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Samuel Marsden

A.H. Reed



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SAMUEL MARSDEN

PIONEER AND PEACEMAKER

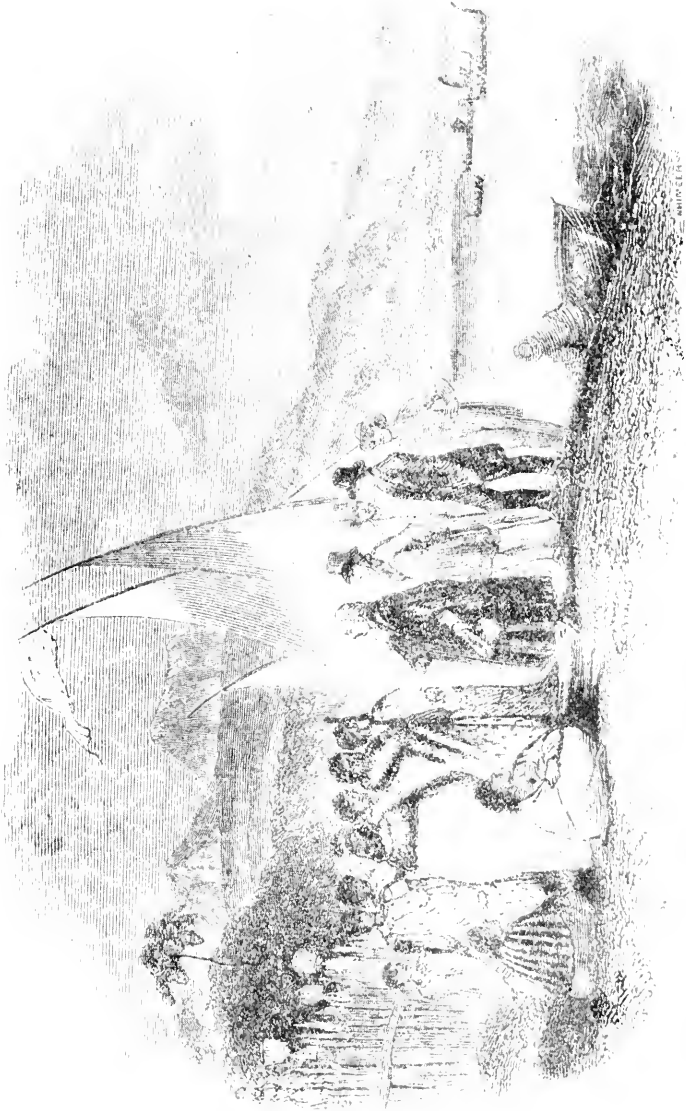
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THE REV. SAMUEL MARSDEN

First landing on New Zealand, at the Bay of Islands, in 1814

SAMUEL MARSDEN

PIONEER AND PEACEMAKER

BORN AT FARSLEY, YORKSHIRE, 25TH JUNE, 1765.

DIED AT WINDSOR, NEW SOUTH WALES, 12TH MAY, 1838.

EVERY boy and girl in New Zealand ought to know something about Samuel Marsden, the first to bring to the Maoris the arts of civilization and the ways of peace. For this reason he is sometimes known as "The Apostle of New Zealand," and merits a high place upon the roll of the good and the great.

Marsden was born at Farsley, a village near Leeds, in Yorkshire, on 25th June, 1765. In many books you will find the date given as 28th July, 1764, and it is well to remember that it was Dr. J. R. Elder, Professor of History in the University of Otago, and editor of "The Letters and Journals of Samuel Marsden," who discovered and recorded the correct date. Marsden's father, a man of good repute, was a farmer and blacksmith. After learning what he could in the village, Samuel went on to the Hull grammar school. He then worked for a time with his father, and later joined his uncle's business. By and by he attracted the notice of some friends, who enabled him to study for the ministry of the Church.

In 1793, through the influence of his friend William Wilberforce, the slave emancipator, he was appointed chaplain in New South Wales and, with his young wife, sailed for Port Jackson (now Sydney) in a convict ship. Although some of the convicts were sent out for very small offences, the moral state of New South Wales was, in those early days, very bad. Only a few days after Marsden settled in Parramatta some men were convicted of housebreaking and sentenced to death, so severe were the laws in those days. The new chaplain was also a magistrate and a farmer, and rendered valuable service



Samuel Marsden

The portrait, of which this frontispiece is a reproduction, was kindly supplied by Miss Elizabeth Betts, of Gladesville, New South Wales, a granddaughter of Samuel Marsden. Miss Betts adds the interesting information that the portrait dates from the period of Marsden's residence at Cambridge University (1790-2) and that the original hangs in Magdalen College, Cambridge.

to the colony by introducing improved methods of agriculture. Some people envied him, and others hated him because he set himself against their evil deeds. Out of the profits of his farm he built schools, and helped both the convicts and the Australian natives.

