was the pet of the ultra-provincial party for a long time (said Rolleston), and they looked to him as their champion and chief. Then he became the most active promoter of abolition.

It is a fatal evil in the administration of a country when confidence is destroyed by the union of men who are prepared to sink principles which are held most dear by the people of the country.

III

By the year 1876 after abolition of the Provinces had been carried he found himself with nowhere to go politically, unless he remained in opposition with the remnant of the anti-abolitionists, Sir George Grey, Stout and Fitzherbert. At this stage his old friend C. C. Bowen, Minister for Education in Vogel's Government, seems to have become genuinely concerned about Rolleston's political future and tried to find a way of escape for him. With Vogel's consent he offered him the post of Colonial Under-Secretary, which at that time was the richest prize in the Civil Service. The letter conveying this offer gives interesting glimpses of the general situation.

HON. C. C. BOWEN to ROLLESTON, 5 May 1876:

At the risk of your being unnecessarily suspicious I cannot but put before you what I think would be a great benefit to the Colony and not disadvantageous to yourself.

Don't quote the Bible to me now, but consider what I have to say carefully and try to believe that although a member of the Government I am not a rascal.... The Under-secretaryship will now be the most important office in the Colony and will grow both in importance and pay with the growth of the Colony. It is essential that the office should be held by a first rate administrator and without flattering you you know my opinion as to your capacities in that line.... If you are inclined to take the office and let me know, Vogel will write you a letter which you can show to your friends if you wish to consult them. If you take the office the salary will be put at £900 a year for the present.

Bowen went on to make the offer as tempting as possible. He pointed out that Rolleston would not be a departmental Under-Secretary but would be in charge of any departmental Under-Secretaries there might be, and would have an assistant Under-Secretary to relieve him from irksome

details. "In fact it would be the most interesting administrative office in the Colony bar none."

Now as to your present position.... I assure you that the Grey-Macandrew party is not one with which you will like to be associated... you said in your note to Fitzherbert you can fairly look on the party of last session as broken up (i.e. the anti-abolition party). What is to succeed it we don't know yet. Nor do you.

It is all nonsense to talk about party government in New Zealand. A party may be formed on a particular question—such as that of abolition for instance. You don't seriously want to see Sir George Grey in office declaring war with England—or ordering His Majesty's ships off the coast. It is time for all reasonable men to do whatever is the best work that offers, and not to fancy that they are tied up to Macandrew or Grey or any such people because the inexorable pressure of circumstances compelled them to go into the lobby with them for one session.

You have fought out the Provincial question to the bitter end with the three other recalcitrant superintendents. Why should you stay to be put in a false position by the two who won't listen to law or reason?

I have talked confidentially of this to two of your friends and mine, Fenton and Fitzgerald, and they are both very strongly of opinion that you ought to take this office.... Vogel is very cordial about the matter and will write you a handsome letter offering the appointment formally if you will let me know your views on the subject.

I think we have a good Education Act simply providing for Boards all over the Colony. Come and have a hand in it. Hislop of Otago has been here and is very useful.

Rolleston rejected this friendly effort to solve his difficulties. His reply is not extant, but from some notes left by Rolleston it appears that in spite of Bowen's injunction "Don't quote the Bible to me", he could not resist doing so. His first quotation was from Numbers, chapter 22:

And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak

the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me.

For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go.

He also quoted Proverbs, chapter 28, verse 6: "Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich."

This is clever sparring, but one hopes that in his full reply he acknowledged Bowen's obviously sincere desire to extricate him from his troubles. But probably he suspected that, though Bowen was a genuine friend, behind him was Vogel, whose real motive might be to get him out of the way politically. Colour was lent to this view by the fact that at the same time Vogel, with his usual astuteness in disarming opponents, had persuaded Fitzherbert to become Speaker of the Lower House. On this Bowen wrote to Rolleston: "The old gentleman (Fitzherbert) is immensely pleased with the offer of the Speakership and is not sorry I think to get out of a false position. He will, I think, make a good Speaker."

This decision by Fitzherbert to accept the Speakership was not arrived at until after he had consulted Rolleston whose reply shows his high opinion of Fitzherbert.

ROLLESTON to FITZHERBERT:

May 1st, 1876.

I write in haste to catch the mail in reference to your telegram about the Speakership. It appears to me that the Speakership ceases to be a party question at all unless the Speaker is nominated by the Party to which he belongs. Under the present circumstances I think it is not a party question and you should act as you think fit. To me it will be a matter of great regret that you should cease to be in active politics as I have looked more to you than to any other public man of late and I feel that your going off

the floor of the House means certainly the breaking up of the party of last session.

There are however so many doubtful circumstances connected with the meeting of the new House that I do not feel in any way justified in raising any objection to a course of which you are entitled to be the sole judge.

IV

By 1876 all the major questions that had occupied the political arena since Rolleston entered the House had been disposed of. The Maori War had been finished; the Provincial system of Government had been abolished; the Colony had adopted as part of its routine policy a plan of heavy borrowing for public works and immigration.

On the departure of Vogel from New Zealand in August 1876 Atkinson became Prime Minister. This change brought a sense of relief to Parliament. For Vogel's health had become precarious. He no longer commanded the attention of the House. "When he rose in former years", said Montgomery, "the House greeted him with cheers. Now his speeches were received coldly and when he sat down there was little applause. He was not the man he had been in former years, nor the trusted leader of an enthusiastic party."

Nevertheless the absence of Vogel's vivid personality left politics rather stale and flat. "The session of 1876", said Rolleston "was one of the weariest ever spent in my life." There was a mass of detailed drudgery to be dealt with consequent upon the abolition of the Provinces.

Moreover, the personnel of the House had been greatly changed at the election of 1876. It no longer consisted almost entirely of men of property and leisure. The new Parliament was probably more truly representative of the people than any of its predecessors.

One of the first conflicts was caused by Whitaker, who joined the Cabinet after the departure of Vogel. He attempted to make the land fund part of the Colonial revenues.

Both Canterbury and Otago denounced this as daylight robbery. For while the North Island had been selling land at 10*s.* or 5*s.* an acre and dissipating the proceeds they had pursued a more virtuous course. They had not only insisted on a higher price for their lands, but they had carefully applied the proceeds in promoting public works and immigration. Hence they stoutly, and for the time being successfully, resisted the attempt to throw their patrimony into the common pool.

At the same time Rolleston was far-sighted enough to see that once Vogel's public works' policy of 1870 was adopted it must result in a large share of the land fund passing over to the control of the Central Government. "The country received with acclamation", he said, "the proposal to expend large sums on railways and to a great extent thereby gave up the power of appropriating the land fund." The land revenue was part of the system of railway construction. The only question was what share should the Government take?

Whitaker's proposal having been defeated the next innovation was proposed by Sir George Grey. He advocated a scheme of separation under which each Island would be a Province under a Federal Government in Wellington. "The real meaning of this", said Rolleston, "is that the greater part of the South Island would be governed from Otago and all the North Island from Auckland." This proposal was also rejected.

V

Atkinson's Budget of 1877 was called "the rest and be thankful Budget". This was due to his statement that the real need of the country was political rest. Certainly Atkinson himself might reasonably hope for a rest. For in carrying through the abolition of the Provinces and all the legislative changes consequent thereupon he had carried

out an immense task. It is difficult to-day to realise the great complications with which he had to cope.

Moreover, once the new order was established all parties broke up in confusion. To add to Atkinson's troubles his great Native Minister, Sir Donald McLean, died. This damaged the Government severely, owing to the fact that the public had had faith in his administration. In fact, his presence was practically essential to the existence of the Government. "There was a thorough paralysis of political feeling", said Rolleston. "There was no clearly defined line of parties. The Government did not know from day to day even among their own friends where to turn for support."

Another factor which injured Atkinson's Government at this time was the general feeling of disappointment. The reality of the effects of abolition did not come up to expectations. It was felt too that the Ministry was merely the shell of the old Vogel Government, drawing even on the Opposition for recruits.

As may well be supposed Rolleston with his constant scruples and too finely balanced mind found the political situation puzzling and obscure. He described the Ministers as his personal friends—as "men of integrity who deserved well of the country". Nevertheless he realised the general desire for change. The Government had been too continuous and had become tarnished by time.

At this stage a curious position developed. A new middle party arose which Rolleston considered as of questionable value. Yet he could not follow Grey on account of the futile desire of Macandrew and Grey to urge separation. He was equally loath to join Atkinson as he had just fought him on the abolition of the Provinces. Hence he was reluctantly driven to vote with the middle party, which, like himself, would support neither Atkinson nor Grey. Indeed, at that time he thought there were enough men available to form a good stable Ministry apart from either of these leaders. But he was mistaken. For though this middle party

succeeded in ousting Atkinson, the man who moved the vote of no-confidence was Larnach—"a man unknown to the political world", said Rolleston. Larnach was powerless to form a Ministry and to the great annoyance of the middle party Grey's followers availed themselves of the confusion and forced Grey on the House as Prime Minister. The position was almost farcical, for all those who believed in the unity of the Colony resented the accidental victory of Grey. Indeed, he had actually been on the point of sailing to England with Macandrew to present resolutions for the creation of Otago as a separate Colony, as a result of what was called The Otago Convention. It was only Grey's ill-health that had blocked this strange adventure.

When the middle party realised the mischief they had done they joined with Atkinson in an endeavour to oust Grey. But they were too late. Grey was in office, and though not very safe in the saddle he survived the attack. Rolleston voted against Grey and fully expected to see him defeated. "It was by a fluke", he said later, "that the vote of no-confidence in the Grey Government was not carried."

VI

During these tempestuous years Rolleston's reputation had steadily risen in public opinion. His speeches had always attracted attention. It was now generally believed that his great abilities must ere long be availed of if any change of Ministry occurred.

SIR WALTER BULLER to ROLLESTON, 26 April 1877:

In the event of ministerial changes next session I hope you will see your way to accept a portfolio. If Gisborne succeeds in getting a seat, and his chances are improving every day, you will find him a thorough-going supporter.

But it was 1879 before Rolleston became a Minister of the Crown. The intervening period (apart from the passage of Bowen's Education Act 1877) is one of the most desultory and least edifying in our political history. I will therefore

pass quickly over this period, except to remark that Rolleston was busily and successfully advocating various social reforms.

The most notable of these was the creation of the Deaf and Dumb Institute at Sumner. This was the direct result of Rolleston's persistent efforts both in and out of Parliament. In 1878 he carried a resolution for the establishment of such an asylum and for financial provision to be made during that session. Up till that time the Government considered that this work should be done by voluntary subscriptions aided by subsidies. Rolleston rightly claimed that it was wholly the duty of the State. "There is no doubt", he said, "that the education of those of its members afflicted with these infirmities is as much the duty of the Colony as the education of the healthy members of the community."

Rolleston went further and urged the need of an asylum for the blind as well as for the deaf and dumb. He had made a close study of the best methods practised in various parts of the world for giving humane and helpful treatment to the blind, deaf and dumb and to orphans.

Before Rolleston brought about this great reform the practice was to send deaf and dumb children to the Melbourne Institute. But Rolleston said the Colony should pay four or five times the cost in maintaining a local asylum rather than send children away for an indefinite period to what was for all practical purposes a foreign country.[1]

His humane views on the treatment of the indigent poor must also not be overlooked. The Government in 1877 brought in a Charitable Institutions Bill. In this legislation they sought to throw the burden on to voluntary contributions subsidised by the Government. The Minister argued that if a poor rate was imposed or the cost met out of taxation "the class requiring assistance would begin to

[1] The results of Rolleston's untiring efforts can be read in an article by the expert directors of the Sumner Institute, see *Lyttelton Times*, 9 July 1921.

consider that they had a right to demand the money collected by means of the poor rate, whereas they ought rather to feel that any assistance was given as a charity". He quoted Whateley's maxim, "that if you pay a man to work he will work, and if you pay him to beg he will beg".

Rolleston indignantly repudiated this line of reasoning and declared that the whole Bill was radically wrong.

> The question of poor relief (he said) is just as much a national matter as education. State action will not dry up private benevolence. I deny that the poor should be forced to regard assistance as a matter of charity or favour. In the City of Christchurch alone, there are no less than forty widows who are receiving assistance. I should be very sorry to think that because they receive assistance it should in any way cause them to lose their self respect. I think the world is coming to have a better idea on subjects of this kind.... I think the time is coming when we should look upon those members of the community who have been earning their bread by the sweat of their brow—when they fall into distress and have been unable to provide for their families—we should look upon them as persons whom we are bound to provide for as a matter of duty and not as a matter of charity.

Rolleston considered the term "poor law" unfortunate, and said no Board administering the system should carry with it an objectionable title.

> It seems to me (he said) to be against every principle of public policy or proper government that any body of men should be able by putting their hands in their pockets to buy the power of administering the taxation of the country. It seems to me against every principle of justice that a few charitable gentlemen should be able to go and manage these institutions, perhaps not solely in the interests of the institutions themselves, and that they should be able to control their administration.

On these and other questions Rolleston revealed himself as a keen social reformer. No one can read his urgent protests against the overcrowding of lunatic asylums and other similar evils and remain content to regard him as a conservative or as one who believed in leaving social problems alone.

Chapter XIV

SIR GEORGE GREY AND ROLLESTON, 1877–79

"The many honest and acute men who did not keep step with Grey who were disappointed in him or repelled by him and embittered against him were not always wrong"—W. P. REEVES.

I

THE contrast between Grey's brilliant career as a Governor and his failure as a politician is well known. In his earlier years he rightly earned an illustrious reputation as one of Britain's greatest Proconsuls; not only in New Zealand but in various parts of the Empire he had proved himself a great administrator, who displayed the highest qualities of courage, diplomacy and resourcefulness. For some years his mana among the Maoris stood high. When in 1868 he was not reappointed by the Duke of Newcastle it was regarded by the people of New Zealand as a humiliating dismissal. Many writers refer to the incident as if Grey had been recalled, but in fact Grey's term of office had expired. Nevertheless, the circumstances were such that a spontaneous burst of sympathy poured in from all quarters, demonstrating the esteem and admiration in which at that time he was held by the people of New Zealand. Not only the members of the Ministry but both branches of the Legislature and many public bodies presented him with addresses of confidence and admiration. But the triumphs won by Grey as a great Governor and Imperial Proconsul he could not repeat in the arena of party politics. It is true that in 1877 he became Premier, and in the lives of most statesmen that is regarded as the climax of a successful career; but in the case of Grey, his occupancy of that high

office was a melancholy and inglorious anticlimax. Indeed, the very qualities that had served him in such good stead as Governor were now distorted and perverted in such a way as to bring about before long his humiliation and downfall. His firmness, dignity and courage as Governor were now converted into obstinacy, arrogance and petulance as Premier. As Gisborne truly said in discussing the career of Grey: "The leader of a political party may become in a certain time autocratic, but he must first, as it were, stoop to conquer." This Grey could never learn to do, and so his parliamentary career was a pathetic series of bitter conflicts, not merely with his enemies but with his colleagues and supporters. Whenever he toured the country he could arouse vast crowds to a frenzy of wild enthusiasm by what Reeves calls "his cloudy eloquence". But this grandiosity was entirely unsuited to the parliamentary arena. "The honourable gentleman", said Rolleston, "labours under the constant belief that the rest of the world is sworn to persecute him. At one time it is the Colonial Office, at another time it is the Generals, at another time the Governor and the Legislative Council, and now the honourable gentleman on this side of the House are sworn to persecute and destroy him." He quarrelled with his able Treasurer, Ballance, who resigned from the Ministry. He became estranged from his Attorney-General, Sir Robert Stout, who went back to his legal practice on the plea that his partner was failing in health. His conflicts with the Governor were incessant, and finally his followers lost faith in him to such an extent that he not only had to give up the Premiership but had to surrender, or at any rate refuse to accept, the leadership of the Opposition.

II

But if Grey was a disappointment as Prime Minister, on the other hand Atkinson was not proving satisfactory as Leader of the Opposition. It was being urged in some

quarters that he should be replaced by Rolleston or Fitzherbert.

J. D. ORMOND to ROLLESTON, 12 April 1878:

I entirely agree with you as to the necessity for arrangement for united action next session and also think with you that whether it gives Grey a victory or not we are bound to put on record our protest against his action in the matter of the Land Bill and it ought to be done by an amendment on the address.

Now first as to united action—the question that arises is who is to lead. There is as far as I can gather a general feeling that change in the leadership is desirable. Atkinson since the close of the session has buried himself at his farm. I hear from all his late colleagues that he writes to no one and answers no letters. I wrote to him two or three times but got no reply and can't understand what he means unless it is that he has retired. If that be so he should have told his friends—for to leave the party as it is now without organisation through the recess is not playing the game at all.

