

world around us and that can be gained only by first respecting ourselves and by satisfying our selves that we act justly and from correct principles ... I think Mary, in a household, a husband should always consider that his wife is equal to himself. I hate the term Lord and Master which should be banished from all well regulated minds, because when love exists no mastery can be felt. In this world we see that a weak minded man is ever governed by his wife and a weak minded woman by her husband, but when the minds are equal, harmony and peace should ensure ... I look forward to the day when after the business of the day, I can fly to my Mary's arms and in her cheerful and rationale discourse improve and cultivate my mind and forget the troubles which had annoyed me in the day.²⁶

For Thomas, to be single was to be alone. His financial situation forced him into a reasonably solitary existence. He wrote of having few intimate acquaintances and of rarely leaving his house.²⁷ He was also the only one of his family to emigrate. The picture the letters from King's mother paint, in the first two years of his settlement, was of a man who was lonely, 'you must cheer yourself up as well you can', who was in need of a wife 'it would make you very happy ... I think you have no friend to sympathise with' and who in fact was disappointed in the colony and considering returning to England, to the delight of his family.²⁸ The alleviation of loneliness was a powerful factor in his decision to marry. He wrote of being 'heartily tired of a single life and find the evenings pass gloomily in the sombre wainscoted room in which I am sitting'.²⁹ Interestingly, he also considered that the state of marriage changed him and made his separation from England more complete. Of his marriage to Mary Chilman, he wrote, 'I am now for the first time truly a New Zealand settler'.³⁰

Separation was an integral part of many colonial relationships. Thomas and Mary experienced the trauma of 'severance' only three times in their long marriage, although each was of some months duration. The correspondence of their first parting in particular, when Thomas was elected to represent Taranaki at the first General Assembly in Auckland in 1854, is notable for the frank language with which Thomas described his feelings for his wife of nine years, a wife who was three years older than him and whom he loved passionately. When he first left New Plymouth, a decision that Mary did not agree with, Thomas decided to write to his wife every day, 'not to keep my remembrances fresh, for that requires no stimulant, but I want to communicate anything that might interest you and to tell you from day to day whether I pass my time agreeably or otherwise'.³¹ The result is a series of letter/diaries, which provide detail of one who was considering political life as a means of employment, which track both his aspirations and his disappointments. Each letter is long, covering the period between ship visits, and were written more or less in a vacuum. The vagaries of communication and Mary's lack of time in which to write, meant that he would write for weeks, without hearing from her or knowing her