In 1795 Marsden visited Norfolk Island, 1,200 miles away, then also a convict station. It was there that he heard something about the New Zealanders which gave him a great desire to take civilization and Christianity to this noble race. As the years passed by, Maoris would often arrive at Sydney on whaling ships. Marsden sought them out, made himself friendly with them, and often invited chiefs to stay with him at his own home—sometimes as many as thirty at a time—so that his name began to be known among the fierce tribes over at the Bay of Islands.

Always Marsden was watching for an opportunity to plant a mission station among the New Zealand cannibals. In 1807 he visited England, and there made enquiries for suitable people to help him to carry out his plans. Once he made a long journey from Hull, on the outside of a coach, in a heavy snowstorm, for the joy of securing a volunteer—John King—to go out at Marsden's expense to teach the New Zealanders the art of rope-making.

On his way back to Australia Marsden saw, among the sailors in the fore-castle, a Maori chief, Ruatara, who seemed to be both downcast and ill. Ruatara had for some years led an adventurous life on board British ships, and had at times been very badly treated. Marsden did all he could to help and befriend him, and on the arrival of the ship at Sydney took the grateful chief into his own home, gave him some useful instruction in agriculture, and at last found an opportunity of sending him back to his people in the Bay of Islands. Ruatara was also given some seed wheat which he planted, and watched its growth with great interest. His fellow-chiefs had been accustomed to digging in the ground for the potato and kimara, and becoming impatient, pulled up

some of the wheat before it was ripe. Finding no sign of anything eatable amongst the roots, they pulled up most of the plants and burnt them. The great chief Hongi, Ruatara's uncle, having more patience, in due time triumphantly reaped the ripe corn.

Marsden now had great hopes of establishing in New Zealand the mission he had so long looked forward to. About this time, however, there was brought to Sydney the terrible news that almost the whole of the crew and passengers of a ship—the *Boyd*—had been killed and eaten by the Maoris. The Governor thereupon refused to permit Marsden to proceed to New Zealand, and in fact no one could have been found to venture to take the mission party there. It was afterwards found that the Maoris had, in accordance with their tribal laws, massacred the people in revenge for wrongs they had suffered at the hands of other white sailors.

At last, in 1814, Marsden himself purchased a brig, the *Active*, and on Christmas Day a little party of missionaries landed at the Bay of Islands, where the Apostle of New Zealand preached the first Christian sermon ever heard by Maoris on their own soil. It was now that Ruatara and the other chiefs whom Marsden had befriended at Parramatta, showed their gratitude and affection. In the midst of these warlike and savage tribes the missionary could move unafraid; in fact he spent the first night ashore in New Zealand unharmed amongst the very savages who had, five years earlier, killed and eaten scores of his countrymen.

Marsden could not remain long in New Zealand, but had to return to his duties in New South Wales. He left a band of missionaries and craftsmen at the Bay of Islands, however, and purchased from the Maoris, for twelve axes, an area of two hundred acres as the site for a mission station. Sometimes the little group he left behind him were in great danger, and sometimes they suffered privations. Still the work was carried on, and once in a while Marsden was able to visit them, and send over new recruits. Two of these were the Williams

brothers, Henry and William, who were a tower of strength to the little community. William afterwards became the first Bishop of Waiapu, and was afterwards succeeded by his son Leonard, and later still by his grandson Herbert.

No less than seven times did Marsden visit his beloved New Zealanders, notwithstanding that the voyage always made him exceedingly ill. On one of these visits he and Williams, by their fearless intervention between the infuriated savages, were able to stop a tribal war. Once his vessel was wrecked at the Bay of Islands, but all escaped with their lives. On another occasion he made a journey across the island, penetrating to places never previously explored by a white man. On his last visit he was accompanied by his daughter Martha. He was then growing old, and his strength was failing. He landed this time on the west coast—at Hokianga. The Maoris received him joyfully, and about seventy of them accompanied him in a triumphal journey across the island, Marsden himself being borne for twenty miles in a litter, while Martha headed the procession seated in a chair, mounted on the shoulders of two natives. During this visit, while Marsden was absent to the southward, Martha records in her Journal having, at the Bay of Islands, witnessed a tribal battle in which many warriors fell.

