

MORE COLLINSON LETTERS

Thomas Bernard Collinson (1822-1902), a lieutenant of the Royal Engineers, was in New Zealand from 1846-50, during which time he wrote letters to his family from Wellington, Wanganui and Auckland. Twenty-six of these were auctioned at Sotheby's—one in 1970 and the others in 1973—and acquired by the Library. They are detailed, literate and keenly observed, and some of them carry clear pen and ink sketches of such things as the Wanganui Stockade, St John's College and Wai-kanae Church. An example will show their interest:

Wellington, Oct. 25, 1848

I had a visit from one of the great chiefs of the South, Te Rauperaha, who was kept prisoner on board the Calliope for a year, by the Governor. Since his release he has become a red-hot missionary, and goes to church every day and affects quite the European; his ordinary costume being a seedy old black frock coat and a shocking bad hat. Next day in walking along the sands on our journey we came upon a group of natives sitting under the sand hills, of a very different character. The chief of them especially, who was seated in the centre of the circle, in a very old Maori mat and covered all over, mat and body, with red ochre; about 6 ft high and large in proportion with a fine head and a quantity of grey curly hair; he looked when standing up like some old Druid priest; for they wear the mat fastened on the right shoulder like the Roman toga. This was our old enemy Rob Roy Rangihacata. He is about the most thorough savage in his appearance, manner and speech and ideas that I have seen. He did not attempt to disguise that he is a determined enemy to the encroachments of the Europeans, as he says, the Maoris will be exterminated by them; otherwise he said he had no wish to fight them. He had heard that the tribe living South of Wanganui had been offering to sell their land to the Governor, but it was he who was the owner, for he had conquered it with his own hand. The next day we arrived in this territory in question and heard the other side of the story. The chief of the tribe said that this land had descended to him from his ancestors from ages back and Rangi had never conquered *him*: but he had evidently a considerable fear of the old fellow.

In 1892-4 Collinson wrote a large, two-volume, illustrated manuscript which he entitled *Seven years service on the borders of the Pacific*