Now the first question for us to consider is the selection of a leader. From Wellington I hear that old Fitzherbert desires to come out of the chair and lead the Opposition, but I doubt very much whether our side would have him. His conduct last session was so bad that several leading men on our side were thoroughly disgusted with him. Still in some respects he would answer the purpose and the question for our side to consider is whether we should use him....

The man I would like to see leader is yourself if you can be induced to undertake it. I believe you would be the most acceptable to the party. George McLean was here yesterday, and he declared nothing would induce him to follow old Fitzherbert but he would gladly follow you. He thinks that a change is necessary and agrees that you would do it best. I had a letter a few days ago from Pollen—he also advocated a change but did not suggest anyone.

It is very important for us to come to some decision but it is difficult to settle it until we can ascertain what the party would be satisfied with.

Thanks for what you tell me about the meeting at Christchurch. I have seen with disgust the apparent success that has

attended old Grey's stumping tour. From what you tell me, however, the meeting was not the unanimous and enthusiastic affair it has been described. The same may be said of nearly every meeting I have heard of. It may be he would win if we had a General Election now, but time is working against him. Already people everywhere are complaining of unfulfilled promises and with the present pecuniary difficulties in which they are placed it is impossible for half the promises to be carried out.

A year later J. D. Ormond renews his complaint about Atkinson's leadership.

J. D. ORMOND to ROLLESTON, 9 June 1879:

Like yourself I have been much exercised lately as to the course to be pursued at Wellington. As you say the great want is that of a leader whom the party will follow. From all quarters I hear that Atkinson would not be acceptable again—but unfortunately no one else seems to be generally acceptable either. I will tell you what I have gathered.

First, it is said the Auckland men of our party wish Whitaker to lead. I have no personal objection to Whitaker but do not think he would be acceptable to the party in the House or the country—we have to fight a General Election and a very great deal depends on having a leader who stands well with the country. I think now as I did last year that of all the men on our side *you* best meet the requirements of the case and would best satisfy the country. John Hall has been talked of and next to yourself I think Hall is the best man to select. It seems however that, like yourself, Hall is doubtful of accepting the position. I don't think Hall would make half as good a fight as you would, but he would have the advantage of standing well with the public as a man who could be trusted.

I see you name Fox—now no one knows better than I do how thoroughly loyal and nice he is to his colleagues—but his unfortunate craze on the liquor question puts him out of the question—at least it would be starting on a hard fight with all the interest of the Licensed Victuallers against us and they are too powerful a body to be ignored. Moreover, I doubt if Fox would accept the position or if the party as a whole would accept him.

I am positive *you* would best meet the case, and I think the party as a whole would go for you.

I have written to both Pollen and Atkinson. Pollen will follow anyone the party as a whole will accept—he would gladly take you or he would agree to Hall. Atkinson only says he will do what the party wishes. I told him very plainly that in my opinion the leader to be successful must be chosen from outside the late Government.

These discussions and speculations are of interest as showing the disorganised state of the Opposition and the esteem in which Rolleston was held. But, as will appear later, although Sir William Fox led the debate which caused the downfall of Grey, at the bitter election which followed he himself was defeated by Ballance and was therefore not available as leader of the party which was about to come into power. Even had he been elected his ardent advocacy of temperance rendered him unpopular with the House and his tongue was too caustic to allow of his reconciling contending factions. The problem of leadership was ultimately solved by Sir John Hall resigning from the Legislative Council and obtaining a seat in the Lower House.

Grey seemed to inspire Rolleston to a degree that produced from him more forceful and brilliant speeches than he ever achieved before or at any later date. Indeed, the contrast between Rolleston's speeches when he was engaged in conflict with Vogel in earlier years and those which he delivered in his contest with Grey is remarkable. His earlier speeches had displayed a certain aridity and coldness, but in fighting Grey his style of speech became transformed. He now dealt sledge-hammer blows with a fiery and sustained passion which must have surprised his friends. It is clear that the two men were poles apart in temperament and outlook. Grey was emotional, and careless in his statements, and was carried away by the magic of his own fluent oratory. Rolleston, on the other hand, was methodical and careful and was (almost) prosaic in his manner of speech. In view of the fact that both Grey and Rolleston were ardently desirous of preventing land monopoly it may

surprise the reader that it was around this question that their conflict mainly centred; but we have seen in an earlier chapter that Rolleston always regarded Grey's land regulations of 1853 as a grave blunder. Under those regulations, which he issued on his own authority, he reduced the price of Crown Lands and thereby enabled speculators to acquire enormous areas or pick out the eyes of the land. It has been contended on behalf of Grey that his real object was to cheapen land in the interests of the poor man, but however good the intention may have been most authorities hold that its effect was exactly the reverse.

It would be wearisome and unprofitable to go into all the phases of this controversy during the time Grey was Premier, but a brief reference may be permitted to Rolleston's speeches. One of these was famous for many years and was known as the "splendide mendax" speech. It occurred on the Land Tax Bill of 1878.[1] During the recess, Grey had toured the country, and in the course of his speeches had declared that the Canterbury lands were locked up in the hands of the runholders. He alleged that the lands had been given to them at *9d.* a head. In reply Rolleston pointed out that this was the minimum and not the maximum. Moreover, the runholders had merely grazing rights and under the legislation the Government could, at any time, throw open the land for sale on deferred payment. He complained that Grey either did not know the Land Act or had grossly and wilfully misrepresented it, and that no more dishonest course was ever taken than that taken by the Premier in raising such a cry to the people. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that the chief grievance against the Land Tax Bill was that it imposed the same tax on the runholders as if they were freeholders. Even those members who had no leanings towards the runholders admitted that this was a real injustice.[2]

[1] Hansard, vol. XXIX, p. 396.

[2] See Saunder's speech, Hansard, vol. XXVIII, p. 519.

But the most famous passage in this speech occurred while he was dealing with the ineptitude and maladministration of the Grey Government.

> We had a Premier lately (he said, meaning Vogel) leading the people onward to a revolution under a banner which has been aptly described as having upon it the words "aere alieno" [on borrowed money].[1] We have now a Premier (Grey) who has gone abroad fostering, as I think unwisely, feelings as between different classes of society. I think that considering the promises he has made, considering the way in which he has entirely failed to carry out these promises, and considering the way he has thoroughly deceived the people the inscription which he may put on his banner is "splendide mendax".

In all his speeches the spearpoint of his attack centred on the land question. It is easy to realise that Rolleston's unceasing efforts to promote land settlement, which had rendered him so unpopular with the squatters, made him deeply resentful of Grey's accusations. In 1879 on the eve of his defeat Grey alleged that 4,000,000 acres were held by the greedy squatters of Canterbury, thus depriving the people of their right to settle in happy homes. Rolleston reiterated that the land was held only on grazing tenure and not on lease and that Grey could at any time have sold the lands under the deferred payment system. He complained that Grey was well aware of the position and had failed in his duty.

Elsewhere he pointed out that the three great guarantees of liberty, namely, the Press, the judiciary and a well-administered Civil Service, had all been flouted by the Government. It had sought to make the Press pander to it by giving advertisements only to papers that supported the Government. It had played fast and loose with the judiciary with a view to getting political support. It had

[1] A classical scholar suggests that this may be a witty double entendre alluding to Vogel's foreign extraction and meaning "with foreign brazen-facedness".

dismissed tried and faithful Civil Servants without justification and rewarded political supporters by placing them over the heads of old and tried officers. Finally, he declared that in Native Affairs no greater mess had ever been made than in the last two years. The people of New Zealand had been humiliated by the great feasts, gluttonous gorges and indecent orgies of Ministers of the Crown.

To add to all these grounds of criticism the benefits of the Vogel policy of heavy loan expenditure were now wearing off. Henry Sewell wrote to Rolleston on 16 April 1879 deploring the position of the public finances:

> I am satisfied (he wrote) that we are approaching the end and that a financial disaster is impending. The current expenditure upon public works and immigration last quarter was £700,000. How long is this to go on? The whole available cash in London and the Colony was £232,000 to meet a current expenditure going on at the rate of more than a million a quarter. The Colony must somehow or another be roused up to a sense of its true condition.

Soon after this the Grey Government was defeated. The attack that led to his downfall was launched by Sir William Fox in a devastating speech that was long remembered. After some political manœuvring the Hall Government took office, with Rolleston as Minister of Lands. Rolleston had now raised himself to the front rank of New Zealand public men. While he had been unsuccessful in his earlier contests with Vogel it seems clear that his powerful indictment of the policy and administration of Grey played a large part in bringing about the downfall of that eminent statesman.

Chapter XV

ROLLESTON IN OFFICE, 1879–84

"Nothing reveals the quality of men like giving them authority and things to do. Place discovers a man's capacity and his character. Office shows the man"—GUICCIARDINI.

I

WHEN, after a dissolution and a General Election, Sir George Grey's Ministry was defeated in October 1879, the Governor sent for Sir John Hall. But the parties were so evenly divided that a political stalemate existed. At one stage it appeared as if another appeal to the country would afford the only solution of the deadlock.

At this stage, however, there occurred one of the most sensational incidents in our political history. Four Auckland members (Wood, Swanson, Hurst and Colbeck) who were supporters of Sir George Grey offered Hall their support on condition that he passed certain measures to which they were pledged. They also stipulated that an Auckland member should be in the Ministry, but to make clear that they were not actuated by personal motives they expressly stipulated that the Auckland Minister should not be one of themselves.

This plan enabled Hall to form a stable Ministry. The four bold members who had cut the Gordian knot were violently maligned for some time as traitors and they were called the "four Auckland rats". But later on they came to be regarded as patriots who had changed their party as the only means of furthering their principles.

II

In Hall's Ministry Rolleston was entrusted with the important portfolios of lands, immigration and education.

One would like to know why he did not become Prime Minister. According to the letters quoted in the preceding chapter the party would have welcomed Rolleston as leader. Did he make way for Hall out of diffidence or generosity, or did he consider that Atkinson had a better claim? Or was he too busy by reason of the fact that about this time he had bought a new farm at Rangitata in South Canterbury? Unfortunately, I have no letters from Rolleston to indicate what decisions he had to make or what influenced him in the course he took.

Turning now to Sir Harry Atkinson, who had already proved himself a statesman, for some reason equally obscure he was not a candidate for the leadership. It has been shown in the last chapter that he seems from time to time to have buried himself in his farm, and to have ignored all letters from members of his party. Whatever his motive may have been his conduct seems to refute the accusation (so frequently made) that he was always hungry for office. On the other hand there is evidence that the party feared that Atkinson would prove too radical. This is not improbable as, although by the irony of history Atkinson has come down to us as a conservative, he was in reality a socialist. The only reason why his socialistic views were never promulgated was that during all his years of office he was engaged in a constant struggle against falling prices and hard times. Under such conditions he was forced to subordinate his theoretical views to the practical necessities of fiscal stringency.

III

When Sir George Grey was driven from office he boasted that he would drag the new Ministry at his chariot wheels and compel them to pass his proposed legislation. These

measures were certainly passed, but it was probably Atkinson's influence that induced Sir John Hall to take up the reforms of triennial parliaments and other measures which Grey had promoted.

Hall remained as Prime Minister until 1883 and was succeeded by Whitaker. A few months later Atkinson took over and remained in office until the downfall of the Ministry in 1884.

Ill-health has always been alleged as the reason for Hall's resignation. But the following letter seems to indicate that there were serious differences of opinion in Cabinet.

J. C. RICHMOND to ROLLESTON, 3 April 1882:

On my way through Wellington I saw Hall and discussed the political situation. That Hall should retire on grounds of bad health even at so inconvenient a moment would cast no shadow on his character as a public man or on that of any of his colleagues. That a breakdown should take place at the very eve of the session on grounds of an ill-advised expression on one side or irritability on the other among your Cabinet would be in my opinion deplorable. For this reason and because I would not have the honourable and prudent party in the country suffer from the reflected discredit of such an event I write to say that it appears to me, without taking counsel with anyone, that Hall should withdraw his unfortunate word and you and Bryce your resignations in order to meet the House as a ministry and that Hall should be liberated after the vote on the address, which happily it is proposed to make a trial of strength. If you carry it the Government would on Hall's resignation naturally send for Atkinson. If you lose, then the question falls and you part as gentlemen able to accommodate small differences arising out of faults of manner should do.

I do not know Bryce well enough to have a right to address him, but if you think well let him read this letter.

Nevertheless there is no reference in Rolleston's letters to the Cabinet quarrels mentioned by Richmond. Writing to his brother, the Reverend Robert Rolleston, Rector of Stanton Rivers, on 18 April 1882, Rolleston merely says:

"We have a ministerial crisis here just now in consequence of the Prime Minister's resignation through ill health. I don't know yet what the issue will be. I will probably continue as Minister of Lands, which is the portfolio I have held throughout. I only took the native portfolio temporarily. Whenever I do go out I am going to live on the farm, which is doing very well just now."

IV

Rolleston's fame and reputation rest chiefly on his land legislation and administration, and we must now give a brief account of his work as revealed in his letters and speeches.

Within a few weeks of taking office he introduced a Land Bill which had been prepared but not passed by the previous Government. This Bill was, however, approved of by himself and his colleagues. It did not involve any large change in policy, as its main object was to increase the facilities for disposing of land under the existing deferred payment system. The principle of the deferred payment system was to enable people with small capital to take up land. It owed its origin to another notable land reformer—Donald Reid of Otago—and under that system in Otago, since it was established in 1873, ten thousand people had been settled on a million acres.[1]

In putting forward this Bill Rolleston emphasised the importance of carrying on land settlement in conjunction with public works and immigration, and he declared that otherwise "they would have a floating population wandering about the country, having no interest in the Colony and never becoming good citizens". He quoted a maxim which

[1] See Hansard, vol. XLIV, p. 626. Vincent Pyke claimed that he was the originator of the deferred payment system and not Donald Reid. But Pyke's system was restricted to the goldfields, and what Donald Reid did was to extend the system to land outside the goldfields; and he added a condition requiring the holder to reside on the property. See *ibid.* vol. XLII, p. 349.

dated from four hundred years before the Christian era to the effect that "the greatest teacher of morality was the possession of land". He showed how admirably the system of village settlements promoted by himself in Canterbury had worked in the Temuka district. The main features of this scheme were that sections of from one-half to two acres near the railway were allotted to immigrant families. On each section was a hut with sod walls costing about £10. For the first year those huts were let free of rent and during the second and third year were let at 2*s*. a week. This seems a modest effort in view of more modern schemes, but the official report shows that its result was most beneficial. It saved working men from having to hang about town and pay high rents, and although unemployment and distress were widespread in 1879 the official report showed that not one of the men located in this manner was amongst the unemployed.

Many aspects of the land question came up for discussion at this period, but for the first two years Rolleston's efforts were concentrated on increasing land settlement in all parts of the Colony, and systematically laying out roads to provide convenient access. In this work he was highly successful, and owing in part at least to his vigorous administration of the existing land laws, distress among the working classes disappeared and renewed confidence was manifest in all classes of the community.[1]

Grey alleged that in land settlement New Zealand was situated worse than any country in the world. Rolleston stoutly denied this and maintained that the number of settlers in New Zealand in proportion to the population bore favourable comparison with any country in the world. There were about sixty thousand freeholders in New Zealand out of a population of half a million. "In 1872 we found that the system of pre-emptive rights—the system

[1] See Governor's speech on opening Parliament, 19 May 1882: Hansard, vol. XLI, p. 4.

of spotting and what is called gridironing—was injuriously affecting the settlement of the country. I sent a memorandum to the Provincial Council pointing out the evils. I brought in a Bill to Parliament to remedy these evils and it was passed."

V

It was not until 1882 that Rolleston launched a major change in policy which was to arouse fierce controversy and a degree of alarm which seems strange in retrospect at a distance of more than half a century. "My advisers are of opinion", said the Governor's speech in 1882, "that a plan for leasing agricultural lands, with fixity of tenure upon reasonable terms, may with advantage be incorporated into the general system of administering the Crown Lands of the Colony, and a measure will be submitted to you with this object." This intimation of Rolleston's new land proposals seems innocent and harmless enough. But without waiting for the Bill to be produced a debate began a few days later on the Address-in-Reply, from which it was clear that these leasing proposals were regarded as a revolutionary change. It was said that Rolleston "had thrown himself into the arms of the Radicals",[1] and he was denounced as a faddist. "We know very well", said Mr Montgomery, "that what are called the advanced Liberals or Radicals have advocated the leasing of public lands, and we know that the Government were opposed to it." A typical sentence from the speech of a freeholder will suffice to exemplify the line of opposition. "I believe", said one speaker, "in a man having a place of his own. A place on which he can spend the best strength and effort of his manhood. His toil is meanwhile sweetened by the knowledge that he will enjoy it in his declining years and that those dear to him will inherit the fruit of his labours. A place around which will clutter happy memories and sacred

[1] Hansard, vol. XLI, p. 32.