On the eve of Marsden's return to Sydney a chief was observed, seated motionless on the ground at his feet and gazing earnestly into his face. He remained thus for several hours, and on being gently reproved by Mr. Williams, said: "Let me alone. Let me take a last look. I shall never see him again." Many hundreds of Maoris came long distances to bid a last farewell to their old friend, and at last bore him affectionately to the ship, six miles away.

As an example of Marsden's coolness and courage, an incident that is stated to have occurred in New South Wales, during his old age, may be referred to. While driving with Martha through the bush they were attacked



THE MARSDEN CROSS.

by two notorious bushrangers. Loaded pistols were presented at them while Martha was ordered to place the contents of her father's pockets in the robbers' hands. They threatened to shoot if Marsden said a word, but the missionary, undaunted, reproved them for their wicked course of life. As the bushrangers made their escape they threatened to shoot Marsden if he turned round to watch the direction they took. He did so, however, and while they remained in hearing, continued to warn them of the consequences of their life of crime.

Within a year after his return to New South Wales—on 12th May, 1838—Samuel Marsden, the Greatheart of Maoriland missions, passed to his rest. At Oihi, Bay of Islands, there stands a lofty stone cross, bearing the inscription,

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1814
THE FIRST CHRISTIAN SERVICE IN NEW ZEALAND
WAS HELD ON THIS SPOT
BY THE REV. SAMUEL MARSDEN

* * *

Having now followed in brief the story of Samuel Marsden's life we will accompany him in more detail in one of his New Zealand exploring adventures.

OVERLAND WITH MARSDEN IN 1820

Samuel Marsden, weather-beaten and travel-stained, stood upon the strand, looking eastwards across the Firth of Thames, scanning the waste of waters in search of His Majesty's ship *Coromandel*, loading spars for the navy. It was the New Zealand winter, the 1st of August, 1820. The morning was dark; drenching rain-storms drifted across the water, while a boisterous gale lashed the tossing manes of the white sea-horses prancing in upon the shore. It was Marsden's third visit to New Zealand and he had just returned from an expedition to the Kaipara, spending three weeks crossing rough country in bad weather. He was glad to board the *Coromandel*, rejoin his friends, and once more for a season enjoy the comforts of civilization.

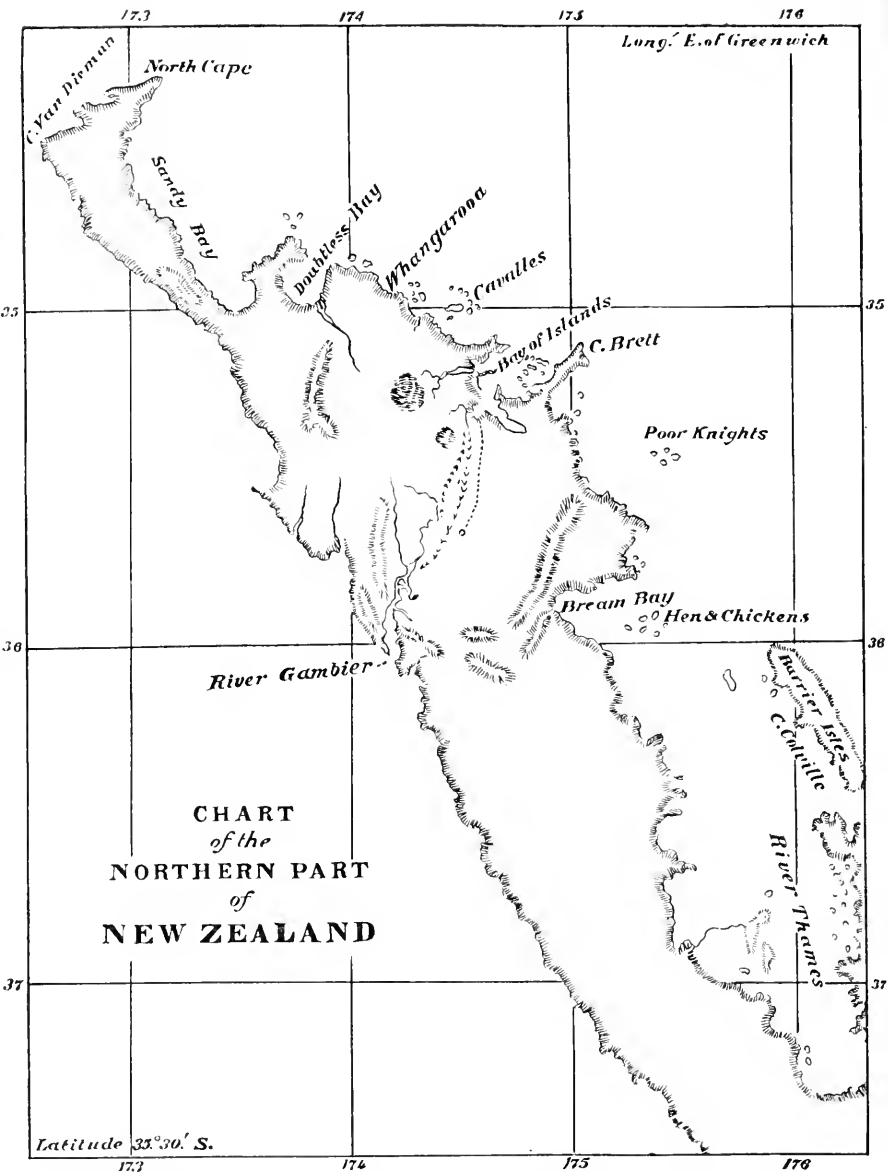
It was now necessary, however, that he should return as speedily as possible to the Bay of Islands, to rejoin His Majesty's ship *Dromedary* in order to secure his passage back to New South Wales. A friendly chief, Te Hinaki, offered him the use of a canoe, but the weather continuing tempestuous, and it being altogether uncertain when a start could be made, Marsden determined to set off on foot. The chiefs assured him that the eastern route was impracticable, and by their advice he resolved to strike across the island to Kaipara, penetrating from thence into the interior in a northerly direction. On reaching the Wairoa River he was to proceed by canoe to Mangakahia, thence mainly on foot to Kerikeri. Undaunted by the privations and dangers he might have to encounter, and knowing that he was venturing where no other white man had trod, Marsden, though no longer young, cheerfully set out upon the adventure.

