

HENRY CLAYLANDS FIELD examined.

74. *The Chairman.*] You have lived in Wanganui a great number of years?—Yes, since 1851.

75. I understand you have been asked by the trustees to come here, and also by the Commission at the request of the trustees?—Yes.

76. You have prepared a statement of what you wish to say?—Yes; it is as follows: I was connected with the Collegiate School endowment at the very outset, and even with its origin. Thus I have always taken great interest in it, and noted its progress. Two of my sons were educated in the school, and one was for several years a master. I was slightly acquainted with Dr. Selwyn in England, before he became a bishop, and I renewed the acquaintance when I was in Auckland, before I came to Wanganui. On one occasion my wife and I spent the greater part of two days and the intervening night with the Bishop and Mrs. Selwyn at St. John's College, Tamaki, Auckland. Thus the Bishop knew that I took interest in religious matters, and particularly in Church ones. In 1851 he appointed Dr. George Rees, our then colonial surgeon, and myself to act jointly with the Rev. Richard Taylor, as his agents in Church matters in this part of the colony. Our duties were to keep him informed of anything that would affect the Church, and take any action that he might direct. As the Church was not established here, like it is at Home, and we had thus no definite organization, the Bishop held the position of a "corporation sole." He was the only Church member who had any legal status or existence, and everything connected with the Church had to be done by him, or in his name, and under his direction. When I was in Auckland he told me that he and Chief Justice Martin had been discussing a project for associating laymen with the clergy in the conduct of Church matters. This project ultimately took form, in the formulation of our Church constitution; but at that time we had not even a colonial constitution. One had been granted by the Home authorities, but had been suspended by Sir George Grey as not being suited to our colonial conditions, and it was not till about 1853 that the amended constitution was promulgated. The appointment of laymen to act jointly with clergy as agents was a first step towards self-government in the New Zealand Church. About the end of 1851 the Bishop came to Wanganui, and requested Dr. Rees and myself to meet him at the Putiki Mission Station, where he was then staying, and, of course, we did so. We discussed Church matters generally, and among other things, our Church school was mentioned. This school had till then been the only one available for settlers' children in this part of the colony. It was conducted in a building situated on the site of the present Harbour Board Office, and which building had been the office of the New Zealand Company's agent, and had been bought for the Church by the Rev. R. Taylor for school purposes. The school was at that time conducted by a retired sergeant of the 65th Regiment, named Twiss, at a salary of 15s. per week. About 10s. or 12s. of this arose from school fees of 3d. per week, paid in respect of the children, and the balance was provided out of our Church funds. Dr. Rees took great interest in education, and by his will he left the whole of his property to his wife, for her life, and afterwards to be applied to educational purposes in Wanganui. We knew that at that time the Government was setting apart small areas of land as educational endowments, and entrusting them to the several religious bodies; and in the course of our talk Dr. Rees asked the Bishop if he thought we could get such an endowment for our Church school. He said that if we could get 200 or 300 acres near the town, it might after a short time be leased, and so enable us to give our scholars a better education than they were then receiving. The Bishop said he thought such an endowment could be got, and that he would speak to Sir George Grey on the subject. At that time there was plenty of unselected land within three or four miles of the town, and several desirable sites were mentioned. No one thought of the present site, as it was all a deep swamp, with a sand ridge running through it, and with no outlet within a quarter of a mile. It had, in fact, been unsaleable for four or five years as suburban land at £5 per acre. No one would look at it. Several weeks later a letter came from the Bishop, saying that he had spoken to the Governor, and that we were to have the present endowment. We were very much disappointed, because we thought the land could not be made available for many years; but on this being pointed out to the Bishop, he relieved our minds by telling us that he was prepared to find the money for draining and improving the property, so as to enable part of it to be leased, and afterwards to provide funds for school buildings. He desired us to see about getting some drainage done on his behalf. Mr. R. Park, the District Surveyor, kindly laid off the position of a main drain, and we let a contract for digging it and carrying it down the seaward side of Churton Street to the outlet of the swamp at Maria Place, a quarter of a mile away. Boundary drains were afterwards dug, where the boundaries were in the swamp, with a view to preventing the land from being flooded by the overflow of the adjacent lands. Another outlet of the swamp was afterwards provided by reopening and deepening an old Maori eel-cut just above the Boys' High School; and as this trench crossed the cart-track then in use along the sand-ridge to St. John's Hill, and no such thing as drainpipes were then obtainable, a rough culvert was formed by laying wine-casks, end to end, in the bottom of the trench, and then filling it in. This work was done soon after the Rev. Mr. Nicholls came here. When the Bishop again visited Wanganui about the end of 1852, as well as I can recollect, he told us that a clergyman who had conducted a large church school at Leeds, in Yorkshire, was coming to the colony, and he proposed that this gentleman should act as master of the school and curate of the parish. Till then we had had no stated clergyman in charge of the settlers. The Rev. R. Taylor was a Church missionary, and, of course, his duties concerned the Maoris. When at home at Putiki he used to come over on Sundays and conduct a service for the military at 10 a.m., and for the civilians at 11.30; but his duties often took him away, sometimes for several weeks together, and we were therefore glad of the prospect of a regular minister. It was proposed that the reverend gentleman's stipend of £200 a year should be paid, half from the school funds, and half from the parish, an arrangement which suited us very well, as Church people were few in number, and mostly of the working-class. In fact, while the school contribution enabled us to have a resident clergyman sooner than we could otherwise have afforded to do