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associations, unblighted by the withering thought that strangers may intermeddle therewith and the link of connection be severed."

On these lines the subject was thrashed threadbare before the Bill was introduced. One of the strongest critics of the new policy was the Premier Sir John Hall, and perhaps this was the real cause of his resignation. For shortly before he resigned he said that a system whereby the cultivators of the soil were Crown tenants would be exceedingly injurious to the country. He made a long and vigorous protest against the idea to his constituents at Leeston. On the other hand, Atkinson pointed out that some of the Ministers, including himself, had long held the opinion that it was better to lease the lands instead of selling them and he said: "There are amongst us members who held that opinion for many years and have fought and worked to give it effect."

When Rolleston finally introduced the Bill on 7 July, it was clear that there was nothing revolutionary in the measure, and that he did not ignore the desire of settlers for a freehold home. He said:

> Nobody who knows and realises the feeling of pleasure that exists in a freehold would willingly ignore that desire so far as it can be reasonably gratified, and I think in administering the Act the system of alternation of sections of freehold upon which people could live and thus gratify the desire for freehold, and the attachment of leasehold sections to the freehold would be the form which would meet very largely the wants of the country.[1]

In fact he suggested that the leasehold should bear a certain proportion to the freehold and deferred payment land in any district not exceeding one-third or one-fourth. The speech in which he set out his proposals is one of the most forceful and earnest speeches that he ever made. He paid a tribute to the great work of Donald Reid, whose Deferred Payment

[1] Hansard, vol. XLI, p. 170.

Bill of 1876 he described as "a Bill of true liberality introduced by a gentleman whose name will be for ever prominent in this Colony as one of the first to take a liberal view of the land question, and who worked it out with an earnestness and zeal that will not be readily forgotten".

His criticism of the deferred payment system was that while it was meant to enable people who had no capital except their industry, knowledge and experience to settle on the land yet the danger was that capitalists, storekeepers and moneylenders would step in and really become the landlords of the deferred payment settlements. The question was whether it was better to establish a tenantry of the moneylenders or a tenantry under the Crown. His object was not to displace the deferred payment system or purchase for cash, but he wanted settlement to go on at a greater pace.

This leasing system had a particular application to mining districts. There great difficulties had arisen from the occupation by agriculturists of auriferous country, without any provision for resumption when it was required for mining. At that time gold mining was the main industry of some parts of the country. The remedy was therefore to lease land for agriculture but with the power of resumption when it was required for mining. The system would also enable endowments to be set aside for educational purposes. "I always thought", he said, "that the country throughout its length and breadth should set aside land which would increase in value, and as the numbers requiring education increased, would lessen the weight of taxation."

VI

To the modern mind there seems nothing revolutionary in these proposals. Rolleston himself deprecated the idea that he was indulging in doctrinaire theories. "What I do feel myself at home in", he says, "is the practical work of administration." And the Bill was merely the result of his

experience as an administrator who had travelled through the length and breadth of the Colony, making himself conversant with the working of the land laws in the different provinces. He would not agree that the Bill discouraged improvements, provided the terms of the lease were satisfactory. The objection raised by many speakers, notably Sir John Hall, was that under the leasing principle, a large state tenantry would become a discontented body and would make up their minds that although they began as leaseholders they should end as freeholders.[1] This criticism was repeated again and again, and even John McKenzie, who in later years was to become famous as a land reformer, said:

> With regard to the leasing clauses I do not think they will be such a success as the Government and those who favour the leasing system seem to imagine. I am sure that if we pass this Bill and grant these thirty-one year leases, long before that time every one of these leaseholders will become a freeholder. If they are successful and make money they will want to purchase, and they will bring such pressure to bear that they will succeed in their object. If they are not successful they cannot benefit either themselves or the country.

This criticism is of great interest because when many years later John McKenzie created the lease in perpetuity, the same warning that he uttered against Rolleston's Bill was put forward against his own proposals. In fact, it was on the demand of the Crown tenants for the freehold that Mr Massey finally rode into power in 1912. The only difference between McKenzie's fate and Rolleston's was that in the case of the former it was the pressure from Crown tenants that compelled Parliament to grant them the right to the freehold, whereas in Rolleston's case it was the Legislative Council that insisted on the right of purchase being inserted in Rolleston's perpetual leases. It is an interesting example of how history repeats itself.

[1] Hansard, vol. XLI, p. 338.

On Rolleston's Bill of 1882 Macandrew said:

> So surely as you multiply the Crown tenants they will become a power in the State, and will demand that the leaseholds shall be changed into freeholds on their own terms. You may regard that as prophetic.

Rolleston's reply to this threat of political pressure by tenants was to say:

> It is infinitely better to have Parliamentary pressure and agitation than growing discontent between class and class and that social feeling of unrest that will pervade the community, where wealth and poverty stand in great contrast, and where there are the jealousy and hatred that cover class animosity.

In his view the business of the legislature was to lay down such provisions with regard to the occupation of land as would afford the largest facilities for all people capable of using their bone and sinew, their industry and their knowledge of agriculture to go upon the land. As to the demand for the right to purchase, he quoted the existing education endowments and the Presbyterian Church endowments of Otago, where no right of purchase was conceded. In his final reply he said:

> What I believe this Bill will do is to diffuse population over the country and also promote the distribution of land among a much larger number of the population than has hitherto been the case. It will prevent the aggregation of large estates. It will prevent, as I believe in the future, those extremes of poverty and wealth which are the curses of older countries. It will provide for the relief of local taxation. It will further induce people to come from the Home country to settle with their families here, and generally I believe if this Bill has fair play it will, in the future, be a thorough blessing to the country.[1]

The Legislative Council, however, insisted on inserting a clause giving the tenant the right to purchase. One of the main principles of Rolleston's Bill was thus frustrated. After long conferences between the two Houses it was

[1] Hansard, vol. XLII, p. 515.

agreed to restrict the leasehold principle to education endowments and land in mining districts; but otherwise the leasing clauses should not operate till after the close of the next session of Parliament. Rolleston quite correctly pointed out that if the right of purchase was inserted they were really merely creating another form of deferred payment.[1]

VII

The following year, 1883, Rolleston made another effort to establish his system of perpetual leases, without the right to purchase, but on this occasion the Bill was rejected by the Legislative Council. Rolleston was deeply chagrined. He never faltered in his plea that the system of perpetual leasing of at least one-third of the lands would be in the best interests of the Colony. He pointed out that a Royal Commission in New South Wales had recently insisted that it was impossible to prevent aggregation once the land was freehold, and under his proposals no more than one section could be held by one occupier. During the recess he said:

> I stood on the top of a high range of hills, looking over a large extent of country reaching as far as the eye could see, and the whole of that country under the free selection scheme was in the hands, not of small holders, but of large companies and large landholders. That is what I trust to avoid in the future.[2]

[1] Hansard, 1883, vol. XLVI, p. 530.

[2] The system of free selection before survey had operated in the early days of Canterbury. It consisted in selling the land for what it would fetch and afterwards devoting a certain proportion of the proceeds to making roads. Rolleston said that for some time this system had worked well in Canterbury and caused land settlement to advance there more freely than in any other part of New Zealand, partly owing to the fact that the whole country was open and roads required little making, and partly because of the ease with which title was obtained. But the result of it was that of 2,800,000 acres of Canterbury land, 1,352,370 acres or nearly 47 per cent had been purchased by 91 persons. "That is not my idea", said Rolleston, "of what settlement should be" (Hansard, 1883, vol. XLIV, p. 626).

Although Rolleston was defeated in one of his main proposals, his efforts towards land reform earned for him an outstanding reputation. "No man", said Mr Hursthouse, "has made himself so popular throughout New Zealand as the Minister of Lands by his journeyings throughout the country during the recess." And Vincent Pyke said: "He has had the noble audacity to advocate principles which if not at the present time altogether popular are entirely just."

VIII

In concluding this chapter it will be of interest to the reader if I insert some extracts from Rolleston's letters dealing with his views on land tenure. These throw an interesting light on the origin of his ideas. They were written to the Agent-General in London, Sir Dillon Bell. From their tenor it is clear that Bell was not in sympathy with Rolleston's views.

December 1st, 1882.

If you have read Hansard I will not trouble you with my Land Bill—my mind has undergone a complete change in respect of Canterbury Land Laws in particular and as to the duty of the State in respect of the distribution of land generally. This change has not come by inspiration or by reading modern theorists, but by practical experience.

I rode a week ago from Albury through the Mackenzie Country, through the valley of the Hakataramea and then back over the range to the back of Rutherford's country, and then through Wigley's and Studholme's country, and as far as human eye could see, I saw the country in the hands of about a dozen people exclusive of two companies, and I prayed "Lord, lay not this sin to my charge". I have a weak consolation in thinking that circumstances were too much for me when in 1873 I protested against the greedy iniquity which was going on in Canterbury—however you need not think that I shall do anything vindictive or strive to build myself up on the ruins of the past.

The fact that I fought against Stout and his party when they endeavoured to postpone the operation of the Land Act 1877 last year notwithstanding strong pressure is, I think, sufficient evidence of this. I don't know what you meant by a sentence in a letter to McKerrow that I have given up the issue, or some such phrase, and though it grieved me I don't care to enquire.

July 13th, 1883.

I commend the new Land Bill to your merciful consideration. It is only a step or two further in the direction of preventing the accumulation of large landed estates or rather of so disposing of the natural estate that accumulation is not fostered in the first disposal of it by the State. The New South Wales report is very strong on the point of the impossibility of preventing the shutting up of the country if you alienate the public estate in absolute freehold. However, I don't suppose I shall convert you.

September 8th, 1883.

I send you the dead body of the new Land Bill over which you will drop a silent tear. It died on going into Committee in the Lords. Its loss will be much felt, but it rests in hope of a glorious resurrection to life.

To WYNNE WILLIAMS (Christchurch):

September 27th, 1883.

I wish you would study my land proposals critically and not only cynically and give a hand in staving off the evils which are holding the old country on the brink of revolution. You are altogether wrong about Whitaker. I have only to say "If you don't help me, don't help the bear". I am not going to be bullied entirely by Montgomery, Reeves and co.

Again and again in various letters he points out that his sympathies are not with the land monopolist and speculators. Writing to a correspondent on 12 March 1884, he says:

If in immigration matters the opinion of today is changed by changing circumstances tomorrow, why not in land matters? What is strangest to me is that which Fawcett and all your best

men who are opposed to Henry George's theories of confiscation admit, that in new countries the State (the great borrowing body) should retain its joint interest in the land it has not parted with, while every review teems with admissions from the leaders of public thought at home of the necessity for change in the land laws if we are to avoid class conflict.

With the Irish Land Law and the Agricultural Holdings Act before your eyes, measures which would have been deemed confiscation a few years ago, you sit still and think that "as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be". You eat and drink as in the days of Noah. My desire is to see a firmer basis for property in land on a fair apportionment of the threefold interest of the State, the so-called proprietor, and the tenant. The conflict may be avoided in these new countries at any rate to a great extent by the proper treatment of the lands still unalienated.

How strongly Sir Dillon Bell dissented from Rolleston's views can be seen from the following extract. No doubt this outburst would have met with support from many large landowners.

DILLON BELL to ROLLESTON, 3 January 1884:

You said in your November letter how selfish the large landholders were about not having married people and so forth. What you forget is that you are the chief crusader against the large holders and are doing your very best to drive them and their capital out of the country. That you will succeed to your heart's content isn't likely; but that you will succeed to a very great extent is certain.

I do not include myself in the class. Nevertheless I hold a good many sheep. Now I don't hesitate to tell you that I am only waiting for an opportunity to clear out and pending that happy event I am ordering the rigidest economies. Is that my own wish? No. At a meeting in my own valley before I left for England it was shown that I had spent £100,000 in wages. That in your view is a big crime. Let me ask you this. What harm have I done the country I helped to found that you should take the squatting property I got together for my children and confiscate it? I am not speaking of land you may take for agricultural or for pastoral settlement or for any of your experiments in the art of

make believe over your friend "the poor man". I speak of an iniquity such as the Mackenzie Clause, which tells me that because I happened to have established myself with 20,000 sheep in Ida Valley when it was a howling wilderness I am to be ruined by being precluded from reacquiring it now or any other country wherewith to "feed my flocks upon my Grampian hills, a frugal swain". Yes, a frugal swain you have made the likes of me who was for years and years a generous employer (the adjective is really right) of labour and who has learnt by bitter lessons that to be so in your eyes is a crime.

Chapter XVI

TE WHITI AND PARIHAKA, 1880–81

"Our native policy is one based upon doing strict justice to the natives and on the other hand claiming from them obedience to the law"—ROLLESTON.

I

FOR many years the Native question was difficult and thorny. It was as troublesome to the New Zealand Parliament as was the Irish problem to the Imperial Parliament. It gave rise to the same bitter accusations of bad faith; it was marked by the same vacillations of policy on the part of the rulers—sometimes yielding and conciliatory, and sometimes firm and even harsh; and in each case it imperilled or ruined the reputations of many statesmen.

The reader will not have proceeded far with his study of New Zealand history before he discovered that there are two strongly opposed schools of thought on many incidents in Maori history. On the one side are the ardent philo-Maoris who can find nothing to blame in the Maoris, and nothing to approve of in the actions of successive governments. These people would be known in England as belonging to Exeter Hall, and indeed that phrase is not infrequently found in early New Zealand controversies. On the other side are ranged most of the settlers who, without regard to the causes of conflict, suffered heavy losses at the hands of Maori War parties—who saw, perhaps, their families murdered, their homes destroyed and farms ravaged. To these settlers we must add the various successive Native Ministers who had to cope with the incredibly intricate problems that arose from time to time.

It is significant that, though these Ministers expressed the utmost solicitude for the welfare of the Native race and in every case strove incessantly to preserve amicable relations, their good intentions were often frustrated by their own blunders or the untoward course of events. But of their goodwill towards the Native race there can be no doubt.

II

One of the most remarkable incidents in our history occurred in 1880–81 at Parihaka—a Native settlement south of New Plymouth. During most of the time the events were in progress, Rolleston was Minister of Native Affairs. But, in the final stage, his place was taken by Mr John Bryce, for reasons which will appear later. The background of the story is briefly as follows:

After the Taranaki War came to a halt in 1865, a Proclamation was issued by the Government confiscating over 1,130,000 acres between Wanganui and the White Cliffs. At the same time it was stated that the rights of loyal natives would be preserved, and the rebel natives were invited under a Peace Proclamation to come in within a certain time. If they did so, provision would be made for them, otherwise they would be excluded. But the confiscation was not enforced, and the natives were not driven from the territory. By liberal arrangements of the Government, they were restored to a large part of the country. They remained in friendly relations with us for nearly three years. Then in 1868 the Chief Titokowaru raised the standard of rebellion, and swept away nearly all the settlements over a large area. He was defeated and fled through the fastnesses of the great forests. Part of the land was again thrown open for settlement, and some of the tribes were brought back and settled on reserves set apart for them.

III

The Government now began to push on the construction of roads. At this stage (1870) the Government sought the co-operation of the powerful Chief Te Whiti, which was willingly given.

Meanwhile, against the protests of the settlers, the defeated tribes were stealthily creeping back by tacit permission. Sir Donald McLean, the great Native Minister, was anxious above all things to avoid another armed conflict. He decided to bide his time rather than attempt to drive the natives off the lands which were still nominally confiscated. So matters dragged on in a sort of uneasy peace until, in 1879, the Government began systematic surveys. It was here that the cardinal blunder on the part of the Government occurred. For, although several successive Governments had promised that the natives would be granted large reserves and that all their burial places, cultivations, and fishing grounds would be excluded from the lands to be settled, the natives became alarmed when they saw no signs of this being done. They saw the survey lines approaching their cultivations, and they threatened resistance. According to the Report of the Fox-Bell Royal Commission, the whole trouble arose from the failure of the Government to make clear to the natives that, in due course, their reserves would be set aside for them. It is not surprising, therefore, that the natives thought it time to forbid any further progress. They quietly removed all the surveyors to the south of the Waingongoro River.

IV

The Chief Te Whiti now became the central figure of the drama. He was a sort of New Zealand Gandhi—a passive resister. He was regarded by his followers as a prophet with some strange power of wizardry. He knew the Bible almost by heart, and had evolved a mystical religion of his

own. Thousands of natives poured into Parihaka where he lived, and stripped themselves of all they possessed to sustain his entourage. Great chiefs of higher lineage than Te Whiti trembled before him. He even claimed to be able to raise the dead, and his deluded subjects actually brought in armfuls of clothing in which to dress their friends when they should be resurrected. But ostensibly he remained a man of peace. His earlier objections to the Government surveys seem reasonable and quaintly humorous.

