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## INTRODUCTION

Methodism, even today, is noted for its urge to go far from the busy centres of civilisation, the thickly populated regions, and to take the message of the gospel to the sparsely populated areas, to the newly settled districts. So we hear of the quiet, unobtrusive but loyal, efficient work done by its Ministers, Home Missionaries, and Local Preachers in mining and milling and scattered farming districts. It has a record in such work second to that of no other Church in New Zealand. That this is so, is not strange. Nor is it confined to Methodism today, in New Zealand. It is part of the genius, the mission of Methodism. The Methodist Church has always been a Missionary Church. Its strength as a world church today is evidence of that fact.

Speaking at the Morpeth Conference - a conference held at St. John's College, Morpeth, N.S.W. in February 1948 and attended by representatives of nineteen missions working in the South Pacific-the Rev. Norman Goodall M.A., a Minister of the British Congregational Church who is Secretary of the International Missionary Council and editor of the International Missionary Review, said, "Apart possibly from the early record of the Moravian Church, there is no record in the world to compare with the work of the Methodist Mission in the Pacific."

This statement makes an excellent background against which to study the life and work of a man who worked in two Pacific Mission fields and was responsible for printing the first passages of scripture to be published in two other Pacific Island languages.

## VISION AND CALL

It is strange how the passing years seem sometimes to give to one man a greater fame than he deserves and to withhold from another, for no apparent reason, that full measure of recognition which is his due. This latter has been to some extent the fate of John Hobbs. Brochures in plenty as well as more ambitious works have been written recording the efforts and appreciating the work of other great figures of the early mission days, but John Hobbs has lacked a biographer. That this is so is the more inexplicable in that there is available a wealth of material upon which to draw for the recording of the story of his life, and further that he, upon whose shoulders fell the responsibility of re-establishing in the Hokianga the work of the Wesleyan Mission after its tragic interruption at Whangaroa, is richly deserving of being widely recognised as one of the outstanding figures of early missionary endeavour. It is in part to repair this unfortunate omission that this brief outline of his life and work is now published.

John Hobbs came of a family of old Puritan stock in Kent. An article published at the time of his death records that not long before, there had been discovered in the Tower of London, "licenses granted in the reign of Charles II to the family of Hobbs in Kent for the holding of their conventicles," while in Foxe's *Book of the Martyrs* we read of Richard and Henry Hobbs being cited before the bishops to give an account of their faith, "but, being only simple folk they were let go, as not likely to do much harm". It has been stated that these were John Hobbs's ancestors. Certainly they were an old family, for it appears that the family crest—a tiger rampant—and the motto *Omnia Bona Bonis*—All things good to the good—was granted on June 6th, 1580. If such was his family background it is not surprising that the family had early association with Methodism.

Born at St. Peter's, Thanet in Kent on 22nd February, 1800, he was the son of Elizabeth and Richard Hobbs. Richard Hobbs, a coach builder, was also a Wesleyan Local Preacher and had been received into the Wesleyan Society by John Wesley himself. So Hobbs had such an environment as made it natural that he should join with his family in giving his time and talents to God. He was one of five sons of whom four joined their father in being Local Preachers.

In a letter written to the Committee of the Wesleyan Missionary Society from Wesleydale on June 28th, 1824, a letter which was in response to a request for a statement of his early life, training and spiritual experience, he tells us that he was bound apprentice at the age of fourteen to his father who was a carpenter, joiner and agricultural implement maker. It was during his seven years' apprenticeship at the smithy as well as the carpenter's bench that he acquired the skill that later proved of such value. From the same source we learn that he was admitted as a member of the Wesleyan Society in September 1816. In October 1819, he became a Local Preacher

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On Trial at Margate and early in 1822 was recommended to the District Meeting as either an Itinerant, that is a circuit minister, at home, or missionary, abroad.

Impatient, no doubt, at the slow movement of the church authorities John took matters into his own hands and on Friday 21st June, 1822, left his home for Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) where he hoped to find employment as Local Preacher and instructor to the convicts. Something of his father's character can be seen in his farewell. "I believe your going to be of God, and I shall pray for you by name every day."

After his arrival at Hobart Town on November 23rd he met the Rev. Nathaniel Turner and was engaged to assist him in his work among the convicts. Turner was apparently already under notice of transfer to New Zealand and only awaited an opportunity to leave. Samuel Leigh wrote from New Zealand asking for a carpenter and a blacksmith. "After what I believe to be mature consideration," wrote Hobbs to the Committee, "I could not but conceive myself to be called of God to fill this situation."

Turner early recognised his ability and enthusiasm and so, after a successful examination in theology, and a trial sermon at Princes St. Chapel, Sydney, he was recommended for service in New Zealand. It was at this time in Sydney that Hobbs first met Marsden who, impressed by his character and zeal, desired to secure his services for the Church Mission, but Hobbs was already committed to his own Wesleyan Mission. So it was that Hobbs and Turner sailed with Marsden on the Brampton when he came over to bring the Rev. Henry Williams to his own church.

In his *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Dr. G. H. Scholefield in his account of John Hobbs states, "Nathaniel Turner whom he met there (Tasmania) urged him to offer himself to the Wesleyan Missionary Society, but Marsden had already offered to employ him under the Church Missionary Society (Anglican). He accordingly on August 3rd, 1823, sailed from Port Jackson in the Brampton."

This is quite incorrect. Hobbs was never engaged by Marsden. That the true position is as stated above is shown by Hobbs' formal statement of June 28th, 1824, to the Wesleyan Missionary Society. Scholefield's error is probably due to the fact that Hobbs did indeed travel to New Zealand with Marsden on the Brampton, but this of course was merely a gesture of friendship so typical of Samuel Marsden.

It is relevant here to quote from the instructions of the Wesleyan Missionary Society to the Rev. Samuel Leigh read at a public ordination service held in the New Chapel, City Road,, January 17th, 1821. What was said then was equally true when Turner and Hobbs arrived in 1823, for Leigh had been in occupation of his station only a few short weeks.

"You are appointed to the important work of undertaking new Missions. You are going among the heathen, and to those stations in the heathen world where Christ is not named. You are appointed, not to enter upon other men's

labours, but to lay the foundation; not to reap the fruit of others' toils, but for the first time to clear away the incumbrances of the ground, and to put the plough into an unbroken soil. Such an undertaking we need scarcely remind you, demands your most solemn consideration. It is one which from its difficulties and hazards, requires you, in an especial manner, to gird up the loins of your mind, to summon all your courage and to put your trust in God. . . . As you will be appointed to assist the natives in acquiring the knowledge of agriculture, and some of the useful arts of life, habits of labour and industry must be cultivated by you, at least in the early stage of your mission. To all things by which you can promote the real good of the natives you must apply yourselves, even as the great Apostle of the Gentiles, working with your hands. In all this beware of the secular spirit. These are works to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and for Him. Whatsoever you are called to in this respect, "do it heartily, and do it to the Lord.' ....."

## WESLEYDALE AND TRAGEDY

With his arrival at the Bay of Islands on August 3rd, 1823, commenced his years of conscientious and consecrated service as an apostle of peace and love, not only in New Zealand but also in Tonga.

Of the work at Wesleydale, Kaeo, on the Whangaroa Harbour much has been written. When on August 6th, together with Nathaniel Turner, he arrived at Wesleydale, having walked from the Bay of Islands, he found there the Rev. Samuel and Mrs. Leigh, the Rev. William White, James Stack and Luke Wade. It was to reinforce these, that they had come. But Leigh was ill, and when finally Marsden left Wesleydale he took Mr. and Mrs. Leigh with him. Leigh never returned. White, too, went with Marsden to Sydney hoping to marry, and so on August 19th, we have Turner and Hobbs together with Stack and Wade left to prosecute the work. They were virtually beginning anew. They had to learn by experience the very elements of the task of understanding the Maori people. They knew nothing of the Maori language, life, customs and thought. We can imagine the burden of responsibility on Nathaniel Turner, in unexpected command of this station, a mere ten weeks after its establishment. To make the situation more difficult they were settled among people who had a most unsavoury reputation. These were the people who had destroyed the Boyd and two other ships and were now under the leadership of three brothers Te Puhi, Te Ara (George) and Nga-Huruhuru, of whom at least the first two were rascals whether judged by Maori or Pakeha standards.

