

eColenso

eColenso is the free email publication of the Colenso Society, 32 Hawkestone St, Thorndon, Wellington 6011:
it might be forwarded to interested others. Contributions should be emailed to the editor, Ian St George, istge@yahoo.co.nz.

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Mr. Colenso and Professor Kirk

On 13 July 1866 William Colenso wrote to James Hector from Napier

I have recently received a letter from a Botanical Correspondent at Auckland, in which he says,—

“Can you recommend me to a likely purchaser of my Collection of British plants? It comprises specimens of about 1400 forms of Phænogams, Filices, &c. and about 340 Mosses. The Flowg. Plants & Ferns unmounted, arranged between sheets of demy sized (18 x 11) paper: the Mosses in part neatly mounted on small sheets & part in envelopes, all correctly named, localized. &c. and could be mounted to order. It is really a good Collection, & I am thoroughly sorry, to be obliged to offer it for sale.”—

There is no one here to whom I could even mention the subject! And I have thought—you may be able to give a better answer, & so I have written to you....

30 July, I am writing to Auckland, to ask about price, &c., of British Herbarium, & will let you know, when I get a reply.

4 September, Enclosed I send you part of a letter I have lately recd. from Mr. Thomas Kirk of Auckland, the owner of the Brit. Plants I wrote to you about.—You will see what he says: please return me his letter....[1]

His next letter to Hector is 26 June 1867 and there is no further reference to Kirk's collection. Even then Kirk must have been struggling financially to be “thoroughly sorry, to be obliged” to sell it.

1. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa MU000198/001/0033.

Kirk

Thomas Kirk, who began his working life in an English plant nursery, began collecting New Zealand plants on his arrival in Auckland in 1863, and prepared a plant collection for the Dunedin Exhibition of 1865. He taught botany at Auckland College and Grammar School, was appointed the city's meteorological observer, and, in 1868, preceded Cheeseman as secretary of the Auckland Institute and curator of its museum. He went on to achieve scholarship, appointments and recognition as one of New Zealand's foremost botanists [2].

Colenso appears to have helped him considerably: 29 November 1867 to JD Hooker,

I have written, more for (& to) Kirk, during the last 2 years, than I have for any other priv. person – he too being wholly unknown to me. I have named a large lot of N.Z. scraps he sent me, & encouraged him in every way. (He is very poor & struggling.) He wrote to me about the *Phyllocladus* (my alpine one is also glaucous) & I am to have specimens by & bye – I think K. is gone to the islets off E. Coast, – & I expect he will obtain something for you.

He felt obliged, though, to correct Kirk's opinion of a new plant: 18 July 1868 to Hector,

The little *Pittosporum* (elegantissime!), “P. Gilliesianum” of Kirk, has given me no little work. (Mr. Kirk wished particularly to know about this plant.) I have examined it carefully (hunting up old descriptions by R. & A. Cunningham of their small N. *Pittospora*.) and have been obliged (from Book descriptions) to conclude it to be reflexum of R.C. I have just written largely to Kirk about it, telling him so, and giving him my reasons. I fear he will be disappointed.

2. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2k10/kirk-thomas>

Colenso on Kirk

Ten years later Kirk was President of the Wellington Philosophical Society and on the Board of Governors of the NZ Institute. Colenso, miffed at his papers having been turned down for the *Transactions*, wrote on 2 February 1879 to Hector,

How often I have been asked (with a laugh),— “What's the use of such stuff,”—as Kirk's everlasting dish of Latin names of introduced weeds? (which takes up so many pages of the “Transactions” vols.) and what can I say to that?—

On 6 March 1882 Colenso would comment to GM Thomson on the latter's book of ferns,

I very much fear you have been led to look too much to Mr. Kirk, indeed, throughout your Book he is your main “authority”! And here I may remark that did not your Book prominently bear your name, I could almost affirm it was written by Kirk, for I detect much of his (besides the numerous quotations) throughout.—

On 16 January 1884, still smarting over the *Trans*' rejection of his work, Colenso sent his self-published *Three literary papers* (supplement with this issue of *eColenso*) to David Balfour,

... now you are in possession of those three papers of mine, which have been the means of my displeasing the 3 Noble Estates, of Kirk, State, Science, (the Wellington & Southern Scientists), & yet I still dare to believe, that I have only told the truth!. Time will show.

25 August 1887 to Andrew Luff,

In same paper, sent by you, is a remark on T. Kirk's new (?) *Podocarpus*: & his naming it *P. Hallii* (like the man—semper idem!)—known to me, & Home, 40 (odd) years ago. See p.58, top, “Ruahine Mountain Range” pamphlet, & T.K. knew of that!—

10 September 1890 to Coupland Harding

... Kirk's compilation ("Forest Flora of N.Z."), which must have cost a good deal, & is certainly poorly executed.

5 January 1891 to Harding,

To my great surprise I recd. a lg. letter from Kirk—together with a "specimen" (5 pages) of the "Students' Hd.Bk. N.Z. Flora"—Hookers' of course w. Kirk's (!) alterations! (bah!) K. wishes me to help, &c. &c. Now I know why K. came here (while I was in the Bush), & got from H(amilton). those Taupo spns. H. had promised me! I have told H. of it—no reply.—

13 February 1891 to Harding,

Did I tell you, that Kirk, senior, has got the billet of editing a 2nd. Ed. of the Hd.Bk. N.Z. Flora? How he got it, I cannot understand: it should have been committed to a 1st class European (or Amern.) Botanist, aided by all local helpers. Sir J.D.H., I know, was applied to, some time ago, (and I strongly advised him to accept—at least, the supervision, but he cld not, as his whole time until his end! is devoted to his great work—Fl. Indica. [And he told me, that even if he should accept, there were certain portions (as mosses, Hepaticæ, Fungi, &c.) which would have to be done by experts—at that part. branch: no doubt, K. thinks he can do all!!! So it is:—some rush in where angels fear to tread"!]) I have a very poor opinion of Kirk's compilation—"Forest Flora of N.Z.,"—especially the plates! Far better ones, of the same plants, were exd. 50–60 years ago! & so I told K.—He has written to me, to aid him, w. spns. &c., & I have promised to do so—as far as I well can: he is far too synthetic for me.

