

THOMAS ARNOLD AND CAPTAIN COLLINSON

Two recent manuscript acquisitions of the Library nicely complement each other, and throw light on some of the intellectual interests and aspirations of young men in the Wellington district in the first decade of colonial settlement. The first is a very characteristic letter from Thomas Arnold the Younger to Captain T. B. Collinson, RE, written from Tasmania in 1851 but in part reviewing their earlier association in New Zealand. The second is General Collinson's private account, written at the end of the century 'for the information and satisfaction of my children', of *Seven Years Service on the borders of the Pacific Ocean, 1843-50*. Collinson's memoir is of great historical and topographical interest, and deserves much fuller description than can be given here. The chief purpose of this note is to publish the Arnold letter, and use some extracts from Collinson's reminiscences to elucidate this rather surprising friendship.

Let the two principals introduce each other. In June 1848, twelve days after his arrival at Wellington in the *John Wickliffe*, Tom Arnold began a walk up the coast to Otaki: '... I set forth, having for a companion Capt Collinson of the Engineers, who was going to visit the officers at Porirua. Collinson is I suppose about 26 or 27 years old, a sincere good man, with something of a sarcastic turn ordinarily, but when there is any good work to be done active and earnest at once.' And here is Collinson, looking back affectionately across fifty years at the young Arnold of 1848: he brings him in at the end of a shrewd and lively series of character sketches of such men as Domett, Fox, Sir Godfrey Thomas, Dillon Bell, Petre, Weld, under the heading 'Society in Wellington, 1848-49':

There is one member of our Society, and a very prominent one, whom I have not mentioned at all yet... that is *Tom Arnold*: a son of the great schoolmaster, he was educated in the highest manner of the day and under the best teachers. . . . Naturally he was a studious, wide minded and large hearted man, of simple and gentle disposition; a character in short on which a strong impression would be made by the teaching of more powerful characters than his own. The result, as far as I was capable of judging, was that the multitude of doctrines tended to produce rather a vagueness in all. We all loved him; it was impossible not to love so aimiable [*sic*] and openhearted a young fellow, who was so full of the best learning of the day, and straight from the society of the principal men of the day, in art, science and politics. He became at once the representative with us of the advanced party in the philosophy of life.

From these two comments, the basis of a continuing friendship is already clear. The impetuous and unworldly Tom Arnold admired the