> Your survey is wrong (he said), being without my consent or authority. Where is the piece to be retained by the natives? Where are the promises of McLean and Parris that the lands in the occupation of the natives should not be taken from them? You say let me and the Governor sit down on the blanket. The Governor will not do that. He is dragging it all away for himself. From the way the surveys are being conducted, it seems that you want to take the whole of the blanket and leave me naked.

No immediate response was made to Te Whiti's complaint. He now resolved to make some more forcible demonstration to bring matters to an issue. In May 1879 he set up a claim to all the land not only of that district, but of all New Zealand. To assert his title he sent out parties of his followers to plough not only the land in dispute but other lands at some distance away held by settlers under Crown grants. Gradually he became more and more arrogant and defiant. The Grey Government arrested some of his ploughmen, but more natives under orders from Te Whiti took their place.

V

While these strange doings were still causing widespread alarm, there was a change of Government. The Hall Ministry took office in October 1879, with Bryce as Native Minister. He realised that Te Whiti's hostility was endangering the peace. The natives erected fences, which the

constabulary kept pulling down. Parties of natives with some sort of clubs or sticks followed the constabulary as they went about their task, and the position became daily more menacing. Bryce wanted to force the issue by arresting Te Whiti and his chief adviser Tohu and removing them from Parihaka. The rest of the Cabinet objected. They counselled delay. They said the slow course was the sure one. Finding his policy unacceptable to his colleagues, Bryce resigned, and his portfolio was taken over by Rolleston.

Now Rolleston had seen this trouble brewing for many years. We have seen in an earlier chapter that, as far back as 1869, he had urged in Parliament the appointment of a Commission to settle the whole problem before it became acute. But his advice was disregarded. "When I was asked", he said, "whether I would join the Hall Government (in 1879) one of the first things I put to Mr Hall was: 'Will you agree to a Commission being appointed to settle this question of the apportionment of the lands on the West Coast?'" This led to the appointment of the famous Fox-Bell Commission, whose report traversed the whole history of our conflicts with the Maoris. On the immediate problem the Commissioners were emphatic that the main cause of the trouble was the failure of successive Governments to set aside and indicate to the natives the reserves set aside for them before pushing on the surveys. Parliament adopted this Report, which made not only fair but liberal reserves for the natives. Lands to the value of over £1,000,000 were granted to natives not exceeding 3000 in number.

VI

I have said that Bryce resigned early in 1880 and Rolleston took his place. Rolleston consulted his old friend, J. C. Richmond, who had been at one time Native Minister, and had a long experience of Native affairs. Richmond strongly

advised that it would be premature to adopt Bryce's policy. It would be better to see what attitude Te Whiti would adopt towards the proposals of the Fox-Bell Commission. Rolleston agreed with Richmond that delay was wise, but that, if no success was achieved by that means, he thought Bryce's policy ought to be adopted.

ORMOND to ROLLESTON, 26 January 1881:

...Bryce's resignation astonished everyone, but it is not fair to express an opinion without knowing all the circumstances. The general opinion is he resigned in consequence of interference on the part of the Governor...another version is that he did not agree with some of Fox's acts as Commissioner....However, as Te Whiti puts it, "the potato is cooked".

I see you have taken over Native Affairs, and think your colleagues very fortunate in having got you to do so. I have always known you had a special fitness for the position, and I think the natives believe in you. You would have had a much better field open to you had you taken Native Affairs when Bryce did. As it is, I consider the position full of difficulty. Bryce, in my notion, has not been a success as Native Minister. I know the general opinion is different....Your great difficulty now is Bryce has entirely neglected to keep up any communication with the natives, and has got that to be looked on as "the policy".

As time went on, Te Whiti became more and more difficult. He declined to put his claims before the Commission. The new Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, who had dealt successfully with Native troubles in Fiji, invited Te Whiti to come as his guest to Wellington and discuss his grievances, or to meet him in Taranaki. Te Whiti declined, and used his famous phrase: "The potato is cooked." All attempts to approach him through friendly emissaries met with similar refusals. The fact was that Te Whiti, having placed himself at the head of a body of malcontents, dare not recede. His vanity and mana were at stake, and his mana, in his view, covered the whole country. In fact, he asserted his sovereignty against that of the Government. When Parliament rose, Rolleston himself went up to the

district and put himself in communication with Te Whiti through a lifelong friend of Te Whiti, and finally personally interviewed him. Te Whiti was friendly and courteous, but absolutely declined to admit the right of the Government to share the lands with him. "He took my hat in his hand", said Rolleston, "and said: 'What is the good of your hat if it cut in two? If you have come to ask me to share the blanket with you, I am not the man to help you.'" Rolleston formed the opinion that Te Whiti would have been glad to come to some arrangement with the Government if he had dared to do so in face of his people. If he gave way, his whole power and influence would vanish. Finally, Rolleston not only informed Te Whiti that, if there were any lands for which he had a predilection, he had only to point them out and the Government would meet him liberally. But he wrote on 10 October 1881 that the present confusion and uncertainty could not continue. "Our meeting is over. Whether it is for good or evil is yet unknown. If it brings good to both races, we shall have the blessing which belongs to peacemakers. If no good comes of it, the blame will not rest with me and the Government. It will be with you."

All these efforts were perhaps taken by Te Whiti as signs of weakness. But at least they show the patience of the Government. The illegal fencing still went on. No other course seemed open but to adopt Bryce's policy and to allow him to carry it out. Rolleston, however, chivalrously insisted on signing the famous and much-debated proclamation of 19 October 1881, under which Te Whiti was informed that he must now yield or he would forfeit all claim to consideration, and all the reserves now set aside for them would be withdrawn. The Queen and the law must be supreme at Parihaka as elsewhere. On the same day Bryce became once more Native Minister. He decided that the position was so critical that the only way was to make an overwhelming display of force, otherwise war was

almost inevitable. He and Rolleston assembled a large armed force, marched on Parihaka, and arrested Te Whiti and some of his followers. There was no resistance, and everything passed off quietly.

Attempts have been made to treat the armed march on Parihaka as a fiasco and a farce. It is true that Bryce and Rolleston and the armed forces that accompanied them met with no resistance. Much fun was made by critics of the fact that some hundreds of young children singing and dancing were sent out to meet them. "Mr Rolleston, who was on foot, showed by his happy, expressive face how completely he appreciated the humour and pathos of the whole design; but Mr Bryce, who was mounted on an old white horse which looked as careworn and unhappy as his rider, was evidently more annoyed than mollified by the clever exhibition of humanity before him."[1]

Te Whiti ordered his people to offer no resistance, and in due course he and the Chief Tohu were arrested.

Now all these and other incidents afforded the enemies of the Government great scope for ridicule. They pictured Te Whiti and his followers as peaceable Quakers invaded by a ridiculous army in a theatrical comedy. But most people in New Zealand considered that a dangerous situation had been handled with great skill and firmness. The settlers who were living in an acute state of tension and alarm breathed sighs of relief. In Parliament, many tributes were paid to Bryce, although there were voices to the contrary. Perhaps the best evidence of the wisdom and necessity of the Government's action came from Sir George Grey, who was in opposition. He declared that we had just come through a great historical crisis, and that Bryce had had as great difficulties to meet as any one could have had to meet in New Zealand. "His hands are unstained by blood," declared Grey, "he committed no act of cruelty, he has done nothing to cast a slur on the name of the Colony,

[1] Saunders, *History*, p. 458.

and he has brought the difficulty to a peaceful conclusion." Finally, Grey did not hesitate to say that Te Whiti was "an impostor or dupe of his own imagination", and had embarked on a very dangerous career, which might have led to enormous disasters and loss of life. In his view, it was entirely proper to confine him till the crisis had passed.

VII

In 1902, long after Parihaka was closed and forgotten, the whole story was revived by Mr (later Judge) Alpers. He alleged that, when Rolleston handed over the portfolio of Native Affairs to Bryce in October 1881, he did so in order to escape from the personal odium and risk of taking strong measures against Te Whiti. This belated and unjust attack called forth a devastating reply from Mr John Bryce in defence of Rolleston, who was ill. "How little Mr Alpers understands the true nobility of Mr Rolleston's nature", wrote Bryce. He recounted Rolleston's unceasing efforts to effect a peaceable settlement, and Te Whiti's vainglorious rejection of all approaches. He quoted Te Whiti's utterance, "I am the Father, I am the Son, I am the Holy Ghost —there is no one behind me", as evidence of his fanatical derision of the pakeha.

> Prior to the request that I should resume office, Rolleston had made all suitable arrangements to secure, by a display of force, a peaceable termination of a disagreeable and dangerous drama. Volunteers were enlisted for the special service and were on their way to supplement the forces of the constabulary. Rolleston, in the greatness of his heart, had insisted that, as Government had now adopted the plan, the refusal of which had caused my resignation, I, and I alone, should carry it out. He would stand back, but give me every loyal support. How well, how generously, how magnanimously he kept his word I can understand, though Mr Alpers cannot.

He gave in detail the sequence of events—how Rolleston, before resigning, had insisted on signing "that terrible

Proclamation giving the Parihaka natives fourteen days' notice in which to accept the terms offered"—how Rolleston had insisted on going with him to Parihaka in spite of Bryce's pleading that he might be killed and that Mrs Rolleston would then have good cause to reproach him (Bryce).

Rolleston's voice was slow and emphatic as he replied: "If anything happens to me, Mrs Rolleston will be grieved, but, rather than see me in these circumstances evade a danger which you are to incur, she would prefer to see me dead at her feet." We went into Parihaka next day together, and it was he who wrote, in my name, the first telegram announcing our success. How steadily, unfalteringly, and generously my friend kept his promise of loyal support no one knows so well as I do.

The Parihaka affair involved Rolleston in several controversies which at this distance of time call for only the briefest notice. The first was with Bishop Suter, of Nelson. The Bishop was a strong believer in Te Whiti, and accused the Government in its treatment of the natives of being actuated by political considerations with a view to influencing the forthcoming elections. Rolleston was furious at what he called "gratuitous and unwarranted slander of men acting under a heavy sense of responsibility". He complained that the Bishop "had not thought it inconsistent with his sacred office to privately slander his neighbour and impute to public men base motives in action involving possibly the lives of large numbers of their fellow creatures". The Bishop protested against being called on to give an account of private conversations. "We might as well be in Russia at once", he declared. J. C. Richmond, a former Native Minister, joined in the fray. "No man in the country", he said, "is fitter to be trusted than Mr Rolleston in such a matter as this. Highly educated, exactly informed as to every detail of the history of Maori affairs—a man of stern conscience if New Zealand contains one—he is as certain to deal justly and considerately in the

future as he is incapable of the offence imputed to him in the past." He quoted very aptly the opinion of several English Bishops to the effect that "Bishops rarely possess the judicial mind and the power of giving an impartial unbiassed decision". After a wordy newspaper controversy, the affair died down without either side being convinced that it was wrong or its opponent right.

Sir Robert Stout then made another serious allegation. He declared that the Parihaka Proclamation had been pushed through late at night on the eve of the Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon's return to the Dominion. The suggestion was that the Governor would not have sanctioned the Proclamation. Rolleston indignantly denied this accusation. "Ministers", he said, "had not individually or collectively received any information that the return of His Excellency to the Colony within any stated time was probable." Rolleston's reply seems clear and final in spite of the fact that Rusden and others have preferred to impute bad faith to the Government.

The reader will probably consider that enough has been said about the Parihaka affair, even although the story has been told only in bare outline.

But the moral of the story is that, had Rolleston's wise proposals of 1869 been adopted, this grave crisis would never have arisen.

VI

It was while Rolleston held the portfolio of Native Minister that he realised the great possibilities of the thermal springs district as a health resort. He foresaw that in future years the marvels of this district would draw visitors and patients from all parts of the world. He therefore devoted much thought and labour to the task of acquiring land and laying out the present township of Rotorua, and the beautiful grounds and gardens that surround the spa. Writing to

Mrs Rolleston in 1900

his brother, the Reverend Robert Rolleston, on 18 April 1882, he says:

My wife and I have just returned from travelling all through the wonders of the hot springs district. I suppose there is no hope of seeing you come in search of rejuvenescence, like Medea's grandfather, in the boiling cauldrons of New Zealand. Here you would see the sun shine as it never does in the Northern Hemisphere, moonlight as bright as your daylight, glacial and volcanic action in active operation and wondrous forests. Trees of the Lord, which he—no mortal hand—hath planted—from one of which you may build a small village. I have been travelling many hundreds of miles on horseback over yet uninhabited country, through peach groves and apple trees under which the wild pigs lie waiting for the fruit to drop. The great beauty of the country however is its shrubs. They are something marvellous in their colour and variety.

Chapter XVII

STOUT-VOGEL MINISTRY, 1884–87

"Sir Harry Atkinson was the largest hearted of Liberals"
ROLLESTON.

THE Atkinson Government, of which Rolleston was so distinguished a member, was defeated in 1884. The No-Confidence motion was carried by a combination of hostile groups which, as Atkinson said, had no common policy and no leader that they could agree on. The Government applied for and was granted a dissolution, and a General Election was held in July 1884. The immediate cause of the Government's defeat was on a matter that appeared to be of minor importance, and yet it is well known that Ministries are often defeated in this way. The Government in their desperate efforts to maintain a falling revenue had found it necessary, among other expedients, to raise the railway freights on the carriage of grain. Canterbury had always been the great grain-growing province, and hence most of their Canterbury supporters deserted them. As Atkinson truly said:

> If there is a prosperous year, the Government gets the credit or the advantage of it. "They are a fine Government—a splendid Government" people say; "look at the prosperity of the Colony!" And so, with poetic justice, when the reverse is the case, given a bad harvest, a low price for wool, and people say: "This is a wretched Government. Out with them!" Well, I don't object to that, I am suffering from it at the present time. There is no doubt at all that one of the sins of the Government at the present time is the low price of wool and grain, and the Government that succeeds us will be a first-rate Government if only the price of wool and grain will go up.[1]

[1] Hansard, 1884, vol. XLVII, p. 114.

So hostile was the feeling in Canterbury against the Government that Rolleston retired from the Avon electorate and sought safety in the new electorate of Geraldine, where he was successful in being elected. But shortly before the dissolution of Parliament, Vogel, having retired from the post of Agent-General, again reappeared in New Zealand like a bolt from the blue, and dramatically joined forces with Stout to fight the election contest. His sure political instinct made it clear to him that the electors would respond to a new voice and a new programme. His cry was that the Colony had been dozing in his absence, and his campaign throughout the country aroused immense enthusiasm. When the House met after the election, a makeshift Ministry was formed by Atkinson, which lasted only six days, and the Stout-Vogel Ministry then took office.

It is not necessary to follow in detail the fortunes of the new Ministry. Although they put forward various policy measures, they were seldom strong enough to carry them. On the other hand, the Opposition forces, while they were powerful enough to prevent Stout from getting any policy measures through, were, as Atkinson admitted, themselves too divided to take office. All the attempts of the Government to increase the tariff and to build unpayable railways were negatived. From time to time Atkinson, with the able assistance of Rolleston, sought to displace the Government. Sir George Grey too was in Opposition, and made frequent virulent speeches against the Ministry, which contained his old colleagues, Stout and Ballance. How bitter were the relations between these leaders can be judged from a brief extract:

BALLANCE: Where is the Party of which he (Grey) should have been the head? Where is it?
GREY: Destroyed.
BALLANCE: By what?
GREY: By yourself. There stands the destroyer.
BALLANCE: Destroyed by the honourable gentleman. Not by

want of talent but by want of consistency, political honesty and straightforwardness.... There never was a man who came into this House more endowed with all the intellectual qualities and gifts to become a leader of a great party in this Colony than the honourable gentleman. How has he used, or rather abused them? ...The honourable gentleman stands isolated, alone; without sympathy either in the country or in the House. He is guilty of the grossest misrepresentation I have ever heard in this House.[1]

In 1886, Rolleston, in one of the longest speeches of his career, expressed his views on the Stout-Vogel coalition. The most interesting feature of this speech was his passionate appeal to Stout to break his "unholy alliance" with Vogel. He based his appeal on the fact that Stout had just made a strong declaration in favour of tapering off loan expenditure so that borrowing might cease in two or three years.