—

2 March 1891 to Harding,

[Some day I may tell you a lot about Kirk, Senr. (originally an Auckland settler—in a very poor way) thro' me—he came S. I did much for him, in many ways: but — — — private this.]—

24 May 1891 to Harding,

Why do yr. Wgn. p. still style K. "Profr"? The Govt., & others never do so.

28 May 1891 to Harding,

I (again) note—in the printed programme, &c. you have sent me of the "Home Rig. Assn."—that K. is again dubbed "Profr."! You will find such is not allowed in the Govt. books, &c, and it does not belong to him.

12 July 1891 to Hooker,

I cannot write now anything Botanical: will merely add – that Kirk is likely to have the editing of a 2nd. Ed. of your "Hand Bk. N.Z. Flora". (I could wish it were in better hands from the Old Countries – at all events the supervision, – to be aided by him & other of our local Botanists). K. has written to me 2–4 times about it, asking for help, spns. sps. nov., &c., &c. And I have promised to assist, and 2 days ago I sent him 60–70 spns. of plants described by me in "Trans. N.Z. Instit." – to be followed, ere long, with another such lot.

12 August 1891 to Harding,

Hamilton is right—i.e. partly: He did write to me last, but in (part) reply. And he did offend me (vex me, really) and I told him of it: he had better spns. of Taupo plants, when out w. Hill, these were to be for me freely offered—given—but left at A., (to aid, in going over Hills wh. were damaged) well, last autumn, 1890 while in the Bush, H. allowed Kirk, who was here & with him, to have them:—I told H. of it, in my last, & how I felt it—keenly: & in writing to Kirk I let

him know of it: both avoided the subject in their replies!!!—For many reasons I did not expect such treatment from H.: of K. I say nothing!!!

19 December 1892 to Harding,

[Private: be on your guard respecting Kirk and Field—whenever anything congeg. me, or my name crops up: more anon when we meet]

21 February 1893 to Hooker,

I have recently received a kind of Circular from XtCh (N.Z.) asking me to join in requesting our N.Z. Govt. to republish your “Hdbook” with additions, & for Kirk to become Editor! This latter I could not support.

22 February 1893 to Harding,

PRIVATE: I have received a circular from Xtchurch, (rather a long one), asking me to join in requestg. Govt. to republish H’s. “Handbook of N.Z. Fl.” with additions; and, to give Kirk the job. This latter I could never do: he is not fit for it: he could help w. spns. of phenogams & ferns. I am sorry to see K. dubbed “Prof.”, in the report of your mtg. you sent me: only a few years ago he was “hacked” in S. papers for it, and styled a “Quack”.

1 November 1895 to Harding,

... you will be sure to find out Kirk—as time rolls on—always a mean plagiarist—& worse.

16 April 1896 to Harding,

You regret my dropping the Maori subjects (and so, others,)—but (I fear) you hold with such 3rd. class creatures as the 2 Smiths, Kirk, Tregear, & Co.—who artfully plunder—

23 September 1896 to Hooker,

Kirk, I see, has come out (in his usual way) on the genus (Veronica) & species: he assumes vastly too much – in everything!

22 October 1897 to Harding,

All very well for “scientists”—like Hutton, Kirk, Cheeseman, & others—who are paid both by the Governnt. & public: whereas all my discoveries & doings have been laboriously & dearly paid for by my own self (con amore) unaided.

10 February 1898 to Harding,

a settler from Ormondville (named Chadwick?) ... is an educated man—such as I rarely meet with, & deeply devoted to Botl. science free from gain—the very opposite of Kirk.—

28 February 1898 to Harding,

You amuse & vex me re Kirk, but that is just the man! always so as I told him here! am greatly pleased at Sir J.H. coming-out: he is right. I had something to say about the republication of the HandBook with additions: and you greatly surprised me (in yr. last, re Lepidium) in saying, that it was “in 4to.” disgusting!! like that monstrous folly Kirk’s compilation— “Forest Flora” in a ponderous folio, w. wretched plates as I told him by letter: most (all of note) of our N.Z. plants were faithfully and beautifully given 50–60–70 yrs. ago from dried spns. sent to England.

17 March 1898 to Harding,

Re Mr. Kirk’s death—I was not greatly surprised when I saw it announced in the “Herald”, as, from his letters to me some time ago, I gathered he was both weak & low & not improving.

What was *that* all about?

Why was Colenso so disparaging?

Was it simply as Hocken had said, that he had “*a nasty bitter way in criticism. He was a jealous man & was loth to allow that anyone in N.Z. knew much about N.Z. botany but himself*”?

Thomas Kirk, Te Ara concludes, was “a kindly, gracious man with firm Christian convictions... (whose) quiet humour and likeable, though reserved, personality endeared him to family and friends.... (who) for more than three decades... had been the leader of botanical inquiry in New Zealand”.

Was there any real basis for Colenso’s criticism?

When Colenso’s work was rejected for the *Transactions* he was angry; his correspondence of the time is disappointed and bitter. Kirk was a Governor on the Institute’s Board and clearly Colenso implicated him in the rejection. Furthermore the *Transactions* did publish Kirk’s work (on weeds and full of Latin names!!) and that looked like personal influence, cronyism and academic snobbery.

Kirk, too, had sunk a number of Colenso’s plant names, had collaborated with Hooker and Baker at Kew in sinking others and had advised GM Thomson, who had sunk a few more. His work must perforce be faulty: his *Forest Flora* was not only expensive but was “poorly executed”, “ponderous”, “with wretched plates”.

When Kirk visited Napier while Colenso was away in the Bush, Colenso’s friend Augustus Hamilton gave Kirk good plant specimens meant for Colenso.

But worst of all, Kirk was the one nominated to update Hooker’s *Handbook of the NZ Flora*, a task Colenso may have considered himself eminently suited for.

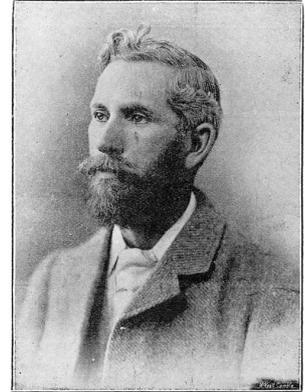
Colenso’s criticism of Kirk’s using the title “Professor” may or may not be apt. Kirk was certainly a College teacher, but whether he actually held a chair is unclear. I can find nothing in *Papers Past* of his being “hackled” or called a quack over it [3].

