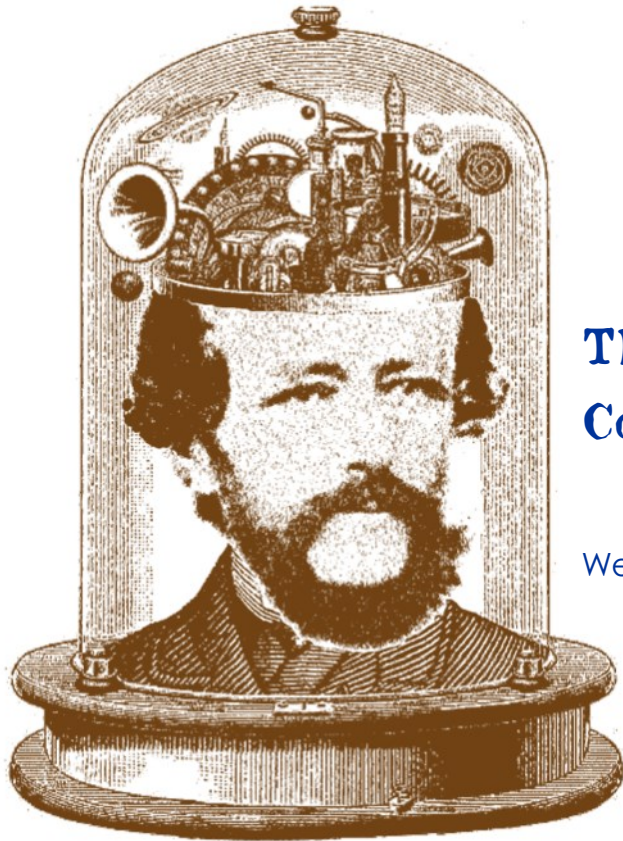




eColenso

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The New Zealand polymath: Colenso and his contemporaries

Wellington 16–18 November 2016

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Alexander Cameron Scrimgeour

Colenso occasionally mentioned “Scrimgeour” in letters and diaries.

10 January 1890: *Wrote to Waipawa:—to Moroney: Scrimgeour: Nash: Gilmour.*

9 September 1895: *At 11 p.m. Mr. Scrimgeour called to give me notice he would pay off his Mortgage (£2500) which I was sorry to hear—as he pays 7%, & the Banks will only give 3½%—and then there is the doubt as to their security.*

18 October 1895: *in the mg. Mr. A.C. Scrimgeour called & staid an hour.*

28 March 1896 (at Dannevirke): *Called on Scrimgeour, & got Moa bone, unfortunately lately broken!!—*

17 July 1896: *Aftn. Messrs. Gow & Scrimgeour called on business: remained some time.*

20 July 1896: *Went to town this mg. (to keep my promise to Messrs. Gow & Scrimgeour)—found it very cold, & stormy: did business & returned w. some difficulty.*

Moroney, Nash and Gilmour were all tenants who paid Colenso rent or mortgage repayments, so probably Scrimgeour was also a tenant in 1890. Indeed in 1895 he gave notice he would pay off his mortgage. In 1896 Gow and Scrimgeour “called on business”.

The *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* tells us AC Scrimgeour was born in Scotland in 1840 and came to New Zealand in 1863 under engagement to HR Russell, Waipukurau. In 1875 he and Peter Gow took over the Tavistock Hotel, Waipukurau, and in 1877 he became proprietor of the Tahoraite Hotel in the Seventy Mile Bush and after-

wards purchased the Empire Hotel at Waipawa, which he conducted for twelve years. He later moved to Masterton and took over the Club Hotel, but subsequently returned to Waipawa, and again took over the Empire Hotel. He married Miss Gow, a sister of his old partner, in 1887. In about 1895 he took over the Railway Hotel, Dannevirke, from Charles Baddeley (Colenso wrote to Harding in 1895, “I was against Scrimgeour going thither,”) but in 1898 Colenso wrote to Harding from “Scrimgeour’s Hotel, Dannevirke”.



MR. A. C. SCRIMGEOUR.

It seems likely Colenso lent money on mortgage to the hotel-keepers Alexander Scrimgeour and Peter Gow. He therefore had an interest in seeing their business succeeded. Indeed, he stayed in their hotels when he visited the Bush.

But more than that, he wrote in defence of the hotels when they were threatened. He wrote to JD Hooker on 12 July 1884, “I have been also hard at it! fighting in our 2 Locals... against the wretched fanatical Teetotallers w. their ‘Local option’,—who have just closed 4 Hotels in the woods on the Royal Mail Coach Lines (where I have often stayed many weeks) and now there are none for 40–50 miles!”

The first Local Option poll in New Zealand was held on 21 March 1894. Among the powers possessed by the licensing committees was

that of refusing to renew licenses, which was done in a number of places, including the Bush district in central Hawke’s Bay.

Colenso’s public letters (*Hawke’s Bay Herald* 21 May 1885 “The hotel question at Makatoku”; 27 May 1885 “Local option”) are in tune with his previously strongly expressed view, that temperance does not mean teetotalism (*Hawke’s Bay Herald* 14 February 1877 “Mr. Colenso and temperance”; 10 June 1884 “Mr Colenso on bush licenses”; 16 June 1884 “Mr. Colenso on ‘Strongbow’”; *Daily Telegraph* 18 June 1884; *HB Herald* 29 June 1888 “Teetotalism and temperance”; 15 March 1892 “The drink question”. For transcriptions of these see St George IM 2009. *Give your thoughts life*).