Now, to my view (said Rolleston), there are two bases of parties which must exist in every popular assembly in one form or another. One, which the Treasurer (Vogel) represents—class interest—class and property against the interests of the people; and the other, the representation of persons and the greatest good of the greatest number....Property classes, syndicates, monopolists, companies, and every speculative abomination are his (Vogel's) care. He revels at the tables of the money-lenders. For him the mountains contain reefs and the little hills nuggets. A noble river like the Molyneux suggests syndicates and companies who may turn its course and enable its golden treasures to be rifled. He dreams of Pactolus.

Rolleston also complained of what he called "the tinselled aristocracy", built up on borrowed money and mortgages, which found a fitting leader in Vogel. But then, turning his attention to Stout:

The Premier (he declared), until he formed this unholy alliance, had been looked on as a man who would subserve no class interest. We yet believe that his natural force of character and his good instincts will dissociate him from the pseudo-patriots

[1] Hansard, 1885, vol. LIII, p. 352.

with whom he sits, and bring him back to the fold of the true Liberals who now sit on this side of the House. I shall give my vote on every occasion (he said)—in the last eloquent words of the Premier—in the direction of curtailing borrowing and leading the people of New Zealand as far as possible to rely upon their own energies, and of inspiring them with a belief in the future of the Colony, in spite of the narrowing lust for gold and this anxiety for a borrowing policy of which the Colonial Treasurer is the embodiment and example.[1]

It is clear that at this period Bismarck's famous remark about Disraeli at the Berlin Conference, "the old Jew—that is the man", was applicable in the small theatre of New Zealand politics. Vogel had restored all his old mana and dominated the political situation.

Colonel Trimble, writing to Rolleston on 14 April 1885, says:

I knew nothing of the worship in Christchurch of the Vogel fetish until you mentioned it. Interesting it is, but not surprising, for they there still expect something from him.... I had believed that some melancholy Canterbury men, heavily beset with pecuniary monetary difficulties, did try to regard the advent of Vogel as at least the beginnings of those "leaps and bounds" of prosperity which all desire and which he promised. They certainly appear to try to believe this—try so earnestly that for very shame they cannot "pitch the painted brad" into the sea.

I confess I cannot understand Stout. I know that his intense egotism blinds him to many things and his conceit for shining to others, but surely he must know by this time that the people only regard him as Vogel's jack-in-the-box. Of course, there is not another man in the Ministry who need be named.... If Stout knew anything of politics, or could get his self-conceit so far abated as to enable him to learn, something might be made of him, for he has talents of a considerable order. Will he do now what he did when he was Grey's Attorney-General—find his business engagements demand fuller attention? Probably, but I could wish it otherwise, for he has a hold upon a considerable party. A break with Vogel is what I want to see—what I hope

[1] Hansard, 1886, vol. LVI, p. 228: Speech on Loan Bill.

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to see. That, I consider, to be one of the not improbable possibilities, and, if it come—if our leaders stand quietly aloof from both sections till they have declared a policy consistent with ours —then the ball is in our hand. Vogel likely enough knows this, for those foxy eyes of his betoken a meaning of the deepest kind; but, if his opponents preserve their integrity and keep awake, they will overmatch him in the long run. I think the gist of my conversation with Bryce and Atkinson was that a policy of watchfulness would prove wisest next Session. Suppose that we best the Ministry on a question of mere policy not founded on any great principle, say by the aid of Grey or even Montgomery, of what avail would it be? The present House is determined not to have the old Ministers if it can help it, and we have no new leaders to put in their places. We would, in fact, be working for some section of our opponents. Let us defeat their bad measures if we can, but let them stay in office, if they will, until the country learns the difference between honest purpose and mere trickery.

Elsewhere in the same letter Trimble says:

Atkinson is greatly improved in bodily health, and therefore seemed to me to have recovered his mental tone. He was totally unlike the man we parted from in Wellington. I think from the general character of his discourse that, when we meet, he will be found pursuing the old line. Of course, as he is a Protectionist, I can never go quite into his schemes; always fearing the slime of the serpent in all anti-Free Traders. But I do sincerely hope that we shall be able, all of the old Party of 1879, to pull well together.

Atkinson always declared that Vogel was really the head of the Government, though Stout was nominally Prime Minister. He complained that, after Vogel returned in 1884, he tried to introduce a fresh and more extravagant scheme of Public Works than he did in 1870. It is interesting to note that he gave his reason for joining the Vogel Ministry in 1874, which was not to support his Public Works policy, but to assist him in the abolition of the provinces. Otherwise, in all his efforts in that and later Governments, Atkinson had been engaged in putting the brake on extravagance. Matters continued to drift from bad to worse. Finally in 1887 the Stout-Vogel Government

applied for and was granted a dissolution. There was no important fight on questions of policy. The main issue was whether reductions in expenditure should be made before fresh taxation was imposed.[1]

The following letters from Sir Harry Atkinson show the trend of events:

ATKINSON to ROLLESTON, 4 March 1886:

I can't tell why I have such difficulty in making myself write letters....

With regard to my movements, I have felt clearly and strongly all along that up to the present time it would have been worse than useless my speaking at the centres of population....Had I thought that any good could have been done, I should certainly have gone round, but what was one to speak about? Criticism of the Government in any shape seems distasteful to every one, and to propose a policy even in a mild form would have been out of place and done no good. I have now been asked to speak at Auckland, and my opportunity has come....

I shall criticise Vogel's proposals and show how completely he has changed front, and state clearly what course in my opinion the Colony should follow. I certainly shall not go in for a rabid Protection policy or extravagant P.W. I am afraid much cannot be done in the way of retrenchment. I wish it could, but I am looking carefully into the finances to see if it is not possible, as I hope it is, to carry on P.Ws. at about £1,000,000 a year without any further taxation. I don't think there will be a dissolution notwithstanding what Vogel said....

ATKINSON to ROLLESTON, 25 November 1886 (his wife had had a second operation, and he had sprained his ankle):

Somehow the world seems a little dark to me just now, but I have no doubt it will all come right.

I am very glad to hear that Hall means to stand again for the House. I think we might get together a very good party for all practical purposes under him. If he is strong enough in body, we might soon get a Government in power that would give the country some rest and a chance of coming round again. In my

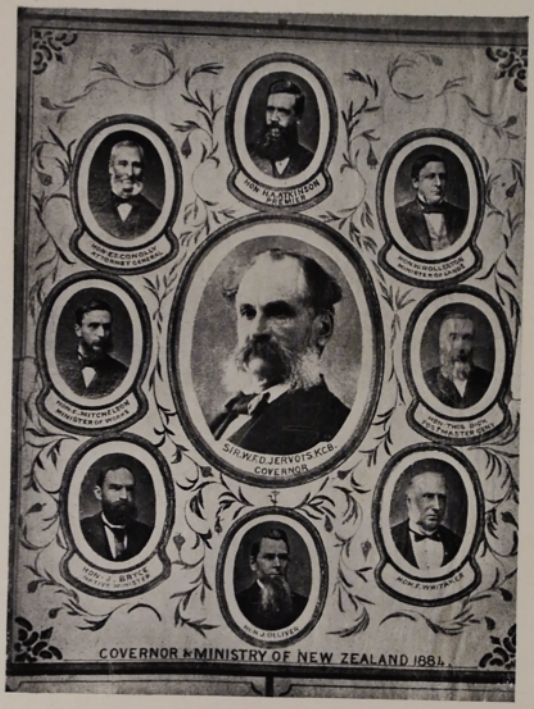
[1] See speech by Atkinson in Theatre Royal, Wellington.

opinion he is by far the most hopeful man we could put forward to form a lasting Government. I shall be quite willing and glad to accept him as my chief once more if that meets the views of my friends....

Stout won't be long in politics in my opinion, and Grey must soon go now. Stout might in time, if he were to stick to it, get a strong party, but he won't, and, with him gone, we shall have a sort of chaos for most of the members of his party will either be *in* the Government or in opposition. The more I think of Hall as a leader, the more I like the idea.

It is very unfortunate the revenue falling off so much; it will be so difficult to make it up next year, for it is impossible to believe in such a revival of trade as will bring it up to our requirements without increased taxation. I suppose tea and sugar will have to be the victims.

I can't say I see much chance for a revival of trade. I hope it may be so, but I don't think it well to count upon it without there is a large discovery of gold.



The Governor's Ministry of New Zealand, 1884

Chapter XVIII

ATKINSON AGAIN PRIME MINISTER, 1887–90

"He was lion-hearted to the last"—GISBORNE on Atkinson.

I

IN August 1887 the Stout-Vogel Government was defeated at the polls. During its three years of office, Vogel had been failing in health, and had lost his old powers of dominating the House and spell-binding the electors. Prices were still falling, and the electors knew that Atkinson was the man to call on when courageous and drastic retrenchment was needed.

The most sensational feature of the elections was the defeat of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Stout, by a young novice in the person of (Sir) James Allen, who had not long before returned from Cambridge University.

But the Opposition also lost some of its best men, including Rolleston, who had stood for the new electorate of Rangitata. The old cry that he had been a member of the Ministry that raised the railway grain freights in 1883 or 1884 was still a burning issue. It was in vain that Rolleston showed that the increase had been unavoidable, and that at no time had the rates been so high as during the reign of Sir George Grey. The wheat industry in Canterbury had become second in importance to the wool industry since the decay in gold mining. Hence the persistent bitterness of the wheat farmers, who were a powerful political force.

Rolleston's whole conduct over this grain rate controversy affords a good example of his almost quixotic chivalry. It is known that, when in office, he stoutly resisted

the proposal in Cabinet. He actually tendered his resignation on two occasions, but was assured that the increased rates were only temporary. It was represented to him that his resignation would mean the downfall of the Ministry. He therefore agreed to retain his portfolio and defend his colleagues. The result was that in 1887 he lost his seat at the General Election.

For nearly twenty years (said the *Lyttelton Times*), the raising of the grain rates was made to overshadow all his splendid services to Canterbury and New Zealand, and he never regained his former place in popular favour. But all through those years he did not mention to his most intimate friend, not even to a member of his family, that he had been as strongly opposed as the most angry farmer in the province to the action of his colleagues.[1]

But, judging by his correspondence, he was also gravely embarrassed in another way. On 2 July 1887, he wrote to his old colleague, Richard Oliver, complaining that Sir John Hall had prepared and was about to deliver an address in which he advocated Protection and a reduction in the Education Vote. What was still more serious, he disavowed by implication at least Rolleston's views on the Land Question.

It was lucky (he wrote) that I did not see Hall's proposed speech before I spoke. It seems to me that our only tie as a party is a kind of spurious class respectability. My whole soul revolts against the creation of a party which rests upon such a basis. It will break down certainly and leave a residuum of class hatred which will help forward all the worst features of socialism. I shall soon be fighting alone, and wish I could lose the election. Somehow my fighting propensities will prevent this, and I must go on for the present. Ours will be the party of "superior selfishness".

This letter is strangely prophetic. Rolleston was conscious of the oncoming storm that was to sweep the older parties from their long-standing control. He seemed to realise

[1] *Lyttelton Times*, 13 February 1914.

that the spirit of the age was changing, and that his own efforts to break the power of the old landed interests were now to be supplemented or replaced by a more democratic Government.

Oliver tried to reassure him by stating that he had persuaded Hall to modify his speech. He said Atkinson had been consulted, but raised no objection to Hall's advocacy of Protection. "But", said Oliver, "of this be sure; no Government will be supported by our side in pronounced Protectionist measures."

This was substantially true for, when Atkinson in search of revenue did introduce a higher tariff, he was largely dependent on Opposition votes to get the measure through the House.

II

The result of all these factors was that in September 1887 Rolleston met his first defeat. After the election, he said: "For years I have been ridiculed and derided as a man who would put the brake on overmuch. But I do not regret that now, as the time has come when every one agrees that retrenchment is necessary."

It is not necessary to follow the fortunes of the last Atkinson Ministry. It recognised that the electors had called for substantial reductions in public expenditure and in the cost of the Public Service. More land settlement was promised—changes in railway control and revision of the tariff. But the tariff was the only easy source of revenue. It is therefore difficult to accept Rolleston's Free Trade views unless he was prepared to propound a clear alternative method of taxation. "It is impossible", he said, "to promote a people's interest by forbidding them to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest. The Protection cry is all nonsense. It only means increasing taxation to pave the way for further borrowing." This is the academic Free Trade argument, but it was no solution of Atkinson's problem.

The Land policy of the Government also exasperated Rolleston. Mr G. F. Richardson believed in selling for cash or credit without limitation of area. "Frowns will predominate over smiles as you read my Act", he wrote to Rolleston, and no doubt he was right.

On the whole it was perhaps fortunate for Rolleston that he was out of Parliament during Atkinson's last term of office. Not that he would have shirked his duty in the arduous and unpopular task of retrenchment. But he was not in sympathy with some of the legislation that was passed. In fact, it is doubtful whether he could have remained a ministerial supporter. "It is notorious", said the *New Zealand Times*, "that Rolleston entirely disapproved of much that the Government did during that period."

In his efforts to increase revenue, Atkinson raised the Customs duties, and thereby gave for the first time to New Zealand a substantial measure of Protection. It is true, however, that Atkinson proclaimed himself as being neither a Free Trader nor a Protectionist. His action was based on the stern need to find more revenue.

During these years Rolleston was living quietly on his farm at Rangitata watching the herculean labours of Atkinson to restore the public finances. He was still frequently called upon to speak at various functions in Christchurch and elsewhere. He also corresponded with leading members of the Government, and these letters afford glimpses of the political situation. As so often happened the Government was kept in office more by conflict in the Opposition ranks than by any strength in its own ranks.

Vogel retains perhaps half the Opposition (wrote one Minister in 1888), Ballance, Seddon, and Grey each has a small tail, and there is dissension in the camp. Each section hates the other only less than it hates the Government, and generally we have one or more of these sections voting with us against the rest of their party.

In this way the Government fought on till 1890. The strain of ceaseless anxiety shattered Atkinson's health, and towards the end he had to be excused from attendance in the House. In fact, he could not personally present his last Budget, and Sir E. Mitchelson had to lead the House in his absence.

In the midst of his arduous duties and failing health Atkinson found time to remember Rolleston's great services. In June 1890, with the consent of all his colleagues, he offered to submit Rolleston's name to the Governor for a seat in the Legislative Council.

> We all trust you will accept (he said), unless you intend to come into the other House, which I hope is the case. I am afraid I shall have to resign. All the doctors are strong that I must do so. . . . I thought you ought to know before deciding which House you would take a seat in.

Rolleston declined the offer, and said that he had decided to stand for the Lower House:

> After a good deal of thought and with the reluctance of a man taking a header into a seething sea of unknown trouble. However, I don't think it well to look too far ahead—"one step enough for me". If I was ever to take a public part again, time at my age is an important consideration, and I have so recently been so kindly pressed in this direction by so many of my old friends in Canterbury of all classes that I thought I had better come out. . . . There is of course a strong latent desire to wipe out my past defeat, and not to go off as a beaten man into an easy and not altogether congenial refuge. I am well aware that I am wont to beat my wings against the bars of the cages which, real and imaginary, surround political problems in the Lower House, and that too to the discomfort very often of my friends—but I am not yet prepared for a padded room, so the die is cast.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Rolleston adhered to his decision, and was successful in being returned at the next election.

Chapter XIX

ROLLESTON RETURNS TO PARLIAMENT, 1890–93

"My opinions on the land question differed from many of those with whom I was working in 1881–2 but I have seen no reason to go back on them"—ROLLESTON in 1899.

I

THE General Election of 1890 has always been regarded as one of the turning points in New Zealand political history. For the first time there came into office what Reeves calls "a more plebeian and democratic regime" under the great liberal leaders, Ballance and Seddon. The main cause of this remarkable change was the long spell of low prices that had persisted from 1879 onwards. This in turn had led to widespread unemployment and "the great exodus", when thousands of disheartened people left in a steady stream for Australia. Moreover, at that period the only recognised remedy for falling public revenues and threatened deficits was stern retrenchment. The modern practice of expanding State expenditure and Public Works to mitigate a depression had not yet been discovered, nor was it perhaps possible with the banking system as it then existed, a rigid gold standard, and a depressed world money market.

Additional factors leading to the political change-over were the abolition of plural voting in 1889; the political activity of the Trade Unions caused by the waterside strike; and finally the demand for more active measures to force the subdivision of large estates. So far as land settlement was concerned, the Land Administration between 1887 and 1890 missed the firm hand of Rolleston, and Mr Reeves

Kapunatiki in 1895

says that his loss at that particular period was very great—much greater than was recognised at the time.