Colenso’s most serious charge was that Kirk “plundered” the work of others and was therefore “a mean plagiarist and worse.” Furthermore he was paid for his work, while he (Colenso) was not, but did it for the love of it. Ironic, really, when Kirk lived and died in relative poverty, while Colenso died a multimillionaire in our money.

Yet, perhaps curiously, Colenso’s 1890s diaries make it clear that he and Kirk maintained frequent correspondence to the last, Colenso helping Kirk, spending weeks looking through his own specimens to send material to him. His actions do not fit his expressed opinions.

His criticisms of Kirk appear only in his letters to intimate correspondents—Harding, Hooker, Luff. Such letters, as Colenso himself said, are close to conversation, and, as in politicians’ emails today, or in the private communications of celebrities in Britain recently, things are said which were never meant to endure public scrutiny. Twice, to Harding, Colenso wrote “private, this” emphasising that he did not want his comments about Kirk to go any further.

He would have been horrified to know we have read them.



Thomas Kirk

3. Hackle: to cut roughly, hack, mangle.

Hamuera Te Nehu: Samuel May Colenso

After delivering Bishop Selwyn's notice of suspension to William Colenso, Rev James Hamlin wrote to the Central Committee of the Church Missionary Society in November 1852,

It may be sufficient to observe that Mr. Colenso related to me with tears that about June 1848 commenced his criminal connexion with the Native woman living in his house whose name was Ripeka; she was at that time unmarried; this I understand continued—about three months, perhaps fearful of consequences, she wished to be married to a young man, also a domestic of Mr. Colenso, whose name was Samuel. After some delay, the parties were united; subsequently to their marriage the criminal connexion went on with the knowledge and consent of the husband during 1849 & 1850.

Who was Samuel?

Who was this man ("Hamuera" in te reo), who knew of and consented to his wife's affair with Colenso? Was he simply extraordinarily understanding? did he owe Colenso such a debt? was he so in thrall to his master that he dare not do otherwise?

We know of him only from Colenso's letters and journals—the early ones to the CMS 1847–52 and the late ones 1889–97.

Colenso wrote on 5 February 1852, that Hamuera

... being a slave, was redeemed when a very little boy by Archdeacon Henry Williams from being killed & eaten; and who, soon

after, (when a loathsome object through Scrophula, which disease had eaten large ghastly holes in his neck, armpits, and breast,) was taken in by me; and through GOD'S blessing on the means perfectly cured; and for whom I had done much, and from whom I had patiently borne a great deal, during the 17 years of our living together.

That would put their meeting at 1835, Colenso's first year in New Zealand, before his marriage. Hamuera must have been baptised after Colenso's arrival and he must have been special, for his baptismal name was that of Colenso's father, Samuel May Colenso.

Henry Williams made a journal entry which may refer to Hamuera, 4 February 1835. Aparahama went over to Rewa to send the boy whom he had seized belonging to the Thames. He came over to see me but was very resolute in not sending the boy.

Journeys with Hamuera

Colenso wrote in his CMS journal on 7 April 52, "By iv. p.m. we reached Pamoteao [*White Rock, southern Wairarapa coast*], where (as my custom has ever been,) I knelt and prayed and thanked GOD for my lad Samuel's merciful deliverance there in 1843". This refers to the reconnaissance voyage of William Williams and Colenso to the Wairarapa in November 1843, in the mission schooner *Columbine* from the Bay of Islands; they were caught in storms and were for some time unable to land, until on 11 November the *Columbine*

Bore away for Wairarapa Bay, hoping to effect a landing there, being almost in want of wood and water. We could not, however, land, but, about 5, p.m., landed 14 natives and our baggage on a desert beach, at a place called Pamoteo, hoping to follow them by return of boat; night coming on, and wind increasing (we, also, 4 miles from land,) we were obliged to take in the boat (when she

returned at 9 p.m., amidst no little danger,) and bear away off the land.

On the 15th he and Williams scrambled ashore at Castlepoint, on a tiny beach Colenso called Deliverance Cove. It would be two more weeks before “our poor jaded Natives arrived with our baggage. We were right glad on seeing each other. They had been to Port Nicholson, had seen the Columbine enter on the 18th., and had travelled hard over most wretched craggy routes to come up with us.” Among the Bagnall papers in the Alexander Turnbull Library is a sheet in Colenso’s writing, showing “Villages beyond Castlepoint—which information I obtained from the Natives of the Coast, & from one of my own Lads who travelled on to Port Nicholson.” That lad was probably Hamuera.

On 6 January 1841 Colenso referred to “my steward-boy, Kahukoka”, but in his extant writing he made no mention of Hamuera by name until 6 February 1847, when he was

Very much cast down in soul, at the careless conduct of my Native lad Samuel—as well as my own cold state. Evening had a long private conversation with Samuel; may the LORD bless a word in Season!

7th. This afternoon, my lad Samuel wrote me a truly good Letter, at which I felt cheered again. Evening, conversed with him.

Written from Waitangi, in the afternoon of Sunday, Feby 7, 1847.

O Sir,

O Colenso, greeting to thee, here is my word to thee. This, the 13th. year of my living with thee, will not vary for the better from the former ones; all are alike bad. Here is the word concerning me in the vii of Mark, verses 21, 22,—“From within, out of the

heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: and this, also, in the Psalms of David, in the xxxvi, in the four first verses,—“The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, there is no fear of GOD before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. The words of his mouth are iniquity & deceit: he hath left off to be wise and to do good. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.”—and here is yet another, from the vii. of S. Paul to the Romans, the 24 verse,—“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of his death?” O sir, O Colenso, here am I confined to thee, with great darkness of Soul. Nevertheless, the cause of the darkness is seen, is known,—it is, because I have not been mindful of my word which I uttered when I first transgressed grossly (referring to August/45.). I then said, Although I have sinned, ye shall yet see the fruit of Faith; and that word of mine was correct, because I afterwards stood, even until now. Alas! I am only evil; I cannot lay hold of the things of Christ; I am fast bound by my many sins. O! here I am held fast enough by Sin. How, indeed; how can I be untied? How may the darkness of my soul, and thy grief on my account, be dispelled? Perhaps by letting me depart from thee? But if I run away, then, perhaps, thy grief upon my account will be increased. Then it will also be said,—“Ah! He left Colenso on account of his having done very much evil.” Hence it is, that I am not very willing to go away, lest my grief should be increased. Lest also, thou shouldst go about thy holy work with a heavy heart. But, on the contrary, should my present state be much talked of, then, perhaps, it will be better for me to depart; yes, let it be thus; even as the female slave of Abraham, who sinned and was thrust forth, not being allowed to remain, although her error was but one. Notwithstanding, however, this is my work,—to

pray; I hold fast by this; this I must never let go; this is the one great thing for me, for my sins and my darkness, and for thee, for thy grief.

