

## THE NEW RAILWAY & HARBOUR IMPROVEMENTS.

C.T. December 6, 1884

A public meeting convened by the Mayor was held in the Town Hall on Monday evening, in connection with the schemes for the new railway and harbour improvements at Christchurch. The hall was crammed, and the enthusiasm which prevailed in appreciation of the projects was very great; one person being so exuberant with his interest as to allow his zeal to outrun his discretion so much as to cause considerable interruption.

His Worship the Mayor (Mr. Edward Aldridge) who presided, read the notice convening the meeting, and said that it was doubtless the wish of them all, as natives of Christchurch, to promote the interests of the old town and to do all they could for its benefit (applause); but before passing any opinion upon it, they would hear what the promoters themselves had to say concerning the scheme they intended to carry out. He would however first of all read a telegram from Lord Malmesbury, which said that his lordship would oppose the railway line to the utmost, as it would so seriously affect his property (hisses). His lordship had also written a letter in which he said —

"I am sorry to hear that the meeting at Christchurch on the subject of the proposed railway from that town to Wimborne is to take place on Monday, because it will be impossible for me to attend. On that night the all-important Redistribution Bill will be discussed in the House of Lords, and I cannot be absent. Colonel Harris is confined to the house by a severe accident; so I have no one to represent me, although this proposed line will cut my estate in two, and under these circumstances I shall be much obliged if you will get this letter read to the meeting (hisses). I shall with regret oppose the Bill for the railway to the best of my power, as being useless and unremunerative and cutting up a very pretty rural district—(laughter)—which is already supplied with railways. On the harbour scheme I give no opinion, but the extraordinary changes which, within my memory, have taken place on our coast must be a warning to those who are proposing to invest their money in so perilous a speculation (laughter and hisses).

That was of course, his Worship added, only the opinion of one; they had to look to the many (applause). They were quite willing to hear all the objections that might be raised; but they must not be guided by what one alone had to say. He would now call upon Mr. Sharpe, who would on behalf of the promoters expound the schemes to them, and he trusted that both the promoters, and the opponents if there were any, would have a fair and quiet hearing (hear, hear, and applause).

Mr. W. J. Sharpe, who rose amid considerable cheering, by which he seemed somewhat disconcerted, spoke of the pleasure with which he appeared before them in conjunction with Mr. Arthur, to propound the projects which they intended to introduce into Parliament. Speaking first of the railway project, he said the line would start from a point at the north of the present station at Wimborne, and come in a straight line to Christchurch harbour [the details of the route of which we printed in last week's *Times*]. They could not, Mr. Sharpe said, make a corkscrew railway, and what, was more, they did not intend to do so. If they could not make a straight one it would not be made at all. He knew that Lord Malmesbury and Lord Wimborne owned a great deal of the property through which the line would pass, but it was evident that any scheme of this kind must affect somebody, and whether they had to go through the property of a peasant or a peer it was practically the same (hear, hear). Therefore, although the promoters were anxious to meet their lordships in the best possible spirit, they could not be dictated to by them, because the question, if it had to be fought at all, would be fought before the committee in Parliament, and not in their lordships' private chambers (cheers).

Proceeding to explain the harbour scheme, which was the more important of the two, Mr. Sharpe said they would have in the harbour a depth of 26ft. of water, which would be sufficient to enable the largest ocean-going steamers to come in or out. Moreover, it would enable Christchurch Harbour to become the favourite yachting station on the south coast (cheers).