When the election of 1890 was completed, Atkinson did not at first realise how complete the Liberal victory was, if one may judge from the following letter:

ATKINSON to ROLLESTON, 8 December 1890:

I am very glad to see you got in after all by so good a majority, but the Parliament is indeed, as far as one can judge, inadequate to the needs of the country, but we must make the best of it. I shall be much obliged if you will give me your opinion as to what should be our immediate line of action. As far as one can judge, the numbers on each side of the House are such as to make it all but impossible to get a strong Government. The Governor told me that he saw Ballance in Wanganui (after the election), and that he estimated that he had 36 or 37 followers out of the 74, and that there were five doubtful. I have not yet attempted myself to go critically into the numbers, but so far as I have gone I think Ballance's view of his own position is over-sanguine. The "Evening Post" here gives him 28 and us 29 and the others as against Ballance's leadership. As far as I can judge, it is clear that there is a majority against the present Government, and that is the important question at the present time. What then are we to do? There is no one here but Whitaker and Russell, and I have not yet talked the matter over with them.

My own views are inclining to call the House together in January and see what can be done to get a Government together. At present I am disposed to think we should get the House together as soon as possible after the holidays, but I am only giving you now my own thoughts as they occur, just with the object of getting your views if you will be kind enough to give them to me.

It is clear to my mind that we should not be justified in simply resigning and advising the Governor to send for Ballance, leaving him to call the House together, or to form a Government as he thought best.

I am undoubtedly better, but I am not at all fit to do any real fighting in Parliament. The doctors seem to think that, if I could get a couple of months quite away, I might be fit for something; but I am afraid this is now impossible.

II

After it was clear that the Ministry would be defeated, but before its resignation, Atkinson went to the Legislative Council as Speaker.[1] Rolleston had again entered Parliament as member for Halswell. It was confidently predicted on all hands that, if he desired the speakership of the Lower House, he would have no difficulty in being elected. His qualifications were outstanding owing to his long experience of Parliamentary procedure, his judicial temperament, and the fact that, for the preceding three years, he had been out of party conflict. But once again Rolleston's bad luck pursued him. The choice of a Speaker was made a party one. Perhaps it was too much to expect the Liberal party, flushed with victory after its long period in the wilderness, to yield such a prize to an Opposition member.

An old Independent Canterbury member, Mr Alfred Saunders, nominated Rolleston as Speaker, and pleaded with the House not to make it a party question. "I have seen Mr Rolleston", he said, "entrusted with duties more arduous and even more important than those of this position, and have watched him discharge them with the most general satisfaction." But his appeal fell on deaf ears. The Government put up a rival candidate in the person of Major Steward, and, on a party vote, Rolleston was beaten by thirty-six to twenty-nine votes. It would be interesting to know if the Government in later years regretted their choice, for many "scenes" occurred in the House under the weak control of Major Steward. Is there not also some irony in the fact that Rolleston's defeat was due to a strict party vote in view of the fact that he always professed himself a firm believer in party government? In this case he was slain by his own weapon.

[1] At that time, it was the practice for the Speaker of the Legislative Council to be appointed by the Government. At the present day, he is elected by the Council.

HON. R. OLIVER to ROLLESTON, 1891:

What an extraordinary session the January one was! And what an extraordinary Ministry! For your sake and for the sake of the character of Parliament, I much desired your election to the speakership. For the sake of the party, I am delighted that you still remain among the combatants. How could you, who have never "shown the white feather of a shameless life", expect to be the choice of Parliament?... I am sorry our side did not choose *a* leader. Putting the leadership in commission will never do. A trinity in unity cannot be secured in party strife.

Poor Atkinson's retirement to the Council is very sorrowful to think of. I hope the quiet which he will enjoy may re-establish his health and strength.

The new Ministry can hardly be considered a strong one. I should think Seddon would dominate it. I think he has more sense than all the rest. Stout will move Ballance—Buckley, Ward, and Cadman hardly count. I suppose you will have an 8 Hours Bill, a Land and Income Tax Bill, with the progressive principle, or want of principle, carried a little further than Atkinson proposed to go with it.

III

It was now taken for granted that Rolleston would become leader of the Opposition, and that under him the party would soon be led in triumph back to the Treasury benches. "Rolleston has every chance", said the *New Zealand Times*, "of becoming Prime Minister after a severe struggle at the head of a strong and stable administration." So little was it recognised at that stage that the Liberal Government was to hold the confidence of the electors for more than twenty years.

The first difficulty the Opposition was faced with was the choice of a leader. For a time the Opposition controlled their operations by a committee of five. Such an arrangement was bound to lead to confusion, and the Government taunted them with having five leaders. However, on 23 June 1891, Mr John Bryce, Rolleston's old colleague of

the Parihaka incident, led the debate for the Opposition on the financial statement, and was congratulated by the Government as appearing for the first time as leader of the Opposition. But Bryce was an obstinate and hot-headed man, and before long found himself in conflict with the Speaker. In the course of a heated debate, he had said that "the Premier ought to be ashamed of himself". Before he could finish the sentence, he was called on to withdraw the words, which he refused to do. The Speaker ordered the galleries to be cleared, and, after a fierce debate a resolution was carried on a party vote:

> That this House regrets that the words taken down were used by the Honourable Member for Waikato (Bryce), although qualified as they were by the subsequent words used by the Honourable Member.

Bryce declared that the full sentence he meant to utter was:

> The Prime Minister ought to be ashamed of himself in relying on a technicality to prevent an enquiry into a disgraceful charge made against a member of the House.

He regarded the resolution as a censure by the House under the scourge of the party whip. "I now leave the House", he said. "Whether I shall enter it again is a matter for my own consideration."

Rolleston immediately became leader of the Opposition, and shortly afterwards a long and bitter controversy arose over the treatment of Bryce. The Speaker offered to mediate if the House would adjourn. However, the Opposition were thoroughly incensed at what they regarded as an unfair censure on Bryce. On 31 August, to everyone's astonishment, Rolleston handed to the Speaker a notification by Bryce resigning his seat as a Member of Parliament.[1] Rolleston thereafter remained as leader of the Opposition during the remainder of the Parliament. But

[1] The incident kept cropping up from time to time during the next two years. Finally Bryce petitioned the House for redress, but without success.

the post was uncongenial to him. Government members taunted him with being a Conservative, while his colleagues suspected him of being too radical to be a wholehearted leader of their party. In fact, he was now in a most unenviable post, and was what the French would call "a prisoner of the right". It is not surprising, therefore, that we find him in his first speech saying wistfully: "I should prefer very much to be doing practical work as a cockatoo among the harvests of the south to sitting in this House listening to a great deal of unproductive talk."

Indeed, it came as a painful surprise to Rolleston to find himself dubbed a Conservative. He protested against the accusation, and it is clear from many incidents that he struggled to escape from the yoke. But the more he struggled, the more he embarrassed his colleagues. Quite early in the session he gave enthusiastic praise to the speech of a new Labour member, Mr David Pinkerton. He described the speech as "full of common sense and freedom from clap-trap and class feeling. In fact, he (Pinkerton) is a thoroughly representative man—not a representative of Labour, but of all classes of the community." Pinkerton had urged that all the coal mines should be nationalised, and Rolleston expressed his concurrence in this radical reform. "People should not get", he said, "for a few shillings land which might contain great mineral wealth, and under my system of perpetual leases we could have resumed land that was discovered to have coal deposits."

IV

In the same spirit he approved of the main principles of (Sir) John McKenzie's first Land Bill, which was largely a consolidation measure. "In respect of lands, I have seen growing in favour during the last eight years a system initiated by myself with a view to promote settlement and distribution of population, and with a view to prevent monopoly of the lands—which has been gratifying to me.

I have not always had the support of those who arrogate to themselves the name of the Liberal party."

This question of land tenure and settlement had long been the cardinal feature of his political faith. For half a lifetime he had worked passionately in the cause of land settlement. It is impossible, therefore, not to feel sympathy for him when he saw the Liberal party suddenly converted to his views and arrogantly proclaiming themselves as the great apostles of land reform. When he reminded the House that, when he was fighting the battle for distributing people on the land, he had to fight against the Liberals, (Sir) John McKenzie said: "I supported you." Rolleston: "Supported me! Save me from such support as I got from you." Historically speaking, Rolleston had good cause to be resentful, for John McKenzie had in the past opposed his scheme of perpetual leasing. But what Rolleston failed to realise was that, even if McKenzie had changed his views, he was a genuine convert, and was to earn for himself in the next few years an outstanding reputation as an enemy of land monopoly, and become the idol of the small settler. When the Opposition and the conservative Upper House tried to block McKenzie's land legislation, it was inevitable that Rolleston had to bear part of the blame and suffer for the sins of his party.

On one occasion Ballance said:

> Does the honourable gentleman call himself a true Liberal?
> ROLLESTON: Yes.
> BALLANCE: The honourable gentleman has done some service with regard to the land laws. I freely admit, and I am glad to say I agree with many of his expressions of opinion as to the land laws. On the other hand, I have seen acts of the honourable gentleman which are those of a Conservative, and whatever his profession may be, he is the head of a Conservative party.

This was a fair statement, and poor Rolleston found to his cost that one cannot be both an Independent and a party man at the same time. His radical views on land questions

irritated his party and weakened his leadership. On the other hand, his views on many of the Labour Bills led him to denounce such measures as the Shops and Offices Act, the Truck Act, and similar legislation. He prophesied that they would produce unrest and disaster. Reeves taunted him for his "gloomy vaticinations, which have gone on for eighteen years or more".

Probably Rolleston would have liked to escape from the almost impossible position in which he found himself as leader. At the end of the first session, he urged Bryce to come back to Parliament as leader of the Opposition:

BRYCE to ROLLESTON, 12 December 1891:

You have more than once alluded to the Leadership of the Opposition as if you were merely waiting till I got back. Don't make any mistake about that. . . . The chances of my returning to the House are extremely small, and in no case would I think for a moment of superseding you.

V

The next year (1892) Rolleston's dilemma became even more acute, and the situation became almost comical. For, when McKenzie reintroduced his Land Bill, both he and his colleagues sought eagerly for Rolleston's support. They cajoled and flattered him, and quoted his views on the leasehold with high admiration and approval, as, for example—

SEDDON: The proper place for the honourable gentleman—the leader of the Opposition—is on this side of the House.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: At the back of you?

SEDDON: No, the honourable gentleman's political status in this country would not allow him to take a back seat.

—and he pleaded with him to see the Bill through. The reason for all this was that the Government were nervous about their own supporters. The Prime Minister, Ballance, was or had been an ardent land nationaliser, and some years before had written a pamphlet advocating this principle.

(Sir) John McKenzie, on the other hand, had come to realise that the public would not agree to the abolition of the freehold. He was nervous lest he, too, might be regarded as an advocate of land nationalisation. So, in his speeches, he laid emphasis on the fact that the freehold could still be chosen under his optional tenure. In place of Rolleston's perpetual lease with periodical re-valuations, he provided an astonishing substitute, known as the lease in perpetuity. This lease was for nine hundred and ninety-nine years at a fixed rent. It was a desperate attempt to please his freehold supporters and yet satisfy the leaseholders, as he argued that, with the State as landlord, it was at least possible to limit the area one man might hold.

On the other hand, a leading Opposition member, Mr Scobie McKenzie, said that the lease in perpetuity had been introduced purely to catch the votes of five or six freeholders on the Government side. They could say to their constituents that, while they had not managed to retain the freehold, this new tenure was as good or better. But it was clear that it meant abandonment of the whole principle of perpetual lease, which was designed, by re-appraisement of rent at stated intervals, to secure the increased value to the State. "It is only perpetual", said Scobie McKenzie, "in the advantages it grants to the individual and losses to the State."

The humour of the situation was that John McKenzie and Rolleston were both anxious not to alienate their own followers. Hence each tried to draw as far away as possible from any suggestion that he was an advocate of land nationalisation. McKenzie kept stressing the fact that the whole object of his lease in perpetuity was to control transfers of land and prevent aggregation.

Rolleston on the other hand recalled the fact that his perpetual lease system was only to apply to one-third or one-fourth of the land. In other words, he had always seen that the only hope of retaining the system was to keep it

confined to a certain limited area. It was to be an adjunct to the freehold but not to do away with it.

This was a strange duel in which two great land reformers on opposite sides of the House were both at heart substantially in agreement. But each, owing to conflict in his own party, was trying to find points of difference. The climax was reached when an Opposition member moved:

> That while in the opinion of the House the Land Bill contains some useful amendments, and should be read a second time, the House considers that the extent to which it aims at restricting the freehold tenure is unsatisfactory and calculated to be injurious to the best interests of settlement.

This ingenious amendment forced Rolleston's hand. Ballance immediately asked whether it had Rolleston's sanction, or did he disclaim it.

> ROLLESTON: I concur in the amendment entirely.
> BALLANCE: That is what I expected.

He therefore treated it as a No-Confidence motion.

Rolleston's attitude on this question was attacked by the Prime Minister and defended by the Opposition. There was in reality on his part no abandonment of his former attitude. But, by being forced to vote against the Bill and with the die-hard freeholders of the Opposition, he was made to appear more hostile to the leasehold than was really the case. In so far as the new legislation had cut out or restricted the right of an applicant to choose between deferred payment or cash or leasehold tenure Rolleston's opposition was justified.

Nevertheless, all these interminable debates on the freehold and leasehold issue proved futile in the long view. Those critics were right who foresaw that State landlordism could never be made the main system of tenure. For, as soon as the tenants became numerous enough to be a political power, they would and did demand and obtain the right to the freehold. As Sir John Hall said: "If any

intending settlers come to me and ask me 'Are we to be forced into this system of leasehold?', I shall say: Take this lease. The more of you that take it the better because, in that case, there will be the more votes to give yourself the freehold, which I am sure they will do so before long." He declared that the Bill was a mop with which Rolleston and McKenzie "were trying to keep out the tide of human instinct which for hundreds of years has held on to the freehold tenure and will go on and sweep away these castles of sand".

Sir John Hall was a true prophet, for, in 1912, Massey rode into office largely on his policy of granting the freehold to the State tenants.

As time went on, the Opposition became more and more dispirited. On the death of Ballance they had to face a far more powerful and astute Prime Minister in the person of Richard John Seddon, of whom something will be said in the next chapter.

But, as always happens when an Opposition finds itself engaged in a hopeless fight, it begins to find fault with its leader. Under such circumstances, it is easy for the enemy to create or stimulate disaffection. Rumours were ingeniously circulated to the effect that the members of the Opposition were dissatisfied with Rolleston's leadership. It was even suggested that a middle party might be formed. Captain Russell (who was to become leader of the Opposition after Rolleston's defeat at the 1893 election) did his best to reassure Rolleston.

CAPTAIN RUSSELL to ROLLESTON, 8 April 1893:

Hall, in writing me, mentioned that you were riled about a paragraph in the "Lyttelton Times" of 30th March which said your supporters are dissatisfied and a middle party was likely to be formed, my name being one of the middlemen.

I never bother my head about the papers—they must supply something new every morning, and I am surprised they invent so little. If, however, you have done so, please no longer attach

any importance to the paragraph. I believe the large majority of our side are quite satisfied with the way you conducted our defence last session, and I was astonished at your persistent courage in fighting so cheerfully and continuously battles which we all knew we must lose, and I add that, in my opinion, nobody would have done it better, and I think none so well. It is very easy to imagine a series of brilliant guerrilla attacks, but they are difficult to achieve, and, even when successful, do not seriously damage an enemy.

The country has to pass through a period of unrest, and our only policy is to try and make that unrest as little harmful as we can.

I know how you hate the word coalition; but it may yet have to be considered. If the rout of one's enemy can be gained only by more outrageous sacrifices than even they are prepared to subject the country to, we had better not defeat them. If three or four years can be tided over, possibly a more tranquil time may come; but all I think we can expect is more careful consideration of social questions; the fact that they have to be dealt with is to my mind absolutely plain.

There is no scheme or talk of any middle party that I have ever heard of.

CAPTAIN RUSSELL to ROLLESTON, 19 April 1893:

No significance attaches to my talk about coalition. I wished principally to bring the idea under your consideration because I believe, if Stout does not come forward, that Ministers will incline to coalesce. The good of the country might require us to agree to avoid a struggle for office which could be run only on the lines of utter radicalism on one side versus prudent finance and constitutionalism on the other, not a very taking programme. I am far from wishing a coalition, but party differences seem to me to be meaningless: the only distinction to be drawn is prudent versus reckless administration. You see the Conservatives in England go for a Labour programme, and we may as well try and stay the waves of the ocean as the waves of democracy. The tide will ebb, and a calm will come; let us then, if opportunity offers, see if it is not possible to divert the current meantime. I am not afraid of the Labour men, but of the agitators.