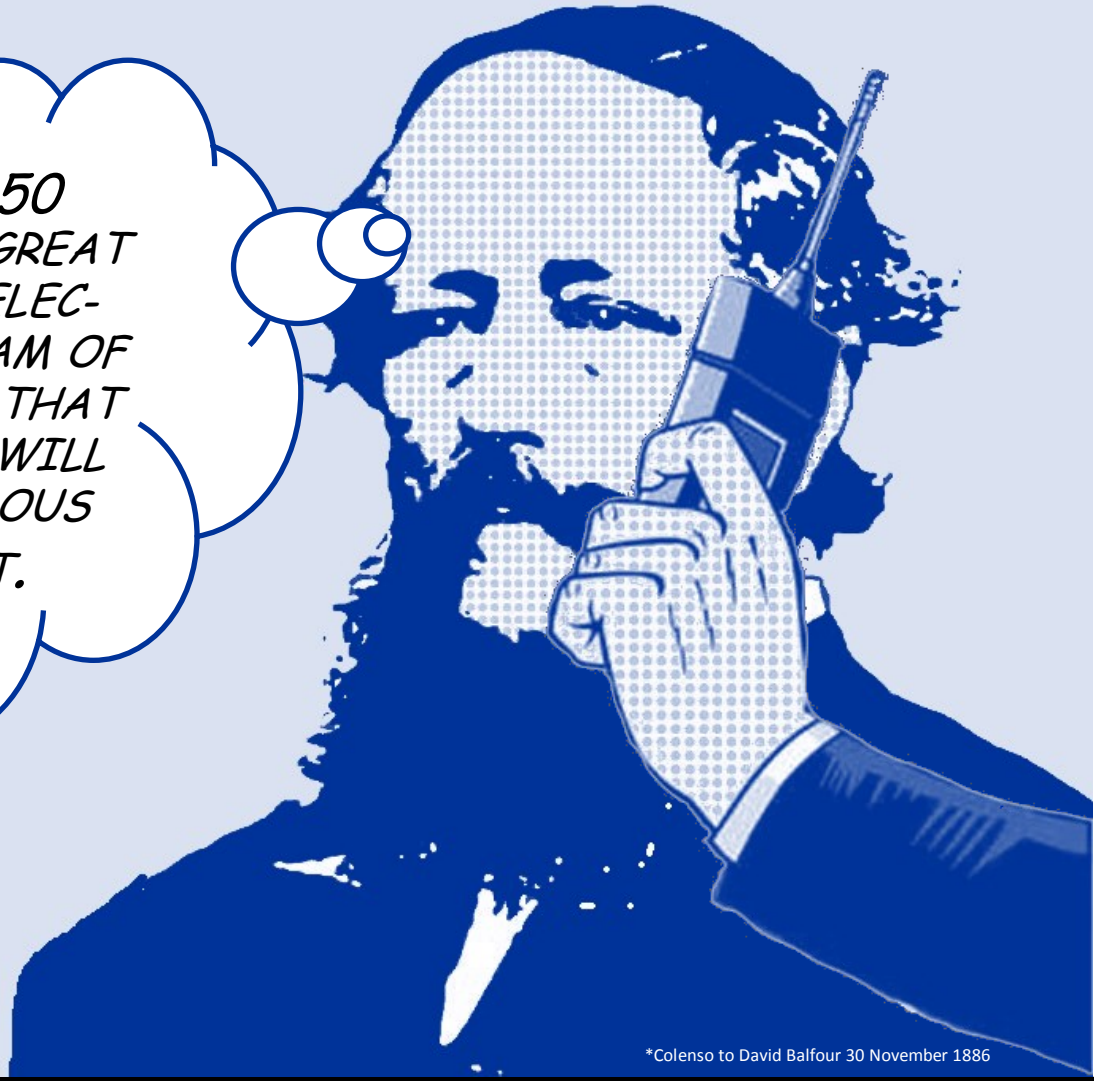
One might cynically conclude that his public arguments in opposition to Rechabites, teetotalers and prohibitionists were motivated as much by a desire to protect his own investments as by any liberal sentiments about moderation.

Or one might allow that such a strong advocate of moderate drinking would be justified and consistent if he “put his money where his mouth is” and invested in the hotel trade.



The Empire Hotel, Waipawa, c. 1900.

*I HAVE FOR 50
YEARS BEEN A GREAT
BELIEVER IN ELEC-
TRICITY, — & AM OF
THE OPINION, THAT
FUTURE AGES WILL
MAKE WONDROUS
USES OF IT.*



Mr Colenso and Mr Isitt

In his letters to Coupland Harding, Colenso several times mentioned the name “Isitt”...

14 December 1894: *Isitt is here this week, starring it! Mrs Hill last night chairwoman, and the Dean to night, at which I am sorry.*

7 July 1897: *One of the most pleasing items in yours is—your separating from Isitt & Co.! You ought to have done so years ago. Your knowledge of History—of the Scriptures, &c, &c, should have led you to do so. I hear more & more against Soltan every day! he was for many years a Congregational preacher at Launceston Tasmania. Some here knew him there, &c!*

20 July 1897: *Isitt has been to Napier, lecturing, & little Oliver Dean (being one of that fraternity) was, of course, Chairman at meeting: Sutton too, was present, & wrote a short letter re same: & now Oliver has come out! and in Letter in “Herald.” given Sutton a reminder!—possibly more may follow: but, I suppose, you will be duly informed of all such matters at Napier.*

1898 March 17: *Oliver Dean has just, again, got into hot water, through his closely following Isitt, & Co. I shall enclose clipping, from 2 “Daily Telegraphs” That Rev. Alan-son, “Missioner,” is now inland at Dannevirke I think, & ? Bishop Williams with him, & I suppose will soon be coming this way. I think I have told you, more than once, that I do not think highly of those peripatetic “Missioners”—let them go to the dark places—& lay themselves out there.—*

Leonard Monk Isitt 1854–1937 came to New Zealand to join his brother Frank who was a Methodist minister at Balclutha and was later sent to a Methodist Mission Station at Lawrence.

“Here occurred an incident which influenced his subsequent career. Called upon to conduct the burial service of a man who had died of alcoholic poisoning, whose body was hurried by a drunken driver to a grave left half-dug by a drunken gravedigger, Isitt scathingly denounced the publicans present at the funeral and set his whole energies to fight the drink evil.”