Finished is my writing. From thy erring child,
From Samuel May Colenso.

Travelling companions

Hamuera accompanied Colenso on his long journeys from Waitangi, and the two grew close, caring for each other in illness and adversity,

18 February 47. This morning at 1 o'clock, my old lad Samuel came groaning to my tent, apparently dying. I was obliged to get up & take him in to my tent, & administer some strong medicine without delay; by daylight he was much better but very weak. He wished, however, to try to get on, so we started at 8 a.m.,—

9 October 47. From this place [*Tautane, near Cape Turmagain*] to Pakuku (the nearest village) is one long open and heavy beach, and over this—with the sea-foam flying madly over it like snow, and the cutting wind and arrowy showers of sleet driving full in our faces—we had to force our way. However, there was no alternative, so we made the best of it. In 2 hours (oh! how long!) we crossed that beach and gained Pakuku, thankful to GOD for a shelter—at least, I certainly was. When half-way across I almost thought I should not be able to hold out to the end; my faithful Native lad, Samuel, (who has been with me in dangers oft,) took me by the hand, and led and kept me up.

27 October 47. I threw myself upon the stones, actually too tired to eat or sleep! At 10 o'Clock, however, through the great kindness of my old Native, Samuel, I got a cup of tea....

4 November 47. In the course of the evening I was taken suddenly ill with severe head-ach, my groaning from acute pain alarmed my Natives who were in a hut close by, and my old tired and faithful lad, Samuel, wept much.

6 November 47. We had been about half-an-hour advancing into the wood, when I found that three of my party (among whom was my old lad Samuel), were missing; so I immediately called a halt, and we shouted together with all our might—but there was no answer. Leaning against the trees among the pools of water, we waited some time, when one of my Natives went back to the entrance of the wood, and by-and-by two of the three came up, but Samuel could not be found. Some of my party now recollected his having severely hurt one of his feet in crossing the thorny plain, while one of those who last came up had seen him sitting down on the opposite side of the swamp. In this dilemma we agreed to wait a while, Matthias again returning shouting as he went to the entrance of the wood, while I made my dog to bark with all his might with his deep and powerful voice, until, between us, we alarmed all the parrots upon the trees which flew screaming about the whole forest resounding with the uproar. In about an hour, Matthias returned bringing Samuel with him to our great comfort. He had halted to tie up his wounded foot, and, losing sight of us among the reeds, &c., of the swamp, had crossed it lower down, and was entering the wood when Mathias' voice reached his ear, and he found his way to us.

17 December 47. Heard that Samuel, my old lad, and Leonard, N. Teacher, had already written letters inland to the Christian Natives, to pray for my recovery.

4 December 48. My old & faithful Steward, Samuel, suddenly strained the sinews of his back in descending the last steep cliff.—This was an awkward affair, for he could now scarcely move

along, much less make any exertion or carry a load. I was obliged to give him doses of wine & Laudanum throughout the evening, to strengthen him & to mitigate the very severe pain, as well as to rub his back with a little embrocation which I happened to have with me.

5th. Samuel, however, got along with extreme difficulty; Reuben, one of my guides, kindly taking his load.

7th, 8th (by now Colenso was ill). I feared my reason was failing me. My old & faithful Steward Samuel, who—though a sufferer himself and needed rest—scarcely ever left my side, where he kept watch, weeping & praying continually, was of eminent service.... I told my steward, Samuel, that if I was no better by sunset, he should fetch Matthias (another Native Domestic of mine), and write down a few instructions for my wife and flock; which announcement made him weep again most bitterly.

9th. I managed, with Samuel's help to wash and dress and to get out of my tent.... Weak as I was I could not resist taking the Evening Service, (although Samuel, who led me to the Chapel, besought me not to do so,)

17 August 48. During Morning Service, the whole of my victuals, cooked & uncooked, including my soup for dinner (prepared last night with extra labour by my steward Samuel, and containing a piece of meat which he had brought over the mountains from Patea, and Isaac's kind present of new onions,) which was carefully shut down in its stewpan, were devoured by dogs!

14 August 49. Commenced blistering & medicating my half-blind lad, Samuel, for his eyes. [*He was "almost quite blind" in 1893 (see below): was this episode related?*]

9 July 50. In finding the R. Tukituki (there being no canoe, the

river being nearly 3 feet deep and about 80 yards wide,) myself and my native lad Samuel were very nearly swept away, through the cold and the strength of the current. Had it been 5 or 10 yards more I do not think we should have escaped.

15 November 50. I found, that, though greatly bruised, I had providentially escaped broken bones! Samuel, my old and faithful Steward lad, seeing the state I was in, begged me to return; but such being altogether foreign to my hitherto mode of acting (and having already put off this visit,) I refused to do so.

16th. the hill being much too steep to ride down, and I being unable to walk, my lad Samuel carried me down on his back, often begging me to return....

