

mind. Constant changes of opinion, and denials of ever having said things which are clearly recorded in her earlier letters, leave one with the impressions that no 'fact' which Amy referred to can be taken at face value. Fred generously annotated one of her letters with the comment that 'she was a wonderful woman, and ought to have made a success as a writer of entertaining fiction'.⁹ The reasons for the breakdown of her marriage can probably be attributed in large part to her dislike of New Zealand and the 'cabbages' who inhabited it. Late in 1909 she wrote to Fred in stunned amazement:

I have had quite enough of the kind of society N.Z. offers to me, yesterday afternoon spent with Mrs Geo. Ross and Mrs Clarke Johnson being a sort of climax. I took a map to show them where Mary and I had been, and where I proposed to go, and I came to the conclusion that neither of them knew *what* the Riviera was, and as to the Tyrol, Botzen, etc. etc. I might as well have talked to Maoris. You remember when I first came here, my meeting a room full of Hobson St. ladies who none of them knew what Chamber Music was.¹⁰

Amy claimed that at the beginning of their married life Fred had agreed to retire in 1914 and return to Europe, and that for twenty years she had stinted and saved in order to make this possible. Fred denied ever having made such a promise. This disagreement over where they should live was compounded by an incompatibility of temperament. Virtually every page written by Amy between 1904 and 1920 harped on the theme of Fred's retirement and the family's living together in England or Europe. Fred confirmed this impression in his reminiscences: 'my wife was always bothering me by urging me to "chuck" my Loan Co. job, realize my insurances and other moneys, buy a joint annuity, and retire with her to a "happy cottage" in England.'¹¹ There was a constant series of new schemes to this end which Fred clearly found difficult to live with. Fred's unwillingness to leave New Zealand was, in Amy's opinion, the attitude of a 'peevish old bore'. Fred, like most other colonials, she considered (at least in this context) a 'cabbage'.

At the end of 1909 Amy took the decisive step. She left for Europe, telling Fred, 'you and Mary can come when you darned please'. Amy returned to Timaru a year later, but Fred found her impossible to live with and agreed to provide her with an allowance of £100 a year on condition that she would stay away from Timaru. Amy returned to England, but never gave up her dream that the family would be reunited in England, a fact which Fred found pitiable. 'No one', he wrote,

can be more deeply sorry than I am that you should have allowed yourself to acquire a habit and temperament which has made it impossible for me to contemplate resuming a joint daily life with you, and my sorrow is all the greater when