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1 'From a little land with no history'

Beginnings

Wellington, the colonial capital of New Zealand, was a small town in 1888. The *Evening Post* for Monday 15 October carried only two simple birth notices, one of which read: 'Beauchamp - On 14th October, the wife of Mr Harold Beauchamp of a daughter.'

Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp was born on that Sunday morning in Tinakori Road, in a simple wooden house built by her father above a deep bush-covered gully.

There were to be six children in the Beauchamp family - Vera, Charlotte, Kathleen, Gwendoline, Jeanne and Leslie, the youngest and the only son. Their mother, Annie Dyer, was a finely beautiful, sensitive and fastidious woman whose love of life was hampered by frequent illness. Her husband, Harold Beauchamp, was an



It's a small town, planted at the edge of a fine deep harbour like a lake. Behind it, on either side there are hills. The houses are built of light painted wood. They have iron roofs coloured red. And there are big dark plummy trees massed together . . .

'Daphne', 1921

Wellington in the 1880s. The Beauchamps' is the large square white house with two chimneys.



Kezia had been born in that room. She had come forth squealing out of a reluctant mother in the teeth of a 'Southerly Buster'. The Grandmother, shaking her before the window, had seen the sea rise in green mountains and sweep the esplanade. The little house was like a shell to its loud booming. Down in the gully the wild trees lashed together and big gulls wheeling and crying skimmed past the misty window.
'The Aloe'

25 Tinakori Road

ambitious successful man. He was soon to become part owner in the old importing firm Bannatyne & Co. which he had joined at eighteen. He would also rise rapidly in Wellington's commercial world, gaining status and wealth, becoming a member of the Wellington Harbour Board, director of several important companies, a Justice of the Peace and in 1901 chairman of the Bank of New Zealand. Although a controversial figure, because of his humble goldfield origins and independent views, he was to be knighted in 1923 for his service to his country in financial and commercial matters.

Conventional, respectable and respected, Harold Beauchamp epitomised much that Kathleen, or Kass as she was often called, was later to reject. Nevertheless, it was he who arranged for the publication of her first stories. He himself appeared in many of them, portrayed at first harshly, but later often sympathetically and perceptively. In 1915 she wrote:

father was a self-made man and the price he had to pay for everything was so huge and so painful . . . He was young and sensitive still. He still wondered whether, in the deepest sense he got his money's worth. He still had hours when he walked up and down in the moonlight half deciding to chuck this confounded rushing to the office every day – and clear out . . .

Many of her early childhood memories of her father were fondly affectionate – carrying her from the house during an earthquake; or as a train laughingly chugging around the tennis court, his children clinging to his back until they steamed 'majestically' into the nursery for breakfast. It was he too who told the children the family anecdotes about their great-grandfather, John. A Cheapside silversmith with a love of hunting and poetry, he was the family's 'original pa-man'.

In a kind of verbal shorthand that was part of the Beauchamp's private code of family expressions, Kathleen and others in the family perpetuated his memory by the frequent use of this phrase to describe a certain kind of character or quality. It seems to have been used to suggest a cheerful, somewhat extravagant, recklessly unsettled approach to life, combined with an ability to laugh at oneself, and all of this tinged with a slight touch of pomposity.

Great-grandfather John had once been known as 'The Poet of Hornsey Lane' and the family were taught to remember him and their grandfather, Arthur, who came to New Zealand from Australia through the rhyme:

I'm the last of the old Hornsey Laners
the last of the Beauchamp campaigners,
The last of the eight it's sad to relate,
I'm the last of the old Hornsey Laners!



Grandma's birthday . . . and one day I must write about Grandma at length, especially of her beauty in her bath – when she was about sixty. Wiping herself with the towel. I remember now how lovely she seemed to me. And her fine linen her throat her scent. I have never really described her yet . . .

'Journal', 21 January 1922

Back row: Vera, Jeanne, K.M.,
Mrs Beauchamp.
Front: Chaddie, Mrs Dyer,
Leslie

The person to whom Kathleen turned most frequently for love and understanding was her grandmother, Grannie Dyer – formerly Miss Margaret Isabella Mansfield. With her daughters Belle and Kitty she had lived with the Beauchamps from the early days of their marriage. It was she who gently admonished the children, ran the house and cared for them.