He was ordained in 1881. He was stationed finally, in 1889 at Sydenham, “where the drink evil was seen in its most sordid aspect.” He determined to fight for legislative prohibition by spreading propaganda via *The Prohibitionist*, which, although started for local consumption, was soon circulated throughout New Zealand under the name of the *Vanguard*. His brother Frank edited the paper. “This propaganda was aided by one of the most powerful speaking campaigns ever carried out in New Zealand. Isitt had a natural eloquence which, fed by his burning enthusiasm for his cause, made him an orator of a type probably unequalled in New Zealand. Dr CF Aked described him in these words: ‘When did we hear such speaking as his? Clear pure Saxon, not a word misplaced, not a sentence which could be improved; every phrase a point; every point sent home; massive sentences falling like the strokes of a sledgehammer’. The Methodist Conference released him from his usual work to concentrate on his campaign.

“Isitt’s second line of attack was to gain control of the Licensing Committee and refuse licences to all Sydenham hotels.”

He toured the country, railing against alcohol from the pulpit and at “temperance” meetings. In Hawke’s Bay Rev. Oliver Dean, Henry and Emily Hill and Harding’s uncle John were prohibitionist.

The newspapers were full of dire propagandist horror stories. Colenso rallied in defence of Dannevirke, his favourite place,

Hawke's Bay Herald 11 March 1892. "A query".

Sir,—I notice in your paper of Wednesday the following statement:— "Two cases of delirium tremens, both from Danevirke—the most drunken place for its size in the colony—have ended fatally in the Waipukarau hospital."

I write to ask you to give us the name of your informant; and please don't hesitate. I believe the story to be utterly untrue. I have been residing eight weeks at the Railway Hotel in Danevirke, with two of the other three hotels always in sight, and during that time I have not seen nor heard of one drunken man!

I would fain hope, that you, as editor of your old and hitherto respectable paper, are not become infected with the lying virus of the "Drink Question" which has so disgraced your columns of late! How strange it is, that otherwise sane and tolerably educated and well-disposed men, the moment they take up their "fad" against all drinking are carried off their legs by its current and "lie by the hour!"—I am, &c.,

W. Colenso.

The *Daily Telegraph* (17 March) was more direct in its attack in Isitt,

Writing to our morning contemporary the other day, the Rev. W. Colenso, said that, "How strange it is that otherwise sane and tolerably educated and well-disposed men, the moment they take up their fad against all drinking, are carried off their legs by its current and 'lie by the hour.'" The truth of this remark is borne to us in the lec-

ture delivered by the Rev. L. M. Isitt at Wellington, in the course of which he had the temerity to say, in reference to Bishop Julius' preference for good beer to the adulterated article, that he (Isitt) "would rather face the risk of eternal punishment than throw the protection of his lawn robe, were he bishop, over such a frightful traffic." We should say that those words bordered on the profane, but the following sentences, we think, enter the regions of falsehood. Mr Isitt said, "It had been said there was no drunkenness in New Zealand, but from the evidence of his own senses and the reading of the police reports, he contended that there was far too much drunkenness, and that, too, among the pick and flower of the young men in this colony." "But it was impossible for the traffic to be regulated, and for this reason, among others, that in the whole of the police force, from the highest Inspector down to the rawest recruit, there was not a living man who dared to do his duty against the grog trade." Not having any personal acquaintance with Mr Isitt, we should say, judging from the report of his lecture, that he was a poor fool who made up for the weakness of his brains by the strength of his language.

REV. LEONARD ISITT
Lectures in the
GAIETY THEATRE
ON
THIS (FRIDAY EVENING, 8 o'clock.
Admission—Stalls 1s, Upstairs 6d, Body
Hall Silver Coin admission.

There was not a very large attendance at the Gaiety Theatre last night, when the Rev. L. M. Isitt delivered his lecture on "Prohibition." Mr H. Hill presided.

ATHENÆUM HALL

FRANK W. ISITT.

EDITOR OF "PROHIBITIONIST,"

WILL ADDRESS

A PUBLIC MEETING

THIS (FRIDAY) EVENING,

At 8 o'clock,
ON

LATEST PHASES

OF THE

PROHIBITION MOVEMENT.

Collection to cover Expenses. 415

SIR,—I attended service at St Andrew's Church yesterday evening, and during the course of the sermon the Rev. Oliver Dean made reference to the Prohibition question, which I could not see had in any way any connection with his text. He made one startling assertion to the following effect:—"That a respectable parishioner informed him that he saw in front of an hotel in this town three children lying drunk in the gutter, and the publican stood at his door with a hellish grin on his face delighted with his handywork." The person or the respectable parishioner should be called upon to substantiate this horrible accusation, and I hope the secretary of the Licensed Victuallers' Association will enquire into it. Meantime, I don't believe a word of it.—I am, &c,

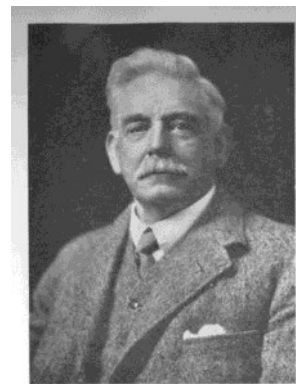
SIR,—Your report of the large meeting addressed last night in the Gaiety Theatre by the Rev. Leonard Isitt is scant in the extreme, and yet, brief as it is, you manage to be incorrect. To call a gathering of 800 people assembled upon a wet night "a fairly large meeting" is not fairly fair reporting. You dismiss one of the largest meetings held in Napier for the last twelve months with three lines and a quarter. We, the undersigned, submit that whatever you may think of the Prohibitionist movement, your paper professes to fairly represent at least all sorts and conditions of men, and certainly the very large section of your readers who sympathise with the temperance reform deserve better treatment than this at your hands.—We are, &c.

