

WALTER MANTELL TO JANE CARLYLE

When visiting the National Library of Scotland in November last I was shown, among a number of interesting manuscripts, a letter from W. B. D. Mantell to Jane Carlyle. The letter is an excellent example of the writer's polished irony and urbanity which with his overseas cultural links make him one of the most interesting correspondents of the period. Pending the editing and publication of what could be a worth-while collected edition we offer this Wellington commentary with the permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland. Mrs Margaret Scott informs me that the Library has five letters from Mrs Carlyle to Mantell although the one here printed—the only one from Mantell to her so far located—seems to have drawn no response other than a short sharp note about her servant Margaret, referred to by Mantell in his P.S. Mantell had resigned from the position of Native Minister in the Fox Government nearly three months before the date of the letter. As a matter of consequential interest Wellington was disappointed for Sir George Grey did not make it.

Wellington N.Z.

March 8. 1862.

My dear Mrs Carlyle,

Long before this reaches you you will have heard of my demission and inferred that it thereby became impossible for me to hand your letter to the Minister for Native Affairs, there being no longer any such Minister.

Native Affairs however seem to go on just as well without him for, so far as we know and we heard from Auckland a month ago, Sir George Grey's plans have been working without any material impediment. True he has wisely begun at the easiest end by pacifying those tribes which were at peace with us & each other. The less amiable tribes are to be converted by observing the success of his institutions among the former. My own opinion is that those who live will see the event—the nature of which will then be perceptible.

Wellington is in an agony of expectation. The Avatar was promised for the 5th of March & on that day all the preparations were complete. Already the triumphal arches begin to droop and the simple gallows of their framework to peep through their faded greenery, and the dogcart & six in which His Excellency is to risk his precious neck is wearied out with practising the short route from the wharf to Govt House. The town is full of Native Chiefs with their wives & followings—occupying the best rooms in the best hotels & drinking grog at the expense of the Government. As the Governor has to be in the Waikato by the 20th calling at Wanganui & Taranaki on the way, he will not be able to stay here above a day or two even should he come today. In that day or two we are going