Pressman

Hamuera worked the Waitangi Mission press,

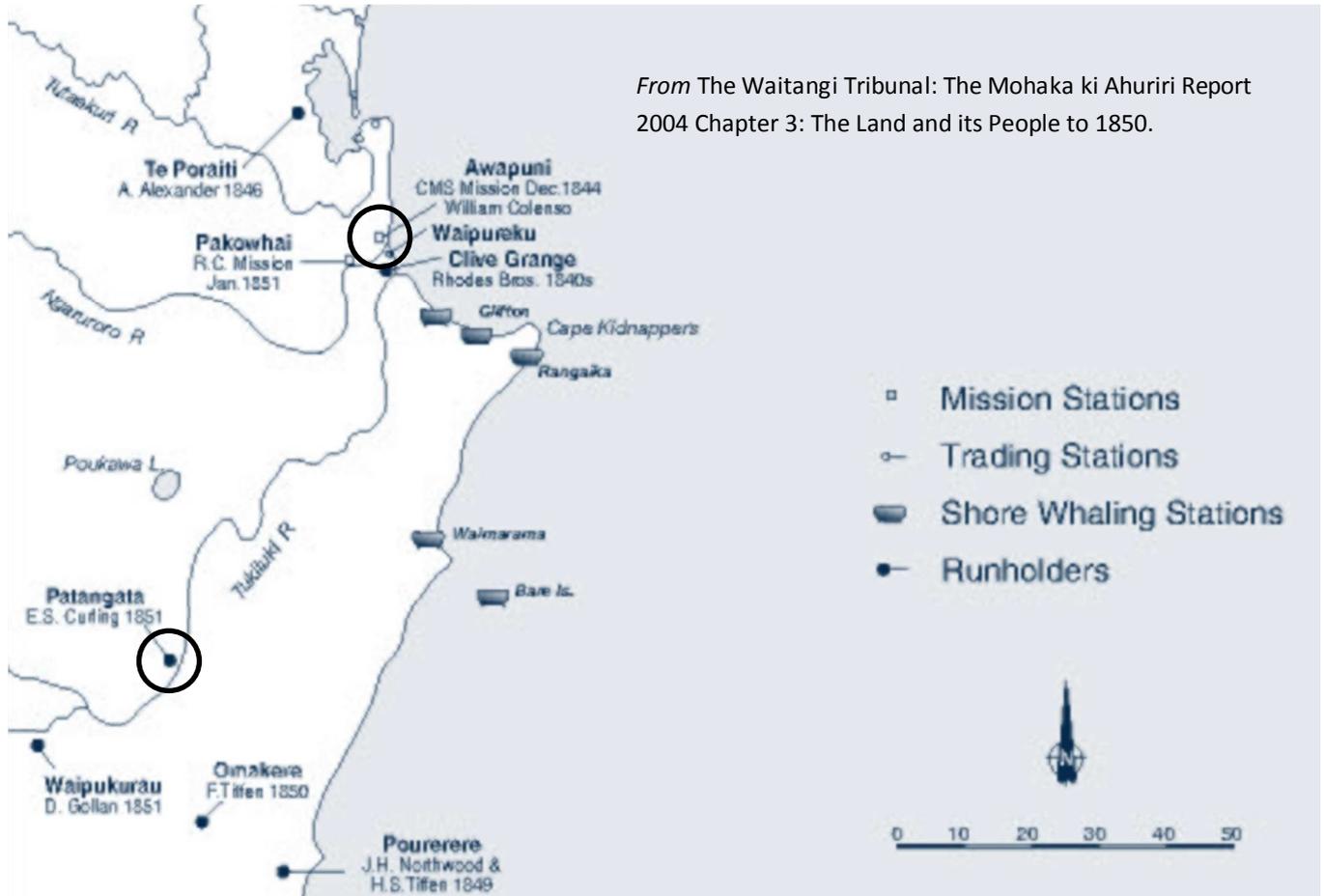
21 September 47. Busy, copying Journal for CMS.—and in printing-off 100 copies of a little book, containing 25 new experimental Hymns (which I had composed at different periods during my lonely wanderings), being the first fruits of my little new printing-press; the compositing was done by my old Native lad, Samuel;— [*BiM 330, Williams 161*].

18 December 47. My lad Samuel, who is now my Printer, being suddenly taken ill, I was obliged to print off 300 copies of a little tract, the paper and all being ready.

20 December 47. Engaged, during the day, with Samuel, printing the little Tract.

7 February 48: Leonard, and Samuel (my old steward-lad) helping me in copying some circular Letters.

From The Waitangi Tribunal: The Mohaka ki Ahuriri Report 2004 Chapter 3: The Land and its People to 1850.



14 September 48 (letter to the CMS Secretaries). My little press, too, is working, spite of all difficulties and impediments; my old Native lad, Samuel, being Compositor & pressman;—the correcting, &c, of course I have to attend to.

Ripeka and Hamuera

Ripeka and Hamuera wanted to marry. In his “autobiography” Colenso would write later to his son Wiremu,

And here I should perhaps inform you that during the preceding year your mother was married to Hamuera, one of my old and tried domestic Maori lads (such being her own wish; and not mine) but not until some time after our connection had taken place; of all which he also well knew).

He wrote in his CMS journal,

29 June 48. Talking, also, with Natives, arranging the marriages of my N. Teacher Leonard, and my old Steward-boy, Samuel, &c.

4 August 48: Married my old steward lad Samuel; who has been with me nearly 13 years. The young woman, his wife, we brought with us from the Waimate, Bay of Islands, in 1844; and she has never left us:—may GOD bless them both!

Rebellion

But soon Hamuera began to mutiny,

15 November 49. Though still unwell from Influenza, I left the Station this morning, at xi., with 5 baggage-bearers, to visit Patea,

and (by way of Taupo) Tarawera. When about to start, my old steward lad, Samuel, refused to go with me! which grieved me much.

20th. I, in my present weak state, and without (as it were) my right hand (Samuel),

7 January 50. Then, coming down from the desk and taking my class (the first), and seeing my own steward, Samuel, going for the slates in his thick blanket, (in direct opposition to my strict charge to him; having, in fact, repeatedly cautioned them all against wearing their hot dirty blankets, such being not only a cause of sleep, but, also, of fever at this hot season.) I went to him, and quietly desired him to leave the School.

But these issues must have settled, for when he saw the rapid progress on the new chapel at Te Rotoatara on 15 April 1850, Colenso “promised to give them 2 windows for the E. end, although I shall have to make them myself, aided by my native steward, Samuel.” Three months later, “Its 2 little glazed lancet windows in the E. end, (which myself & my native lad Samuel had made,) gave it a finished and snug appearance.”

Then Hamuera formed a liaison with Colenso’s nemesis Wiremu Tipuna, and came and went...

5 December 51. During this week two of my domestics, (one, being my old steward, Samuel, whom I had brought up, and who had lived with me nearly 17 years,) being enticed away by Wiremu Tipuna to look after his Cows, &c., left me much against my wish.