The journey was commenced on Wednesday, 16th August, and the missionary was accompanied by Te Morenga and several other friendly chiefs. Crossing

over a narrow neck of land they reached what Marsden called the "River Wyeteematta." A slave, being despatched to a neighbouring village, there shortly appeared a fine, well-manned canoe, into which Marsden and his party stepped. Late at night—wet and cold, for they had come through a rough sea and a gale of wind—they arrived at the place now known as Riverhead, near Silverdale. Here there were no huts, but the Maoris managed to kindle a fire, and they got what comfort they could.

At dawn next morning they set off again in the direction of the Kaipara, and after walking for two hours sat down beside a creek to eat their breakfast. During the afternoon they reached a village. The chief and his people had heard of this white friend of the Maori, and urged him to stay the night with them. His companions wished to remain, and recover from their fatigue, but "Greatheart" seemed as fresh as ever in spite of his fifty-five years, and being anxious to press on, prevailed upon a Kaipara chief to accompany him further. After a three hours' walk over the sandhills walking, as Marsden says, "very fast," they arrived at the verge of a small lake on the edge of the bush, where there was a small village, the inhabitants of which had apparently never seen a white man before, and we can imagine with what astonishment the boys and girls, and their elders, gazed upon him. They watched him take off his outer garments, dry them at the fire and put them on again; eat his supper of potatoes, fernroot and karaka berries; wrap himself up in his greatcoat; commend himself, to use his own words, to "the guardian care of Him Who keepeth Israel"; and fall soundly asleep.

The rest of his party joined him at this little village, and together they set off, leaving behind them the beautiful lakelet and bush, and plodding over the sandhills where, Marsden noted, there was neither tree nor shelter from the southerly and westerly gales, where the sand drifted hither and thither and quickly covered the footprints of travellers.



This map shows what the coast-line was thought to be like before Marsden explored the North Auckland peninsula. He was the first white man to sail up the Auckland Harbour, in July, 1820.



This map shows the correct outline of the coast. Reading the story in this booklet you will be able to trace Marsden's journey from the northern shore of the Firth of Thames to the west coast and then across to the Bay of Islands.

They next arrived at the village of a chief named Wai, one of those who had accompanied Marsden from Mokoia. Here they received a wonderful welcome. The people were assembled to greet them, headed by the chief's wife and daughter. A hut had been prepared, and clean bracken fern put down for the visitors to rest upon. To crown all, a bountiful feast had been prepared for them. All this was due to the kindly thoughtfulness of Wai who, the previous evening, had sent forward a messenger to inform his wife of the approach of the party, quite unknown to Marsden. Few would have given a cannibal chief credit for such fine feeling. It was at this village that, for some reason, the children were terrified to see the white man, and could not be pacified. Usually children made friends quickly with Marsden, who was very fond of them, and said there were no finer children in any part of the world than those of the Maoris. He said that the parents seemed to love them and that they always appeared happy and playful.

