

THE STORY OF COLENZO

IT was November 17, after days of dangerous travel, that William Colenso wrote in his diary, "An old chief, J. H. (John Hobbs) Waitai came after me and commenced teasing me about his determination to let land which was not only against the wishes of nearly all the people, but if done likely to prove their

ruin. (Later at Kaikokirikiri) several friendly speeches were made when J. H. Waitai suddenly leaped up and made a very angry one . . . He once more bounded on his legs and seizing a stick made towards me uttering loud threats. Someone of the heathen party cried out, 'Strike him, kill him.' But it pleased God to give me more than mortal courage and to make him quail again, and in a little time I saw this dragon slowly sink down before me quite cowed: glory be to God. (Luke X, 19.)"

That one short passage illustrates several of the facets of Colenso's character: his piety, his courage, his determination to look after the interests of the Maori—against other Maoris, against pakeha—and his confidence that he, himself, knew best where those interests lay. This man is the subject of a play, *The Relentless Servant*, by Harry Osborne of Hastings, which will be heard from 4YZ at 9.42 p.m. on Wednesday, March 23, and later from other stations.

The piety of Colenso is shown strikingly by the first two entries in his journal, made the year before he left England for New Zealand.

May 1, 1833: . . . if I got into bed without saying my prayers I could not sleep but would have to get out again . . . now I do intend to pray mornings and evenings, to read the morning and evening service of the church daily, and a por-

tion of the scriptures every night. May thy beginning have a better end. Amen.

May 3: I have so determined to pray to God at noon in addition to morning and evening . . .

Nevertheless, despite his longing for priest's orders, constantly denied him (according to the play) by Bishop Selwyn because of his lack of a university education, Colenso could still accuse the Williams family, that family of bishops, of land grabbing. Despite his piety, an illegitimate son born to him by a Maori girl employed in his house cut him off from the church and turned his fiery work for others into political channels. Colenso had always to be saving people—if not the Maori then the pakeha, if not the soul then the body.

The play opens in Colenso's printing office at Waitangi with a visit from Bishop Selwyn. Colenso's interests and prejudices soon become apparent. He is packing New Zealand plants for Sir William Hooker, plants which he collected on his long and arduous trips preaching to the Maoris. As printer for the Church Mission Society and working under primitive conditions, he has printed five thousand copies of the New Testament in Maori, and seen to their binding; six thousand copies of common prayer, complete; 27,000 copies of the abridged version—"and all my general work, for the church and the governor. I've translated, composed, read, folded and packed. That's only been part of my labour."

No doubt Colenso's most famous piece of printing work was the Treaty of Waitangi. But about the treaty itself, Colenso seemed to be doubtful—doubtful of its ethics, doubtful of its value. On the one hand he thought everything was done too hurriedly and without the chiefs knowing what they were signing. On the other hand, when, in the play, Henry Williams states that, in so far as his part in getting the Maori to sign was concerned, "I'm quite prepared to stand by everything I did," Colenso replies, "Then I pray we don't fall by what you did." Not many years later, the Maori wars started.



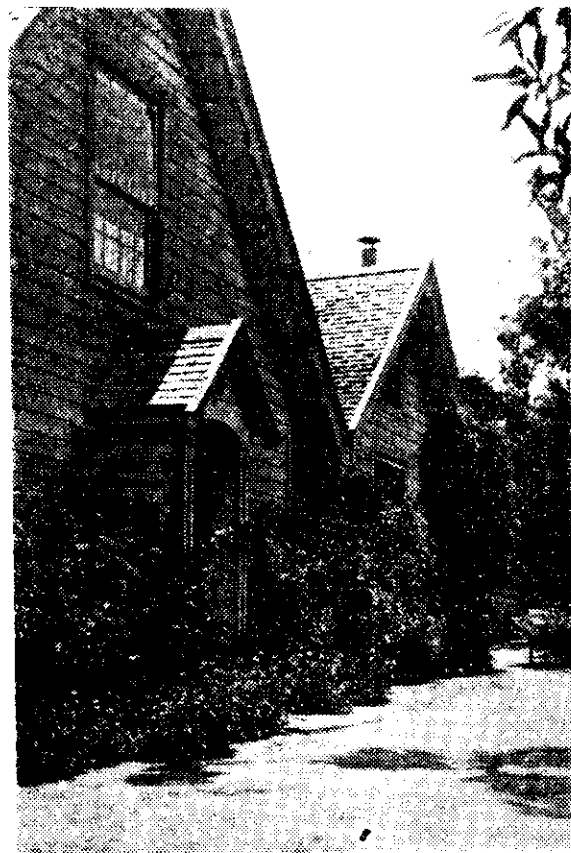
Turnbull Library Archives
WILLIAM COLENZO

We hear the beginning of Colenso's letter of marriage proposal to Miss Fairburn: "Dear Miss Fairburn, I fear you will deem this letter a very strange one compared with the love and tenor of letters on the subject I now assume the temerity to broach to you . . ."—the offer was accepted.

The play shows his rejection by the church, by his wife. We hear how they took his few acres of land from him and his half-caste son. We hear "Good old Clenso" campaigning in an hotel bar, though he started a Temperance Society, and how he was defeated for his seat in parliament by his old friend, Donald McClean—"Sir Donald finished up with a knighthood and a hundred thousand pounds. I'm a poor old man with an F.R.S. to his name."

And that was how William Colenso died—a poor old man with an F.R.S. after his name. But it was the first F.R.S. awarded to a New Zealander.

The Relentless Servant will later be heard from 2YA, 3YA and 4YA and all the YZ stations. It is produced by William Austin. Colenso is played by Roy Leywood, Selwyn by Briton Chadwick, and Elizabeth by Paddy Turner.



Turnbull Library Archives
COLENZO'S house at Napier



PARLIAMENT

The New Session

NEW Zealand's relations with other countries of the Commonwealth and the rest of the world grow in importance year by year, and reports by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. S. G. Holland, on the Prime Ministers' Conference in London, and by the Minister of External Affairs, the Hon. T. L. Macdonald, on the conference of Seat powers at Bangkok, are expected to be amongst the most interesting business for the session of Parliament which opens next week. The first broadcast from the House, covering the opening of the new session by a commission of Supreme Court judges, will be heard at 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 22, and at the same time next day the ceremonial opening and the Speech from the Throne given by the Governor-General, Sir Willoughby Norrie, will be broadcast. Details of the usual transfers of programmes from 2YA to 2YC and from 2YC to 2YX appear on the programme pages of this issue.

LEFT: Her Majesty the Queen photographed with Commonwealth Ministers on the occasion of a dinner party at Buckingham Palace on February 2