5 February 52. The less recorded of this eventful day the better—“Nolite annuntiare in Geth,” &c [*Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all. Micah 1. 10*]. This day my old Native steward, Samuel... left

me, no more to return! My supposition, when he last returned, (that he had not come back to stay,) appears to be more than true; as he had merely returned to gather together all that he could. But, on that day, the notices arrived, informing us of the Bishop being on his way hither, which unexpected news kept him here until the Bishop should be again gone, and I returned from accompanying him. Truly, with Hezekiah, I may say, this day has been— “Dies tribulationis, et corruptionis, et blasphemiae.” Never have I been so greatly so outrageously abused to my face; never had to do with such stubborn outrageous mischief! such threatenings, such base ingratitude— (Et tu Brute!)—thus am I justly punished. “Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgements.”... I have good reason to fear, that the conduct of Samuel and Rebecca towards me this day, is but the beginning of outward sorrows. [*Indeed, his sorrows became public when he confessed his adultery to the Bishop later in the year*].

6th, 7th. Where can Samuel and Rebecca be, who ran away yesterday in a small canoe?

23 April 52. This morning we travelled to Tautane... Here I met my old steward-lad Samuel, (who having run away from me in February last had since concluded to return)....

Ripeka’s second child, born on 14 September 1852, was sickly, died and was buried the next day: Bagnall & Petersen assume Hamuera was the father and Colenso made no claim to fatherhood.

23 November 52. This morning, early, Samuel again left me. For a considerable time past he has been in constant correspondence with Wi. Tipuna, and has also been often away in the bush talking with “Jean” the Popish Priest’s lay-brother, as well as at their place, Pakowhai. I have no doubt but that Rebecca’s leaving last week (on the 19th.,) and going to Pakowhai to reside, was a

planned scheme between them. May GOD be very gracious unto him!

Colenso allegedly assaulted Wi Tipuna, who took his grievance to Donald McLean...

25th, 26th. Heard, that Wi. Tipuna, being encouraged by several whites (who profess to believe [?] his false stories), is very busy at Pakowhai, the Priest’s place, with Ahipene Tururu, Samuel, Cranmer, and others, intending to carry the matter of the 1st. September last before the Magistrate, Mr. McLean, on his arrival here, now daily expected.

Colenso was found guilty and fined. Outraged, he wrote to McLean on 18 January 53,

Again, when I had more than once in open Court, requested, that my two runaway domestics (who had gone to Ahuriri with the Complainant and his party), should come forward as witnesses, the Complainant arose from his seat, and very significantly said— “Kua korero maua ko Hamuera, a, e mea ana tera, ka ware ia ki taua korero.” (In English—Myself and Samuel have conversed together, and he says that he has forgotten all about the matter.) I understood this well. Samuel, the native whom I had brought up from childhood, who had lived with me nearly 18 years, and who knew well the nature of an oath—Samuel, who lives with the Complainant, and on whom the Complainant had principally relied—now, that the hour of hearing was come, shrank from taking a false oath before my face; and, unwilling to injure his new and quondam friend, by telling the truth, had managed to forget all about it!!

Then the house at Waitangi was burned to the ground, Elizabeth and Wiremu left for Auckland, and Colenso was alone. He seems to have re-established contact with Hamuera,

27 March 54 (in a letter to Elizabeth). A native from Waipukurau stole my enamelled rice saucepan and a new pair of woollen trowsers (20/- value) from the store. I suspected someone from inland, and wrote a note to Hamuera, and through his searching it was found out.... a wheat mill is said to have been stolen from Ahuriri, for which Hamuera got suspected, but wrongfully, I fully believe. Still (as I told him) his conduct towards me—his living with that perjured man, Wi Tipuna, and “the well-known thief” Taare Hauaitu, will ever operate against him. I hear nothing of Rebecca, I believe she is quiet among her own people inland.

20 June 54 (in a letter to Elizabeth). Of Hamuera and Ripeka I know nothing.

I can find no records of Hamuera after this, until...

The later diaries 1889–1897

Although Henry Hill wrote that Colenso kept a diary throughout his life, there is a 36 year gap in what has survived and his later diaries contain only brief jottings. Clearly he was writing to Hamuera, seeking his advice on te reo for his Lexicon, sending money, medicine, a church almanac.

13 May 90. Wrote to Hamuera, enclosing £1., advance.

20th. Wrote Hamuera with MSS.—

28 February 91. Sent Hamuera, a fresh lot of words.

16 February 92. replied to Hamuera.

9 May 93. At IX p.m. a letter from Hamuera (reply to mine of April 10th) poor dear fellow! Almost quite blind & in much pain from rheumatism and so far off, no roads, that I cannot get to him!—

10th. Aftn. writing to Hamuera, &c.—Sent £1 & medicine.

13 Aug 93. (Letter) to Hamuera.

2 December 93. (Letter) to Hamuera

16 September 94. Evg. wrote long letter to Hamuera, in reply, &c.

26th. Evg. wrote a long Maori letter to Hamuera, also a ms. Ch. Almanac for Decr Quarter, asked for.

19 December 94. Wrote to Hamuera, enclosing £1.10.0 for him & son.—

In 1893 Hamuera was rheumatic, almost blind and “so far off, no roads, that I cannot get to him”. Hawke’s Bay historian Patrick Parsons has traced a “Hamiora Te Nehu” who remarried and spent his life at Patangata. Patangata was near the junction of River road and Elsthorpe road. Is it the same man?

So far off? No roads?

Patangata lies forty-three miles south from Napier, and is seven miles from the railway station at Kaikora North, with which it is connected by coach. It has one hotel, a store, a post office, and telephone bureau, and there is a bi-weekly mail service. The Elsthorpe station, a large property in the district was cut up by the Government for closer settlement in the year 1896, and the settlers who were fortunate in securing sections have prospered amazingly, and speak in glowing terms of the richness of the land, and the splendid facilities offered for sheep farming.

—THE CYCLOPEDIA OF NEW ZEALAND
[TARANAKI, HAWKE'S BAY & WELLINGTON PROVINCIAL DISTRICTS] 1908.

In 1894 Colenso sent money to Hamuera “& son” but there is no record of Hamiora having fathered a child.