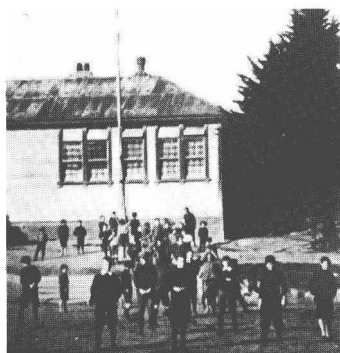
Annie Beauchamp had been born in Upper Fort Street, Sydney, not far from the wharves beneath where the harbour bridge now stands and Harold had been born in the Victorian goldfields. Nevertheless for them, as they rose in Wellington society, as for other colonial New Zealanders, it was England that was to be seen as the mother country. So it was that Grannie Dyer became particularly important to the Beauchamp children when their parents returned 'home' to England in 1889 and 1898. It was not surprising that Kathleen remembered her grandmother all her life with warm affection.

Gwendoline was born in October 1890 but died three months later. The last daughter, Jeanne, was born in 1892.

When Kathleen was four her father, now the owner of Bannatyne's which he had developed into a very successful business, leased a large home in the country area of Karori:

In the days of our childhood we lived in a great old rambling house planted lonesomely in the midst of huge gardens, orchards and paddocks. We had few toys, but – far better – plenty of good, strong mud and a flight of concrete steps that grew hot in the heat of the sun and became dreams of ovens.

With her sisters she attended the local Karori school. A plump,



For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none . . . the consequence was all the children of the neighbourhood, the Judge's little girls, the doctor's daughters, the storekeeper's children, the milkman's were forced to mix together. 'The Doll's House'

Karori School

I think of our house our garden us children – the lawn – the gate & Mother coming in. Children! Children! I really only ask for time to write it all – time to write my books. Then I don't mind dying I live to write . . . let me finish it without hurrying – leaving all as fair as I can . . . 'Journal', 19 May 1919

On the steps at 75 Tinakori Road 1898. Back row: Mr and Mrs Beauchamp, Mrs John Ruddick. Centre: Jeanne, Marion Ruddick, Belle Dyer. Front: K.M., Leslie, Chaddie

plain, bespectacled and moody child, she apparently shone in arithmetic but, ironically, proved to be an erratic speller. Later on the happy memories of this period, a time of roaming and exploring in fields and gardens, would be reshaped into some of her finest stories including 'Prelude' and 'The Doll's House'.

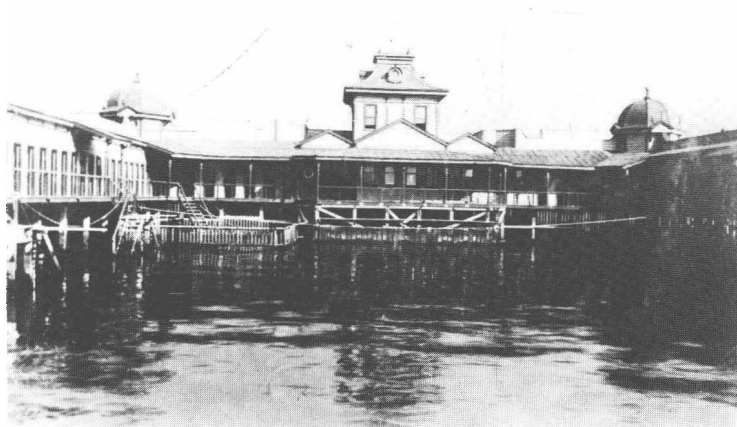
In 1898 the family moved back to town, to a spacious white house in Tinakori Road, later the setting for 'The Garden Party'.

Our house in Tinakori Road stood far back from the road. It was a big, white painted square house with a slender pillared verandah and balcony running all the way round. In the front from the verandah edge the garden sloped away in terraces & flights of concrete steps – down – until you reached the stone wall covered with nasturtiums that had three gates let into it – the visitors' gate, the Tradesmen's gate, and a huge pair of old iron gates that were never used and clashed and clamoured when Bogey & I tried to swing on them.

