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# BUILDERS OF GREATER BRITAIN

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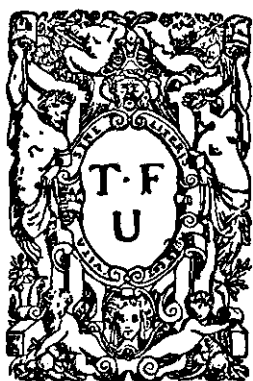
## BUILDERS OF GREATER BRITAIN

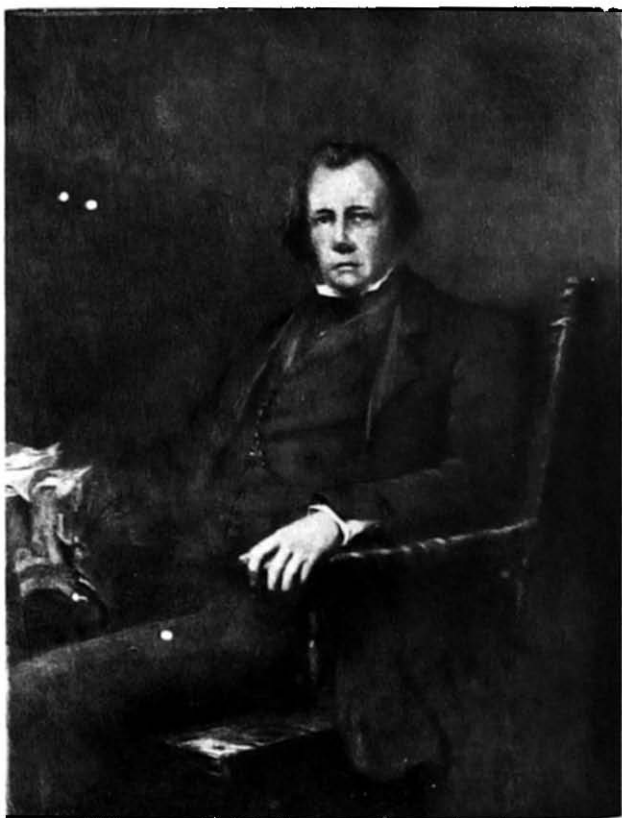
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Builders  
of  
Greater Britain

EDWARD GIBBON WAKEFIELD





E. J. Wakarusa.

EDWARD GIBBON  
WAKEFIELD

THE COLONIZATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
AND NEW ZEALAND.

BY

R. GARNETT, C.B., LL.D.

*With Photogravure Frontispiece and Maps*

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## PREFACE

AMONG all the men celebrated in this series of biographies as 'Builders of Greater Britain,' Edward Gibbon Wakefield, inferior to none in genius and achievement, is perhaps the only one whose inclusion could excite inquiry or surprise. Not that his claims have at any time been weighed and found wanting, but that their existence is unknown to the multitude. By the mass of his countrymen at home he is chiefly remembered by the one incident in his career which he would have wished to be forgotten. The historians of the colonies he founded in general pass him over with slight notice, some omitting his very name.

If, however, judged merely by this popular

neglect, the name of Wakefield might seem one of those which the world is content to let die, it is far otherwise with students of the subject of colonization, to whose judgment popular opinion must ultimately conform.

A complete view of Wakefield's activity as an Empire-builder has not, indeed, existed until the publication of this little biography. But it is impossible to read even the casual notices of such an authority as Mr Egerton, in his *History of British Colonial Policy*, without perceiving the high place accorded to Wakefield as a practical statesman, not merely a founder of colonies, but a reformer and transformer of the entire British colonial system. Indications of a similar feeling in authoritative quarters are continually transpiring—as, for instance, in a recent article in the *Quarterly Review*—and the biographer's problem is how to permeate the oblivious and indifferent general public with the knowledge and appreciation of the better informed.

This is not a problem easy of solution, for, although Wakefield's biography is one of fascinating interest, it is a difficult one to

write. Special obstacles will be brought to light by the story itself, but two capital ones may be mentioned here by way of preliminary apology for inevitable deficiencies. Most extenders of the British Empire have been emphatically men of action. They have plunged into the thick of war, pestilence and famine; have explored great unknown rivers, or defended beleaguered forts with handfuls of men. They have, at all events, planted the British flag where it never waved before, occasionally displacing some other to make room for it. Wakefield's work was not performed in this fashion. Though capable of vigorous action in emergencies, he wrought principally by the pen and by the tongue. His activity with both was prodigious; yet the former implement has left but inadequate traces of its employment, the latter none. Though living and breathing in an atmosphere of colony-making, he never saw a colony until his last days; he headed no exploring expeditions, overthrew no antagonists, except upon paper, and his battles were chiefly with the Colonial Office. Once, in Canada, he seemed to have a chance of letting

his light shine before men, but the authorities promptly snuffed it out. That he should have brought this exclusion from conspicuous public life upon himself deepens the tragedy of his romantic career, and so far enhances its interest, but in no respect diminishes the biographer's difficulty in rendering this mainly subterranean activity visible and tangible.