The NZ polymath: Colenso and his contemporaries

Wellington 16–18 November 2016

An aptness to teach

On 3 February 1874 School Inspector William Colenso wrote to a “Mr. Compton, Teacher, Sunny Bank Newton, Auckland” who had enquired about “any vacancy among the offices of School Teachers in Hawke’s Bay.”

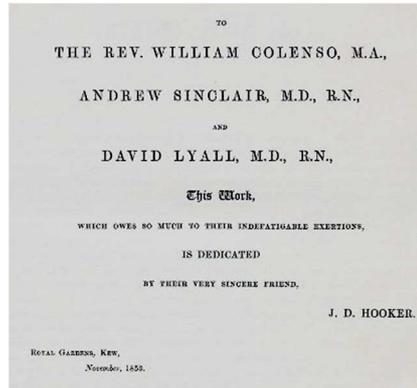
He addressed various matters, then wrote,

And this brings me to the other portion of your letter, wherein you (rightly) mention your scholastic qualifications, Classical, Mathematical, &c,—and, knowing their value, I will congratulate you in your possessing them: still, at the same time, what is really more required at present, in our new country—and especially in its small scattered humble village schools, is, an aptness to teach (i.e. to educe the capacities and to impart plain & useful elementary knowledge,) and a real love, or zeal, for the work—in all its daily, and too often, dry routine, accompanied with temperate and regular habits:—these qualifications are in my opinion essential to success.—

—page 80, “Correspondence and Returns Book, Hawke’s Bay Provincial Council Inspectors of Schools” (Hawke’s Bay Museum Trust, Ruawhāro Tā-ū-rangi #67845).

The *Book Mart*, a trade journal, has an article on Macaulay’s famous passage about a New Zealander sitting on the ruins of London Bridge sketching the ruins of St. Paul’s, in which it refers to “a paper recently read before the Philosophical Society of Napier by Mr William Colenso, the well-known Maori lexicographer.” It credits Mr Colenso with “disentombing a passage, so far as we know hitherto overlooked, which he thinks has the strongest claims of all to the paternity of the idea, more especially as the term ‘New Zealander’ is actually used. The passage is to be found in the preface to the English 4to edition of La Billardiére’s Voyage in search of La Perouse, of which a translation was published in London in 1800.”

—Hawke’s Bay Herald 13 July 1886



—from *Flora Novæ-Zelandiæ*, 1853

There was a small attendance at the meeting of the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute last night. The Rev. W. Colenso, F.R.S., F.G.S., read papers on “Fire” and “The Victoria Regia Lily,” which were listened to very attentively.

After a dissertation on the disadvantages of the use of the old time flint and steel at the Philosophical Institute meeting last night the Rev. W. Colenso said he was one of those who was almost sorry that matches had been invented, as it led to the increased consumption of “that wretched tobacco!”

—Hawke’s Bay Herald 16 June 1896

*Here, by the side of a stream of water, were some Natives with some living specimens of that elegant and rare bird the Huia (*Neomorpha acutirostris*.) which they had just taken upon some Karaka trees hard by. This bird which the Natives unremittingly pursue, and so highly prize all over the Island, for their handsome black skins which they hang in their ears, and for their graceful black tail feathers tipped with white, which they stick into their hair, is getting more and more scarce, and will, ere long, be among the things which were.*

—William Colenso, 1845.

A Sea-Green Rhapsody

The December 2014 *eColenso* carried a piece of penny dreadful prose written by 22yo Colenso at sea aboard the *Prince Regent*. After transcribing its turgid librettos we were bold enough to write, "... most readers will be pleased to hear that it wasn't 'continued'."

Alas. It was. There are several scraps of paper with pencilled writing in Colenso's hand among the GC Petersen papers in the Alexander Turnbull Library [ref. 88-038-09]. It is hard to be sure of the sequence, but really, the story doesn't matter, does it? it's the rich extravagance of the style (kept alive today only by real estate agents) that commands our attention... that and the mansplaining, Hemingwayesque, let-me-enlighten-you-about-the-subtleties-of-the-bullfight-since-you-are-only-a-woman dialogue....

... and know not what to do—when the sea have made repeated breaches over yr decks & carried away yr bulwarks and boats—your poor bark scudding under bare poles—the shrill roaring of the spirits of the tempest, sounding awfully loud, through your ropes and rigging, harrowing your very heart's blood—only occasionally interrupted by the vain cry for help of a drowning seaman—whelmed in the dark rolling waters and—

"I can no longer sit in patience to hear you—stay your recital, and let me hear how you found the sea, on leaving our English Channel

—“Then you really wish to hear about the sea?”—

“Oh! to be sure I do—what can be more delightful—Is it not

a beautiful object?—whether tranquilly slumbering like a “cradled infant”—or foaming, rending and lashing the boundary walls of an Island with reverberating roar.—Is it not the emblem of mortality and immortality—of hope & despair—joy & grief?—does it not remind us of a false friend—when its hollow and deceitful bosom wears a halcyon smile? Is it not an Emblem of Independence? when we see it, as it were, embracing the Earth with a beauteous zone—rolling its tides—billows—the beautiful plane of Venus shining brilliantly as an Evening Star—emblem of hope to the wandering sailor—waves, where it listeth?—certainly it is an emblem of that “Lord of the lion—heart & Eagle Eye!” and—

“Stay,—stay yr. volubility—why you have already put me such a string of questions, that I feel assured in order to answer all, I must reply to all, at once—which I will do in the affirmative—Well, you wish to hear abt. the sea—allow me to ask you whether you are most partial to the Red, Black, White, or Yellow Seas—the Caspian or Attic Mediterranean, —or Asiatic seas— the Sea of Azof—of Marmara—of Okholsk or, of Jesso—The North, South, or Eastern seas—the sea of Kamschatka, Arabia, or Japan—the China or Caribbean Seas—the famous Zuyder Zee—or, lastly, and in one sense least, the Brazen Sea of Solomon—or, shall I—

“ I do declare, that you are a thousand times worse than myself—never find fault again—I know not any thing, of one half of those seas which you have just mentioned—but I wish to know a little of—

“The sea, you wodd. say—well, then, would you like to hear of it, when in a calm—the sun gently setting in the west, and casting a mellow, holy, genial slanting light across the hardly moving murmuring waters, whilst Zephyr wafts a lovely

streak of purple vapours athwart the rolling orb of day—as if to veil it from your presumptuous gaze, the dolphin gambolling about & playing in frolicksome mirth around the ship, the fearful flying fish ***** showing its silvery azure, gossamer—away above the surface of the water—and the deep blue depths intense—and beautiful—so clearly reflecting every image like an immense mirror—or,—when the rudely blustering northern blast deforms the face of the main—when, mountain surmount mountain, when Pelion is piled on Ossa—when the angry Neptune flings a white foam in feathery showers from the mane of his sea green coursers—when your ship—the head of which you only occasionally perceive by the glare of a fitful gleam of lightning, shewing you the awful situation of your black speck, on the moving alpine scene around—“reels to & fro and staggers like a drunken man”—and you, yourself—though, an experienced mariner—are at yr “wits’ end”.