H. HILL (Chairman of Meeting), HENRY W. J. MILLER (Secretary), OLIVER DEAN, JAMES G. PATERSON, WALTER DIXON, CAPTAIN SALVATION ARMY, R. H. ROBINSON.

[We have reported Mr Isitt's utterances time and again, though it is always the same monotonous tale. Our staff being short-handed, we did not deem it necessary to put ourselves to inconvenience to give Mr Isitt another report. We do not dictate to Messrs Miller, Dean, and Paterson what they shall do or say in the pulpit, and we decline to be dictated to by them in the conduct of the HERALD.—ED. H.B.H.]

MR ISITT.

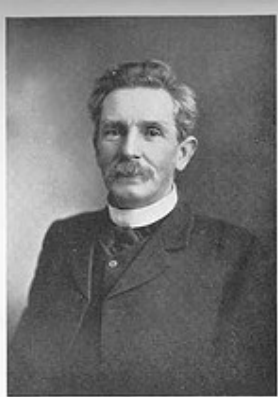
SIR,—*Vini, vidi, vici* is not embalmed upon the Prohibitionists' banner as a result of the Rev. Mr Isitt's visit. The splendid stage presence and admirable dramatic power enabled him to secure the applause of the audience for a lecture which had little else to recommend it—oratorical twaddle and nothing more. You could not have done the reverend gentleman a more unkind turn than publish his speech *verbatim et literatim*. Truly the gift of eloquence is a splendid gift, and enabled the lecturer to obtain applause while the same words used by a lecturer without dramatic power would have led to his expulsion from the platform.



LM Isitt went on to become a Member of the NZ Legislative Council.

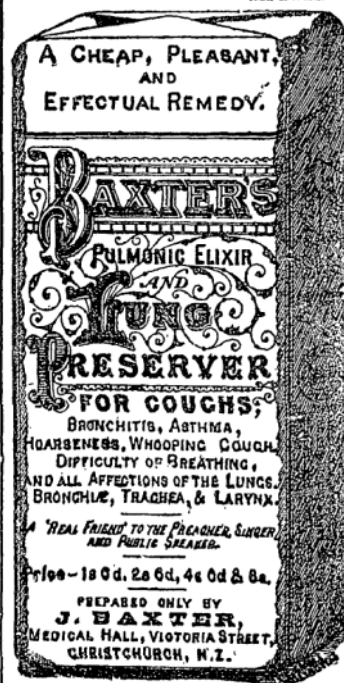
HON. L. M. ISITT, M.L.C.,
Outstanding and fearless prohibitionist
in and out of Parliament.

JOHN Baxter, the maker of Baxter's Lung Preserver, must have chuckled happily to himself on gaining the endorsement of the prohibitionist Rev. Frank Isitt, for his concoction had as much as 28 % alcohol.



REV. F. W. ISITT,
Secretary N.Z. Alliance, 1900-09; Editor
"The Prohibitionist."

"AS A COUGH MIXTURE IT IS EXCELLENT."
DR. EWART.



From Rev. F. W. ISITT, Wesleyan Minister.—"I have derived much benefit from its use when suffering from excessive speaking. You will, I suppose, know that the Rev. Alexander Reed (now of Dunedin), uses and highly commends it."

From Rev. H. J. CONGDON GILBERT, Christchurch.—"I shall not fail to recommend it to all who suffer from affections of the throat."

From Rev. W. B. MARTIN, Wesleyan Minister.—"I shall certainly recommend to all who suffer."

From Rev. CHARLES PENNEY, Napier.—"In one case when every remedy tried proved powerless to give relief (the cough was so distressing) the first dose of your Lung Preserver proved most effective."

From Rev. GEO. CHESSON.—"The Lung Preserver has done Mrs Chesson a great deal of good."

From Rev. E. MARSHALL.—"I received considerable and speedy relief."

From Rev. J. PARKIN.—"Your Compound Quinine Pills are the best remedy I have tried for flatulency and pains in the head. The Lung Preserver has done my throat good. I gave several people doses, the result being that the chemist has been compelled to send for a case."

From Dr. J. EWART.—"As a Cough Medicine for all ages 'tis excellent."

SOLD BY ALL CHEMISTS AND STOREKEEPERS.
AS IMPORTANT TO PURCHASERS.

Purchasers are requested to see that each packet of Lung Preserver offered for sale is a facsimile of the above drawing, and that the words "Baxter's Lung Preserver, Christchurch," are blown on the bottle.

Further that the wrapper of each packet of LUNG PRESERVER bears the Proprietors Trade Mark and Autograph along with the late Proprietor's signature thus—REFUSE ALL OTHERS AS COUNTERFEITS
B3



John Baxter
Robt. H. Baxter

Colenso's letters to Harding referred also to "Soltan" and "Alanson".

Rev. G. Soltan was a peripatetic evangelist who preached, with his wife, in New Zealand, Australia and California in the 1890s.

SPECIAL MISSION
FOR THE
DEEPENING OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.
Conducted by
REV. G. AND MRS SOLTAN
At the request of the Napier Ministers' Association, commencing
TO-MORROW, SEPTEMBER 27TH.
REV. G. SOLTAN—Wesleyan Church, 11 a.m.;
Presbyterian Church 7 p.m.; do 3 p.m.;
Children's Object Lesson, "Red or White."
MRS SOLTAN—Baptist Church, 7 p.m.
Week—Evening Meetings as announced
from the Pulpits. 1123

Rev. E. Allanson of Nelson narrated his proselytising philosophy to the 1897 annual missionary meeting of the New Zealand Church Missionary Association in connection with the Nelson Diocese of the Church of England—that "Christ had enjoined that the Gospel should be carried first to Jerusalem, which meant home.... then Christ said, take the Gospel to Judea, which would represent the Maoris; to Samaria, which would stand for the Chinese in the Colony; but they were not to stop there, for the Divine injunction was 'to the utmost parts of the Earth.'"