John Hobbs was particularly suited to this work. He was devoted to the cause of his Master, he was young and enthusiastic, and he possessed those characteristics which as he developed and gained experience in later years, made him one of the most welcome visitors in any home in the north. He was fitted not only to be a Missionary but also to be a pioneer. He was intensely practical. Of tireless energy, he had knowledge and skill in many arts, and showed the inventive genius, the initiative, the versatility, the ability to turn his hand to strange tasks, the province of many and varied skilled tradesmen, that made him so valuable a servant of the mission in those early days when everything depended on their own efforts. John Warren speaking of him as he was in later years says that he was during his journeys "accustomed to tune the pianos of the settlers, to repair their clocks, to adjust their spectacles, to bud and graft their fruit trees, to give plans for their buildings and boats, to attend their sick and occasionally to perform not unimportant operations." This, as we shall see, is by no means a complete list of his practical accomplishments, but it will suffice to show that he was a man invaluable in the founding of an infant settlement remote from all others. It should be remembered that at this stage he was a lay missionary, or as he described himself, "a mechanic in the Wesleyan Mission" and it was largely due to his efforts that the raupo whare used by Leigh was replaced by a board house and that

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other wooden buildings were erected and the whole fenced in. Reading his early journals indicates that his early days in the mission were largely given over to manual work of all kinds but he did not stop at this.

It was of course as carpenter and blacksmith that he had been appointed. At the time of his appointment there were already two ordained ministers at Kaeo and a third—Nathaniel Turner— was about to leave for New Zealand. Leigh, who was perhaps not a very practical man, felt very much the need for a good craftsman and indeed with the establishment of the mission such a man was just as necessary as a missionary.

We find him making a commencement with the education of the children, a work which proved most worthwhile and which was to be adopted almost universally as a fundamental means of introducing Christianity to native peoples. In 1825 it is recorded that the hymns being sung in Maori were of his composition.

Never, while they were at Wesleydale, did the missionaries feel at ease or confident about the attitude of the chiefs and people. Life was more calm and reassuring at some times than at others. but always there was the undercurrent of real apprehension that the chiefs would finally become openly hostile. The years 1825 and 1826 were particularly difficult, the threat of war between Hongi and the Whangaroa Maoris making the situation even more delicate. As early as March 1825 the women were sent to the Bay of Islands for safety. The Anglican brethren recommended that they withdraw and commence a new station elsewhere but a natural unwillingness to admit defeat, and a determination to remain as long as it was possible to do so made them refuse until their station was actually attacked, their livestock destroyed, their goods plundered and their houses burned to the ground. On Wednesday 10th January 1827 they abandoned Wesleydale and trekked to Kerikeri.

In times of peace, and free from fear of attack, this was no light undertaking, especially for the women, and in particular Mrs. Turner who had with her three children of whom the youngest was a baby of five weeks. The rugged country made the going hard even for strong men. However they pressed on until, rounding a sharp bend in the track, they found themselves face to face with a well armed war party of some hundreds. We can imagine the feelings of the fugitives. But this was not the end. The war party was under the command of Eruera Patuone, one of the most powerful of the Hokianga chiefs. When he had learned who the fugitives were and where they were going he immediately took them under his protection. Nathaniel Turner describes it thus.

"On seeing us in the bend of the river he instantly turned round upon his army and commanded them to halt. Never before had I seen in New Zealand such an exhibition of authority and obedience. Some few attempted to press forward but he instantly repressed them with his spear. Others ran into the water to get past him but he was with them in a moment. And having stopped the people he told us to

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come forward towards him, which we did, and he then told us to sit down. He and other chiefs then came and rubbed noses with us in token of their goodwill."

So Patuone stood by them until the main body of his force had passed and then accompanied them on their way until all danger from stragglers was past. This action of Patuone's not only saved the party but also shaped the future course of the mission.

Thus ended in disaster the first chapter in the story of the mission. That, in spite of appearances to the contrary, all their work had not been in vain was seen by later events. Their first convert at Mangungu years later was Hika Tawa, a lad who had been with them at Whangaroa, and in as short a time as three years later the people of Whangaroa asked them to return, a request which could not at the time be granted.

The whole mission party returned to Sydney, but not before expressing their determination to return. There they spent some months, their return to New Zealand being delayed by various causes, but principally by the fact that they were awaiting the arrival from England of William White who, having left New Zealand in 1825, was not at Wesleydale during the last sad days. During their stay they discussed the prospects of their work in New Zealand and it appears that some, particularly Turner, were doubtful of the wisdom of any attempt to re-establish themselves here. Turner obviously was considerably drawn to the Tongan field. Nevertheless it was decided to return, and all would have done so had not bad news from Tonga made it imperative to send reinforcements there. Turner and the Rev. William Cross, originally intended for work in New Zealand, set out for Tonga a few days before the remainder returned to New Zealand. This was a distinct loss to New Zealand. It meant that John Hobbs, on whose shoulders fell the responsibility for the re-establishment of the work, was deprived of the support and counsel of Turner the only other man with much experience in New Zealand. It meant, too, that New Zealand lost the services of Cross, one of the truly great missionary figures of the Pacific, who toiled so successfully in Tonga and later, with the Rev. David Cargill, pioneered the Fiji mission field in 1835.

These months in Sydney were not however a mere empty period of waiting. For Hobbs at least, two very important events occurred. On August 14th he had been married at St. Phillips, Sydney, by the Rev. Mr. Cowper to Miss Jane Brogreff of Rams-gate. It was during this period, too, that he was ordained to the ministry, so that when he returned to New Zealand it was in a different capacity. He was no longer a mechanic or lay missionary, but a fully ordained minister.



## A FRESH START—HOKIANGA

John Hobbs then, was the leader of the party consisting of Mrs. Hobbs and himself, Mr. and Mrs. Luke Wade and Miss Bedford (who had come out to teach Turner's children) which left Sydney on the Governor Macquarie on October 20th 1827 and anchored off Pakanae, a little distance inside the Hokianga Heads, on October 31st. James Stack had preceded the main party, having travelled with Mr. Richard Davis of the Anglican Mission in the schooner Herald, arriving at the Bay of Islands on October 8th.

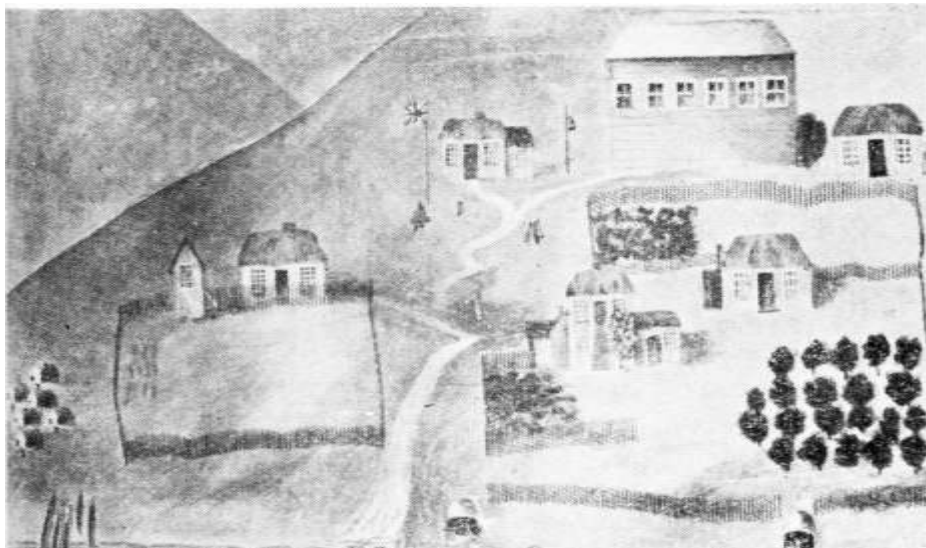
Hobbs's first thought was to meet again Patuone who had saved the party from Wesleydale. So on November 1st he set off in the boat he had brought from Sydney, up the river for Horeke where Messrs. Browne and Raine had their timber mill and ship building yards. Here he learned that Patuone was living a further five miles up the Waihou River and there, next morning, he met him. Patuone welcomed him and desired that he settle with him. After much discussion, in which Henry Williams and others of the Anglican Mission took part, a site was decided on and land bought at Te Toke on the Waihou (near the present settlement of Rangiahua), but right from the time of the purchase Hobbs was doubtful of the wisdom of their choice and eventually, just a little after the Te Toke purchase was completed, they made arrangements to secure land at Mangungu, a mile from Horeke. On March 2nd 1828, they removed to Mangungu, the purchase of the 850 acres being completed on April 2nd and the value of trade goods paid being £190. They made the change principally because they would there be surrounded by, and have easy access to, a much greater number of Maoris. Those who, like the writer, have seen the land even in its present semi-developed state can realise the difficulties that confronted John Hobbs, James Stack and Luke Wade as they strove to create from this rough wilderness a home and headquarters for their work.

