

NEW ZEALAND RELATIVES OF THOREAU

Search By American Biographer

SOME readers will remember that when Dr. H. S. Canby visited New Zealand last year we put some questions to him about Henry David Thoreau. Now he is putting questions to us. He wants to know, as Thoreau's biographer, if there are any surviving relatives of Thoreau in New Zealand, and if anyone can add to a letter he has received from James Walker, of Auckland.

First we reprint the letter:

"Sir,

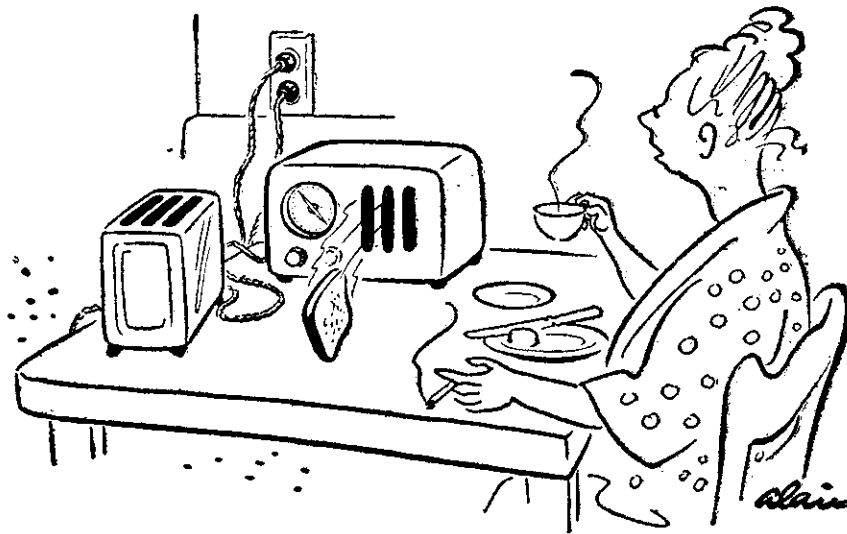
"Here are brief details of my acquaintance with the Thoreau family in New Zealand.

"In 1907 when travelling from London to New Zealand I met on board ship a Mr. Thoreau, of Timaru, Canterbury, New Zealand. He was returning to New Zealand after leaving his two sisters in London with their two maiden aunts, the Misses Thoreau. He had accompanied his sisters to London after the death of their mother, Mrs. Thoreau, of New Zealand, and he told

me that these aunts and a cousin, Dr. Thoreau, of Harper Street, London, were the only other Thoreaus surviving of the original Channel Island family. Some months later I was invited to spend Christmas at his father's home at Fairview, Timaru, where I was his guest for some days.

"Mr. Philip Edward Thoreau was a gentleman farmer, a man of fine appearance and some dignity. On the death of his uncle years earlier he had been summoned to the Channel Islands, and had come into an inheritance which included many family heirlooms. This relative was the last Thoreau in Jersey. Mr. P. E. Thoreau was then informed by the solicitor of his relationship with Henry D. Thoreau, of Concord, of which he had no prior knowledge, although he had been in Canada in his youth in the employment of the Hudson Bay Company, at the time when H.D.T. was alive and widely known.

"He showed me the collection of family portraits (paintings) which I



detail: Mr. and Mrs. Philip Thoreau, his grandfather and grandmother (valued at £500 each); Marie le Gallais, his great-grandmother; his father and mother; his uncle, Judge Lerrier; another uncle, Major Reinon.

"There are additional points I learned from him: The Thoreau family hold the first quarterings known. Through the union of the Houses of Leon and Castile the undernoted were the most powerful

Spanish nobles—Princes del Toro e Zamona. Also, from entries in the family Bible of Philip Thoreau, of Jersey, Mr. P. E. Thoreau's grandfather, an uncle of Mr. Thoreau, of New Zealand, was a major in the Spanish Legion during the Peninsular War. A Thoreau was Archbishop of the Cathedral of Dol. Another Thoreau was the admiral in command of the French fleet attacking Bantry Bay, Ireland. The Prince del Toro e



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