

## THE WAITARA PURCHASE

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A letter from Archdeacon Hadfield, vehement defender of Maori rights, to Archdeacon Govett at New Plymouth, and correspondence of John Coleridge Patteson, Bishop of Melanesia, are recent additions to the Library's manuscript collections. They provide further documentation of the Waitara dispute which in 1860 brought Maoris and European settlers into open conflict over the possession of land. Bishop Patteson's comment on the explosion, detached to a degree, reveals his views on the action taken by the chief protagonists. His letters indicate an important two-fold role as relatively neutral intermediary between Governor Gore Browne and churchmen led by Bishop Selwyn, and as the means of communicating the clergy's viewpoint to the Imperial government.

The confrontation at Waitara saw the alignment of the Church of England clergy on the side of native rights to the extent that they were treated with acrimony by land hungry settlers. At the same time the Maoris harboured feelings of disillusionment against their champions. Wiremu Kingi te Rangitake, baptised by Archdeacon Hadfield, expressed this graphically in a letter of 10 December 1862 addressed to Bishop Selwyn from Huitrangiora, District of Kihikihi. . . . 'Where were you before Governor Brown, [sic] why didn't you tell him to enquire about that land [at Waitara]? Instead you allowed blood to flow in a crimson tide.'<sup>1</sup> The Governor had, under pressure, and in Patteson's opinion with little understanding of the import of his action, secured by force the purchase of this land sold by a tribesman Teira in spite of Wiremu Kingi's assertion of his right, set down in the Treaty of Waitangi, of 'chieftanship over the land' of the Ngatiawa tribe, whereby he refused to permit the sale.<sup>2</sup>

Archdeacon Hadfield, more than any other European, had had a close association with Wiremu Kingi and the members of the Ngatiawa tribe since the setting up of his mission at Waikanae in 1839 before the tribe's return to Taranaki. The substance of his ardent support of Maori rights over the Waitara Purchase may be found in his three pamphlets—*One of England's little wars*, *The second year of one of England's little wars* and *A sequel to one of England's little wars* published in London by Williams and Norgate in 1860 and 1861—and in his evidence taken at the Bar of the House of Representatives on 14 August 1860. Correspondence between Archdeacon Hadfield and Archdeacon Govett, the two missionaries most immediately involved in the complications of Wiremu Kingi's assertion of tribal rights is referred to by Robert Parris, Land Purchase Commissioner in Taranaki, in his report of the purchase at Waitara.<sup>3</sup>