

**SELWYN COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE**

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Selwyn college, Cambridge by A. L. Brown

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A. L. BROWN

**SELWYN COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE**



From the painting by George Richmond, in St. John's College.

George Augustus Selwyn.

[Frontispiece.]

University of Cambridge

COLLEGE HISTORIES

SELWYN COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

BY

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I GEORGE AUGUSTUS SELWYN	7
II THE BEGINNINGS OF SELWYN COLLEGE (1878-81)	29
III CONTROVERSY AND RECOGNITION (1881-83)	46
IV THE OPENING OF THE COLLEGE (1882)	61
V THE FIRST MASTER (1882-93)	72
VI THE SECOND MASTER (1893-98)	95
VII THE THIRD MASTER (1898 AND AFTER)	126
VIII THE CHAPEL	134
IX SPORTS AND CLUBS	159

APPENDICES

<i>A.</i> THE CHARTER	169
<i>B.</i> THE LICENCE OF THE CHAPEL	180
<i>C.</i> THE LIBRARY	182
<i>D.</i> PRESENT AND PAST OFFICERS	185
<i>E.</i> MATRICULATIONS AND GRADUATIONS	191
<i>F.</i> LITURGICAL FORMS USED IN THE COLLEGE	192
<i>G.</i> AN INVENTORY OF THE FURNITURE, PLATE, AND ORNAMENTS IN THE CHAPEL	198
<i>H.</i> COLLEGE PLATE	206

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ILLUSTRATIONS

I	GEORGE AUGUSTUS SELWYN - - -	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	(From a Portrait by George Richmond in St. John's College.)	
II	THE GATEWAY - - -	<i>To face page 60</i>
III	ARTHUR TEMPLE LYTTTELTON - "	72
	(From a Portrait by Charles Furse in Selwyn College.)	
IV	JOHN RICHARDSON SELWYN - "	96
	(From a Portrait by G. Lowes-Dickenson in Selwyn College.)	
V	THE CHAPEL AND LODGE - - -	126
VI	THE COLLEGE FROM THE GARDEN - - -	134
VII	THE CHAPEL INTERIOR—EAST - - -	144
VIII	THE CHAPEL INTERIOR—WEST - - -	156

SELWYN COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

CHAPTER I

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SELWYN

SELWYN COLLEGE was founded in 1882 to perpetuate the name and memory of GEORGE AUGUSTUS SELWYN, the first Bishop of New Zealand and afterwards Bishop of Lichfield, whose noble character and heroic labours command for him a conspicuous place in the history of the revival and expansion of the spiritual energies of the Church of England during the nineteenth century.

His biographers¹ have presented the picture of the man as his letters and journals reveal him in the everyday work of his strenuous life, and the story of the foundation of Selwyn College will convey some idea of the impression which he left on the minds and affections of his contemporaries. It will suffice here to record the chief facts of his career.

¹ "Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn, D.D.," by the Rev. H. W. Tucker, M.A. Third edition, 1900. "Bishop Selwyn: A sketch of his Life and Work," by G. H. Curteis, M.A., Canon of Lichfield Cathedral. 1889.

8 SELWYN COLLEGE

Born on April 5, 1809, the second son of an eminent King's Counsel,¹ and educated at Eton and St. John's College, Cambridge, George Augustus Selwyn showed from boyhood those qualities of leadership, moral strength, and physical as well as intellectual energy, which made him admirable through life. He rowed for Cambridge in the first inter-University contest of 1829, and in 1831 graduated as Second Classic. He was duly elected a Fellow of his College; but his bent was for a practical rather than an academical life, and he spent the next ten years at Eton and Windsor, first as a Private Tutor, and later, after his ordination in 1833, as assistant-Curate of Windsor Parish. This was the period when the Oxford Movement was beginning to offer an alternative to the spirit of short-sighted "reform" that was threatening the destruction of the then decadent Church; and George Selwyn, though not a reader of the "Tracts for the Times," was one of those who shared the Tractarian belief in the glorious heritage and opportunities of his Mother Church, and saw that the best policy was not to destroy but to fulfil. At a time when Cathedrals were regarded as doomed, and when ecclesiastical activities were at a pitiably low

¹ His father was Mr. William Selwyn, K.C., who was entrusted with the task of instructing the Prince Albert (afterwards Prince Consort) in the Constitution and Laws of England. His elder brother, William Selwyn, was Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity from 1855 to 1875, and the University owes the Selwyn Divinity School to his benefaction. His younger brother, Charles, became a Lord Justice of Appeal, and died in 1869.

ebb, he published his "Essay on Cathedral Reform," in which he sketched his ideal of a Cathedral as a real and living centre of religious work and worship, and was busily engaged in showing what could be made of the opportunities of a Parish Priest. In 1839 he married Miss Sarah Richardson, daughter of Sir John Richardson, a Judge in the Court of Common Pleas; and at this same period there was developed a romantic friendship, to which Selwyn College chiefly owes its existence. In 1838 there had returned to Eton as a Master a young Fellow of King's, an Etonian five years junior to Selwyn, the Rev. Charles John Abraham, who soon became Selwyn's most intimate friend, and later on the constant companion of his labours.

In 1841 came the call to the newly-founded Bishopric of New Zealand, which had been declined by George Selwyn's elder brother William, who afterwards became Lady Margaret Professor. To George Selwyn the Archbishop's offer was a command. "My Lord," he wrote in reply, "whatever part in the work of the ministry the Church of England (as represented by her Archbishops and Bishops) may call upon me to undertake, I trust I shall be willing to accept it with all obedience and humility. . . . It has never seemed to me to be in the power of an individual to choose the field of labour most suited to his own powers." And so, actuated by a simple sense of duty as a "man under authority," he set himself to the work that was to occupy the next twenty-six years of his life.