He did not know they should interfere with the fishing question. The facilities afforded by such a harbour for communication with Cherbourg, Havre, St. Malo, and other places was apparent, and if they could thus make it a calling point for all classes of steamers, Christchurch port would be the port of the south (loud cheers). He thought, it was hardly necessary to say more, in briefly explaining the schemes, but any questions put to him in a frank spirit would be answered in a spirit equally frank. He might, before sitting down, however answer one or two objections which have been raised. The landing stage would be 1,200 feet in length, and the width of the dredged harbour would be 990 feet, and the length 3,960 feet. The distance from Mudeford and Sandhills to the landing stage would be three-quarters of a mile. The width of the channel would be 528 feet. The mercantile harbour would be about 90 acres and the depth 26 feet. The general or yachting harbour would be 132 acres. The upper or inner reach for barges would be 72 acres, so that they would have a total acreage in the harbour of 300 acres. He had been asked whether the new line would cross Wick ferry. Well, he might, say that they had already altered their proposed course a bit in order not to interfere with the ferry, because they had no wish to interfere with any vested interests where it could possibly be avoided (cheers). And to avoid a spot which the fishermen laid great stress upon—Swinney pool—they had also altered the proposed course of the line. "Training wall" was a technical term; it was really nothing more than an embankment. It was almost impossible that they should not touch the fishermen and others to some little extent; but in return for that the promoter's would be giving them a harbour that would almost of a certainty become the yachting harbour of the south coast, and that would afford the local fishermen good employment for twelve months instead of six (cheers). So that if they lost a little by the left hand they would gain much more by the right hand (hear, hear). What he proposed on this point was that the fishermen should elect six of their number to represent them, and that the rest should be bound by their voice, those six should then, meet the promoters on equal terms, and he could assure them that they would do every possible thing they could in reason to meet their views (cheers). They could not deal with 50 or 60 fishermen holding different views. If the fishermen would meet as he had suggested and discuss the matter among themselves, and then come and meet the promoters, they would concede every reasonable request, but when it came to unreasonable demands why of course it would be a question of fighting (hear, hear and applause).

Mr. Druitt who spoke next, in proposing a resolution, said that he thought that anything which would improve the railway facilities and the communication of Christchurch with other places would, upon the first showing, do good (hear, hear). He believed that anything that could tend to make their poor, wretched harbour a good and efficient harbour—anything that could tend to make it a useful, practical harbour was the very thing that they had tried to do for the last 200 years, at intervals (hear, hear). It was attempted by that ingenious surveyor, Yarrington; afterwards Smeaton tried his hand at it; and Armstrong and others in the present century had had their schemes. And their schemes, had been all, in their main features, very much the same as that now put before them. There had been schemes for narrowing the mouth of the harbour, for directing the course and scour of the river, and for making a narrow channel wide and clear out to sea. Looking, therefore, at that, also at the fact that such a scheme as that now before them involved in its success the prosperity of the place and of the majority of the inhabitants in it, and if it should unfortunately fail it would entail great disappointment, it behoved them to consider the matter calmly and dispassionately

(hear, hear). He thought they would all agree further with him when he said that their best thanks were due to the promoters, both for devising it for their good, and for coming there to explain it (hear, hear). He thought too that those gentlemen were entitled to the best treatment they could have at their hands (applause), and that their scheme should be welcomed and receive such support as they could give it (hear, hear). He had had one or two conversations with Mr. Sharpe and he had thought over this matter a good deal; and he had considered what would be a reasonable conclusion for such a meeting as that to come to—a meeting which, as he took it, was anxious for the improvement of their harbour, for the improvement of their railway communication, for the improvement of their neighbourhood generally, but also anxious that as little damage as might be should be done to anybody. He would read to them what he would propose:—

“That this meeting offers its best thanks to Messrs. Sharpe and Arthur for the explanation that they have given of the scheme projected for additional railway facilities for the town of Christchurch and for improving its harbour, and considers any scheme for those objects deserving of support, provided that the promoters first satisfy themselves that the project will be a profitable one, and that upon due consideration it shall appear to be practical and efficient, and that its details are so arranged as to duly respect all interests affected by it.”

