

Here (avoiding excessive annotation) one may notice the Maori salutation ('Karihana' was Collinson's Maori name); the comments on Lieutenant Andrew Clarke, RE, who had been best man at Tom Arnold's wedding, and was then acting as private secretary to the Governor of Van Diemen's Land, Sir William Denison; the not misplaced pride of the young married Arnolds in their first child (who was to become the celebrated Victorian novelist, Mrs Humphry Ward); the typically idealistic reflections on the Great Exhibition, in which Collinson – again typically – was playing a modest practical part; and the amusing account of an early colonial 'demonstration' against the continued Transportation of convicts, which Denison stoutly supported. How Collinson might have got on with the Olympian Matthew Arnold we shall never know, though their cooler temperaments might have indeed proved congenial. The affectionate references to mutual friends in New Zealand that close the letter (Edwin Dashwood and William Budge were early Wairau settlers; 'Budge's island' at the Wairau bar ceased to be practicable farmland after the severe earthquake of 1855; the other names are familiar) show how strong the impression of New Zealand remained.

The subsequent career of Thomas Arnold was full of reversals and surprises – that was to be expected. Thomas Bernard Collinson (1822–1902) made his steady rise in the service, to retire in 1873 with the rank of Major-General. He married the daughter of a Chancellor of Durham Cathedral, his brother became an admiral and was knighted: he ends up, indeed, as something of an establishment figure. But when he sat down to write his memoir in retirement (1892–4), it was the New Zealand years that came most vividly to mind – the years of independent authority as a subaltern and captain that he never knew again as colonel; the years when he was closely associated with brilliant young men who believed they were helping to found 'an exceptional colony'.

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