He seems also to have been a property developer, advertising a subdivision of his Nelson property "Tearowhenua" in the same 19 November 1897 issue of *The Colonist*.

Printer or preacher?

One of my 16 great great great grandfathers was Rev. George Adam Kissling. He was a Wurttemberg German Lutheran minister who had worked as a missionary in Liberia and Sierra Leone before contracting yellow fever and returning to England. There he trained as a missionary at the CMS institution at Islington, and was later ordained a Church of England priest. He arrived in Auckland on 21 May 1842, thence to the Bay of Islands, then after a few months to Tauranga and then Hicks Bay (Te Araroa) where William Colenso visited him. Colenso wrote years later of “my often having denounced his incessant German habit of smoking tobacco”.

Kissling wrote to the CMS on 12 June 1846—from Auckland where he had gone for treatment of an illness—a discursive letter which included criticisms of the way the mission was run in New Zealand. He complained that

Two new phenomena arrested my attention when I first reached this Mission. The first was that almost every agent in the same, seemed to have it in his power to dispose of his time and labor, thus forming his own system of operation, if a system indeed it can be called. The very printer would go forth to preach, undirected, uncontrolled. I know that such a course of procedure is diametrically against the Spirit of your Committee's instructions to the laborers in West Africa....

Colenso had been sent to NZ as a printer: he had not been instructed in missionary work at the CMS training college in Islington. On 30 December 1834 he “first trod the shores of New Zealand” but he wrote in his diary on Sunday 18 January 1835, “Yesterday the Revd. H. Williams informed me I must take the English Service this after-

noon, in consequence of which, I did so, though with much weakness & fear! I preached, for the first time in any place of worship....”

So, within three weeks of arriving as a printer he was preaching, at the request of the senior missionary Henry Williams. After that he preached often, and the Alexander Turnbull Library has a roster, a timetable for Henry Williams, Charles Baker and William Colenso, taking church services at various sites around the Bay of Islands in 1839.

Then, on 22 June 1842, came Selwyn. He wrote to Colenso on 17 March 1843, suggesting he come to Waimate for instruction, and adding,

In conducting your Services with the Natives you will do right in making your Teaching as Catechitical as possible: not professing to preach in the manner of an ordained Clergyman, which you will see in the Ordination Service is a power entrusted conditionally only even to a Deacon; but acting upon the Rubric which directs Catechizing after the Second Lesson: adding to your questions such additional remark and exhortation as you may think fit. In the case of those Members of the Mission who have already acted in Stations, where there has been no ordained Missionary, I have not thought it good to deprive the natives of any benefit which they may have enjoyed before; but in the case of Members beginning, as yourself, now for the first time to be officially appointed to the duty of a Catechist, I wish the spirit implied in the name to be acted upon. I will license you to read the Morning and Evening Prayer and to Catechize and expound after the Second Lesson, concluding with the prayer and grace as usual. Believe me, your very faithful Friend, G.A. N. Zealand.

Selwyn told Sampson Kempthorne (another of my ggg grandfathers) that Colenso needed some “pruning” (see *eColenso* January 2016).

The old order had changed.

Much later, on 28 October 1853, Colenso wrote to Rev. Robert Cole in Wellington, apparently in response to something Cole had written,

... I was repeatedly called and sent to Ecclesiastical duties—or, Missionary work, preaching the Gospel—by the (then) highest Ecclesiastical authorities in the whole Southern Hemisphere! In Sydney by Marsden, Hill & Cowper, in N. Zealand by all the old Ministers, some of whom are now Archdeacons. So that for several years (before the Bishop's arrival in New Zealand) I was engaged in similar duties to those of a Deacon in England although still a Layman & under many disadvantages. True, I was not then a Deacon—some may say "I was a Catechist" but I was far more than a Catechist—i.e. according to the ancient & legitimate usage of the word [Catechist: a person appointed to instruct those preparing for baptism in the principles of religion—Ed]. I was, in my own opinion, an Evangelist: (I use this word although I am aware that this Office has been by some Divines supposed to be above even that of a Presbyterian—but this perhaps is doubtful.) Now it has appeared to me, that my having been thus called & sent (and owned in my work, I must not omit this,) is a widely different thing from a Dissenter's ordination;—or, that of a person going forth by his own self uncalled & unsent (which distinction, I fear, the Bishop of N. Zealand never allowed in his mind concerning me).

George Adam Kissling was one of five chosen by Selwyn to form a "Commission of five Clergymen" to examine Colenso's confession of adultery—a Commission which, Selwyn wrote, "in a Report of their proceedings given under their hands and seals have certified that there is prima facie grounds for instituting further proceedings in the matter aforesaid." [Selwyn to Colenso 11 November 1852].

Who was Octavius Browne?

"Gifts from Christian friends"

On 17 July 1862 Rev. William Colenso wrote to Sir George Grey,¹ that while at Te Awapuni mission he

... spent all that he could devote of his Salary (never laying anything by) besides sundry gifts from Christian friends in England....

In an undated letter to Dixon & Co.,² his London suppliers, Colenso hinted at who these benefactors might have been,

The order marked A will I hope be met with the balance of £50. Bill enclosed.

The order marked B is conditional; you will please to execute this if a friend of mine, Mr. O. Browne, (of St. Peter's Chambers, Cornhill,) should call upon you & pay you £23. 9. 9. on my a/c. I have written to him by this opportunity requesting him to do so. But do not apply to him for the same.—It is possible he may pay the amount into the C.M.S....

Whenever you are abt. to send off goods—please let CMS.

Sir JD Hooker

Mr. O. Browne

Mr. S.M. Colenso, West Street, Penz.

Mr. N. Broughton, Tootg. Com.

know of yr. being abt. to do so.