At this point it is well to pause to record the magnitude of the task and responsibility entrusted to Hobbs. He was still a young man—27 years of age. He was just ordained. His two colleagues were also young, and both laymen, and on him fell the responsibility for selecting a site for mission work and for directing the work in its initial stages. But he was enthusiastic. "I feel as one restored to his proper element," he wrote during the first few days with Patuone; and he had the experience of his Whangaroa days to guide him. That he benefited from that experience is shown by the fact that he brought with him the boat which he used the day following his arrival in the country, a well stocked tool chest, and plenty of trade goods to pay for native labour. But further he had brought with him copies of translations of hymns, and portions of the catechism, and material for teaching the Maoris to read and write. Also he hoped and applied for the appointment of a printer, someone capable of undertaking the work of translation, and a doctor, for he had seen the opportunity for

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service of a consecrated medical missionary; Unfortunately none of these requests could be granted. As experience in other later mission fields has shown it would have much to the advantage of the mission if they had.

With all the manual work necessary to the establishment of the mission, Hobbs and Stack did not forget their primary object—the evangelisation of the people—and they travelled up and down the river preaching and teaching, and though they then saw few if any signs that their work was effective, and felt very often discouraged and disillusioned, later events proved that their labour was not wasted.



An early drawing of Mangungu Station by John Hobb's daughter (Mrs Kirk).

It is convenient to record here a description of Mangungu Station as it was a year or two later. This account is given by John Hobbs's eldest daughter, Emma.

"It consisted of two wooden houses, and two of raupo. On the hill where the work was first begun stood a wooden building called Te Wharekura (the school house). It had two rooms; one of these was used for worship, teaching of reading, writing and singing. It was also a dispensary and a surgery. In the other room Mr. Parker and Mr. Stack lived. There was a flagstaff in front, on which the Union Jack was hoisted on Sundays to let the natives know it was Ra tapu, the Sacred Day. My parents lived in a small two-storey house. There was a living-room and a bedroom on one floor. Steps led down to a lean-to kitchen on one side, and, as the ground sloped, the space below the house was made a storeroom. From the front of the house there was an extensive view of the river in every direction, which was most important in those days of sudden alarms. In the living room

Mesdames White and Hobbs taught the native girls sewing and in the morning trained them in household duties.

Facing the river on the right was a three-roomed raupo house, the home of Mr. and Mrs. White. Nearby was a wooden barn in which potatoes and kumaras were stored. On the left of our house was another raupo whare, where visitors were lodged, for sailors and strangers all came to the Mission for aid. All who died on the river were buried in the cemetery at Mangungu . . .”

The church was a plain weatherboard building thirty feet by forty feet. The Maoris squatted on the floor, but there was a raised platform at the pulpit end where the Europeans sat. Richard Monk who worshipped there in his youth is at pains to explain that this arrangement was not made in any spirit of exclusiveness but for practical reasons. Many of the Maoris suffered from colds and expectorated frequently and vigorously with scant regard for the clothing of those around. "Besides," says Monk, "many of the natives were the hosts of entomological life which, if transferred to the juvenile pakehas led to a course of domestic discipline not to be forgotten." The normal procedure for the weekend was for the Maoris from villages far and near to come by canoe on Saturday evening. Now was evident the wisdom of Hobbs's decision in transferring from the Waihou. Mangungu was in a central position. Arrived at Mangungu they prepared all the food required for the following day, for on the Ra tapu they did not even cook. On the Sunday they worshipped. The usual procedure was to hold a Sunday School, a church service, and then another Sunday School in the morning. In the afternoon a service was held for the European residents, and in the evening the Missionaries either went out to hold services in the outlying districts or held class meetings with those at Mangungu. On the Monday, having secured advice or medicine for the sick, the Maoris returned to their homes. The station with its worshippers—up to a thousand in number—encamped around must have been a scene of excitement each weekend.

It was unfortunate that the excellent beginning made here in the Hokianga, largely through the efforts of John Hobbs, should have been endangered by the arrival of the Rev. William White as Superintendent on 31st January. 1830. Within a few weeks of his arrival differences arose between him and John Hobbs, and as the months and years went on it became obvious that the two could not work together. Dr. C. H. Laws in his brochure *First Years at Hokianga* describes the differences in the two men thus:

"Hobbs was an experienced missionary. He had been longer in the New Zealand work than White. His convictions were strong, and he could give reasons for them. His aim and methods were those of an intensely spiritual man, and that they should be subordinated to secular ends was intolerable to him. He could be led but not driven, counselled but not compelled. He welcomed treatment as an equal but would not be 'lorded over' to use his own sufficiently suggestive word.

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But White could tolerate no question. He had zeal and driving force, but he was self-willed, self-important, ill-disciplined and, at critical moments, lacking in proper self-control."



**John Hobbs aged 29 years  
From a miniature by Major Sturgeon at Hokianga in 1829**

Add to these fundamental differences in their natures, the sorrow and annoyance that Hobbs must have felt in seeing the work he had commenced jeopardised by what he rightly believed to be wrong emphasis and behaviour on White's part, and it is not surprising to find Hobbs's increasing sense of frustration. It appears that White and Hobbs did not agree even at Whangaroa. Although White did not reach Hokianga until 31st January, 1830, it is only March 17th when we find Hobbs writing to the Society requesting that he be transferred to Tonga. Referring to White he says, "his natural disposition is to me as it ever has been, quite contrary to my taste and feeling and, without exaggeration, often overwhelming." In September of the same year in his letter to the Society he discusses White's desire to abandon the station at Mangungu and his expressed opinion that 'they were wasting their time both in their services for the Europeans at Horeke and among the Maoris. In this connection he draws attention to the fact that White would have given up Whangaroa much earlier but for Turner's opposition. He is quite explicit and leaves no room for doubt about his restlessness. If White is to remain in New Zea-land he wishes to go to Tonga or South Africa; if White goes he is prepared to remain, even if he is left unaided.

This desire for removal was at last granted, and in 1832 he was appointed to Tonga. He did not however leave until the following year. On June 6th, 1833, he left the Bay of Islands in the schooner *New Zealand* having met before his departure the Rev. John

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and Mrs. Whiteley who had come to replace him, and the Rev. Joseph Orton who had come from New South Wales to investigate the differences between White and his colleagues. However, the relief Hobbs experienced by this transfer was spoiled by the fact that he was transferred under a cloud. The authorities at home had supported White, and Hobbs was censured for his "ensoriousness and unkindness," and prohibited from being appointed superintendent of any station over any other agent. It is interesting to note that the folk of Tonga refused to be bound by that restriction. Nevertheless it hurt, especially as Hobbs was quite sure that, had the Missionary Committee made the enquiries he had suggested, he would have been justified. That it was White and not Hobbs who was in the wrong was proved by the fact that Whiteley, who succeeded Hobbs, and James Wallis both found it difficult to work under him.