The leader of a political party can hardly fail to hear

from time to time rumours of dissatisfaction with his leadership and no asseverations of loyalty by his colleagues can wholly free him from the belief that such rumours are evidence of some discontent. To so sensitive a nature as Rolleston's the merest whisper of dissatisfaction with his tactics or strategy caused him more than ordinary distress. Perhaps it was this that caused him to write to his daughter Margaret on 13 May 1893:

> I doubt whether I shall continue much longer in public life. Old age is coming on apace and I hate worry. This industrial warfare—the class animosities that have been engendered—have very much spoilt the earlier ideals of one's life.

Chapter XX

SEDDON AND ROLLESTON, 1893–99

"We came here seeking a better country and I honestly believe we have made this a far better country to more of our fellow men than could have been dreamt of by those patriots who first landed on its shores"—ROLLESTON.

I

On one occasion Rolleston declared that the great value of Parliamentary Government is that it provides a safeguard against autocracy. But he could not have foreseen the rise to power of Richard John Seddon, who, after the death of Ballance, grasped the leadership and before long came to be called "The uncrowned king of New Zealand". He was to remain in that position until his death thirteen years later.

But, while Seddon imposed his masterful personality on his Cabinet, his party and Parliament, he was wiser than most dictators, for he did not seek to impose his autocratic will on the electors. On the contrary, his great skill consisted in finding out what the people wanted, and then proceeding to give it to them. He had a perfect flair for gauging the constant changes in public opinion. If a major issue arose in which the issues were obscure, he played for time by setting up a Royal Commission. Sometimes of course this expedient was entirely wise and justifiable. For example, while it is difficult for us to-day to realise that the proposal to join the Australian Federation was ever a live issue in New Zealand, it is clear that it was seriously debated at the time when the Federation was established. On such a question, affecting the whole future destiny of New Zealand, there was full justification for delay and inquiry. Seddon accordingly set up a Royal Commission, and, on its recommendation, rejected the proposal.

But this recourse to a Commission was less justifiable when Seddon found his party hopelessly divided on the burning question of freehold versus leasehold. A vast amount of evidence was collected and published in a huge tome; but, as the Commission was composed of an almost equal number of avowed freeholders and leaseholders, no clear recommendation emerged. Seddon, however, gained his chief object, which was a long delay. But the problem remained a constant cause of discord in his party, and after Seddon's death was one of the chief factors in its downfall.

This is not the place to attempt a full portrait of Seddon. In any case, the task has been brilliantly accomplished by his old colleague, Mr W. P. Reeves.[1] It will suffice to say that he was the most powerful and popular of all the Prime Ministers New Zealand has had. He was the father of much social legislation, and in time he became an ardent Imperialist. He was a loyal colleague—indeed, too loyal to the group of dead-heads who so largely composed his Cabinet.

He that seeketh to be eminent among able men (says Bacon) hath a great task, but that is ever good for the public. But he that plots to be the only figure amongst cyphers is the decay of an age.[2]

His immense physique and tireless energy enabled him to tour the country making four-hour speeches at innumerable meetings and banquets in a way that left his opponents gasping.

II

Rolleston admired the great sagacity and forceful personality of Seddon, and so far as party ties would allow occasionally supported him. For example, when Seddon brought in a bill to further Technical Education, Rolleston seconded the adoption of it in an enthusiastic speech showing a wide knowledge of the subject. But he was dismayed by the way everything was sacrificed to Seddon's personal ascendancy

[1] See chapter "King Dick", in *The Long White Cloud*.

[2] Quoted in a pamphlet, *Back to Democracy*, by A. R. Atkinson, 1906.

and all power centred in his hands. He was infuriated by Seddon's exercise of his powers of patronage, and his open boast that other things being equal he believed in giving appointments to men of his own party.

In the distribution of public moneys, he saw at work the principle of "spoils to the victors", and he denounced Seddon's cynical warning to country constituencies that, if they did not favour the Government, they could not expect favours from the Government. He was constantly irritated by Seddon's flamboyant verbosity.

III

At the 1893 election, Rolleston stood for Ellesmere, and was defeated by W. H. Montgomery, the son of his old friend, the Hon. Wm. Montgomery. His defeat was partly brought about by the hostility of the newly-enfranchised women and by the growing power of the Prohibitionists. Rolleston had freely expressed his opposition to the granting of the right of women to vote. His reason was that he did not believe there was any widespread general desire for such a measure. In retrospect, his opposition may appear old-fashioned. But we are apt to forget how many public men in 1893 viewed the proposal with grave misgivings. It is well known that Seddon was not personally favourable to it, and manœuvred for as long as possible with his usual skill to avoid a decision. Even his colleague, W. P. Reeves, announced that he himself was a "half loaf man", and he advocated restricting the franchise to women who had passed the matriculation examination of the University.

Sir Robert Stout was of the same mind. He thought the reform should be brought in gradually by allowing women to vote for school committees and other minor local bodies. Moreover, the Government leader of the Legislative Council confessed that he brought in the Bill merely out of loyalty to his party. Personally he was opposed to the granting of the franchise.

In the light of such views, Rolleston's opposition to a measure which in those days was regarded as a novel and daring experiment was not so strange or unreasonable as might now be supposed. But, as he could not speak with two voices or disguise his opposition by subtle manœuvres, he paid the penalty in the loss of his seat.

In like manner he opposed the new licensing legislation, which allowed the livelihood of the publicans to be confiscated by a direct vote of the people. The Prohibitionists were in the ascendant, and they rallied a heavy vote against all candidates who withstood their demands. Rolleston argued that Prohibition would encourage lawbreakers and drunkards and a baneful system of paternalism; that intemperance would never be cured by intolerance; and that great social reforms could not be worked out by injustice. He thought it wrong to treat the publicans as outlaws and the enemies of society. Therefore he favoured stricter regulations and inspection and a limitation of the number of public-houses.

After an interval of many years, public opinion—perhaps influenced by the actual experiment of Prohibition in America—seems to have swung round to Rolleston's view. Although it was for many years a burning and almost a dominating issue in politics, it seems now no longer to agitate the public mind, or to be a serious embarrassment to candidates. Rolleston's view on women's franchise and the licensing question contributed to his downfall, but no doubt the main cause was the immense popularity of Seddon and his legislation. It is worth mentioning that Rolleston considered the graduated land tax would work unjustly, and later experience proved that he was right.[1]

Nowadays we accept the special tax on absentees as a

[1] When in office, I abolished the Graduated Land Tax, which had been condemned by two Royal Commissions after full enquiry. It has since been reimposed by the Labour Party, but it is still imposing grave injustice.

matter of course—yet there is something to be said for Rolleston's view that, as we were dependent on imported capital to develop the country, it was unwise specially to penalise such resources. "What would you think", he said, "if the English Government punished people who invested their money in New Zealand and ventured to live out of England in order to manage it?"

Rolleston still supported a Free Trade policy and opposed the idea of further Protection, which he denounced as "a selfish, a bad, and a mischievous policy".

IV

"I am glad", said Rolleston after his defeat in 1893, "I am out of politics. I have indeed had enough of it. If I had remained in politics, I should have shortened my life, and I want to live. I have a large family, and I must look after my own affairs for the rest of my life."

It was generally supposed that Rolleston had now left the scene of politics. The papers wrote laudatory articles of an almost obituary character. They praised him as a great and patriotic statesman whose frugal way of life and high ideals should prove an example to the new generation. "As he descends the path of life's decline", said one writer, "may some rays of prosperity fall upon him and may his last days be peopled with thoughts of a past in which he played a useful and honourable part, and sweetened with sweet companionship of books"—and much more to the same effect. But the "New Zealand Cincinnatus—honest William Rolleston", as he was called, came back to sit in one more Parliament.

In 1896 he was elected for Riccarton. At that election his main thesis was an attack on the growing autocracy of Seddon. He described Seddon as "a resolute man with a great deal of intelligence, ability, and grit", but he complained of his Parliamentary dictatorship, of the impropriety of Seddon becoming adviser to a mining syndicate,

and the help given to this syndicate from public funds. On the other hand, he praised Sir John McKenzie, and recognised his earnest desire to promote closer settlement.

As a result of the election in 1896, Seddon's majority was substantially reduced, and the Opposition hopes began to rise. In the Government party a left wing had formed, and proved so threatening that Seddon at a party caucus declared that the question was whether the Government or the Opposition was to carry on the Government of the country.

V

Rolleston excused himself from resuming the leadership of the Opposition on re-entering Parliament in 1897. He claimed that "his growing years and other considerations" disqualified him. Moreover, he considered that Captain Russell was ably discharging his duties under most difficult circumstances. But, while this attitude may have been chivalrous on Rolleston's part, the popular opinion was that Captain Russell was too easy-going to be an effective leader. He treated politics as a game that should be played with polite courtesy, and not too strenuously. He was a large landowner, and it was said that he found horse-racing more interesting than weary all-night debates in Parliament. In fact, Seddon was well satisfied to have the Opposition led by Russell.

Nevertheless, in my view, Russell had a far sounder appreciation of the political situation and of the best tactics to adopt than many of his colleagues. This is shown by his letters to Rolleston quoted in the last chapter. He was quite right in saying that "party differences seem to me to be meaningless; the only distinction to be drawn is prudent versus reckless administration. You see the Conservatives in England go for a Labour programme, and we may as well try and stay the waves of the ocean as the waves of democracy." These views do not indicate an attitude of

defeatism. Captain Russell saw clearly enough that social questions must be dealt with by whatever party was in office.

Indeed, what made the task of the Opposition so hopeless all through the Ballance-Seddon regime was that there was no real line of demarcation between the political philosophy of the Government and the Opposition. It was of no avail to denounce Seddon as a Socialist, for everyone realised that, had the Opposition been in power, the spirit of the times would have compelled them to pass much the same class of legislation. In fact, while the Opposition at times criticised and voted against much of the Labour legislation passed by the Liberals, at other times they claimed with truth, but with some inconsistency, that many of these measures had actually been drawn and prepared by the Atkinson Government in its last year of office. So far, therefore, as the Opposition fought against the Liberal legislation, it was largely a battle of the ins and the outs. Richard Cobden once said: "There is perfect truth in the sarcasm that the Whigs are Tories in office and the Tories are Whigs when out of office."

Probably Rolleston felt more strongly than any of his party, except perhaps Captain Russell, that a new spirit was abroad, and that the only useful service the Opposition could render was to offer constructive criticism to improve the crude and hasty proposals of the Government.

> The public conscience (he said) has been educated and become sensitive to the just claims of all classes to a recognition of the bonds of human fraternity. Changing circumstances call for legislative provision to protect those who cannot protect themselves in security of life and proper sanitation.

He therefore believed a large portion of the political future was bound up in dealing with social and economic problems.[1]

But so long as the Opposition could only offer negative criticism or help to improve Government Bills without

[1] Speech to Industrial Federation, 18 August 1897.

destroying them, and so long as prices for exports kept at a payable price, Seddon was politically secure and boisterously triumphant. Indeed, it suited him very well to maintain the fiction that there was a deep gulf between his party and the Opposition. It helped to keep him in office, and he naturally made capital out of the fact that, whatever remnant of the old Conservatives and the large landowners still existed was to be found in the ranks of the Opposition. "Business now regulates itself", Captain Russell wrote on 15 December 1899, "according to the whim of the Premier and the supineness of the Speaker."

So it came about that, at each election, the Opposition went from defeat to defeat, until in 1900 they were so demoralised that they renounced the role of an organised party and dispensed with a leader. Some supporters even urged the members of the Opposition to resign their seats and leave the country to its fate. "The only function the Opposition can hope to perform", said Mr John Hutcheson, M.P., "is to look nice and watch the procession go by." It was in vain that they complained of the autocracy of Seddon, of the laying aside of constitutional safeguards, of the emasculation of the Upper House, and of the bribing of the constituencies. The electors turned a deaf ear to their appeals for better government. The country was enjoying prosperity and rising prices, and was not concerned with political abuses or party manœuvres.

VI

During the absence of Russell in England in 1898, Rolleston again found himself called on to lead the Opposition. The chief legislation of this Parliament was the Old Age Pension Act, in which Seddon took a special pride. It met with prolonged opposition, and Rolleston based his criticism on the grounds urged by Mr Joseph Chamberlain against a similar proposal in England. He considered that a non-contributory scheme based on poverty alone would not sufficiently dis-

criminate between the deserving and the thriftless. He preferred the scheme advocated by Sir Henry Atkinson many years before under which a universal pension scheme would be established, to which everyone would contribute during their active years of work.

Again, Rolleston's view seems to find justification after many years in the fact that a contributory scheme has been enacted in 1938 by a Labour Government.

In the same year (1898) Rolleston met with an accident by a fall from his horse. This seriously affected his health and disabled him for some time from carrying on his parliamentary work.

ROLLESTON to SCOBIE MCKENZIE, January 1898:

What are you doing? Dreaming much? Write and tell me what you think of things. I don't think of anything but the harvest and low prices, and nurse my woes physical and financial to my heart's content. . . . Russell will soon make a nice "gentlemanly" speech. I shall address my constituents with ponderous solemnity later on—you will dance lightly and fantastically in front of the footlights in Dunedin—but we shall none of us evoke the slightest enthusiasm. The country is generally prosperous and does not care for politics. Who is going to put their hands into their own pockets? For myself "Cantabo vacuus coram latrone" [The traveller whose pockets are empty will sing in the presence of the highway robber]. Put yourself and your bicycle into the express some morning, and come up and talk over the situation. "Si foret in terris rideret Democritus" [If Democritus were alive he would laugh].

It is pleasant to put on record a letter from Sir John McKenzie showing that, in spite of their political duels, McKenzie and Rolleston held each other in high personal esteem. The letter is dated 10 April 1899.

My dear Rolleston,

I can assure you it was with very great satisfaction indeed I received your kind, honest, and manly letter of 30th ultimo. I have received a great many kind letters since my proposed visit to the Old Country, but none has come to hand that has given me

more satisfaction than has yours, as it goes to show however we may differ in small things politically we can throw aside all small personal feeling and petty differences and unite together for the welfare of the country of our adoption. It will give me considerable pleasure to hear of your continued health and success, and I sincerely hope that you may be able to follow my example in paying a visit to your native country once more.

With very kind wishes and regards,

Yours very truly,

JOHN MCKENZIE.

Chapter XXI

ROLLESTON'S LAST FIGHT

"It was his fortune to be engaged in incessant conflict all through his life. . . . Politics was the one consuming interest of his life"

MORLEY on Cobden.

I

At the election of 1899 Rolleston was again defeated. His successful opponent was G. W. Russell, who raised the cry that Rolleston was "too much of a colonial politician". By this he meant that Rolleston was too much absorbed in high questions of general politics, and did not devote enough time to local affairs. "Apparently", said one paper, "the people of Riccarton agreed with Mr Russell in his dislike of broadminded statesmanship, and preferred the smaller to the greater man."

A. R. ATKINSON to WILLIAM ROLLESTON, 18 December 1899:

Almost incredible in its naivete was your opponent's accusation that you were too much of a colonial politician. Too much of the statesman and too little of the commission agent, too much of the patriot and too little of the pedlar, too much backbone and conscience and too little capacity to grovel or to lie, too erect, too broadminded, too honest—what a glorious charge upon one to be found guilty by a shearer's casting vote and driven from political life.

The contest was so close that Rolleston was only beaten by one vote. His friends urged him to apply for a recount; but he said that, even if the result was reversed, he had no desire to be elected by a small majority.

Even in the hour of his defeat, there were still Radicals who hoped that, when the public tired of Seddon, Rolleston

would be called on some day to lead a better Radical party than Seddon's.

Mr Samuel Saunders, Editor of the *Lyttelton Times*, said:

I trust without any disloyalty to my party I may say how much I regret that the country has lost for a time your services in Parliament. If you were in the House of Representatives to-day as leader of the Opposition, we ardent young Radicals who hope for something even better than the present Government might look to you for valuable assistance in realising our aspirations. But that will come in good time. Happily you are still young enough to create a new political party and lead it to success.

Whether you do that or not, there are thousands of men and women in the country who will remember with the deepest gratitude your years of unselfish labour on their behalf. Their esteem is a greater prize—a thousand times greater—than any seat in Parliament, and it cannot be taken away by a fickle constituency or by the mistakes of your political friends.

During the last decade of his public career, Rolleston was not only depressed by the fact that the new surge of political thought had left him—the one-time Radical—stranded as a "prisoner of the right", but he felt lonely owing to the death of so many of his old colleagues and intimate friends. His great leader, Sir Harry Atkinson, in whose company he had fought many a hard-fought fight, had died in 1892. The last words of this fine old soldier-statesman as he lay dying were: "I have received my marching orders."

Another old and intimate friend, Judge Richmond, died in 1895. He had married a sister of Sir Harry Atkinson. He left politics for the bench in 1862—before Rolleston entered politics—and was for thirty-three years the most erudite and distinguished of all New Zealand judges.