Earlier in 1898 the three oldest Beauchamp girls were enrolled for Term II at Wellington High School in Thorndon. It was here that the nine-year-old Kathleen's first published story appeared in the *High School Reporter*, with the schoolgirl editor's comment: 'This story, written by one of the girls who have lately entered the school shows promise of great merit. We shall always be pleased to receive contributions from members of the lower forms.'

The school magazine published a second story in 1899 and she followed in her sister Vera's footsteps by winning a prize for Eng-





a wooden building jutting out into the sea. Over the entrance was a square tower and inside were the dressing rooms opening off the galleries . . . we were put one by one into a harness while the instructor held the reins and propelled us from the gallery through the deep water . . . Kathleen made hard work of it.

Marion Ruddick

The Thorndon Baths

lish, as well as French and arithmetic. Like her sisters she played in the school croquet tournament. Charlotte and Kathleen also entertained the girls with songs and recitations at concerts in the large, dark hall of the old wooden building. Obviously for Kathleen it was not as unhappy or as unproductive a childhood as it has often been painted. Her young Canadian schoolfriend Marion Ruddick with whom she explored Thorndon and swam in the Thorndon Baths later remembered her as plump, bespectacled, inky fingered and capable of violent likes and dislikes. She remembered too her feeling of awe at the visit of Richard Seddon, the premier and a close friend of the Beauchamps. Clearly by then the family had gained considerable social status and wealth.

In 1899 Vera, Charlotte and Kathleen left the high school for nearby Miss Swainson's, a private school requiring fees of four guineas a term. One of her teachers, Mrs Henry Smith, found her 'a surly sort of girl' who was 'imaginative to the point of untruth', whose written work was 'too prolific, poorly written, poorly spelled and careless' and – worse still – was one who 'put herself in too much'. One contemporary remembers her as one of a threesome, 'We were all fat . . . We used to walk arm in arm at playtime . . . Kass learnt the cello. She was fond of music.'

Another teacher, Eva Butts, remembered her as enjoying playing tricks on teachers – on one occasion challenging her: 'I've been reading a lot about Free Love. What do *you* think?' Nevertheless her rebellion was a quiet one. She was 'dumpy' and 'biddable', her work was 'exceedingly lacking in grammar, style and finish . . . smeary, blotted with ink. No subject she was *asked* to write on interested her.'

Although some found her difficult, she became very close to the young part-Maori princess, Maata Mahupuku. Kathleen was soon a member of the school's A.R. club, a select group comprising the



Outside Miss Swainson's
Second to back row: Kathleen
Beauchamp 5th from right; third
row: Vera Beauchamp 2nd from
left; front row standing: Jeanne
Beauchamp 3rd from left; front
row: Charlotte Beauchamp 1st
on left, Martha Grace (Maata
Mahupuku) 2nd from left

school's best writers and speakers, which met secretly in a room at the top of the back stairs and put out a school magazine called the *Comet*. She appeared with Charlotte as Tweedledum and Tweedledee in a production of *Alice in Wonderland* and her clever impersonations showed that she had inherited Grandfather Arthur Beauchamp's flair as an entertainer. A later journal entry gives a glimpse of those school days:

Why can't I change my hair ribbon on Wednesday afternoon. All the other girls are allowed to . . . But 'No', says Mother. You may put on your thread work pinafore, but you may not put on your blue satin hair ribbon. Your ordinary brown velvet one is perfectly neat, suitable and unobtrusive as it is. (Mother loves sentences like this.) I can't help what *all the other* girls do. Have you got your thimble. 'Yes Mother in my pocket.' 'Show it me, dear' 'I said Mother it was in my pocket.' 'Well show it to me so that I can be perfectly sure.' 'Oh Mother why do you treat me like a baby? You always seem to forget on purpose that I'm in my teens. None of the other girls' mothers . . . ' Oh well, I'll take my blue satin hair ribbon in my pocket & change when I get to school. It serves Mother right. I don't want to deceive her, but she makes me deceive her, & she doesn't really care a bit – she only wants to show her power . . .

