

In 1876, disaster struck. Cooke became involved in the collapse of shares on the Stock Exchange, and made 'a terrible shipwreck of character life fortune family'. He lost his own money, and that of relatives and friends, but worse still, it seems, 'sold securities and deeds that belonged to others'. Abandoning his wife and family to debts totalling some £45,000 he fled to Sweden, where he seems to have stayed for several years.²⁰ It was during this period of exile that he wrote his *Reminiscences*, which refer to his 'unlucky self', to 'drifting into rocks and quicksands', and to being 'a victim to a gang of robbers'.

By 1878, when he answered the inquiry from Walter Severn in the letter already quoted, he seems to have been back in England, though retaining business interests in Sweden. From the tone of Sharp's reference in 1892, it may be inferred that Cooke was then still alive. If he kept any further records or journals, their whereabouts is not at present known.

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² Austen, Jane. *Jane Austen's Letters* collected and edited by R. W. Chapman. 2nd ed. London, 1959, p. 206 and note.

³ Cooke to McLean 22 April 1871, McLean papers A.T.L.

⁴ Austen, Jane. *Letters*, p. 182 and note.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 35, 182, 318, 322 and note p. 474.

⁶ *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*; 1940. (DNZB): Greenwood, Robert.

⁷ Rollins, H. E., ed. *The Keats circle*. Letters and papers 1816-78. 2 vols. Cambridge, Mass., 1948. Vol. II, p. 50.

⁸ Domett, Alfred. *The Diary of Alfred Domett, 1872-85*, edited by E. A. Horsman. London, 1958, pp. 193, 196.

⁹ Fildes Collection, Victoria University of Wellington, Box 21.

¹⁰ DNZB: Ngatata, Wiremu Tako.

¹¹ Wells, Benjamin. *History of Taranaki*. New Plymouth, 1878, p. 100.

¹² Chapman, *Jane Austen. Facts . . .* p. 61.