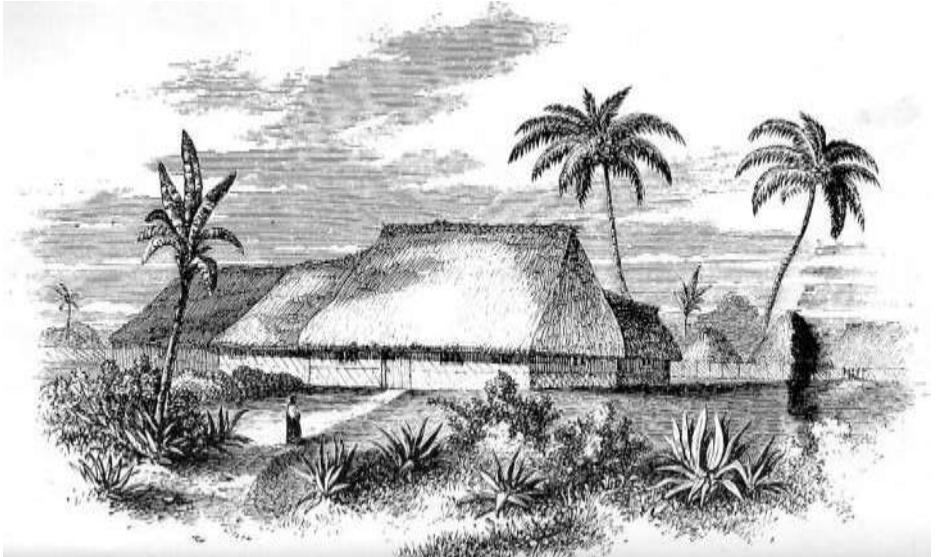
John Hobbs was however finally justified. White's name was removed from the stationing sheet, and on 3rd October 1838, shortly after his return to New Zealand Hobbs records:

"I have had the extreme pleasure of receiving a letter from Mr. Beecham who says he is happy to inform me of the Committee's satisfaction with my general conduct since I was removed to the Friendly Islands and that they are therefore willing to remove the restrictions under which I was placed through my affairs with Mr. White. Six years and a half ago, the instrument was signed in Hatton Garden (the headquarters of the Missionary Society) to place me under the rod through my affairs with Mr. White, who we now hear has been expelled, and now an instrument has come to remove the rod which has ever since made me smart. In taking leave of this afflictive period of six years through which I have laboured in hope that God would eventually secure to me all that was due to me I do most gratefully and cordially receive Beecham's instructions, and with him hope that nothing will ever transpire to induce the committee to withdraw that confidence which they are now willing to repose in me."

It says much for the character of the man, that labouring as he was under a sense of injustice, he continued to give devoted service to the Missionary Society.

## TONGAN INTERLUDE

So Hobbs's feelings on leaving New Zealand must have been mixed indeed. He had first arrived in 1823 with all the enthusiasm of a young missionary ardently looking forward to the consecrated adventure of winning heathen souls for Christ, and after all manner of difficulties and disappointments had been forced to abandon the work early in 1827. Later the same year he had returned and had the responsibility but also the joy of re-establishing the work and seeing it develop, slowly it is true, under his guidance and labour for three years. Then had followed a further three years of growing irritation and sense of frustration and feeling of disquiet for the future. And now he was leaving New Zealand again, feeling that his efforts had been nullified, that he was in a sense abandoning the work again and that, too, under official displeasure. So some of the first confident enthusiasm must have been gone as he commenced his work in Tonga, but that did not mean that his confidence in the glory of the gospel he was privileged to preach was in any way lessened. He approached this chapter of his life with a sober determination to labour consistently as an agent of his Lord and Saviour. And he had need of this determination for he was sent to reinforce the staff at Tonga because, as he told an interviewer during the days of his retirement, "the natives had threatened to eat the resident missionaries Thomas and Hutchinson without salt."



Wesleyan Mission premises, Neiafu, Vavau. Erected 1833

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Here in Tonga he was to stay for close on five years, working at various stations and at a variety of work. Here he learned printing. Even a cursory study of his journals indicates a very marked difference between conditions in Tonga and in New Zealand. It is most illuminating to read the record of activities and thoughts of a man who has left behind so adequate a record, and see not only the comparisons that he himself drew, but also those that we can ourselves make, differences that are reflected in the state of the Christian Church in Tonga and among the Maori people today.

It was not that there were no difficulties, and that the way was always smooth. He tells of one group of converts visiting a neighbouring island and attempting to convert its inhabitants by force of arms, the "aggressive Christians" being annihilated; of the long and bloody civil war between the people of the groups of Vavau and Haapai on the one hand and those of Tonga Tabu on the other; of the opposition to the Gospel in Tonga Tabu; of the people on one island who, he says, were like the New Zealanders, with great similarity in language and who, like the Maoris, refused the gospel, and would not take native teachers.

But in spite of this the whole tenor of his journals is of success. Writing while in Haapai in 1837 he records that all in the group were baptised and "under regular Christian discipline." Entry after entry in his journal records enthusiastic and crowded church services. We read that the native King was a class leader and Local Preacher, while the Queen too was a class leader. He writes of meetings of Class Leaders and Local Preachers and the discipline and exclusion of those unfit, of missionary meetings among the Native Christians themselves, all these showing that the Native Church there was stronger than in New Zealand. Indeed it reads like the story of a native church, but it is difficult to talk of any such native church in New Zealand. But this feeling of optimism that pervades his writing is not a false optimism.

He was well aware of the weaknesses. He tells us of a feeling of disquiet about the reality of the spiritual life of the people. "For some weeks past my soul has been bowed down in secret before the Lord on account of the spiritual vacancy of many of our people, and I have experienced the most painful feelings on that account." And then towards the close of 1837 he records a most remarkable spiritual revival among these native Christians. "These circumstances having occurred at one place are sufficient to show that though the people are all nominally Christian and some time ago all met in class, that many of them remain nominally Christian yet, and require to be converted and born again before they can enter the Kingdom of God. May this revival now begun, spread through all the islands of the group and God be glorified by all."

But nevertheless the predominant note is one of success. We read more of achievements than of difficulties and setbacks. It is during this time that we find him joyously recording a sense of freedom, power and effectiveness in his preaching,

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"perhaps I never spoke with more power since I began to preach the Gospel." It is now too that we find in his journal a prayer, a prayer not meant for the public ear but an outpouring of his soul to God, which shows the spiritual nature of the man—"O God may I, as Thy messenger, be more holy, that I may at all times speak from the heart to the heart under Thy own immediate direction."

It was mentioned earlier that it was during this time that he learned printing. In May 1836 he states that the total of scripture portions, catechisms and other books he has printed since January is 39,000. And those not all in one language. Some were in Samoan. Practically all these Pacific Island languages were reduced to writing by the missionaries, and wisely they made them as nearly phonetic as they could. That being so it is interesting to note some of the inconsistencies. In Fijian the sound *Th* is represented by *C*. For example *Thuvu* is spelt *Cuvu* a fact which always struck me as very strange until I came upon this reference in John Hobbs's writing when discussing his printing activities: "I next printed a leaflet for Fiji. Mr. Cargill (pioneer missionary to Fiji) said, 'I want you to cast me some Greek thetas.' I said 'The Th in Fijian is flat and I am not a type founder; take one of our spare letters and make that do.' In a short time I got the thing printed giving C the sound of Th." So John Hobbs has left his mark in Fiji as well as in Tonga and New Zealand.

But his time in Tonga, where we feel he was so happy in the sense of achievement, was not to last. Mrs. Hobbs became ill, and it was obvious that for her sake it was essential that he should get to a cool climate, and so it was decided in October 1837 that he should return to Tasmania. We can imagine that it was with some regret that he left Tonga. "I have no idea," he says, "that I shall ever be called to move in a sphere of greater usefulness than the one in which I am now engaged, but the life of my wife and the moral welfare and education of our dear and rising children appear to render it necessary that I should take them back to civilised life. No wish whatever exists in my mind to leave the work of God among the heathen, and I can truly say that were it not for the above considerations I should most happily remain and die in a work in which I consider it no small honour to be engaged, and in which I am fully conscious of the blessing of the Lord upon my labours."

So on 8th February, 1838, he left Vavau on board the *Independence* bound for the Bay of Islands en route for Sydney. They did not have a comfortable trip. Five days out the ship sprang a leak. Three feet of water were in the hold before the leak was discovered, and it was then found that the ship was taking eight inches in ten minutes. However, by effecting temporary repairs and keeping at the pumps, and favoured by good winds, they arrived off the Bay of Islands on 18th February, but had to stand off because of head winds and thick weather. They landed next day at Paihia where on that date ten years earlier their first child had been born.