Continuing on their journey they now passed through some rich land, where slaves were busy preparing the ground for potatoes. It was here that a chief singled out Marsden for a special mark of regard. As a rare delicacy for his dinner the missionary was offered, suspended by a cord at the end of a long spear—a cat. This was an awkward dilemma for Marsden, who was the soul of courtesy and would have been very sorry to offend his hospitable friends. What could he do? Well, he was very wise, as well as brave and good. He tactfully told the chief that cats and dogs were *tapued* animals to white people, so far as food was concerned; and though the Maoris seemed to think it very strange that such a tempting meal had to be declined, they brought instead a large fat pig, which the chief Te Morenga and his servant quickly killed and dressed ready for the cook. Here the party stayed the night, and until long after midnight Marsden and the chiefs plied each other with questions, for there was so much that each wanted to know about the ways of life of the other.

Starting off again the next morning, Saturday, they soon arrived at the village of a chief named Kahu, where they were entertained at a meal, and clean fern was spread upon the ground for their comfort. Proceeding, they passed a well-built and strongly fortified pa, near which Marsden was told a chief had been slain in battle a few weeks previously.

At the next village they found the chief, Murupaenga, and his family ready to receive them, his children having their heads adorned with feathers, and his wife wearing a garment of native dogskin. Marsden stayed over the week-end with Murupaenga, and on Monday morning desired to make an early start. There were present, however, several chiefs who wished to deliver speeches in honour of Marsden's visit, which delayed the departure for two hours. The Maoris were very fond of speech-making, which was carried out with great ceremony whilst running to and fro before their audience, and was looked upon with as much serious enjoyment as a game of bowls or golf to-day. However, they got away at last, after a large party of slaves had been collected to carry a plentiful supply of food down to the river-bank, for they were now to travel by canoe. Their direction was down stream, and with the tide in their favour the canoe sped on with great rapidity. Night came on, the river was broad, and it was very cold. It must have been a strange experience for Marsden as he sat there, the only white man in the midst of this warlike and savage people. For a short time they landed on the beach and made a fire.

At the first village they passed in the morning they heard news which made Marsden anxious. Hongi, one of the most dreaded warrior chiefs in New Zealand, it was reported, was out with a *tauu*, or war party, plundering and murdering the people in the neighbourhood. However, the party proceeded on its way, and near the mouth of the harbour arrived at the village of a chief named Hauraki, who received them kindly. They next had to cross the harbour, and make for the entrance to



KORORAREKA, BAY OF ISLANDS, N. 1840

the Wairoa River. Buffeted by a storm of wind and rain they landed, before dark, at a village consisting of about fifty huts. No one came out to greet them, and they found the huts empty, all the inhabitants having fled into the bush to escape Hongi's plundering party. They thankfully sought shelter in the deserted village, and no doubt thought with compassion of the fugitives in the bush, as they listened to the beating of the rain and the roaring of the wind.

By next morning the wind had increased to a heavy gale, and their canoe was in danger from the violence of the surf pounding upon the beach. Without an instant's hesitation the Maoris cast off their mats, raced down to the beach, plunged into the boiling surf, hauled the canoe through the breakers, and leaped into it while the waves tossed it about like a cork. Every moment Marsden expected to see it capsize, but these courageous and skilful seamen got her off the breakers into safer water and, running before the wind and tide, steered her into a sheltered cove. Here the natives showed their skill in another direction. Collecting raupo and stakes they built a shelter screen, seven feet in height. Next they made a flax hammock, which they slung under this shelter, and in which Marsden took his rest that night.

Next morning, weather, wind and tide were all in their favour, and hoisting their sail and vigorously plying their paddles they proceeded up the river at a rapid rate. No natives were here to be seen. Silence brooded over the river and the bordering bush, but far away could still be heard the ceaseless rumbling of the angry surf beating the seashore. During the afternoon, however, they arrived at a well-defended pa, crowded with men, women and children, and here they heard that some of their people had been murdered by Hongi's war party, terror of whom was largely caused by their being armed with the Pakeha's invincible muskets.

