

"Public Libraries Act", 1869.⁽⁴²⁾ The matter was referred to the Bylaws Committee which recommended that the petition be ordered to stand over,⁽⁴³⁾ and nothing further was done in the matter. This Act provided the only means of attacking the Board's control of the Library, and it is remarkable that it was not invoked sooner. Possibly it would have been, if the postponed meeting had been held. But the fact, that the public meeting was never held, forces two possible conclusions. Either the people of Christchurch, generally, were satisfied with the Library, as run by the Board, and were not prepared to support the Council in its proposed measures, or they were so apathetic that they were just not interested, and with the great majority, then as now, food for the body was possibly considered of much greater importance than food for the mind.

In this modern age of hustle and bustle, apathy is all too common in every branch of society. However, such a note has a false ring in the early days of the Canterbury settlement. Possibly our forefathers were not of greater intellectual stature than ourselves but there can be no doubt that they brought, to their new home, a great love of good books. Samuel Butler said, on a visit to a Canterbury sheep station,

"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 ... New Zealand seems far better adapted to develop and maintain in health the physical than the intellectual nature ... Yet, after all, it may be questioned whether the intellect is not as well schooled here as at home ..." (44)

42. Vide supra p.24.

43. C.C.C. Bylaws Committee Minute Book (1898-1905) p.32.

44. Samuel Butler "A First Year in Canterbury Settlement" London, A.C. Fifield, 1914 (revised edition). pp 49-50.