Where the public life is thus sequestered, and mainly traceable in its effects, it is doubly important that the details of private life should be copious and interesting. The mere thinker or writer, however illustrious, must remain much of an abstraction. No real biography of some of the world's greatest benefactors will ever be written, simply because *il n'y a pas de quoi*. It is otherwise with Wakefield, a rich specimen of human nature, commonly admirable, sometimes condemnable, but ever potent, impassioned and dramatic. This much is clear even from the imperfect records of his political activity, but these greatly needed to be supplemented by traits derived from private life, and it might well have been that such would not have been procurable. Relying on the friendship and confidence of members

of Mr Wakefield's family, the present writer ventured upon a task of which more competent executors might conceivably have been found. His expectations have not been disappointed, and his obligations cannot be sufficiently expressed. Everything available has been placed at his disposal; he has written free from constraint or suggestion of any kind; and, though conscious of having done his utmost, he knows well that the best pages in his book are from the pens of Nina Wakefield and Alice Freeman. Yet, by no fault of Mr Wakefield's present representatives, there are imperfections in the record which demand apology, and this rather as they might otherwise be liable to misinterpretation. The reader, observing that long periods of Wakefield's life are devoid of any illustration from private letters, which afterwards on the sudden begin to be comparatively numerous, and as suddenly cease, might reasonably conclude that a rule of selection had been exercised, and that much had been omitted which it was deemed inexpedient to publish. It is not so. The preservation or destruction of Wakefield's

letters appears to have been a matter of mere accident. Many ought to exist in the hands of the representatives of Sir William Molesworth, Charles Buller, and others of his allies on colonial questions; but it has, for the present, appeared useless to search out documents which there was neither time to collect nor space to employ.

The reader on a subject so much passed out of notice as the colonizing career of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, may not unreasonably ask for some assurance, beyond the word of the biographer, that his study will be repaid. Abundant evidence of the high position accorded to Wakefield by his contemporaries might be collected from the books and journals of his own day, but it is less troublesome to produce two unpublished testimonies, one referring chiefly to the theoretical side of his work, the other to the practical. In reply, as would appear, to a letter from Wakefield, acknowledging the gift of his *Political Economy* (published in 1848), Stuart Mill writes:—

‘INDIA HOUSE, *Thursday*.

‘MY DEAR WAKEFIELD,—I am very glad

that you think the public statement in my book of what is so justly due to you, both as a colonizer and a political economist, likely to be of use at this particular time. I am still more glad to hear that you are writing the book you speak of. I have long regretted that there does not exist a systematic treatise in a permanent form, from your hand and in your name, in which the whole subject of colonization is treated as the express subject of the book, so as to become at once the authoritative book on the subject. At present, people have to *pick up* your doctrines, both theoretical and practical. I cannot help urging you to complete the book with as much expedition as is consistent with the care due to your health, which your life is too valuable to permit any relaxation of.—Ever truly yours,

J. S. MILL.'

For Mill, doubtless, the chief interest lay in the Wakefield system of land sales and emigration funds, the system which regulated emigration and made it defray its cost, prevented it from running to waste over vast and indefinite areas, and provided that the flower and not the refuse of the old country should be transplanted



to the new. Another and not less important aspect of his activity, the restoration of Imperial ideas and right relations between the mother country and the colonies through the agency of responsible government, is thus set forth in a letter to the author from almost the last survivor of Wakefield's associates, the venerable Lord Norton, who, at eighty-four, sets an example to younger men by a lively interest in whatever concerns the common weal:—

‘Wakefield was a man of genius, and, circumstances having shut him out of Parliament, where he would have risen to the top of the tree, he devoted himself to make ministers dance in his leading-strings. Under his auspices I, in company with others, founded “The Colonial Reform Society,” by which our colonial policy was restored to its original unrivalled success in the hiving out of English citizens. The disuniting from us of great colonies, owing to our infringement of the essential principles of their freedom, had led us to treat new colonies as dependencies, and misgovern them from London by way of keeping them tight. To Wakefield is due the chief

merit in restoring our colonial policy—to let colonies be extensions of England, with the same constitution as at home—only not represented in the House of Commons, because of the thousands of miles of sea to cross—with their own Parliaments on the spot<sup>o</sup> and Governments responsible to them under the Queen's Viceroys, who connect them with her supremacy.'

