

## MORE DILLON LETTERS

In anticipation of the centenary in 1940 of the establishment of British sovereignty over New Zealand, the New Zealand High Commissioner in London made an inquiry through the press for possible family papers relating to New Zealand's early history. One result was the loan by Miss Kathleen Dillon of Oxfordshire of letters from and to her grandfather the Hon. Constantine Augustus Dillon and his wife Fanny Dillon. They were early colonists in Nelson until in 1848 they removed to Auckland following on Dillon's appointment by Sir George Grey as Civil and Military Secretary. I had the considerable pleasure of editing these letters, which were published under the title *The Dillon Letters* in 1954. Miss Dillon kindly presented the original letters to the Alexander Turnbull Library. Subsequently she found some more of the Dillons's papers and sent them to me with permission to publish them as I thought fit; they were also presented to the Alexander Turnbull Library. Among them were three letters written by Dillon from overseas to a younger sister in London. I think these are of interest for the historical sidelights they give, and also for the light they throw on the personality and attitudes of the author, a rather unusual colonist; the son of an Irish peer, Dillon called himself a radical.

The first letter, addressed to Dillon's sister Louisa, then unmarried, was written in Quebec on 28 September 1838. Dillon was 25, a professional soldier, aide-de-camp to the Governor-General, Lord Durham, who, following a rebellion in Lower Canada, had been appointed with extraordinary powers. Durham quickly became popular with the people of Quebec for his liberal policies. He earned the displeasure of the British Government (in which Lord Brougham was Chancellor) by a decision to transport some of the rebels without due process of law, and returned to England. His famous 'Durham Report', presented to the British Parliament in 1839, gave a model for the grant in due course of responsible government to a succession of British colonies, including New Zealand. Dillon's letter to Louisa from Quebec follows:

"I have to thank you my dearest Louisa for two very nice letters that you have sent me amongst others the account of Mrs Hamilton's wedding which you may imagine interested me very much Not very long after you receive this you will have the pleasure of seeing me at Gore House or elsewhere in England as we shall go away from here in a month As you are not yet a politician I cannot explain the reasons to you but all I can tell you is that it is expected that there will be a rebellion here ten times worse than last years if Ld. Durham goes home You would have been very much amused if you had seen Lord Brougham burnt in effigy the other night they made a straw Ld. B with fire works inside and a rope round his neck it was a very fair likeness of him carved