It is all just a word game of course, and a letter from Colenso among these papers, referring to verses surely of the same stripe, offers an explanation. (*Main Sheet* has to be the *Prince Regent’s* shipboard newsletter).

To the Editors of the “Main Sheet.”

Gentm. Without the least intention of aspiring to a situation on Parnassus—(by-the-bye I don’t think the life of a Poet at all enviable) I venture to send you the following verses!!

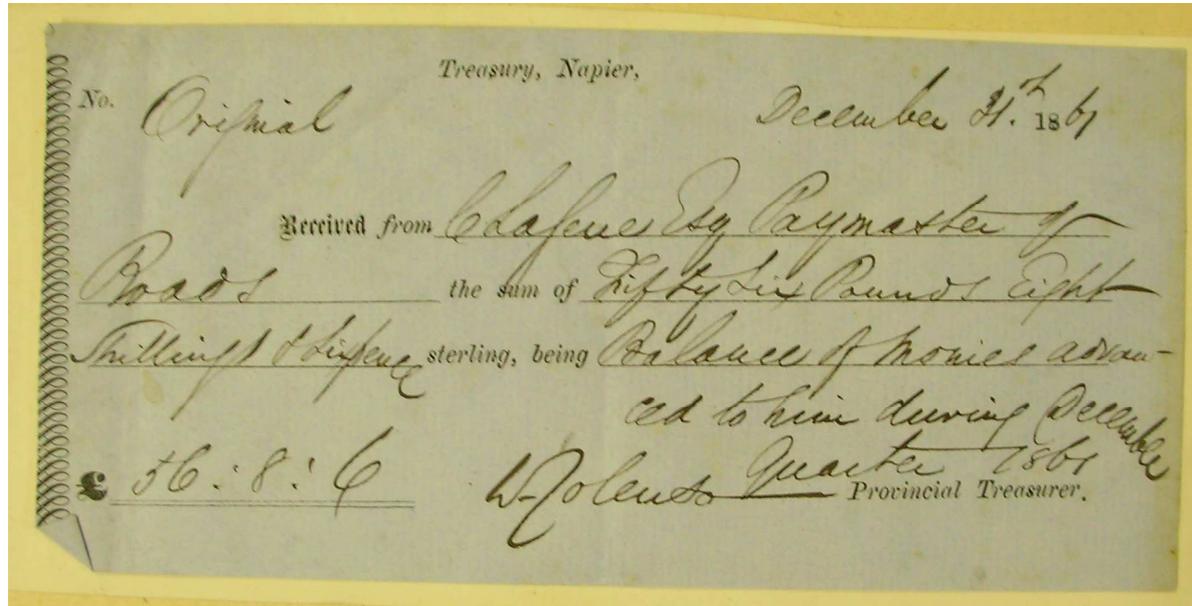
Having never drunk of the Castalian fount, I am aware that they will not stand Criticism—but knowing how much you abound with the “Suavitur in modo”—alias, milk of Human Kindness, I throw myself on yr. mercy—

W—

A Sea green rhapsody—written on a sea-blue billow—In the great Atlantic sea—by a sea-sick brain—July 17th.

When I found myself out of sight of land I exclaimed, with a sigh, “England with all thy faults I love thee still”—with nought but “blue above and blue below”—around & beneath—my spirit exulted—it roamed with delight—billow to billow—like an April butterfly from flower to flower—it greedily drank in thoughts inspired by those aërial intelligences which abound at sea—those sweet, influential pulses, which, as some say, cause the harmony of the spheres, and in condescension to us, poor mortal wights, deign to visit us, even on an Atlantic sun-beam,—or in the shell of a Nautilus—but in the midst of my agreeable reverie—oh doleful disaster!—oh fatal moment! surely my guardian must have been away from my side—I was taken suddenly sea-sick!!! This I cannot describe. Exeunt.

Colenso receipt for C. LaSerre: Alexander Turnbull Library Ms-papers-0031-1A



The *Wellington Independent*, Volume XV, Issue 1345, 8 July 1859, Page 3, identifies the payer and payee...

A proclamation is published in the Hawke's Bay Gazette, of the 29th June, by T. H. Fitzgerald, Esq., Superintendent of the Province of Hawkes Bay, appointing Captain J. C. L. Carter, to be Deputy Superintendent of that Province. The following appointments by the Superintendent are also notified in the same Gazette:—Edward Catchpool, Esq., to be Provincial Treasurer, **William Colenso, Esq., to be Provincial Auditor**; William Boorman, Esq., to be Provincial Solicitor, Thomas Gill Esq., to, be Provincial Engineer ; Mr. G. F. Fannin, to be Clerk in Superintendent's office; **Mr. C. LaSerre, to be Clerk and paymaster in the Provincial Engineer's office.**

*COLENZO: WAS HE THE KING OF HEARTS,
BRINGING THE MESSAGE OF THE CREATOR'S
LOVE TO THE UNENLIGHTENED TANGATA ?*



*... OR WAS HE THE KING OF CLUBS,
HAMMERING SINNERS WITH THE
MORAL CUDGEL OF A WRATHFUL GOD?*

Colenso's journal, November 1851: "new vices and follies... have come in like a flood upon us—viz. Card and Draughts playing, Rum drinking, Horse, Canoe, & Women (!) racing, and, neglect of the Sabbath." (Oh no, not women racing!!"