Speaking to the resolution, Mr Druitt said that as regarded the first part of it, perhaps some people might say that these gentlemen came here for their own interests; but what did that matter if their coming here would benefit Christchurch people as well. With regard to the proviso about the project being a profitable one, it might be said “that is their business and not ours.” Well that was true; but at the same time if they knew of anything likely to stand in the way of their benefit, and which by due notice they might possibly obviate, they were bound as honest men to tell them of it (hear, hear). It was not to be supposed that the inhabitants of Christchurch would act so dishonestly as to meet these gentlemen and coax them on to spend their money if at the same time they expected that they were going to lose it (hear, hear). Then the next thing was about the scheme being practicable and efficient. The difficulty and the danger that the promoters of former schemes had to content with was the bar at the mouth of the harbour. What that bar would be supposing that all this was done he could not say. What it would be under present circumstances no man could tell from years’s end to years’s end, or months’s end to months’s end (hear, hear). He believed the fishermen and those acquainted with the coast will confirm what he said: that the bar at the mouth of the harbour, and at the mouth of any harbour, was so shifting and uncertain that it was impossible to calculate upon it clearly (hear, hear). These gentlemen might be able to get over the difficulty, and he trusted they would (hear, hear); but it was right that it should be placed before them. He had his own idea as to opening the harbour, and he had his own idea as to the cheapest, the only way, in which a harbour could be made there. What stopped the harbour? The bar. What created the bar? The sand which came there. Whence did it come? Round the Head. Put something at the Head to stop the sand and away went the bar (cheers). Put something at the head to stop it there, and the sea and the river would dispose of the bar between them, and they might have then a chance of a good harbour. He had already mentioned that to Mr. Sharpe. He should not like to pat Mr. Sharpe on the back, and say "Go on my boy, and get into all the difficulty you like," without putting before him what he thought was the great difficulty he would have to face (applause). There was another difficulty. He had heard it said that the people of Lympington and Southampton were going to oppose this scheme (laughter). That was a matter which was very flattering to the scheme itself, because it seemed as if the good people of Lympington and Southampton were already afraid of a rival which was not yet in existence (laughter and hear, hear). But they were wide awake people and looked far ahead; they were right in that respect, and Christchurch ought to do the same. With regard to the last clause, he was very glad to find that the promoters were

prepared to do all they could either to preserve the interests of the fishermen or to compensate them for it (hear, hear), and that they were willing so to arrange the details of the schemes that there should, if possible, be no end of compensation, but they should be protected. And it was a necessary thing that they should be protected, because there were a great many people with small interests at stake, and therefore they did not so readily defend those interests individually as where interests were collected in a body (hear, hear). Compared with other large fisheries the “Run” fishery might be said to be a very important thing to the poor people who earned their living by it, and those people were entitled to due consideration from the promoters of this scheme and to every protection—a protection which he was sure their townsmen and neighbours would endeavour to give them (hear, hear). There were also other interests,—the inhabitants of Mudeford. He was sure that they would be very sorry if any avoidable injury, or damage, or annoyance was caused to them (hear, hear). But he did not see that any such damage was necessary (applause). It appear from what he saw that it was proposed by means of retaining or “training walls” to enclose what was now shallow water, and so to separate their gardens and pleasure grounds from the harbour by a stretch of mudland upon which something possibly might be built or laid out . It appeared to him, however, that that was not only unnecessary to the success of their scheme, but that it was prejudicial to it (applause). What did keeping clear the mouth of the harbour depend on? The scour. What did the scour depend on? On the amount of water that went out of the harbour. And what did that depend on? Upon the amount of water in there. Every foot of land cover with water—where water stood between high and low watermark—that they filled up would gather or exclude six gallons of water and every time it would have to go out of the harbour would tend to augment the labours of the dredging machine, and render it very difficult without any expense which he was not sanguine enough to think the tolls would be able to bear. Remarking upon possible opposition, Mr. Druitt pointed out that the South-Western Company, who would be certain to oppose the new railway, would not be able to offer so stout, so effectual, and opposition if the scheme is supported by considerable interest in the locality near which the works were intended to be. The thing was to get rid of any such opposition as that, so far as it could be, by conciliation. He was sorry to hear that Lord Malmesbury intended to oppose the railway (hear, hear). He did not at all undervalue his lordship's opposition, and doubtless the promoters by no means undervalued it; but he thought that a great deal of the opposition which would be certain to be offered might be overcome by conciliatory means (applause).

Mr. Sharpe, in taking up some of Mr. Druitt's remarks, said that as regarded the profitable character of the scheme, the promoters would not have gone to the great expense they would already had without well going into the matter and calculating the result. As to the matter of the shifting sand from the west bay, he would remark that the limits of deviation was sufficiently wide to allow them to throw out a jetty or breakwater to entirely stop this.

Mr J. J. Smith, of Willow-lodge, observed that the 4ft. wall they proposed constructing would be useless as it will be overflowed by the first high tide.

Mr. Sharpe: not exactly; our “training wall” will be four feet above the mark of the high water spring tide. We should not be such bad engineers, I was going to say idiots as to erect an embankment that would be overflowed by the first high tide.

Mr. Smith: How shall we be able to get out to sea in an adverse wind?

Mr. Sharpe: How do you get out now? (laughter).

Mr. Smith: By means of a small channel.

Mr. Sharpe: Well, we will keep that channel open for you (hear, hear); we are willing to meet you all upon every reasonable point (applause).