Apparently then, these were people who might want to add to, or pay

for, a parcel being sent to Colenso in New Zealand—the Church Missionary Society, JD Hooker, Colenso’s father, Nicholas Broughton who clearly was one benefactor (see Ann Collins’ paper in *eColenso* August 2013) and “Mr. O. Browne” again.

On 23 October 1848 Colenso wrote again to Dixon & Co.³

From Mr. Oct. Brown I have very lately recd. a kind Xn. Lre., in wh. he advises me of his having sent an order to his London agents to pay you the money due—and which I suppose you have recd. ere this—and the goods are now on their way hither.

We read more of Octavius Browne in a much earlier letter from Colenso to Gilbert Mair (on 1 March 1844),⁴

I am very sorry to find that a Collection was made for poor Gordon Brown during my absence;⁵ I did all I could to prevent it before I went away, and thought I had succeeded in putting a stop to it. I have had letters lately from Octavius and Charles, and shall write them in a day or two. Poor Gordon’s sun has set under a Cloud! I dare however, hope that our Heavenly Father—whose tender mercy is over all his works, and who never willingly grieves nor afflicts the children of men—has had mercy on his soul.... Octavius says, (in his letter to me of the (some day) February 1843), “Remember me most kindly to Mr. Mair and family, from whom I have received many kindnesses.” I will show you his letter when I see you; it is a very nice one.

Six months later Colenso wrote (19 November 1844) to Dandeson Coates at the CMS,⁶

... I have received yours to me of Decr. 4/43, authorizing me to draw upon you for the sum of £50, on a/c of the late Mr. G.D. Browne....

.... (I send) a small parcel for Mr. Octavius Browne, containing accounts and papers relating to his deceased brother Mr. G.D. Browne.—

.... I have been obliged (in winding up Mr. G.D. Browne’s affairs) to draw a Bill upon you for (£25.) Twentyfive Pounds: Mr. Octavius Browne had authorized me to draw upon him for £50. additional, if I required it; finding, however, that (in consequence of the conduct of Major Browne’s agent in Sydney, who refused to honour our Bills,) a Bill drawn on Mr. O. Browne would not now be cashed, and being about to leave this neighbourhood, I was necessitated to do as I have done, and have not the least doubt but that Mr. B. will retire the Bill immediately. Should, however, anything arise to hinder his doing so, please to retire the same and charge it to my account.

On 31 July 1846 Colenso wrote to Sir WJ Hooker,⁷

You will also find... a small parcel for a Mr. Octavius Browne, which I have ventured to trouble you with. (Mr. Browne’s Brother died here in N.Z. a short time ago, and as his family wished to obtain, if possible, his Bible, I, fearing it might be lost if sent singly, have put it into the corner of the case x: – Mr. B. is a person of respectability, his elder brother being a Major in the Army).

From all of which we gather Gordon D Browne died (“under a cloud”) in New Zealand, leaving brothers Octavius (of Cornhill, London, but also of New Zealand where Gilbert Mair was kind to him) and Charles (the Major). Colenso tidied up Gordon’s affairs, arranged with Octavius to repay his expenses and later returned Gordon Browne’s bible to the family.

But who were they?

Phiz's uncle

The children of Katherine and William Browne were Charles Alfred, William Frederick, Henry Albert, Kate, Emma Louisa, Lucinda Sarah, Gordon Davis, Edgar, Septimus, Octavius, Adelaide Matilda, Decimus. If you also count Hablot Knight Browne, brought up as a brother but probably a nephew (Kate's child) then Septimus is the 7th and Octavius the 8th son. Hablot was "Phiz", the book artist best known for his illustrations in Dickens's works and the subject of a delightful biography by a descendent, Valerie Lester.¹³ What follows is derived from her work.

Octavius was known for his generosity and on many occasions helped other members of his family. The adventurers Gordon, Octavius and Decimus sought their fortunes in the Antipodes—Gordon preceded Octavius to Australia in about 1826, and worked in Sydney as a merchant until 1828, when he sailed to New Zealand where a mere handful of Europeans lived. Gordon was extremely industrious, but the solitude was profound and eventually led to the breakdown of his mind. His brother Charles visited him in 1835 and in May 1839 when Octavius set out from England for Australia, Gordon persuaded him to visit him in New Zealand first. Octavius found Gordon in extraordinary difficulties and was soon sucked into the vortex of his mental and fiscal disasters. After paying off debts and making sure that Gordon was as comfortable as possible, and after a brief time in Australia, Octavius returned to England in 1842. Gordon died in 1844.

In 1847 Octavius returned to Australia with his family and made his fortune, building a lavish house in Melbourne's St Kilda, later to be used as the Governor's residence. He returned to England in 1854 when his own health broke down.

It was after he returned to England in 1842 (and before he became

wealthy in Australia) that Octavius Browne helped Colenso with money, probably in gratitude for Colenso's looking after Gordon Browne's affairs.

The father of the New Zealand timber industry

The diary of Anne Wilson of Tauranga, 22 November 1836, says,⁸ *"Heard this morning that the wreck of Mr Gordon Browne's boat has been found and it seems almost certain that he has perished"*. He hadn't perished, but he hadn't had much success either.

"Prominent Sydney merchants" Thomas Raine, David Ramsay and Gordon Browne established a shipbuilding and trading centre at Horeke on the shore of the Hokianga under Patuone's patronage perhaps as early as 1819. They went bankrupt and in 1835–6 Gordon Browne bought land at Mercury Bay for Ranulph Dacre, a prominent merchant of Flaxmill Bay and Cooks Beach, establishing the first European settlement in the area.^{9, 10} A stone wharf, store, and New Zealand's first water-powered sawmill were erected in 1838. Difficulties in fulfilling his contracts drove him again into debt. He became a prey to "religious melancholia" and was placed in the care of Mrs Swayne at the Bay of Islands where he died. Colenso's comment that he died under a cloud suggests he committed suicide.

