

James WATKINS to Rev W. LAWY 17 Apr 1850
Alexander Turnbull Library Reference MS-Papers-2624-09

My Dear Sir, I beg to forward copy of Minutes of a Meeting held here March 18th 1850. Mr Ironside had previously written on the subject and I copy his letter verbatim. He says under the date Feb 15 1850:

I feel sorry to be troubling you so often with my concerns, but it is of importance that you should know Jenkins proceedings. In my opinion he is doing more harm than good over at Motueka. I have just ventured from thence and found things much worse than I anticipated. Three fourths of the small English Society quite disaffected, and believing that 'The Society has robbed Jenkins.' (This is the very expression) "All the Ministers disposed to crush him" "He has been very cruelly treated" &c &c. The Natives on the contrary tired of him, and anxious to be rid. (of him?) He charged them in a committee... with cheating him, and they retorted "You Tikenā tifi – you steal our eggs, you steal our fencing and chop it up for firewood, you have done it often, we have seen you &c" and he did not deny it.

Then his creditors are clamorous for their money. Mr Snow is getting a summons out for him, and I copy for you a reply to an application from Moore about a dishonoured Bill of his (see farther on). I really don't know the extent of his liabilities, but at the lowest they are near £70.

You will see what he in the note says about wanting the common necessities of life. I got breakfast with him on Thursday morning last (for which I paid) and was surprized at the extravagance. Bread and butter cut thin, and well buttered to eat with a dish of Brawn rich and ... enough in itself. Potatoes well buttered along with them and all children and Parents eating to their hearts content. I should say more than half a pound of butter was consumed at that one meal. I am vexed to have to be so precise, but he wrote to Moore, five days previously "I cannot at present provide common necessities"!! I did not get his acceptance renewed, because I knew nothing of it until several days after it was dishonoured, and had told him a fortnight previously that I neither could nor would have anything to do with his acceptance. This letter of Moore is plain enough.

Motueka Feb 9, 1850 Copy

Sir, Yours of the 7th inst has just come to hand, am sorry that Mr Ironside did not get the acceptance renewed as I wished and expected that he had done. I am at present placed in a very unpleasant position by the Managers of our Society, who have not yet refunded what I have outlaid in building Mission Premises here to the amount of forty pounds and upwards. I am now waiting the reply of Mr Lawry on the subject. In the meantime I am quite destitute of means wherewith to meet the demands made upon me. In fact so far am I affected by this conduct of our society that I cannot at present procure common necessities. If they do not speedily refund what I have paid I must claim the house, and endeavour to raise money upon it, but I can do nothing until I hear from Auckland which must be very shortly. Were you acquainted with all the facts of the case you would, I am sure sympathise with me, and I do trust you will not use extreme measures in reference to the acceptance now dishonoured. You will be paid the amount as soon as possible.

Mr Ironside will have my salary for the current quarter in his hands and if he pleases he may pay over the amount of the acceptance as soon as so much will be due to me which will be after the middle of the present month. I can assure you that it is not my fault that I have not paid this affair. Nothing is so vexatious as to be unable to meet payments when due and had I been dealt fairly with I could have made all my payments good without troubling any one. Trusting that you will take the case into your kind consideration and not take further proceedings. I am Sir Yours respect W. Jenkins

I have already endorsed a Bill of his falling due the middle of March £11 Walkers and yet he can write that sentence "Mr Ironside will have &c." "It is my decided conviction either that J must be removed to Taupo (if his creditors will permit him) or be cashiered. The Members over there, all newly enlightened and needing a Pastor, have withheld their contributions, small enough at best and told me they should not pay a penny until Mr Jenkins was righted. I leave the affair with you, either to let it run on until a D. M. (if there is not an explosion...) or to take steps forthwith, or otherwise as you think best. Better nobody at Motueka than he." Yours... Samuel Ironside.

Before I could do anything the following letter came

Important – Nelson Feb 28, 1850

My Dear Bro, Jenkins affairs grow daily worse. This last transaction ... of dishonesty. He has collected monies for the Motueka Chapel, and appropriated to his own use. More has been subscribed than was necessary, and when we all expected that he had paid the Bills and the Chapel was clear, Atkins the carpenter summonses him before Dr Greenwood for £14 cost of labour and he has nothing to pay so gives up the Key of the place to him, and so the poor maoris who have contributed nearly twenty pounds in wheat, potatoes, pigs &c &c are turned out of the ware karakia. He has also offered the house for sale, which as you know was purchased by Mr A. and some repairs paid for by him. Now is he fit to remain as Catechist?

Our Society is disgraced by his connexion with us; and, if he remains I must press for his removal to another neighbourhood, as he does harm instead of good.

This letter was soon followed by the writer himself, and Jenkins and his doings more fully revealed. We held a Meeting and the discussions are forwarded to you for information rather than revision, for they have been acted upon.

Hear read the Minutes please. I copy mine to Jenkins.

Mr W. Jenkins, I am sorry, very sorry to have to write to you such a Letter as this must be. You represent the Missionaries with whom you have been more closely connected as your enemies. That is pure slander. You are your own worst enemy in not restricting your expenditure to your income. You represent your present difficulties as the result of injustice on the part of the society. See your letter to Mr Moore. You ought to take the blame to yourself, for having without authority, proceeded to the erection of a house; a step which no office bearer among us may take without the sanction of a District Meeting. Mr Ironside is instructed to make some arrangement about both Chapel and House. In conclusion it is my painful duty to inform you that your services as Catechist will be dispensed with at the end of our Financial year September 30, 1850. Wishing you well. I remain your obedient humble servant, James Watkins.

Mr J. was one of Mr Aldred's recommendations when he had but small experience of men and things. He was engaged without proper examination as to his suitability. He was at the time miserably in debt, and for years I was more plagued with his affairs than with all my other causes of care. Since he went out of my Circuit I have refused correspondence, also to permit him to draw before his salary was due for which I am as I suppose stigmatized as his worst enemy Aldred bad Ironside worse Watkins worst.

I think Mr J. might have acted with greater caution about things, but it is ... to avoid appearing suspicious, that was his feeling I think Mr J. inconsistent in proposing another place for him unless there is repentance and reformation.

I decidedly object to his going to Taupo. For one thing I don't think we ought to have a man there at all, Mr Whitely to the contrary notwithstanding. I don't think Mr Kirk the person to manage Jenkins, and unless there is a change I don't think Jenkins fit for that or any other place.

Perhaps out not dealing summarily with the matter may excite surprize. Money was the motive, I do hope that the man will after his plan of conducting himself in several respects at present highly objectionable. Gentleness has failed perhaps threatening will produce some better effect.

We heard overland from our sons in Auckland and from there their short experience seemed to like the place as much as a certain near relative of theirs likes it, and that is not saying much for. I hope we shall shortly hear again from A. June Quarter. December a/cs still due.

There is a great dearth of English intelligence here. A vessel has arrived at Akaroa and it is said she has an English mails on board. I should like to hear how the agitation is getting on should be more glad to hear that it was dead, defunct, done up.

I hope to send this by way of New Plymouth, there may be a chance of its getting to A. something sooner than by overland. ... Gov. small loss, No Brig rather greater. Mrs W's love and mine to Mrs L. and yourself, Yours affectionately, James Watkins.