The following year saw the loss of another of this fine band of pioneer statesmen, James Edward Fitzgerald. He had been the first Superintendent of Canterbury and the first Prime Minister of New Zealand. His brilliant oratory

caused him to be regarded as the finest public speaker in our history. Rolleston had maintained a close friendship with Fitzgerald since their early days in Canterbury, and his death was a sore loss to Rolleston.

Two years before his death Fitzgerald wrote to Rolleston (2 June 1894):

> I am very sad about affairs—as a socialist I see a course being taken which will only result in stormy reaction. The public service is being simply destroyed, honour and loyalty in the service prostituted to political ends. I must reverse all my former opinions and am beginning to hold that, as elsewhere, the Public Service must be removed from the control of Ministers altogether.

There were others, such as Sir Dillon Bell, who died in 1896, and the passing of such men made him feel that on himself too the shadows were falling.

II

"It is a good thing", said Rolleston, "to have an interval between a man's life work and the reaching of those 'dark gates across the wild that no man knows'."

He was speaking at a banquet tendered to him and his wife by the citizens of Christchurch in February 1900 on the eve of their departure on a trip to England. At this banquet eloquent tributes were paid to Rolleston's long and eminent services by his old friends, the Hon. C. C. Bowen, Sir John Hall, and others. In his reply Rolleston referred to past scenes and the many men he had served with, and he spoke optimistically as to the future.

During his visit to England he spent some weeks in his native village of Maltby, where he was received with a cordiality which he described as extraordinary.

He also visited old friends and relatives at Oxford and Cambridge, Eton and Shrewsbury, and more particularly his old school at Rossall, where he was received as a guest of honour.

In London he spoke at various banquets and renewed friendships with many old New Zealanders resident in England. After his return to New Zealand, he was still in the public eye and deference was paid to his opinion on questions of the day. He was invited to stand for Patea, but he replied:

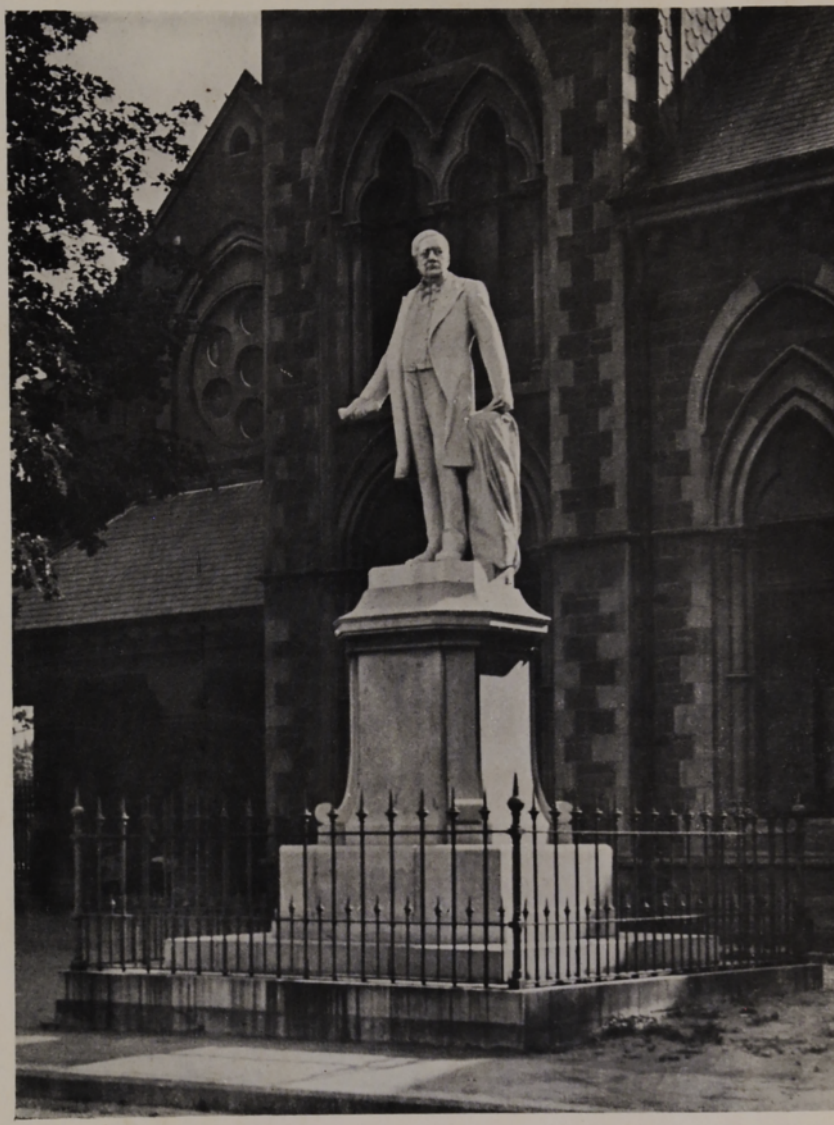
I feel that I would not be able within any reasonable time to look for a realisation of my hopes in respect to the main questions of public interest. The people's eyes are blinded with glamour, and the period of unparalleled prosperity leads them to be careless upon subjects which less easy times would force upon their consideration.

But even as late as 1900 MR SAUNDERS wrote to ROLLESTON:

I must protest against your describing yourself as a man who has lived his life. There are many years of good service before you yet, and I am quite sure that a large part of them will be devoted to the public interest.... It is easy to understand why in the past you drifted into the Conservative camp, but there is really no reason now why you should not be associated with some of the advanced Liberals. Your old party, with whom you cannot have been in full sympathy, is now practically dead, and there is a band of younger politicians who would gladly welcome you as their leader. Your land policy and administration are quite as popular as those of Jock McKenzie, and there are many other questions too upon which the public are in full sympathy with your views.

August 4th, 1899.

None of us find fault with your liberalism. It is good enough for anything. But, under the wretched party system which you persist in defending, we cannot get your liberalism without accepting other people's conservatism. If you were separated from your present political association, there is not a constituency in Canterbury which you could not command. It is this fact that makes you such a difficult man for decent Liberal journals to oppose.



The Rolleston Statue

III

So he retired to his farm on the sea coast at the Rangitata mouth. It consisted of about 1600 acres which he had bought in 1879. He had gradually turned it into what someone called "as nice a piece of land as any man might wish to farm". Here he spent the short remaining time left to him among those of his family not yet married and dispersed.

He had married in 1865 Mary Elizabeth Brittan, born in Sherborne, Dorset, in 1845, the daughter of Joseph Brittan, one of the early settlers of Canterbury, who arrived with her parents in 1852. This happy marriage realised his hope expressed in a letter written before he left England, that he would be a married man before he was thirty-five.

Mrs Rolleston's life of devotion to her husband's interests, the self-sacrifice demanded of her to bring up in the right way the nine children of the marriage, her vitality and beauty, and her triumph for so many years over the disabilities of age, is a story which demands a place of its own to be told adequately. She lived till the age of ninety-five, deeply interested in her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Of their sons, two were members of the New Zealand Parliament, one being Attorney-General, and Minister of Justice and Defence in the Coates administration, 1925–28. Two other sons left New Zealand, one eventually to occupy important administrative posts in the medical profession in England, and the other to be resident magistrate in the Transvaal after the Boer War, and later the first British Trade Commissioner in New Zealand. Three of the daughters married New Zealanders, one of whom was a son of Sir Charles Bowen, Rolleston's lifelong friend.

He was happy in his domestic circle, and all the happenings on the farm were of intense interest and importance to him. As his strength failed he often sat gazing silently at the

distant mountains and at his beloved trees. He loved animals, flowers and trees—especially trees. His favourite saint was St Francis of Assisi, and he said he would like to found an order of St Francis for all people who love flowers and birds. His mind seemed to turn with wistful longing more and more to his early home in England. Bulbs of the wild daffodils which grew in the woods round Maltby Hall were sent to him and planted and watched over with great care. As far back as 1871 he had been instrumental in having some rooks imported which were used to establish a rookery at Riccarton near Christchurch. One of his great pleasures was to listen to the cawing of rooks, for they carried him in spirit back to his native land. During his last illness, at his earnest request, some of the birds were brought with great difficulty to his farm in an unsuccessful attempt to acclimatise them there.

His old friends did not forget him in his retirement and on 30 June 1902 he wrote to Sir Robert Stout:

> It is very pleasant to find as I have found that one's old friends do not forget one when the days darken round one and the years. Your letter was particularly gratifying to me and my wife. I have little to complain of in my seventy-first year. No active physical pain, simply a decay of the powers of nature which has stood me in such good stead for so many years. Six months on one's back with sleepless nights, no appetite and a general failure of the system is of course a trial. I think however my strong constitution will rally within certain limits, and the interval between one's active life and the end may be well spent in a not unpleasant retrospect, nothing doubting that "good will be the final goal of ill".

He still kept up his love of the classics. A few months before his death he suggested to his old friend, Professor Sale, a new interpretation of a passage in one of Horace's Odes. Throughout his last illness, when he was unable to read, he frequently recalled to his mind the noblest passages from the works of this, his favourite, author.

After a long illness, he died on 8 February 1903.

EPILOGUE

SPEAKING at the Jubilee Celebrations in Otago in 1898, Rolleston said: "Seldom indeed are our ideals realised in this world. We aim at one thing; we attain something different. It is in the working out that we gain or lose, and in which success or failure consists."

Hence it was that, though Rolleston's early dreams had not been fulfilled, yet he felt that his efforts had not been in vain. In the sphere of Provincial affairs he had played a leading part in the development of Canterbury and in the establishment of educational and social reforms. In Parliament he had won golden opinions as an administrator of outstanding ability. Sometimes a public man's influence is greater than his achievements, and Rolleston exercised a most beneficial influence on parliamentary life by his high ideals and passionate devotion to the service of the State. Mr Reeves describes Rolleston as "a Conservative by instinct who, as the result of practical experience, became a reluctant but convinced Reformer". He quotes in proof of this the fact that Rolleston became a Reformer where the land question was concerned. Mr Gisborne expresses much the same view. But in my view Rolleston began as a Liberal and remained a Liberal throughout his life. In proof of his early Liberalism, one might quote his creation of the Deaf and Dumb Institute, his advocacy of free secular and compulsory education, his indignant objection to the old Poor Law attitude towards the destitute, and his efforts to prevent land aggregation. In his later days, the extension of State activity in many directions and his political association with the Opposition led to his being regarded as a Conservative. But this was his political ill-luck, and competent critics like Mr Samuel Saunders, of the *Lyttelton Times*, still regarded him as a true Liberal. The fine tribute

by Mr Reeves to Rolleston's political career ends with these words: "What the rejection of Mr Rolleston's views has cost the country is not easy to compute. Already a heavy price has been paid for the mistake and the reckoning is not yet settled." Mr Justin McCarthy, in describing an English statesman, uses words that are applicable to Rolleston. "The most advanced Radicals", he says, "came to understand that the character of such a man is not to be estimated merely by the measure of his agreement with the reforms which in spite of his most vigorous opposition were able to establish themselves in the system of government. The feeling of the whole country rendered homage to his character when death removed him from the political arena in which he had borne himself so bravely and so well."

If we had no record of Rolleston but his public speeches, he would appear as a figure of portentous solemnity, always overweighed with an undue sense of responsibility. Someone described his speeches as resembling a long series of leading articles. They were prepared with immense care, and his delivery was halting and laborious, except when he spoke under sudden provocation. On one occasion he said to Mr Alfred Saunders: "I wish words would come to me as readily as they do to you. You never hesitate for a moment." To which Saunders replied: "Words come to me in single file and I take the first that comes. They appear to me to come to you about six abreast, and you attach I think rather too much importance to the selection of exactly the most appropriate word to be used."

Nevertheless, Rolleston's speeches well repay study, for they contain many wise maxims that are an index to his philosophy and confirm what the reader has already seen, that he was a man of deep sympathies. What, for example, could be more admirable than this extract from one of his speeches: "You may depend upon it there is no greater truth than this. In the old days it used to be said that, if you are virtuous, you will be prosperous and happy. Really

the reverse of this is the truer picture. I would make the toilers comfortable and give them the opportunity of working out their own salvation, and that would make them happy."[1]

Or again: "My experience of men is that they will rise to the positions in which they are placed. I feel that the more you trust people, the greater the confidence you put in them, the more likely they are to do right."

One of his closest friends was Scobie McKenzie, whose speeches displayed in full measure the very qualities of sparkling wit and brilliant repartee that were lacking in Rolleston's. But this intense seriousness that runs through all Rolleston's public speeches was laid aside in private circles. All his friends testify that he was a delightful companion, and his company was eagerly sought by men who liked good talk. In Parliament he loved the friendly association of the dining-table in Bellamy's, and in a touching tribute he wrote on Scobie McKenzie's death he said:

> I am sorry to hear that that daily social meeting is more or less a thing of the past. Sir George Grey, Mr Bryce, Colonel Trimble, and others were men who there interchanged thoughts on every kind of subject. There was no more brilliant or versatile talker than Scobie McKenzie at these prandial gatherings.

The late Mr Charles Lewis, M.P., wrote an amusing account of the kindly way in which Rolleston would afford advice and guidance to many young members who sought his help. His method was to pose as an anxious inquirer rather than as a teacher. "He would ask questions with such humility and receive the answers with such gratitude that he appeared to be merely groping for light. By this means he would draw out the young tyro flushed with importance and stimulated by murmurs of encouragement." Finally it would dawn on the inquirer that he had overlooked some essential point and that he had been put right by "methods assuredly the most artful, the most insidious,

[1] Hansard, 1897, vol. c, p. 586.

and beyond all question the most effective". Then with a few kind words the Parliamentary veteran would walk away "leaving the chastened neophyte to contemplate his own unfathomable ignorance". Mr Lewis denounced as a fallacy the belief held by some people that Rolleston was the apostle of gloom. "I never knew", he said, "a man with a more abiding belief in the future greatness of his race....Of New Zealand's future he would speak in terms as glowing as those of the most exalted optimist." He adds that to strangers Rolleston exhibited a stately old-time formality and a certain reserve born perhaps of nervousness, but the barrier once broken down he was a delightful companion with a keen appreciation of humour.[1]

In physical appearance Rolleston was strikingly handsome. Those who knew him describe him as one of the finest-looking men who ever entered the House. His portrait shows him as possessing all the physical characteristics usually associated in the public mind with the ideal of a statesman. The massive head is deeply set in his broad shoulders; the features are clear-cut and masculine; the steady eyes full of thought and intelligence; and the whole poise shows a striking personality.

Herbert Hampton, the English sculptor who designed the fine statue of Rolleston erected in Rolleston Avenue, Christchurch, said: "The making of this statue, the attempt to render the character of this great man—and I am sure with such a head he must have been great—gave me the greatest interest and pleasure, and I shall never fail to consider myself fortunate to have had the privilege to execute his statue."

The innumerable obituary tributes that were paid to Rolleston's personal character and career show what a remarkable ascendancy his single-minded devotion to public duty had earned for him in public esteem. The *Lyttelton Times*, which was opposed to him in politics, said: "There

[1] See *Christchurch Press*, 10 July 1903.

is scarcely a home from the North Cape to the Bluff in which his name is not held in grateful and affectionate regard. The secret of his popularity was that every one trusted him."

An eminent Civil Servant, Mr James McKerrow, said he had served under Rolleston for five years, which he regarded as the brightest five years of his forty years of official life. "He was one of the most pure and high minded men I had ever the good fortune to meet. His great wisdom and foresight was recognised by every member of the Civil Service who had come in contact with him."

I might quote many more similar tributes, but I will conclude with two sentences—one from his old opponent, Mr Seddon: "Above all others I have met in public life it was not with him a question of expediency but a question of doing the right thing, no matter how unpopular it was", and another sentence from his old colleague, Mr Massey: "Rolleston was without exception the most lovable man I ever met."

In the old church of Maltby village, where so many of his family are buried, there is a memorial brass the wording of which, written by himself, is his own summary of his life:

Quid terras alio calentes sole mutamus?
Patriae quis exsul se quoque fugit?[1]

In loving memory of William Rolleston for forty-five years a New Zealand colonist, youngest son of the Rev. G. Rolleston, formerly Vicar of Maltby. This memorial was placed here by his wife in fulfilment of his last wishes, and to record his devout thankfulness to Almighty God for the blessings of a long and active life and to perpetuate a remembrance of the unchanging love he bore in a far-off land to his native country and his early home.

Born at Maltby Hall September 19th, 1831.
Died in New Zealand February 8th, 1903.

But now they desire a better country that is an heavenly one.

[1] Why do we change our own land for climes warmed by a foreign sun? What exile from his own country ever escaped from himself as well?

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