The man who has done this is assuredly a builder of the Empire, even a master-builder. Respecting Wakefield's personal character, the most profitable remark to be made seems to be that he is a conspicuous instance of the happy effect of public causes and wide views in ennobling man's nature. So long as he is intent upon private ends, a harsh critic might be warranted in terming him selfish and unprincipled, although even then displaying traits inconsistent with a low type of character. From the moment that he finds his work, and undertakes his mission, he becomes a memorable example of enthusiastic and mainly disinterested devotion to an idea, not indeed devoid of advantage to himself, since, though producing no

brilliant pecuniary results, it took away the stain from his name, yet evidently followed for no such subsidiary end, but in the spirit of the creator, who must see of the travail of his soul that he may be satisfied.

Another principal figure in this history being, according to the popular belief, unprovided with a soul, can view posthumous censure and vindication with indifference. Even a corporation, however, has a claim to justice, and it is the writer's decided opinion that few persons and few institutions have been more unjustly treated than the New Zealand Company. That its precipitate proceedings occasioned much mischief and misfortune is certain, but it is equally certain that this precipitancy was forced upon it by the perverse malevolence of the Government. The part played by Government in the early history of New Zealand colonization is indeed a melancholy chapter in English history; save for Lord John Russell's magnanimous admission of error, and his good intentions frustrated by a charge of administration. The main cause of the unpopularity of the New Zealand Company, however, seems to have been not so much the errors they

were driven to commit as the imputation of designs remote from their intentions. They were looked upon as land-sharks, bent on depriving the natives of their land, and some countenance was given to the charge by the extensive purchases by which their agent sought to protect New Zealand from a shoal of sharks from Australia. It is curious that their accusers are usually the persons who object most vehemently to property in land at all, or at least to the uncontrolled exercise of private rights over it, but who seem unable to perceive that if a white landowner has no moral right to reserve a barren moor for the pursuit of game, a brown landowner has still less to lock up a fertile territory for the pursuit of rats. Neither one nor the other, in fact, has a right to more land than he can use for the general good; within these limits his title is impregnable; but in Maori New Zealand these limits were exceedingly narrow. The New Zealand Company would have solved the problem by a plan for native reserves, conceived in a spirit of fairness and philanthropy, but which they were not permitted to carry into effect. Not all their

proceedings were equally laudable, but the only one which appears open to very serious animadversion occurred after Wakefield had ceased to be concerned in their affairs.

The list of the author's obligations is long. He is, above all, indebted to members of Mr Wakefield's family, and among these principally to three of his nieces—Miss Frances Torlesse, of Christchurch, N.Z., daughter of his favourite sister Catherine; Mrs Harold Freeman, daughter of his brother Daniel; and Mrs D'Arblay Burney, daughter of his brother Felix. But for Miss Torlesse, in particular, this work would never have been undertaken. The countenance of Mr Charles Marcus Wakefield, of Belmont, Uxbridge; and of Mr Edward Wakefield, author of *New Zealand after Fifty Years*, also demand acknowledgment. Two ladies more remotely connected with the family—Mrs Chapman, wife of Lieutenant-General Chapman, C.B., the officer commanding the Scottish division of the home forces; and Miss A. M. Wakefield, of the Westmoreland branch, as great an organiser of music as her relative of colonization—have also been of material service

to the author. He is, further, deeply indebted to Mr Albert Allom, of Parnell, N.Z., and his sister Mrs Storr, the children of Wakefield's old and faithful friends, Mr and Mrs Allom. The value of Sir Frederick Young's written contribution speaks for itself, while he has courteously provided the daguerreotype from which the frontispiece is taken. The writer must cordially thank Mr Stuart J. Reid, now engaged in a biography of Lord Durham, for the communication of documents illustrating Wakefield's connection with that nobleman. Lord Norton has been good enough to permit reference to be made to him respecting the New Zealand Constitution of 1852; and it has been a sincere gratification to the writer to find his account of John Robert Godley, Wakefield's coadjutor in the foundation of the Canterbury Settlement, approved by his son, Sir Arthur Godley, K.C.B., and his venerable widow, one of the original 'Canterbury pilgrims.' Mr Atchley, librarian of the Colonial Office, and Mr Boosé, librarian of the Royal Colonial Institute, have kindly furnished documents from their respective libraries. The lamented illness

of Sir George Grey has deprived the author of assistance from him, but he has found a sympathetic, as well as judicious, counsellor in the Hon. W. Pember Reeves, Agent-General for New Zealand; although he must not be considered responsible for anything in the book.

R. GARNETT.

LONDON, *August 2d*, 1898.

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