## THE HOKIANGA AGAIN

Here he met Turner, now back in New Zealand, whom he had not seen since the latter had left Sydney for Tonga just over ten years previously, while they were both awaiting the re-establishment of the New Zealand Mission. Hobbs had always enjoyed his association with Turner, and had been happy to work with him in the past. Naturally he was interested to hear all that Turner had to tell him, of developments at the Hokianga; developments both in the work and progress of the Mission, and also in the difficulties in relationships with William White. It is not surprising therefore to find him paying a visit to Mangungu before going on to Australia. He came to Mangungu and tells us that on Sunday, March 3rd, he preached on Baptism, but "was a little embarrassed at times when different Tonguese expressions presented themselves for utterance." That visit was fatal to his plans to proceed to Tasmania. Turner and Whiteley made a formal written request to him to remain, a request which was unanimously confirmed by the District Meeting. As Mrs. Hobbs was already better in health and they feared the rigours of a Tasmanian winter after the tropics, they decided to remain. So commenced Hobbs's third and final term in New Zealand, a term which was to last twenty years until his retirement owing to ill health, in 1858.

Hobbs must, I think, have felt not a little sad as he took up work here again. He was very conscious of the small numbers of people compared with the populous islands of the Pacific Three times within ten days of his landing at Paihia he comments on it, and he voices the opinion, held in common with others, that the increasing number of European settlers spells the ultimate extinction of the Maori people. There is in the entries of his journal at this time a despondent note.

He was doubtless seeing New Zealand conditions more clearly now. His experience in Tonga gave him a wider background against which to evaluate the position here. The dwindling population has been referred to above. The health of the Maori people caused him great concern. He thought of the way the people of Tonga had so eagerly accepted medical aid, but here he says many of the people "seem to remain careless about their health or rather about the means which we know would contribute to their health!"

He became freshly conscious of how difficult it was to persuade the Maori to change and to improve his method of living. He comments—again a comparison with conditions in Tonga—on a most striking want of reverence and order in the House of God or anywhere else. All these things serve but to emphasise how difficult was the task of the early missionary to the Maori people.

For the next twenty years, then, Hobbs was to labour among the people of Hokianga. It is interesting to note that while he paid visits to other parts of New Zealand and played quite a prominent part in the organisation of other spheres of labour, he himself

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was never stationed anywhere but in the Hokianga. Not all the time was he at Mangungu. He spent considerable periods at Newark, or Pakanae, near the Hokianga Heads. Indeed it was during this time that the head station at Mangungu was abandoned. Strangely enough there does not seem to be anywhere a statement as to the reasons for abandoning Mangungu. No doubt the dwindling and shifting population was largely if not entirely responsible. Reference was made earlier to his feeling of despondency and disquiet. This distress over the state of the Mission, indeed of the condition of the Maori people generally in the North, was something that continued with him, indeed became intensified, as the months and years passed. He visited, in 1839, Rangihoua, the cradle of the Church of England Mission, and was moved by the desolate state of the place to utter this lament:

"But, O Rangihoua, thou art now left without an inhabitant, most of whom have been taken off by disease and death, the other few removing to other parts. When I think of the twenty-seven years in which the messengers of Christ have been proclaiming to thee the tidings of peace, and that very few indeed during that period have been brought to God, my heart weeps over thy deeds, thy guilt, thy desolation."

But not only was he distressed by the refusal of so many of the people to accept the gospel and by the lack of true spiritual life, but also the material condition of the people caused him much pain. He had lived and laboured with these people and come to love them. He had known them when they were almost untouched by the white man, and in the days of their prosperity through trade, but now he saw them in poverty. The increasing number of English settlers, and the growing greed for land was dispossessing the Maori. Then, in the years following 1840, the uncertainty and delay in settling land claims, and the consequent removal of many Europeans to Auckland and its environs, where incidentally the land was better, withdrew from the Maori people their income.

After attending a meeting in 1845 between the Governor and Hone Heke and his followers, he says, "my heart was pained to see their thin threadbare blankets scarcely decent to behold." This poverty of the Hokianga Maoris he attributes to a variety of causes, including various factors connected with land, the depression in the Australian colonies which used to purchase timber, the clamour of the Bay of Islands Observer and other papers against the Government keeping settlers away, and finally, forgetfulness of God.

He sums it all up referring to the North as "a ruined country."

These were not the only problems. The year of his return from Tonga had seen the arrival of the French Roman Catholic Bishop Pompallier pledged to combat heresy and convert the heathen. And Pompallier had settled in the Hokianga surrounded by Wesleyan stations, and proceeded to unsettle the Maori people so that some were won

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over to the Bishop, and others, unable to decide between the two, remained obstinately heathen. Further, following the arrival of Bishop Selwyn in 1842 there was a deterioration in the hitherto friendly and helpful relations between the Anglican and Wesleyan Missions, for Selwyn, in spite of all his great virtues, could find no place in his scheme of things for the Wesleyans and unfortunately, to his charge must be laid the unseemly squabbles that arose, particularly in the south, between the Maori members of the two Societies. To Hobbs, who had been accustomed to the close co-operation and friendship of the preceding twenty years, this was a sad and painful experience. So then the dwindling population, poverty stricken, bewildered by the rival claims of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, unsettled and alarmed by the increasing wave of settlers, was a distressing sight for one to whom their welfare meant so much.

But the whole picture was not black. The outlook there in the north may have been gloomy but elsewhere there were signs of very distinct encouragement. Down in the Kaipara district, at Kawhia, and Whaingaroa (Raglan), they were meeting with very real success, and there were requests for further extensions of the work. Once more, too, there fell on Hobbs much of the responsibility of planning the work. He was the senior missionary, for Turner, suffering from tuberculosis, had left for New South Wales in 1839. Although the Rev. J. H. Bumby, a young man of more than ordinary gifts as a preacher, had been appointed by the Mission Board in England as Chairman of the New Zealand district, and had arrived in the barque *James* on Monday, 18th February, he was naturally compelled through his ignorance of New Zealand conditions to depend on the advice of experienced men, especially Hobbs and John Whiteley.

## SOME MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

In May it was arranged that Hobbs should establish a station at Wellington, Hobbs stipulating that Charles Creed, a newly-arrived missionary, should accompany him to assist in the education of his children. After one fruitless attempt to charter a boat to take them, Hobbs, quite undaunted, decided to walk, but could not persuade Maoris to accompany them, and without their assistance as guides and to help the women and children, the project had to be abandoned. Eventually they secured the services of a small boat the Hokianga, and it was decided that Hobbs and Bumby should go south and prepare for the others. So Hobbs commenced one of his longest trips, a journey of which his journal account makes thrilling reading. On Saturday, 18th May, 1839, he set sail with Bumby from the Bay of Islands in the Hokianga. After a good start they ran into bad weather around Hicks Bay, and he records on Saturday, 25th, that "ever since Wednesday 22nd, we have been drifting under bare poles." On Saturday they landed at Hicks Bay while sheltering from the storm. Here they had further evidence of the destruction caused by Hongi Hika on his raids to the south. The population had been largely wiped out—three thousand had been slain in one spot. A brighter side to the picture was the discovery of a native catechist Hemi Taka, who had lived with Hobbs and Stack at Mangungu, and who was now working with the Rev. William Williams of the Church Missionary Society. After one abortive attempt to leave the shelter of the bay they eventually got away on 2nd June and entered Port Nicholson on 7th June. Here they met one white man who, Hobbs records, was building a boat with which to get away, and making his nails from iron hoops.

After surveying the position they selected a site for a station, and entered into an agreement with the people to purchase it. "The river frontage of the land which we have tapued at Port Nicholson runs from the stream called Kumu Toto to another stream called Te Aro. The name of the bluff in the middle of it is Kai-upoko."

