

MOORE COLLEGE: BROUGHTON LETTERS

Broughton to Coleridge, 26/8/1843

My dear Coleridge: Since my return home about a fortnight ago after two months absence, I have been, and am still, so engaged in disposing of accumulated business, that it was not my intention to have written to you by the ship which sails for London tomorrow, but to have postponed doing so till next week. A cause however has just arisen sufficient to impel me to alter my determination: that is - the desire of communicating to you as correct an account as I have been able to obtain of the sad news which has reached us from New Zealand. For some offence or other it had become necessary to summon a native chief to appear before the Police Court, which form of law he savage-like set at nought. In order to vindicate the dignity of the law (as I have been given to understand) it was deemed necessary to arrest him by force: with which intent Captain Wakefield and 22 other persons went to the spot. The occurrence took place near Wellington or Nelson, I cannot positively learn which: but my object in writing was to assure you that it was, at all events, nowhere near to the Bishop's station; lest you and his other friends should experience alarm if you should hear vaguely any report of the horrid particulars which have been communicated to me. The 23 persons above referred to having proceeded towards the native station with the intention of seizing the accused party, were met by a most fierce and obstinate resistance on the part of the natives, by whom they were driven into a position where resistance was useless, and dreadful to relate, having laid down their arms, were every one of them put to death. The only names I have heard specified were those of Captain Wakefield and the Police Magistrate named Johnson. He was, I think, a medical man, and resided some time in Sydney. The only particular which I can positively vouch for, is that this fatal affray did not occur either at Auckland or the Bay of Islands: and this will be sufficient to relieve your mind from any apprehension on behalf of our dear brother and his family. Knowing however how fierce and revengeful these barbarians are, and how prone to revenge upon the English

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generally any wrong which they may think they have suffered from individuals, I shall write by the earliest opportunity to him to beg and intreat he will send Mrs Selwyn and Willy to us (even if he cannot come himself) should he have the least reason to dread any commotion around him. Her friends may therefore rely on her being kept, if it please God, out of the reach of all danger. The information I send you I have no doubt is in the main correct, as it comes from Mr Savage, the health officer here who in the course of his duty boarded the Vessel which arrived this morning here from N.Z. and brought the news. I could not find means to see him in person, and can therefore only report the particulars as related to me by another medical man who had them from Mr Savage. As the Mail for England closes at 6 this evening, and it is now near 5 I fear there is no chance of my obtaining more particulars: but I trust that what I have said will set you at ease on the main point. I enclose two or three notes, which will inform you of the safe arrival of the portraits etc and I am persuaded will gratify you. God bless you, and all who are dear to you. We are all quite well. Believe me to be always Your sincere and faithful friend,
W.G. Australia.