Landing at night to bivouac, the next morning, Friday, they continued paddling up the river, higher and

higher, continually finding evidences of Hongi's depredations. At last they reached a point beyond which it would be dangerous to proceed further. Only a few days previously three canoes, endeavouring to do so, had been driven on to the rocks by the force of the stream, and dashed to pieces. Most of Marsden's Kaipara friends now returned home in their canoe, but Te Morenga and another chief whom Marsden calls Mookow (Muriakau), who was accompanied by his young son, together with three slaves detailed as baggage carriers, set off overland with the missionary, to Whangarei, not much more than a day's journey due east.

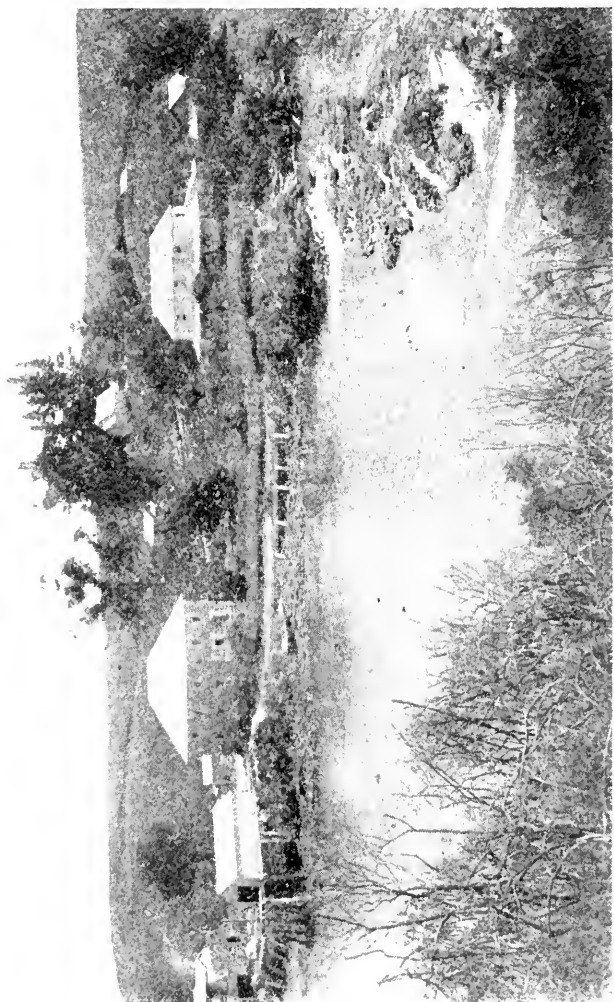
Saturday morning, the 26th August, broke cold and wet and stormy, for we must remember it was in the winter this journey was undertaken. The narrow native track was very difficult to follow, and the way was made more toilsome by the necessity of wading through several swamps. They still passed deserted villages, and in one of these, in a miserable hut, sought shelter that night from the wind and driving rain. Fortunately, despite the wetness of the wood the Maoris, to the great joy of everyone, were skilful enough to succeed in kindling a fire by their ancient method of friction.

On Sunday, Marsden being somewhat in advance of his companions, saw at a little distance about fifty natives, two of whom approached him, one being completely naked and carrying a long spear with a bayonet fixed at the point, while his companion was armed with a carpenter's axe attached to a long handle. It was quite evident, from their astonishment, that they had never previously seen a white man, though news of him and of his friendship had reached them. These people proved to be friends of Te Morenga, and from them it was learned that Hongi's party had recently slain ten people at Whangarei, including a chief and his uncle, and a niece of Te Morenga, and that all three had been eaten by their murderers. Te Morenga's state of mind can be imagined on hearing this dreadful news.

The two parties now united forces and all proceeded in the direction of Whangarei (Wangaree Marsden calls it), where they arrived at three o'clock in the afternoon. It seems, however, that this was not the site of the present town of Whangarei, but lower down the harbour, probably near the present settlement of Mangapai. Next morning they set off down the harbour in a canoe lent by the chief of the village. It was wet, cold and stormy, and it took them about three days, labouring hard at the paddles, to get round as far as the Patatau inlet. Here they landed, "hungry, cold and weary," and were conducted, by a steep and narrow track, to the pa on the summit of the hill. It was now quite dark. Below them the sea was dashing against the rocky precipices, and its thunder echoed in the depths of the caverns. In the pa were many natives, men, women and children, gathered around their fires preparing supper. A kindly woman handed Marsden a freshly roasted snapper, to which others added fernroot as his vegetable.

