



The Education Board invited applications for the vacant rectorship of the Boys' High School from candidates in New Zealand and the neighbouring colonies, and the choice fell upon Mr. Stuart Hawthorne, M.A., of Sydney University, and Headmaster of the Ipswich Grammar School, Queens land, and a native of Belfast, Ireland.

He entered on his duties in February, 1869, when only 56 names were enrolled. The average attendance for the whole of 1869 was 70; in 1871 it had risen to 126. In the beginning of 1871 Mr. Hawthorne removed from the residence in the south wing of the High School building to make room for the Girls' High School, which the Board had resolved, after much consideration, to place under the same roof with the Boys' School.

With a view to provide suitable board and residence for boys from a distance attending the school, the Education Board erected the boarding institution known as the Rectory on a site adjoining the Town Belt, near the place where the present Boys' High School now stands.

Mr. Hawthorne entered on the occupation of the Rectory in 1871, and in a short time a number of pupil boarders were placed with him.

On 23 March 1872 at St Paul's Church, Dunedin by the Rev E G Edwards, he married Marie Jeanie, widow of Captain Willeby 23 Regiment French Cavalry, and only daughter of the late Dr Angel of Paris.

In 1872-73 the school showed a falling off as regards attendance and the standard of work reached. In May, 1873, the Superintendent, in accordance with a resolution of the Provincial Council, appointed a Commission "to inquire into and report upon the present condition of the Boys' High School, and to make such general suggestions as to the advancement of the

higher education of the Province, as may commend themselves to their consideration." The Commission consisted of the late Sir John Richardson, Professor Shand, Sir Robert Stout, and Dr. Hislop.

In the course of his examination by the Commission, Mr. Hawthorne attributed the falling off in the attendance and the lower standard of study to a variety of causes, over which, he could not possibly exercise any control. In its report the Commission expressed the opinion that "the various circumstances referred to by the rector must have combined to exercise a most dispiriting influence upon both masters and pupils, to keep back intending scholars, and to injure the status of the school."

In accordance with one of the recommendations made by the Commission, the Government, in July, 1874, appointed Sir John Richardson, Sir Robert Stout, the Rev. Dr. Stuart, Professors Shand and Macgregor, and Messrs. E. B. Cargill and: James Fulton "to be a Board of Advice for the High School, to recommend to the Education Board such measures in connection with the organisation and management of the school as might be deemed advisable." The result of a conference between the Board of Advice and the Education Board was the adoption by the latter of a number of Regulations based almost wholly upon the recommendations made by the High School Commission of 1873. It is very much in accordance with these regulations that the school is now organised.

Mr. Hawthorne was of a gentle and sensitive nature, and the public criticism, usually of an adverse character, to which his administration of the High School was subjected for some length of time, at last produced the results that might have been expected. His health began to fail; he completely lost heart; and in September, 1874, he resigned his appointment as rector, intending to carry on the work until the end of the year. But his illness proved of so serious a character that he was compelled to retire from active duty some time before the close of the session. Mr. Hawthorne's health was never again completely re-established, and he died at his residence in Maori Hill, Dunedin on June 8, 1875, aged 42, leaving a widow and several small children. His widow was forced to petition the Otago Provincial Council for money to provide for herself and her family as she was left penniless. They were sympathetic and granted her 250 pounds.

The funeral of the late Rector of the High School, Mr Stuart **Hawthorne** was attended by about 400 persons, our leading citizens being well represented. Portions of the burial service of the Church of England were conducted in St Paul's Church by the Ven. Archdeacon Edwards and Rev. E.G.Penny. The coffin, surmounted by an extensive cross and simple inscription with floral wreath, was beautifully plain and neat. About 180 pupils of the High School marched in single file to the Octagon, where they halted; and the cortege having passed, they doubled along George street and headed the procession, which extended for a considerable distance. After the mourning carriage in which were the relatives of the deceased, were the Right Rev. Bishop Nevill, Rev. Dr **Stuart**, and several schoolmasters. The pall-bearers were six young gentlemen who had formerly been connected with the High School. The solemn service was concluded at the Northern Cemetery.

*The Otago Guardian* in another issue says - A strange fatality seems to attend the Dunedin High School. The first master and all his family were drowned in the Bay [Otago Harbour] on the night of their arrival. The second was fairly driven from his post and from the province by the bitter storm of

persecution which followed on the unauthorised publication of an injudicious letter. And the third has been hunted to his death by the unpardonable malignity of a hostile and unscrupulous Press.

From the day that the late rector first assumed office down to the time when, sick at heart and broken in spirit, he resigned his charge, he was subjected to a series of persistent, unremitting attacks, in which defamatory language was used to the utmost point compatible with ordinary decency. His ability was questioned, his fitness was denied, his acts were misinterpreted, and his motives were misconstrued.

Invidious comparisons were instituted between the Dunedin High School and similar institutions in other provinces and the most unfair and unworthy means were used to disparage the man, to depreciate the scholar, and to bring the school over which he presided into popular contempt.

What his offence was, or how or in what manner he had drawn upon himself these cruel and remorseless assaults none save the dastardly perpetrators can tell.

A more inoffensive gentleman, or one less likely to provoke or invite attack, never walked the streets of Dunedin. But this availed him nothing.

There was a stern resolve to hunt him down, by fair means or foul, and the tactics of his enemies were but too successful. They have indeed hunted their victim down-down to the silent grave, where even their vindictiveness can no further pursue him.

Prepared by The Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of Zealand from information in

*Education [in Dunedin], by J. Hislop, In: Picturesque Dunedin: or Dunedin and its neighbourhood in 1890* website: New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, Victoria University, and The Brisbane Courier (Qld. : 1864 - 1933), Wednesday 21 July 1875.