Everything is different on Wednesdays . . . The ink pots are put away by the monitors, the desks pushed against the wall . . . the chairs are arranged in little groups – the windows are opened wide . . . the camellias are white & red in the bright sun. We are making [cheap] flannelette chemises for the Maori Mission. They are as long as night-dresses, very full with huge armholes & a plain band around the neck – not even a lace edging. Those poor Maoris – they can't all be as fat as these chemises! . . . it is very quiet & when the Headmistress reads Dickens aloud there is something so fascinating in her voice I could listen for years & years . . . The headmistress herself is exactly like one of those illustrations – so tiny so spry . . . What does she remind me of – she reminds me of a bird and a donkey mixed.

The Kathleen Beauchamp of these years was often awkward and rebellious. In the same spirit of rebellion she was later to reject Wellington for its brashness and emptiness, but there can be no doubt that it also provided her with vivid memories that she cherished for the rest of her life. Summer holidays at Island Bay and Day's Bay; ferry trips across Cook Strait to visit her grandparents and great-uncle and aunt:

A rough sea journey is a strange conglomeration of sensations & I in a moment seem conquered by a thousand memories – am a child again sitting on the deck in my Grandmother's lap.

The little town of Picton, the wild beauty of the Sounds, the family property at Anakiwa, her grandfather's articulate humour and grandmother's hymn singing at the piano were an integral part of her childhood. There are still many Beauchamp descendants in the area today. One recently expressed her regret about the many 'lies about Kathleen' wishing that she could be left in peace; remarking that her later 'antics' would have gone unnoticed in our modern permissive society!

The colourful beauty of the sea, the golden hills of Wellington and the wind, even the life of the colonial Edwardian society she soon came to despise, had already become part of her soul. Many years later its place in the pattern of her life would be acknowledged, even to her father:

The longer I live the more I turn to New Zealand. I thank God I was born in New Zealand. A young country is a real heritage, though it takes one time to recognise it. But New Zealand is in my very bones.

Harold Beauchamp was not only a successful businessman, and owner of several properties. He was also a man who, like his wife, enjoyed music and poetry. In his opinion this 'young country' did not offer sufficient cultural stimulus for his daughters. Moreover, their English cousins were attending Queen's College in London.



Father is a Tolstoi character. He has just the point of vision of a Tolstoi character. I always felt that Stepan in Anna Karenina reminded me of someone.

May 1917

Harold Beauchamp about 1890

I have a very soft corner in my heart for the 'Niwaru' ... Do you remember how Mother used to enjoy the triangular shaped pieces of toast for tea? Awfully good they were too, on a cold afternoon in the vicinity of The Horn. How I should love to make a long sea voyage again one of these days. But I always connect such experiences with a vision of Mother in her little sealskin jacket with the collar turned up. I can see her as I write.
to Sir Harold Beauchamp, 26 June 1922

The Beauchamp family, Las Palmas, 1903. Back row: K.M., Harold Beauchamp, W. Crow, B. J. Dyer, Vera. Front: Chaddie, Annie Beauchamp, Leslie, Captain Fishwick, Jeanne, Belle Dyer



In truly 'pa-man' style he booked the entire passenger accommodation of the cargo ship s.s. *Niwaru* and the family embarked for England – complete with a clavichord and a canary in a cage.

After forty-two days they arrived. Vera, Chaddie and Kathleen, in black velour hats and sailor coats with brass buttons, walked up the wide front steps of Queen's College in Harley Street. For the next three years Miss Clara Wood's boarding hostel next door would be their home. The Beauchamps, knowing the girls would be well cared for by their aunt, Belle Dyer, who later became Miss Wood's assistant, returned to Wellington in November.

Queen's College was a progressive school for its time, run on the lecture system. Girls could attend or not, as they wished, although they were required to write papers as evidence of their studies. Kathleen may have gained comparatively little formal education but it was a rich and colourful experience for her:

Nobody saw it, I felt as I did. My mind was just like a squirrel. I gathered & gathered & hid away, for that long 'winter' when I should rediscover all this treasure – and if anybody came close I scuttled up the tallest, darkest, tree & hid in the branches.

But someone did get close; it was at Queen's College that she formed one of the important relationships of her life, with the quiet and musical Ida Baker. Together they planned their future musical careers and even decided on the professional names that would lead them to fame. Ida chose her mother's name, Katherine Moore, but her forceful friend, having already decided on Kath-

erine for herself, convinced the pliable Ida to take Leslie instead – the name of Kathleen's young brother. So Ida Baker became Leslie Moore and Kathleen Beauchamp, taking her grandmother's maiden name, became Katherine Mansfield. The friendship of K.M. and L.M. was a strange one, but it was to last a lifetime.