Gordon Davies Browne was "in a great measure entitled to the credit of having established the timber trade in New Zealand".¹¹

A very clear sight indeed

Gordon Browne's brother Octavius arrived at the Bay of Islands on 21 Oct 1839 and wrote to his cousin Eliza Moxon in Twickenham,¹²

I have so much on my mind too, so much anxiety, and everything to do in Gordon's affairs, before I can think of my own, that I must be unsettled for months to come—

He wrote again in 1842, at sea in the Indian Ocean, on his way to see his brother Charles in Calcutta, a long letter with a journal of his time in New Zealand and later New South Wales,¹²

I was five months in New Zealand altogether—travelling most of the time in this almost impenetrable country of mountain and flood, forest & fernhills, streams & swamps. The “prestige” of Gordon's name did more for me than the best letter of recommendation would have effected among the civilised and polite. I received a courteous welcome from the Chiefs wherever I went, and the name bestowed on me of “the Brother” (of Kiore that is) while it established my rank & dignity among them, shows how great a man he must be, since to be under him was so much. I suppose I was a sort of Duniewassel to the Head of the Clan, and I can assure you I “behaved as such” to the best of my ability and with much gravity....

“Kiore” was a reasonable approximation of “Gordon”; it was also the name of the esteemed native rat.

On Christmas Eve Octavius was ashore on Waiheke with Gordon when he observed some irrational behaviour from his brother,

The whole Tribe, men, women & children, assembled to receive payment from Kiore for some spars—here I first saw some of my Bales & Boxes, Bins &ca, with the Scarlet Blankets, Prints &ca which I had shipped from England—Gordon threw them to the Chief, and he distributed the articles to his people; an interesting sight no doubt for a Xmas eve, if I had not known very well that I should never be paid for any Goods, but poor Kiore seemed quite unconscious that they were mine, or, of the loss he was inflicting on me—this was a very clear sight to me indeed, but I could not help myself, I would not



Octavius Browne by Georgiana McCrae, 1841. State Library of Victoria.
“Portrait of Octavius Browne born Nov 2 1809, died June 25 1876.”
Browne wrote that he had a “small frame” and Ms McCrae, by exaggerating the head, has captured that nicely.

fret, though between the seriousness and the strange novelty of the scene I must have smiled most ruefully....

Later in the letter Octavius related how he met Captain Hobson on HMS *Herald* in the Bay of Islands on 3 Feb 1840, and was present at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Letters to Gilbert Mair

In his letter to Mair Colenso passed on Octavius Browne's good wishes, "Remember me most kindly to Mr. Mair and family, from whom I have received many kindnesses."

Auckland City Libraries have six letters from Octavius Browne to Gilbert Mair from May 1840 to November 1841,¹⁴ the later ones dealing with Gordon's affairs,

Sydney 25th. March 1841

Dear Sir,

.... I am happy to inform you that arrangements will soon I trust be concluded respecting my poor Brother, and his affairs, as I hope, will be attended with the best result, with God's blessing.



Octavius Browne in about 1870

With kindness, quiet, wholesome diet, and regular habits under Mrs. Swayne's care, with a friend or two to see him now and then, I entertain great hopes that his malady which seems to be a religious melancholy, will gradually be reversed....

There is one from Mair to Octavius Browne,

Wahapu July 6th 1841.

My dear Sir

I wrote you a few hurried lines some time back which I trust you received. Your poor Brother Gordon came up last week from Mercury Bay, he was 32 days on his passage up in a little thing belonging to Webster, he sent your Brother on board without putting so much as little Tea or Sugar or even meat, when he landed on my beach he could hardly stand, shall endeavour to give you as near an account of him as I can. He landed at my place in the morning and in the afternoon I took him up to Mrs. Swains. I have not seen him since but have heard from him every other day since he went up, he is regaining his strength very much, I have furnished him with clothes and every thing he requires. Two of his Natives came up with him one of them has been with him many years but I am afraid they will not remain in the Bay as they want to go back. He cannot be left by himself as he would wander from home one of the Natives can make him do any thing I should be very glad if he would remain to attend to him. I think you had better write to the Native and promise him something to remain as I have told him to stay untill we hear from you. Your poor Brother is well in health but his mind is completely gone. Dr Ford has promised to attend on him and do what he can for him. I have agreed to give Capt. Swain one hundred pounds per annum for their Trouble....

[The rest of the letter concerns financial arrangements—Ed.]

[Perhaps this was Captain Samuel Swain, a Nantucket whaler who visited the Bay in the *Vigilant* 1831–35 and bought about 300 acres on the north bank of the Waikare river; he died at sea in 1842 (hence perhaps the reference to “Mrs Swayne” looking after Gordon Browne)].

Octavius wrote again on 14 October 1841, concerned over his inability to understand the complexities of Gordon’s affairs—

*... no one but himself seems to be perfectly acquainted with the purchases, extent, situation or titles of his lands.... My Brother’s affairs are in such an embarrassed state, and indeed seem to me to have been so very confused for many years, that I find it impossible to understand his real position, or to form any correct notion of the extent of his debts & liabilities—Capt. Davis... makes out a Balance of account against my Brother of Six thousand Pounds—I certainly do not understand how in such a business, in such a country as New Zealand, such an enormous debt can have been accumulated....*¹⁴

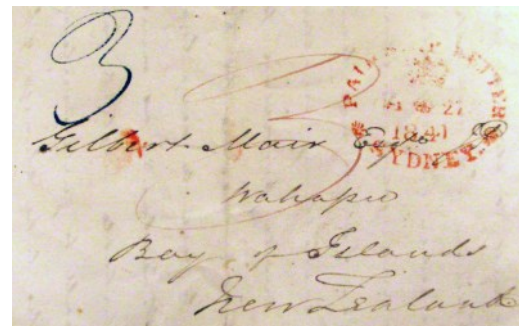
This must have been what we now know as bipolar disorder: euphoria, an abundance of energy, periods of megalomania, huge generosity, largesse well beyond one’s means, ending in crippling debt—as well as periods of profound and very often suicidal depression: even now 25 to 50 percent of people with bipolar disorder attempt suicide.¹⁵

Octavius Browne continued,

... I am sorry I have not heard from Swayne, or Mr. Ford—but Mr. Dacre will let me and my family know from time to time how my poor Brother is—I have not written to him for a long time, because I thought it would be quite useless—I send him a few lines now however and when ever he mentions the subject, please never let him think himself neglected by any of his friends, for I

can assure you, they have all been anxious enough about him for years, and now are more so than ever. We must all hope the best yet.—

Alas, their hopes were in vain, for Gordon Browne died, probably two years later, in late 1843—probably by his own hand.