In the course of some later remarks, Mr. Sharpe said he might as well allude to the other schemes a little. He had them before him; and what was Armstrong's proposed total

cost? £6,000!—it would not put the "training" walls (hear, hear). Sylvester's amount in 1836 was £1,700 (laughter); not enough to pay the cost of preparing the plans. Smeaton's scheme a hundred years ago was to be £5,000. If gentlemen talked like that was it reasonable to expect anything other than failure? (hear, hear). If they wanted an efficient harbour they must spend money, and they knew that (applause). And they knew pretty nearly what would be the probable cost of carrying this out (hear, hear). But to quote these things as reasons why the harbour could not be improved was—well, it was a mistake (hear, hear).

Mr. Sibley Derham asked how they were going to secure a depth of 26ft. in the harbour?

Mr. Sharpe: By dredging.

Mr. Derham: What, right out to sea?

Mr. Sharpe: Yes; we purpose dredging a distance of a mile and a half. There are a lot of things we might talk about which may be better settled by a private communication with us (hear, hear).

Mr. James Kemp-Welch, in rising to second the resolution, was well received. He said that although it might be said that it should have been seconded by some younger man, some one who would perhaps enjoy the benefits which he himself could not live to see carried out, yet he could not hear of a scheme of this sort, or any scheme proposed which would be supposed to interest and benefit Christchurch without having a word to say about, it (cheers). He might say at the outset that this had come upon him like a thunder-clap. He did not expect, at his age, to hear of any such scheme for the advantage of Christchurch; but he felt that he could very well second the proposition which had been so ably put before them by Mr. Druitt, and what he said, he thought, must commend itself to them very strongly indeed (hear, hear). There was a mixture of prudence, with a desire for the benefit of Christchurch, which, he thought, had been exceedingly well expressed; for it behoved them when they had before them a scheme of such importance and magnitude to consider it thoroughly before they came to a resolution upon it (hear, hear). They ought all to rejoice if without injuring persons more than must always be the case in any scheme such as this, the work could be carried out; and it was reasonable to suppose that if it was beneficial to the town they ought to support it, (cheers). He felt just in this difficulty. It was a scheme in which he did not know how to balance the advantages and disadvantages in a certain sense. But he did hold this, that no individual interest ought ever to stand in the way of a general boon (cheers). Not but what they should well consider when others—as for instance, their friends at Mundeford—were concerned, and therefore he was very pleased to hear Mr. Sharpe say he would endeavour as far as possible, to meet anything that might be brought forward by persons who considered their interests injuriously affected by the scheme (hear, hear). There was another point he would say a word about, and that was as regarded the salmon fishery (hear, hear). He thought that was a most important matter. He did not yet see how the salmon fishing was to be carried on in the Run, as it was at the present time, by the scheme before them (hear, hear). He had no doubt that Mr. Sharpe and those engaged with him would put something before the people which would satisfy them; but he thought they ought certainly to hold to that decidedly, and that nothing should go by which would injuriously affect the interests of those employed in that calling (applause). Speaking of the question whether the scheme would be profitable or not, Mr. Kemp-Welch said that if gentlemen came forward with a scheme and said: "We have money to carry this scheme out, we don't ask you so subscribe anything, and we are only putting before you a scheme which we think will benefit you and not injure us," then he thought they had no right to go behind that and to consider for them what would be their gain or loss (hear, hear). He was not going to stand there and judge between gentlemen differing so much in opinion as gentlemen on that platform and the promoters of the scheme, who were practical men, but he did say this, that if the scheme went before a Parliamentary Committee

it would be so thoroughly sifted, and so thoroughly inquired into upon the evidence then presented that if it was not a practicable scheme it was likely to come to nothing. He was old enough to remember when Mr. Armstrong was engaged upon his scheme, and he knew that Sir George Tapps was the man who was willing to find the money for Mr. Armstrong to carry it, out. The inhabitants then objected to it, and it was in consequence of that it fell through. Well, if they had a better scheme now, they ought to feel thankful there was failure then (hear, hear). He should be exceedingly glad if he heard that the result of any meeting between gentlemen interested in Mundeford who thought that this scheme for improving the harbour was against their interest, and the promoters of the scheme, was an amicable arrangement by which opposition would be removed (hear, hear). He would only in conclusion say that he was exceedingly pleased to see so large an assembly that night of persons evidently feeling deeply interested in the matter before them. To anything in reason that would improve their little town, anything that would bring them trade and employment, and increase the value of property around them, he would say, "God bless the scheme" (loud cheers). On the other hand, if it was not a good thing, if the result of investigation showed that it was not a feasible one, then he believed it would fall to the ground, and he should rejoice then if it did fall to the ground, if it were not, for the benefit of the people generally (loud applause).