This is the area of land in the heart of modern Wellington over which there was considerable argument later. Wakefield claimed to have purchased it for the New Zealand Company, but the church claimed to have purchased it previously, and there is no doubt that the chiefs concerned had no intention, when entering into negotiations with Wakefield, of dispossessing the missionaries. The Land Commissioners however refused to recognise the Mission's claim, and many members of the Church laboured under a sense of injustice that the Church should thus have been done out of property rightly hers, particularly as that property later became so valuable. Even the Rev. M A Rugby Pratt says in his article *The Founding of Christianity at Port Nicholson*. "On 13th June, the purchase of the Te Aro Mission site was completed . . ." Yet it is quite clear that John Hobbs, who had conducted the negotiations, was never of that opinion.

Writing from Hokianga on September 13th, 1842 to the Revs Whiteley and Wallis he stated that "the land was tapued, not completely purchased." Land that was tapued was

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land on which a small sum was paid, something in the nature of a deposit or securing an option over the land. As it was the Land Commissioners' rule not to recognise any claim to tapued land, Hobbs at any rate was prepared to accept the Land Commissioners' finding as correct. This of course does not get away from the fact that the Maori people intended the Church to have it, and that the Church had a very strong moral claim to it, but unfortunately no legal right.

Having made arrangements for the erection of a church and mission house, and left a party of six native teachers equipped with copies of the Scriptures, hymns and catechisms from the Mission press at Mangungu to hold the field until English missionaries could be sent, they crossed to the South Island at Cloudy Bay. Here, on Sunday, 16th June, John Hobbs preached the first sermon heard in the South Island. They were impressed by the size and prosperity of the whaling industry. In Cloudy Bay there were eight whaling ships, and at Queen Charlotte Sound, fifteen. Whale oil then would fetch sixty pounds per ton in New Zealand, or one hundred pounds in Sydney. However, they were considering the establishment of new stations and Hobbs records that there were not enough Maoris in the area to justify the establishment of a Mission.

On Friday, 21st June, while still at Queen Charlotte Sound he records in his journal, "It is seventeen years ago this day since I left my father's house to come into the South Seas, and I this day find myself a preacher of righteousness to those who have never before been addressed by a European preacher." We can imagine the sense of satisfaction it must have given him when on looking back over the long separation from home, he could also look back on the growth of the work of God in New Zealand. He had seen the beginnings at Whangaroa in 1823; now in 1839 he was contemplating the spread to the South Island.

From Queen Charlotte Sound they proceeded in their boat up to Mana Island, Porirua, and Kapiti. Everywhere they found white men living with Maori wives. So on up the Taranaki coast until, on 2nd July, they arrived off the Kawhia Heads at daybreak. On their arrival at the mission house where they met the Rev. John and Mrs. Whiteley, they dismissed their vessel the Hokianga, intending to travel the rest of the way on foot. After a rest of several days Hobbs and Bumby set off with Whiteley for the Mokau, for there had come word of war impending between two of the tribes. When they had met the contending parties, and settled their differences, they returned to Kawhia, much regretting the delay in their trip.

Then, on 26th July, that is, more than three weeks after their arrival at Kawhia, they set out for Aotea and Whaingaroa (Raglan). At this latter place they met the Rev. James Wallis. And here, to his joy, Hobbs received on August 1st letters from home—Mangungu—the first news he had had of his family since leaving home on May 14th. So on, up to the Manukau Harbour, to Pehiakura the home of Epiha Putini (Jabez

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Bunting), across the harbour to Waikumete and on, by foot to Tangiteroria in the Kaipara district. Here he met the Rev. James Buller who was, just a little later, to take the lead in establishing Methodism in Auckland. But he was anxious to be home, so did not delay, but went on past Kaihu which he reached on August 14th, the anniversary of his wedding, through the area now known as the Waipoua State Forest down to Waimamaku, and up the hills beyond until, on 16th August, "In the evening at dusk I had the unspeakable pleasure of looking down from the hills into the Hokianga River."

To many New Zealand people of today the Hokianga is still the Land of the Lost, but those who have been privileged to travel from Dargaville through the Waipoua Forest and Waimamaku and up the hills to emerge through the cutting at the top of the hill and have burst upon them the view of the Hokianga River and Heads, the blue of the sea, the white breakers on the bar, and the golden sand hills beyond, can appreciate something of what gave Hobbs that "unspeakable joy" for this is one of the grand views in New Zealand. Hobbs, however, did not see the golden beauty of the menacing sand hills—he saw the more sombre bush, but what he saw was home—his own district. By 8 p.m. he had reached Newark, or Pakanae as we now call it, where William Woon was stationed. Not all that the Woons could do could persuade him to accept their hospitality for the night. All he wanted to do was to get home. He secured a boat and set off on the final lap of his journey—the fourteen mile trip up the harbour to Mangungu where he arrived on August 17th, "at 12.30 a.m. after an absence of thirteen weeks and five days."

Bishop Selwyn is justly known for his formidable feats of walking through New Zealand. But he was not alone in this. Surely this journey in which John Hobbs crossed on foot from Hokianga to the Bay of Islands, went by sea down the East Coast to Port Nicholson, across to the Sounds and up the West Coast to Kawhia and then walked from Kawhia to the Hokianga is worthy of record among the great feats of those days.

This was not the only big trip Hobbs made. One other trip made at a later date is equally worthy of recording. On this occasion in 1848, Hobbs was accompanying his daughter Emma and her husband, the Rev. William Kirk, who had been appointed to open up a new station in the Wanganui district. They chartered a vessel the Harriet Leithart to convey them to their new station. Furniture and joinery for Kirk's house was prepared at Mangungu and loaded on to the schooner, together with Kirk's belongings from Newark or Pakanae, three or four miles from the entrance to the harbour. Entering or leaving a narrow harbour mouth like the Hokianga, especially when furnished with a treacherous bar, was no easy matter in the days of sail. Wind and tide had to be just right. The Harriet Leithart missed her first opportunity to cross the bar because she had fouled her anchors and the skipper refused to abandon them. By the time they were freed the tide had turned. Then followed stormy weather or

unsuitable winds. When the wind was right the tide was not, and so the whole party was kept waiting, unable to leave the boat, for they did not know from tide to tide when conditions would improve. So they fretted against delay from August 22nd to September 21st. Eventually they went out against advice at half ebb tide. They bumped, and two big breakers came on board, but they were lucky.

They reached Onehunga three days later, and having transacted their business at Auckland were ready for sea on 27th September. Again the weather was against them, and they were bar bound until October 7th. Down the coast they proceeded to Taranaki where they experienced more bad weather and had to lay to for a time. Now they came up against another difficulty. With the exception of John Hobbs no one on board had been so far south before, the Captain being quite ignorant of this part of the coast. It was this ignorance which caused the final catastrophe. Arrived off the mouth of the Waitotara River, the Captain would have run in but for Hobb's insistence that the Wanganui was a much larger river. Finally they arrived off the mouth of the Wanganui on the evening of October 18th in perfect calm but the captain, being unfamiliar with the river, decided to wait for morning before entering. During the night a gale sprang up, an unsuccessful attempt was made to run for the shelter of Mana or Kapiti, and at 3 a.m. the vessel struck. Hobbs records that he spent the rest of the night in the rigging. Dr. G. H. Scholefield in his *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* states that the deafness which later was one of the principal causes of his retirement, developed as a result of that night's experiences. Be that as it may, the boat was a total wreck, and though there was no loss of life and little of cargo, the boat itself was finally sold for thirty-seven pounds ten shillings. What an end to the voyage! Fifty-eight days after they had embarked, the boat was wrecked. Just a journey down the coast!

Hobbs now set about surveying the scene. They finally decided on a site at Ohinemutu near Pipiriki and about eighty miles from Wanganui. Here John Hobbs purchased an area of ten to twelve acres for the use of the mission, and comments that it was the easiest time he had ever had in land dealing. Whether there is any connection in fact between that and the earlier statement that the Maoris here were less civilised than those in the north it is difficult to say.

