

The Turnbells, it is clear, were highly literate and both were great readers: among the writers represented in the small library they carried with them to New Zealand were Macaulay, Marryat, Dickens, Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, with Colonel Mundy, author of *Our Antipodes*, and Charles Hursthouse Junior, author of *New Zealand*. Nor must I omit to mention that both were pious, though not oppressively so: Alexa distributed tracts to the sailors but also danced in the cuddy; Walter censured his fellow travellers' laxity on the Sabbath but sometimes joined them in a game of cards – a relief, he found, from continuous reading.

After four months at sea they landed in Wellington and for more than a decade disappear from view – that is, in their private aspect. Public or semi-public activities have been uncovered, a few by myself, far more by Miss Walton – far more, indeed, than I have found it possible to use. Walter established himself with his partner in Willis Street, he bought land, he sat on committees and councils, he undertook a brief business trip to Britain, he dissolved the partnership with George Turnbull, he bought more land, he built stores, warehouses, shops – in a word he prospered. More than that, in collaboration with Alexa he initiated a new and fruitful chapter in the history of the Turnbull clan. As children appeared in rapid succession their advent was announced in the *Wellington Independent* or the *New Zealand Spectator*: a daughter and three sons, born in a house in Tinakori Road, and two sons, Robert and Alexander, born in the next home, situated in Dixon Street. 'Precisely where in Dixon Street?' some pedantic reader may ask. The question is, alas, unanswered and apparently unanswerable, for it has baffled even the ingenuity and pertinacity of Mr Bagnall himself. Hence, if Wellington should ever decide to affix a memorial plaque to some building associated with Alexander Turnbull, it will encounter serious problems: his birthplace is unknown, his office on Customhouse Quay is demolished, and two of his homes are soon to meet a similar fate. One of them, the present nurses' home of Bowen Street Hospital, known to the Turnbells as 'Elibank', was bought by Walter in 1869 when Alexander was six months old. There the last child was born, a daughter christened Joanna but usually called Sissie, and there for a while Walter and Alexa lived with five of their children: the eldest son had died of croup in 1867 and a year later Isabella, the elder daughter, had left to go to school in England.

The Turnbells had now been thirteen years in the colony and, as Walter remarked when opening a new shipboard journal, Alexa was 'yearning greatly to see again her native land and the few friends that were still left of the many she had parted with'. Accordingly they set off in December 1870, taking with them the three elder boys but not the baby Joanna and not Alexander, then two years of age. Only after