Mr. Sambrooke Newlyn, rose amid hearty applause to support the resolution. Having referred to the seeming impossibility of ever constructing a tunnel through Mont Cenis a hundred years ago, and to the manner in which engineering science had overcome those difficulties; he said they had no Mont Cenis to deal with at Christchurch, but they had what every harbour had, a shifting sandbank (hear, hear). He was going to show them how; from experience a sand-bank could be shifted. For five years he lived at Bridport. The harbour at Bridport was a small harbour about 300 yards long and 90 yards wide. It had two piers. At the entrance a sandbank was constantly thrown up, and when there had been a ground sea he had stood on the pier-head of Bridport harbour and had seen the sand nearly out of the water. How did they clear out that sand? They had no volume of water like the rivers Avon and Stour there. They had two little streams, the Brit and another; and the united flow of those two streams would not be more than had in their mill stream at Christchurch. But just opposite they had a sluice, and they bayed back after high tide that small amount of water; and that small amount of water was found sufficient to wash away the bar and to admit vessels drawing 12ft. or 14ft. If that could be done by a small volume of water, why could it not be done at Christchurch by the scour of their two big rivers? (applause). There was not, between the Thames and the Severn, such a volume of water poured into the English Channel as there was from the rivers Avon and Stour, and if other places could take advantage of their smaller volumes of water, and by the use of it make their harbours practicable for navigation, why could not the waters of their own two rivers be made use of for a similar purpose? (applause). There was only one thing that could raise the town Christchurch to a position of prosperity, and that was the making use of the advantages that Nature had blessed them with (hear, hear). They had a good, well sheltered harbour that only needed the engineering science of the present day put to work at it to provide them with one of the best ports in the South of England (enthusiastic applause).

Mr. Henry Stride spoke from the back of the hall, but failing to make himself clearly understood, he subsequently spoke from the platform, and said that the danger which some seemed to apprehend from the tendency of the shifting sand to go eastward was but a bugbear, and would be absolutely stopped by the works at Southbourne.

Before putting the resolution, his Worship said that concerning the salmon fishing it was a question which had more to do with supposed private owners, and he thought that good might come of it, because it would then solve the question whether the present fishermen had not a greater right up the harbour than they exercised at the present time. So far as his own

opinion went, be believed they had a right to the Quay (much applause). But that was a question which would have to be settled with the supposed owners of the bottom of the river (hear, hear). He thought it was a very great pity that any objections were raised, for it seemed to be pretty nearly universal opinion of that large meeting that this scheme was for the benefit of the inhabitants of Christchurch, and not for the benefit of individuals (hear, hear); and, as it had already been said, if it could be carried through, Christchurch would possess a port second to none on the South coast of England (applause).

The resolution was then put, and carried, without dissension, amid most hearty and prolonged cheering.

Mr. Elias Lane said he desired to ask one question. Mr. Kemp-Welch had told them that the promoters of this scheme would not require any money from the locality. He knew that was a blessing to Christchurch, because there was not much money here—(laughter, and hear, hear)—and if these gentlemen were coming here to carry out this scheme out of sheer benevolence to the place they were all the more glad of it (renewed laughter). But he should like to ask whether any money would really be required, whether there was going to be shares, or whether a company would be formed which would carry out the work without any appeal to the people of Christchurch? It was a simple question which he thought many would like to hear answered because it was a scheme which would involve the spending of tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of pounds, and the question naturally was "Where is the money coming from?" They would like to feel assured that there would be no lack of money, and that, if the scheme was sanctioned it would be carried through, to the ultimate benefit of those who lived to see it.

Mr. Sharpe replied that they could not issue shares for public works for which an Act of Parliament was required until they had obtained the Act.

Mr. Lane said he should also like to know whether he had been rightly informed, when he had been told that the Midland Company were promoting this scheme, and that they would not require any new capital whatever, as they had plenty of money to carry it out.