Early on Thursday morning they left this pa, which Marsden describes as a romantic spot, and adds, "the side next the sea has the appearance of an old abbey in ruins." This apt description enables us to recognise at once the fantastic rocky heights in the neighbourhood of the Whangarei Heads. He might have been surprised if he had then been told that one day the point on the opposite side of the harbour, and indeed the whole electoral area, would one day bear his name. Shortly after passing the little harbour of Tutukaka, where Marsden noted there were plenty of fine spars, they landed at a cove, made a fire, dressed a hog that had been presented to them at Patatau, and had their breakfast.

Marsden now resolved to continue his journey by land. Though Te Morenga told him he did not feel equal to it, and that the route would be a very difficult one, our Greatheart, nothing daunted, set off accompanied by Te Morenga's servant as guide. This slave warned Marsden that, on account of the distance to the



THE OLDEST BUILDINGS IN NEW ZEALAND

The large square stone building near the landing place was built in 1833; Bishop Selwyn had his library here. The two-storied house on the right was built in 1819, and Marsden stayed here on some of his visits.

next village, they would have to spend the night in the bush. Marsden, however, footed it to such good purpose "up and down precipices and rocks, and wading through the water at the head of the coves . . . we had the pleasure," he writes in his Journal, "to observe the smoke of the settlement about five or six miles off." Thus encouraged they reached the village before darkness set in, and very glad they were, for they were wet and weary, and it still rained heavily. The chief and his wife at Whananaki invited him to rest in their own hut.

The following morning the chief persuaded Marsden to remain until the next day, promising that, if Te Morenga was unable to come on by canoe, he would send the missionary up the coast to Whangaruru in his own war canoe, when he would be within an easy day's walk of the Bay of Islands. The next day, Saturday, Te Morenga not having arrived, this chief, Te Ngangi, launched his war canoe, which was strong, and well manned by his powerful warriors. The wind and sea proved the stronger, however, and Marsden was compelled to disembark and once more make his way overland. Frequently they had to leave the beach and make a detour into the bush, in order to cross over high necks of land running out into the sea, besides having to wade through swamps and creeks. The weather, too, was very unpleasant, and they were thankful at night to reach a small village, where the natives received them kindly, and where they were joined by Te Morenga.

The next morning was Sunday, and they rose early and continued their journey on foot up the coast, but had not proceeded far when they perceived that a war canoe, which was overhauling them, was being paddled in towards the shore. It proved to belong to the Whananaki chief, who had kindly sent it after them, the weather having again moderated, in order to save the

Some. I spent the night in rummaging upon the
difficulties with which I was surrounded, while
the stormy wind and heavy still continued, and
the raging sea to dash against the shores -

Leave
the island
for the
Muddy
Station

Second. At the return of Day we observed the ship
still upright, but appeared to be driven higher
up upon the reef - I now determined to return
to the three ridges in order to call boat with us &
Mr. Seign. we had suffered two dreary and stormy
days and nights under the most painful
Anxiety for the safety of those in the ship -
we now left the island as soon as we could for
the neighboring settlement, where we arrived about
9 o'clock - in. I think had not heard of the loss
of the ship until our arrival, as there had
been no communication between the
different settlements in consequence of the
severe weather - we were very kindly received
by the brethren - I took up my lodging with
Mr. Kemp and Mr. J. M. Seign with the
rest of the brethren - I informed the brethren in
what situation we had left the ship, and
requested that every assistance might be
given to land the passengers and baggage -
The wreck was about 12 or 14 miles from
the settlement - four boats were immediately
sent off - Mr. Halls went with the women and
children the same evening to Kungsee too
and two of the boats returned with part
of the baggage - and we went to the

Boats
despatched
to the wreck

missionary the fatigue of the overland journey. To anyone watching from the shore it must have been a fine sight to behold. The long, slender canoe, with its carved prow and stern-post, decorated with the beautiful white feathers of the gannet, urged forward by scores of paddles keeping perfect time by the voice and motions of a chief standing in the centre, carried Marsden swiftly on his way. About midday they arrived at Whangaruru, where the chief expressed his welcome by a discharge of musketry.

Glad indeed was our Greatheart, after an absence of three months, to find himself again within a short day's walk of the Bay of Islands. On Monday morning, the 4th of September, Marsden, as usual the first to arise, found the grass, shrubs and trees white as snow with hoar frost. Never, he says, had he seen anything like it before in New Zealand. He was eager to start, but Te Morenga had no such desire, and declined to get up until the sun, lifting his warm face out of the sea, had thawed the frost on grass and scrub. At length the party made a move, halting, however, at a village to partake of a breakfast of dried fish and potatoes. Marsden could now no longer restrain his impatience, and set off accompanied by one chief, leaving the rest of the party to follow at their leisure.