Having seen Emma and Kirk settled, Hobbs set off for home. He was to travel by canoe and on foot up to Auckland, and then by boat to the Bay of Islands. It was not an easy parting, for Hobbs realised all the difficulties his daughter and her husband would have to face. In his journal he writes, "The prospect of leaving this dear young couple to prosecute their work in their responsible station is, to a father, one of those events which require the exercise of faith and trust in God. Lord, guide and help them." So, on 28th November he left them and set off up the river. What a journey it must have been. One day he records ten and a half hours at the paddle with only a kumara for breakfast and lunch. Ten and a half hours at the paddle with rain, and then

to bed with wet blankets. So he proceeded until he left the main river on December 8th. But even on such a journey there were agreeable surprises for, on December 3rd, he writes that he had met some Maoris who had copies of his translation of the Book of Job. December 12th being wet, he rested to ease his leg and foot, which had been giving him trouble ever since leaving Ohinemutu. Two days later he passed the Ongarue and Waimiha Rivers and ascended the hills that divided the streams. Now he came to those flowing to the Mokau and the north of Taranaki.

Three days later, he reached Whakatatumutumu which had been a station occupied by a lay missionary, Mr. Miller, who had died at his post the previous year, and been buried by the Maori people on the hill Zion or Hiona. The grave is still to be seen on the hill at Arapae, as the district is now called, nine miles south of Te Kuiti on the Awakino road. Here he spent the night, and next morning rose early to chase, catch and kill a goat belonging to the station. Then he turned cook, made a stew, and at 12 o'clock had a good breakfast. And his only comment was, "Thanks be to God for such provision in the Wilderness." Just three weeks after leaving Ohinemutu he reached the Rev. George Buttles's station at Onepaka (Te Kopua) in the Waipa. Here he appreciated the comforts of civilisation. He ate food after the European manner, was able to wash his soiled clothes, enjoyed raspberries and cherries from the garden, and caps all with the exclamation, "How delicious was new-made bread!" But he was still a long way from home, and so pushed on for Auckland, being much impressed by the richness of the land in the Waipa and Waikato. Auckland he reached on Christmas Day, and after discussing the situation with the Revs. Walter Lawry and Thomas Buddle, who were disturbed to find how few Maoris there were in the Wanganui and Taupo districts, he left on 28th December in the Nancy for the Bay of Islands. Arrived at the Bay he was nearly home. He had but to walk across the island to the Waihou River and then followed a three and a half hour canoe trip to Mangungu. He had been away more than four months, he had been shipwrecked, he had canoed or walked from the mouth of the Wanganui to Auckland; and this was in 1848.

His journals abound in records of his journeys, though none other was as extensive as those recorded above. A trip from Mangungu to Keri Keri of course was scarcely worth mention, but other trips, such as those from Mangungu to Wesleydale Kaeo and Oruru in the north, or to Tangiteroria on the Kaipara travelling via Waima, Otatau and the Mangakahia Valley were greater events. Two things it would appear from his records were a trial on such journeys—fleas which often made a good night's rest impossible, and the impossibility of keeping dry.

"I slept as much as I could during the night, in a native house, but hosts of fleas annoyed me very much. Green rushes were my mattress, and a thin rush mat my bed ... I put my mackintosh under me and my cloak over me as a house and bed but cannot say that the night was very refreshing." Thus he describes two consecutive nights on his trip to Tangiteroria via the Mangakahia Valley in 1841.



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Again, writing to the London Committee in 1857, describing a short journey he had made he says, "The track which cannot be called a road, for about five miles inland is so full of mud and water and so crooked, narrow, and intercepted with fallen trees, high bushes and shrubs, as to excite our gratitude that we escaped with a few heavy falls, with torn trousers, and a general bath of perspiration. The great danger arises from sitting in the boat for two hours pulling against a keen wind after one has been so bathed."

Considering the conditions under which he travelled, and the strain which he put upon himself, it is no wonder that he was forced to retire at the early age of fifty-eight. That is comparatively young, but when we remember that of those fifty-eight years thirty-six had been spent largely living so strenuously, this early retirement is not surprising.

## TRIALS AND HEARTACHES

Hobbs returned from his trip with Bumby to Port Nicholson, on August 17th, 1839 and so was at Mangungu when Captain Hobson arrived at the Bay of Islands to negotiate with the Maori people for the cession of New Zealand to the British. But Hobbs did not go over to Waitangi to meet the new Consul and future Governor, in spite of the fact that all the leading chiefs, the men who looked to the Wesleyan Missionaries and to John Hobbs in particular as their father and guide and counsellor, were there. Hobbs says that though he was asked to represent the Mission at what transpired to be a most historic occasion, he did not want to leave home again so soon after so protracted an absence. Bumby, the Superintendent, had, after his return from the south, made a further tour to Oruru, Mangonui and Whangaroa, and also paid a visit to Sydney to arrange for furniture and supplies for several projected new stations. The mission was therefore represented at Waitangi by the Revs. John Warren and Samuel Ironside. While we can appreciate his reluctance to leave home, his family and his people, it is a pity that Hobbs, the man who, of all the Wesleyans, could have spoken with most authority, and who was so highly esteemed by James Busby, was absent. It is of course in keeping with his general nature. He much preferred working on his own station to attending such gatherings. What a contrast with the Roman Catholic Bishop Pompallier who, though but newly arrived in New Zealand (he had landed in the Hokianga in 1838) appeared at Waitangi clad in elaborate vestments in striking contrast to the simple black of Church and Wesleyan missionaries and, by clever manoeuvring, secured for himself an important position near Hobson out of all proportion to his influence with Maori and pakeha. The accounts of this in Buick's *The Treaty of Waitangi* and Scholefield's *William Hobson* make amusing reading.

However, though Hobbs was not at Waitangi in person, his influence was there. It is generally agreed that the speech of Tamati Waka Nene, the great Hokianga chief and statesman, did more to influence the assembled Maori chiefs than anything else. Behind that speech lay the mana of John Hobbs. Nene was a Wesleyan chief, and had not gone to Waitangi before discussing with Hobbs this vital question. But though Hobbs was not at Waitangi he did not miss all the negotiations over the Treaty.

Hobson crossed over from the Bay of Islands to Waihou on the Hokianga. Here he was met by the men from Mangungu and the other principal European settlers. They made a triumphal progress down the river in a dozen boats accompanied by an equal number of canoes. Passing Horeke where Lieutenant MacDonnell lived, they were greeted by a salute of thirteen guns from MacDonnell's battery on a hill overlooking the river. They reached Mangungu where, in the absence of the Rev. J. H. Bumby, Hobson was entertained by Miss Bumby. On the following day, 12th February, Hobson held a meeting to discuss the Treaty. Here assembled some three thousand Maoris, including between four hundred and five hundred chiefs. John Hobbs here

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acted as interpreter, just as Henry Williams had done at Waitangi a few days previously.

May 1840 saw the arrival of the Rev. John Waterhouse, newly appointed General Superintendent of Missions in the Pacific on board the brig *Triton* which was on her maiden voyage as a mission ship. With him were six additional missionaries for the New Zealand field. Bumby joined the *Triton* at Hokianga to accompany those who were appointed to the south as far as Kawhia. After the *Triton* had left for Tonga he set out on his return to Hokianga. He visited Whaingaroa and the Waikato, and then crossed to Thames. Wishing to avoid the western route back to the Hokianga, partly because he did not feel equal to the heavy walking involved, and partly because he dreaded crossing the Kaipara Heads where the *Sophia Pate* had been lost, he decided to go by sea from Thames to Waiheke and so on to Whangarei. On 26th June his canoe was upset on the passage between Motu-tapu and Tiritiri in the Hauraki Gulf. Bumby and thirteen of his Maori companions were drowned. So Bumby perished only eighteen months after his arrival in the country. Hobbs, as the senior missionary, became acting chairman of the New Zealand District, and continued in that capacity until the arrival of the Rev. Walter Lawry on March 17th, 1844.

This was a very difficult period with many problems. There was the land question—"My heart aches," he says early in 1840 "for the condition of this island. Europeans trying to grasp all the land they can, and natives quarrelling with natives about the right of the different individuals to sell." And he was particularly disturbed about the activities of the New Zealand Company and its dealings with the Maoris. A further effect of the increasing settlement was the greater demand for native labour. The Maoris were not slow to capitalize on this, and their demands for payment soon became exorbitant. The missionaries were unable to meet them.