Mr. Sharpe (with a smile): I am very glad you have been told so.

Mr. Smith: Supposing the scheme is not carried into effect, what position should we be in then? (laughter).

Mr. Sharpe, and a voice: The same as you are now, I suppose (renewed laughter, and hear, hear).

Mr. Edward Arthur proposed a vote of thanks to the Mayor for presiding, and in so doing took occasion to thank him personally for the kind and courteous attention the promoters had received from him; and in seconding the proposal, Mr. Druitt said that he had acted just as the mayor of Christchurch should act.

The vote being cordially agreed to, his Worship acknowledged the same, and the proceedings terminated.

At the close of the meeting several persons went forward to inspect the plans, and have a personal consultation with the promoters.

We understand that on the following day, the promoters had an interview with Mr. Smith and other residents at Mundeford, and upon close inspection of the plans they were of opinion that Mundeford would not be duly interfered with, but rather benefitted by the carrying out of the project.

#### CORRESPONDENCE.

[WE do not hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.]

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "CHRISTCHURCH TIMES."

Sir,—With reference to the scheme, now publicly announced for improving Christchurch harbour, I wish to remind my friends and neighbours that in 1846 my brother,

the Admiral, being then member for the borough, a person came down with a programme for the same object. A meeting was stopped by the exertions of Admiral Harris who promised to endeavour to obtain an Admiralty survey of Christchurch harbour, and at his request, Admiral Bowles, then one of the Lords of Admiralty, sent Captain Sheringham, one of their best surveyors, who lay in a steamer for a month off Mudeford, and after a careful survey, reported that no harbour there was feasible. The project was abandoned. The Corporation have a copy of that report, and Mr. Druitt would know about it. I should be sorry if my Christchurch friends were victimized by Birmingham speculators.—I remain, your obedient servant,

MALMESBURY.

14, Wimpole st., Dec. 3.

[We regret that Lord Malmesbury has seen fit to depreciate the project respecting the improvement of the harbour, especially as his letter read to the town's meeting on Monday stated that he would not give any opinion thereon. Lord Malmesbury's position, it seems to us, should have been one for fostering projects for the improvement of Christchurch, rather than to meet them with such a "wet blanket." We put it to his lordship also, whether to stigmatise the promoters as "Birmingham speculators"—whatever the term may mean, is fair argument?—ED. C.T.]

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "CHRISTCHURCH TIMES."

Dear Sir,—At the public meeting the other evening I heard it questioned, if the harbour were formed would it be likely that ship-owners would use it. Permit me to point out one or two reasons why it would be greatly to the advantage of ship owners to use such a harbour in preference to many others. (1) The great advantage such a harbour as it is proposed to form at Christchurch would have, on account of the small rise (only about four feet in the tide). Most of our harbours have been constructed to take advantage of a great rise and fall of tide (and without such a rise and fall they would be useless). The consequence of this is that vessels coming in on the high tide are left resting on their bilges, with all the weight of their cargoes in them. This as ship-owners know causes an incalculable amount of damage to the vessels. In a harbour like Christchurch vessels would at any state of tide be afloat. (2) The discharge of cargoes is much facilitated also by the small effect of the tides. The steep gradients in the gangways being avoided, less crane power being required, whilst at any state of the tide the rapidity of discharging would continue the same. (3) Where harbours are constructed for a great rise or fall vessels often have to lie outside the harbour for hours. This is all very well in fine or moderate weather, but in the event of bad weather it is most serious. Christchurch harbour would admit vessels of deep draught at any time of the tide. (4) The railway scheme in conjunction with the harbour puts the latter in direct communication with our great manufacturing centres. Who can transmit their goods for export without having to pass over so many company's lines, each of which take their due proportion of tolls, the result of which would be increased expedition and reduction on railway rates. In the present state of foreign competition, this is of the utmost consequence to manufacturers for export. I think, sir, when these natural advantages are taken into consideration there will not be much doubt about ship owners using Christchurch harbour if the present schemes are carried out. With regard to engineering difficulties I cannot imagine how men of the present day can hold them when we have the Suez Canal as a practical illustration of what can be done by engineers in the construction of water ways. Permit me to point out that we do not require a M. de Lesseps to construct Christchurch harbour. The engineers who have the scheme in hand well know the difficulties they have to meet and how to encounter them.—I am, sir, yours truly,

AN OBSERVER.