References

1. Archives Ref. No. IA1 242; Record 63/2384 in Colonial Secretary Record Book 244.
2. ATL 80-038 George Petersen papers: Colenso’s rough copy. This is an undated fragment, but would appear to have been written in late 1847.
3. ATL 80-038 George Petersen papers: Colenso’s rough copy.
4. ATL MS-Papers-0092.
5. Colenso had returned from his first Waikaremoana journey on 15 February 1844.
6. Hocken Library Ms Vol 63; ATL qMS 0491.
7. Kew Directors’ Correspondence LXXIII: p50; ATL Micro-Ms-Coll-10 Reel 3: E354.
8. Frances Porter & Charlotte McDonald (eds.) 1996. “My hand will write what my heart dictates”. p267.
9. http://www.hokianga.net.nz/hokianga/horeke/horeke_shipyard.htm
10. <http://www.thelostspring.co.nz/whitianga-surrounding-areas>
11. Ruth Miriam Ross. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/browne-gordon-davies>.
12. ATL MS-Papers-0932.
13. Valerie Lester 2011. *Phiz: The Man Who Drew Dickens*. Random House.
14. Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library. NZMS 184–194.
15. <http://www.suicide.org/bipolar-disorder-and-suicide.html>.



Missionaries' wives' frocks

The Alexander Turnbull Library displayed this book recently: “When the first religious texts were published in Māori from the 1830s, printing and binding materials were hard to find. (This text is) bound in dress fabric, donated for the purpose by missionaries’ wives.

It is *Ko te Rongo Pai I tuhituhia e Ruka* (Gospel of St Luke)—printed by William Colenso.

Colenso wrote, in his 1878 *Fifty years ago in New Zealand*, that in 1835, “Having obtained a small supply of folio post writing paper from the Mission Store at Kerikeri (all there was!) — 1000 copies of the Gospel of St. Luke, 67 pages, post 8vo., were printed and bound during this year.”

He also wrote (of the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Philippians), that, “on the 17th of February, 1835, I pulled proofs of the first book printed in New Zealand; the Printing-office being filled with spectators to witness the performance. And on the 21st of the month, twenty-five corrected copies were printed and stitched and cut round for the Missionaries; their wives kindly furnishing a few sheets of pink blotting-paper from their desks wherewith to form coloured paper covers for these tracts; which, of course had first to be pasted on to stronger paper.”

We are pleased in observing in the London *Mail* of June 13th the success of Mr Ridley Latimer Colenso, eldest son of Mr W. Colenso, of this town; who, as a graduate of St. John's University, Cambridge; took his degree of M.A. there on the 12th June. Mr R. L. Colenso was born here, and is both the first born of European parents in these parts, and (as far as we know) the first instance of a young man from this East Coast gaining the scholarly distinction of M.A. We heartily wish him all further prosperity.

—*Hawke's Bay Herald* 8 August 1879



Rewa Kendall, of Te Rarawa descent and greatx4 grand-daughter of William Colenso, who recently came 3rd of kapa haka leaders from 27 schools. Rewa has helped her school to achieve its Treaty obligation to be bicultural.

[30]

Storm Bird

2

William Colenso Esq
Provincial Treasurer
Napier



Colenso was appointed Provincial Treasurer in 1860. Here Bethune & Hunter wrote to him from Wellington on 15 July 1861, the letter arriving in Napier 2 days later on the *Storm Bird*. National Archives, Wellington.

On tactical prolixity...

When Colonial Secretary Grimstone, on Lieutenant Governor Eyre's instructions, wrote to Colenso asking him to explain reports that he was obstructing work on the Rimutaka Hill Road, Colenso replied to him (on 15 March 1848 from Waitangi) in a letter of 28 pages, swamping Grimstone with almost 10,000 words, while apologising for being "necessarily prolix".

He often did this, this writing at such tedious length that his accusers would flounder, overboard, drowning, gasping for clarity in a sea (if I may extend the metaphor) of pleonasm—and, rather than risk further redundancy, they would relent....

There are some telling notes in a large box of papers relating to the Māori Lexicon at the National Archives.

One is from William Fox, Native Minister in 1864,

Will Dr Knight be so good as reduce the substance of Mr. Colenso's letter of Decr. 19th/63 into an official arrangement....?

Charles Knight reduced Colenso's seven-page letter to one.

WBD Mantell made a note to his under secretary on 18 April 1865,

Ask Mr. Colenso (politely) to explain his meaning...

Mantell wrote to Weld on 12 June 1865,

When you handed this affair to me it seemed simple & I dealt with it according to its seeming. But from some confusion of terms between

Vocabulary, Dictionary, & Lexicon I am so thoroughly bewildered that I must ask you to assist me to comprehend it, before I venture to write again to Mr. Colenso.

Another is undated but lies among other papers from 1868 (below). JC Richmond was Native Minister, and the note is initialled by under secretary GS Cooper. Colenso had, among other things, requested the right to frank his letters, to save expense in writing to others for help with the Lexicon.

About Franking? If we don't answer Mr Colenso on all his points we shall have another 6 page letter by return of post.

Richmond supplied the answer on that point,

The Postmaster General objects to franking but Mr Colenso may have a reasonable allowance for postage say £10.
J.C.R.