Years later Vera remarked that L.M. was her sister's 'walking shadow' and that she and her sisters felt they had to allow K.M. 'a loose rein . . . our lives did not run on parallel lines, there was a very wide divergence. I felt she'd chosen a bohemian way of life, mine was much more conventional.'

Ruth Herrick, another friend at Queen's College, described K.M. at that time as a girl of great vitality, impulsive and strong willed. Some girls apparently disliked her intensely because she was moody and somehow 'different'. Nevertheless they all apparently found her greatly entertaining with her vivid imagination, flair for mimicry and ingenious sense of mischief. On one occasion, dressed as a prospective parent she interviewed the unwitting principal on behalf of her daughter! Apparently she and the other colonials at the school came as something of a shock to the system. Already the young New Zealander was an enigma – 'If she wanted you to like her she could be utterly charming, that was part of the enormous vitality, she could be great fun to be with. On the other hand, she could be moody and morose for days on end.'

Much of her early writing and letters and personal notes reflect this adolescent moodiness, but life was certainly not all rebellion. The school's 1906 magazine describes an auction on the last day of the bazaar:

All the stalls sent their various produce to be sold by the hammer, generally at ridiculously low figures, though Katherine Beauchamp, who next took the hammer, occasionally succeeded by her determined and most professional air in really doubling the price of some things, the Colonial jams especially going at prices far exceeding what had been asked for them at the stalls . . . enquiries were anxiously made, when at last everything had been disposed of, after the voices of the two brave auctioneers, who showed that womens' inferiority is not extended to that branch of professionalism in any case.

She was not a businessman's daughter for nothing. She participated in debates wryly described as 'a great outlet' by her sisters, in the elegant high-ceilinged waiting room, and in school concerts, on one occasion playing 'an artistic and beautiful rendering of Tchaikovsky's "Chanson Triste"' on her cello. Not always the rebel, she took part in at least some of the school's activities: tennis, croquet, and cricket in Regent's Park, swimming competitions at the Marylebone Baths, tea in the park kiosk and visits



I need you & I rely on you. I lean hard on you – yet I can't thank you or give you anything in return – except my love. You have that always.

April 1920

Ida Baker (L.M.)

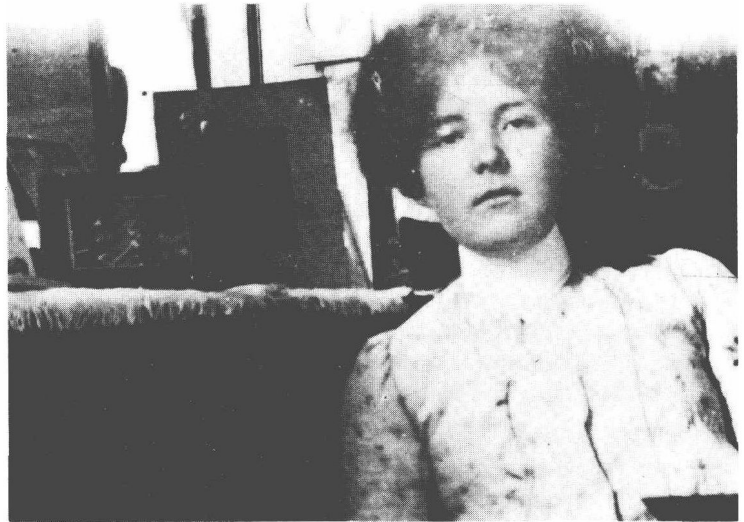
She had been as yet utterly idle at school, drifted through her classes, picked up a quantity of heterogeneous knowledge, and all the pleading & protestations of her teachers could not induce her to learn that which did not appeal to her.
'Juliet'

Queen's College pupils, Regent's Park, Summer term 1905. K.M. is on the far left, back row. Chaddie is immediately in front, Vera is fourth from left in the back row. Belle Dyer is on the far right in the centre row



Juliet looked around her room curiously. So this is where she was to spend the next three years.
'Juliet'

K.M. in her room, Queen's College



to the theatre. She attended the Royal Academy of Music and many concerts, visited art galleries and spent stimulating evenings at the homes of her friends and teachers.