About three o'clock in the afternoon he stood on the shore of the Bay, at Pairoa, and looked, not without emotion, upon the whalers riding at anchor. He says, "I got into a canoe to go on board the *Catherine*, and fell in with Captain Graham in his whaleboat, and went on board with him, where I once more entered into civil life and felt it much sweeter than at any former period of time." It was with a thankful heart he recalled that during the whole of that long journey by land and river

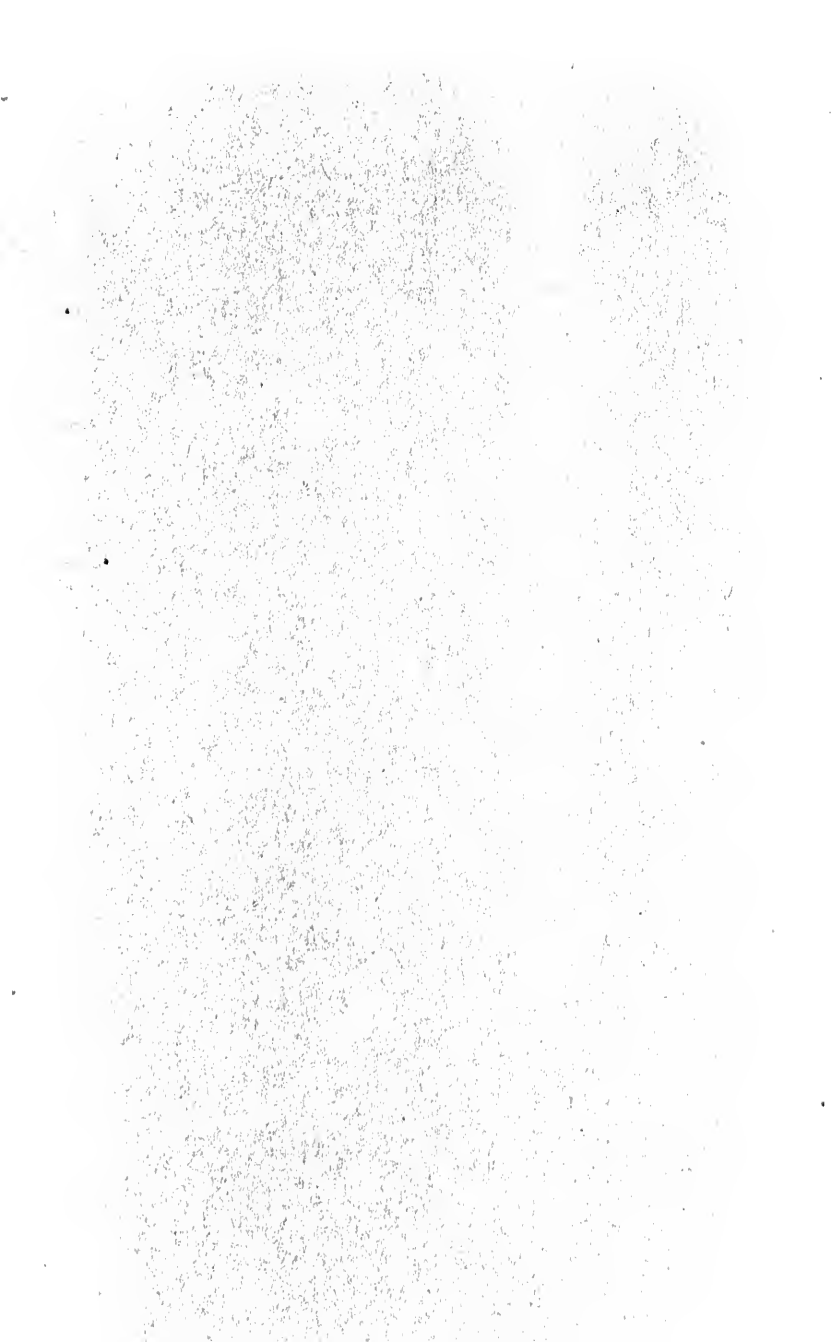
About three years after Marsden's journey, described in this booklet, his ship was wrecked at the Bay of Islands, and this is part of the story in his own handwriting.

See opposite page

and sea he had suffered no serious injury either from cold or wet, from want of sleep, or from lying down in his clothes in varied weather and under primitive conditions; while the noble race of savages had everywhere shown kindness to him. An hour after he had boarded the *Catherine*, the *Prince Regent*, a government schooner, arrived in the Bay from Port Jackson, bringing Marsden a packet of letters from his wife and children. Then indeed his cup of happiness was full and running over.

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