Despite an increasing tendency to stay away from class, her work was generally considered 'very good', although today's students might gain some comfort from learning that one of the world's great short story writers was once considered 'unsatisfactory' in English language and 'disappointing' in English literature.

K.M. wrote five stories for the school magazine and eventually became its editor. Most of those stories are vivid recollections of a happy childhood. One, 'Die Einsame', is intriguingly different. A turgidly romantic Wildean tale, it indicates – in its subject and exaggerated style – the direction in which she was already beginning to look for inspiration. There are hints of the features that

would later characterise her writing – the spontaneous joy in living things; the image of the sea – vast and mysterious; the moments of joy and disillusionment. Already these contrasts were part of the fabric of her life and of her writing.

Although she loved London's theatre, concerts and art galleries, there must have been moments when, gazing across the cobbled mews below her bedroom window, she remembered a very different view.

In September 1905 the three Beauchamp girls were demurely decorative bridesmaids in white silk and chiffon at their Aunt Belle's wedding to Mr Harry Trinder at St Marylebone Parish Church followed by a reception given by Miss Wood.

There could be no greater contrast between such reminders of her childhood world and the sophisticated cynicism of the writing of Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater and other 'decadents'. She was introduced to their heady ideas at this time by the school German professor, Walter Rippmann, during stimulating evenings at his home; their beliefs were to become her credo. She came to believe in Wilde's dictum 'the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it.'

K.M. was already in love with Tom Trowell, a young cellist whom she had known in Wellington. In 1903 this gifted musician (whose professional name was Arnold) and his brother Garnet had been sponsored by a group of Wellingtonians, including Harold Beauchamp, to continue their studies, at the Brussels Conservatoire. In the spring of 1906, after a visit to Paris, Aunt Belle had taken the girls to Brussels. K.M. revelled in her first taste of Europe and the romantically bohemian existence of the Trowell brothers and their friend Rudolf. There was even, she told Ida, a memorable incident when she had swum naked at a secluded beach.

In April, after her return to London, the Trowells arrived to give their first recitals. Despite the arrival of her parents to take their daughters home, now their education had been completed, K.M., seventeen, vibrantly alive and in love, felt herself on the threshold of great adventures. There was a renewal too of her friendship with Maata. She certainly did not wish to return just then to New Zealand.

Nevertheless, K.M. began to suspect that 'Caesar', Tom Trowell, did not really reciprocate her ardent feelings, so during the time the family spent together in London she poured her passion and confusion into her unfinished novel *Juliet*. She also discovered that:

Father is greatly opposed to my wish to be a professional cellist . . . so my hope for a musical career is absolutely gone – It was a fearful disappointment . . . so in the future I shall give *all* my time to writing.



I love her very much indeed.
to Sylvia Payne,
4 March 1908

Ida Baker, left and Gwen Rowse,
Queen's College



He must always be everything to me the one man whom I can call Master and Lover too and though I know I shall have many fascinating connections in my life none will be like this – so lasting – so deep – so everything, because he poured into my virgin soul the life essence of Music.

June 1907

Tom (Arnold) Trowell

The inevitable return could not be escaped. In October, the Beauchamps sailed on the *Corinthic* via South Africa. From K.M.'s point of view the trip home was not a success. Her journal reveals an egotistical preoccupation with herself and her own emotions. Experience, it seemed, should not consist merely of one man or woman but of 'the whole octave of the sex'.

Her passionate shipboard infatuation with a young MCC cricketer, 'Adonis', with 'the face of a statue' is described in truly purple prose:

When I am with him a preposterous desire seizes me, I want to be badly hurt by him. I should like to be strangled by his strong hands. He smokes cigarettes frequently & exquisitely fastidiously . . . We exchanged a long look and his glance inflamed me like the scent of a gardenia . . . Oh, I want to push it as far as it will go. Tomorrow night there is to be a ball . . .

Indeed, the influence of Oscar Wilde had been an intoxicating one.

She complained that her parents were, 'prying & curious . . . My father spoke of my returning as damned rot said "look here he wouldnt have me fooling around in dark corners with fellows".' This perhaps was not a surprising attitude for an Edwardian father accompanying an eighteen-year-old daughter on a ship carrying the MCC cricket team. Nothing they could do was right. Her feelings of rebellion were exacerbated by small details. Angrily she wrote of her father and mother:

His hands covered with long sandy hair are absolutely cruel hands. A physically revolted feeling seizes me . . . She is constantly suspicious, constantly overbearing tyrannous . . . they are a constant offence to me . . .

Already she knew with the arrogant certainty of youth:

I shall never be able to live at home – I can plainly see that. There would be constant friction. For more than a quarter of an hour they are quite unbearable – & so absolutely my [mental] inferiors.

A few weeks after K.M.'s return to 75 Tinakori Road her grandmother, whom she had not found time to visit, died suddenly:

My Grandmother died on New Years Eve – my first experience of a personal loss – it horrified me – the whole thing. Death never seemed revolting before – this place – steals your Youth that is just what it does – I feel years and years older and sadder.

She was saddened by the death of her grandmother, trapped by her family and horrified by the provincialism and ugliness of her home town with its 'narrow, sodden, mean, draggled wooden houses, colourless save for the dull coarse red of the roof – and



the long line of grey hills, impassable, spectral like.' K.M. felt that life in New Zealand was unbearable, as she wrote to her cousin, Sylvia Payne:

I feel absolutely *ill* with grief and sadness here – it is a nightmare . . . Life here's impossible – I can't see how it can drag on – I have not one friend – and no prospect of one. My dear – I know nobody – and nobody cares to know me – There is nothing on earth to do – nothing to see – and my heart keeps flying off – Oxford Circus – Westminster Bridge . . . my old room . . . and a corner in the Library. It haunts me all so much – and I feel it must come back soon – How people ever wish to live here I cannot think.

Dear – I can't write anything. Tonight I feel too utterly hopelessly full of *Heimweh* [homesickness].

Harold Beauchamp became Chairman of the Bank of New Zealand in April 1907 and the family moved to fashionable Fitzherbert Terrace, to a large house with a ballroom, croquet lawns and gardens, now the site of the United States Chancellery. They were frequently bewildered by K.M., by her intense unconventional relationships, her bitter rejection of them and their life. Even after the dance held to celebrate her nineteenth birthday and their initial agreement to her plans to return to England, she wrote:

Damn my family. O heavens – what bores they are – I detest them all . . . Even when I am alone in a room, they come outside the door and call to each other – discuss the butchers orders or the soiled linen and I feel – wreck my life . . .

She poured out her frustration in letters to L.M., to her sister Vera and in 'huge complaining diaries'. Many of these notebooks were later destroyed but some, together with her letters, exist.



If I do once go back, she thought, all will be over. It is stagnation, desolation that stares [me] in the face. I shall be lonely. I shall be thousands of miles from all that I care for.
'Juliet'

K.M., 75 Tinakori Road

*They have been making havoc
of our pine avenue – cutting
down some of the trees ...
horrible crashing tearing
sound.*

to Vera Mackintosh Bell,
19 June 1908

47 Fitzherbert Terrace



*I pass down the central walks
towards the entrance gates.
The men and women and
children are crowding the
pathway, looking, reverently,
admiringly, at the carpet
bedding, spelling aloud the
Latin names of the flowers.
Here is laughter and
movement and bright sunlight
– but behind me – is it near, or
miles and miles away? – the
bush lies hidden in the
shadow.*

'In the Botanical Gardens',
2 December 1907

The Botanical Gardens in the
early 1900s



They reveal that it was a dual existence. Although closeted alone in her book-lined room she may at times have yearned for England and her friends, her life in Wellington was not always quite as unbearable as she and others have described it. She studied the cello with Mr Trowell and played each week in a trio with another friend, Millie Parker. There were walks in the Botanical Gardens and days at Island Bay watching the fishermen as they hauled in their nets in the sunlight, the gaunt golden mountains stretching out to sea behind them.

Harold Beauchamp obtained a General Assembly Library reader's ticket for K.M. This enabled her to spend many pleasant afternoons there. Her reading apparently included Henry James, Shaw, Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Heine and Nietzsche and Marie Bashkirtseff. Later her work was to be frequently compared to that of