But there were other problems very disturbing to Hobbs, with his passionate concern for the well-being of the Maori people and for the extension of the Kingdom of God. In the early days of the mission there had been full and free co-operation between the two Missionary Societies. Maoris attached to one mission were freely welcomed at the other. The missionaries of one Society visiting another were always invited to lead the services. Eric Ramsden in his *Marsden and the Missions* titles one of his chapters, "The Brethren of Mangungu." That is symbolic of the relationship between them. Their one big disagreement had been resolved by the so-called Treaty of Mangungu, the agreement between them arranged by Nathaniel Turner and Henry Williams whereby the Anglicans were to keep to the east coast and the Wesleyans to the west. But in the early forties that former friendship was showing signs of breaking. A large measure of the responsibility for this must be accepted by Bishop Selwyn, who deliberately set about destroying the basis of that friendly co-operation. "Our natives," says John, "have been somewhat annoyed lately to hear that Episcopalianism is spoken of as the only direct road to heaven, and that all other ways are pig tracks."

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On August 3rd, 1843 he writes,

"It is twenty years this day since I first landed in New Zealand. When I came heathenism was the religion of the country, now there is Methodism, High Episcopacy and Popery. When we had the opposition of heathenism, bloodshed and cannibalism, the two Societies, viz. the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Missionary Society were of one heart and one soul, and only one love (ruled) the whole. About six years ago a Roman Bishop came with a number of French Priests, and succeeded in hindering many from receiving the gospel who would no doubt have given themselves to the Lord and to us. The tribe at the Heads of this river (the Hokianga) is an example. Rangatera is their chief and they are now obstinately heathen.

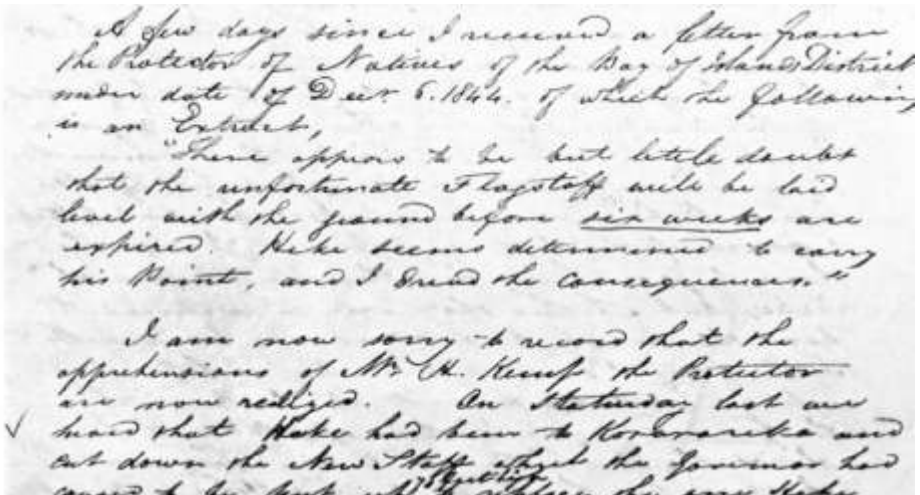
"A little more than a year ago an English Bishop arrived and has now established a College at the Waimate. He brought out a number of clergymen with him, and some of them at least are great admirers of the Oxford Tracts (High Church), and now we have indubitable proof that from this Episcopal establishment we are to expect no ecclesiastical friendship. We have a long while suspected that Puseyism was to be the order of the day, and now we are sufficiently convinced of it. "From the first establishment of Christianity in New Zealand the natives of both the Missionary Societies have been accustomed to take the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at any of the stations where they might be, but now a stop is put to our people going to the Sacrament at the Waimate Church, which is now to be the cathedral, and the members of the Church Society are prohibited from taking communion with us."

Co-incident with this changed attitude came the decision of the Church Missionary Society to establish Octavius Hadfield at Kapiti or Waikanae. This was in contravention of the spirit of the "Mangungu Treaty" but it is interesting to note that John Hobbs did not place all the blame on the Anglicans. Bumby, he felt was partly responsible. Of this decision he says, "This is of course a coming round to the western coast, and since we broke faith with them in not standing to the agreement entered into with them I think they will now go on and do all the good they can without reference to us, especially as they see Mr. Bumby so very distant. It appears to me as if he almost hates them." A fortnight later he says, "Mr. Williams told me plainly that he would not be bound to the eastern coast, and that if the committee at home insisted on it 'he would leave the Society before he would yield. He said it was so unjust."

Above all he was very concerned at this time over the spiritual life of the Maori people. He complains of the lack of spirituality. "My soul is sorrowful, and my spirits seem to fail. I fear there are very few who enjoy real spiritual religion." His people he finds indifferent to the prayer meeting, and gently says, "I find the people want much more looking after now than when they first believed." It was at this time that,

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contrasting what he knew of the true spiritual development of the people with the reports that had been sent to England of eager reception of the gospel, he voices the fear that, "too glowing reports have been sent home." Something of the same rather plaintive note can be detected in the remarks with which forty years later he concluded an interview with a representative of the *New Zealand Observer*. "I believe that many of the natives were sincere, and died in hopes of a glorious immortality, though I fear that not so many of them were brought to Christ as I could have wished. Still we can look back and say that our labour has not been in vain. If I still had strength to run a boat I would still labour in the vineyard . . . We must all grow weak some day, but I thank God if, by my humble efforts, I have done something in His great cause." Amid all this questioning of the success of their work, with all these problems and worries we can feel the joy with which he records the success of efforts of Whiteley and Wallis in Kawhia and Raglan. "My heart rejoices at the increase in the numbers of persons joining Bro. Whiteley and Bro. Wallis who have a wide field before them. But when I turn my attention to my present station (he was then at Newark where the people had been more difficult than at any other place) and see almost all that remain out of Society, either attached to Popery or obstinately refusing to join either Protestants or Catholics, my heart aches."



A few days since I received a letter from the Protector of Natives of the Bay of Islands District under date of Decr 6. 1844. of which the following is an Extract,

"There appears to be but little doubt that the unfortunate Flagstaff will be laid level with the ground before six weeks are expired. Hake seems determined to carry his Point, and I dread the consequences."

I am now sorry to record that the apprehensions of Mr. H. Kemp the Protector are now realized. On Saturday last we heard that Hake had been to Kororarua and cut down the New Staff upon the Governor had caused to be built <sup>at the same place</sup> ~~at the same place~~ the one Hake

A page from Hobbs' diary.

## THE SECOND HALF

After the death of Bumby, Hobbs moved back to Mangungu, and there he remained until Heke's war. All through the war the mission staff remained. The Hokianga Maoris, led by Nene, supported the Government so that they had nothing to fear from them, but of course the absence of all the fighting men of their tribes left them wide open to attack by any raiding party of Heke's supporters. Indeed at one stage they commenced to fortify the Mangungu station intending to make it a place of safety for all the Hokianga residents. They desisted however, as they considered that to prepare to resist attack was the surest way of inviting it. It was moreover, thought John Hobbs, inconsistent to fortify a mission station. That they were not without apprehension is shown by Hobbs's entry in his journal under the date, May 24th, 1845. "We are all, by the mercy of God, in the land of the living, although our people have nearly all been away since the fighting began."

Eventually on January 3rd, 1846, not long before the end of the war as events turned out, Mrs. Hobbs and the family, Dr. Day, the Rev. W. Woon and his family, together with other European settlers, sixty-eight all told, left Hokianga in the Government brig Victoria. John Hobbs refused to leave. With him remained Mr. and Mrs. Stannard. It had not been intended that Mr. and Mrs. Stannard should remain, but Mrs. Stannard was not able to reach the point of embarkation in time.

Hobbs, of course, held himself ready to perform what service he could for his Maori people, and on more than one occasion was uncomfortably close to fighting. Eric Ramsden in Busby of Waitangi records the following incident on the authority of Lieutenant Morton Jones of H.M.S. Pandora. "On one occasion Maning (Frederick Maning the author of *Old New Zealand*), who led his Maori relatives by marriage against Heke, was accompanied in a boat by the missionary Hobbs. Bullets whizzed about their ears as they approached the enemy. But as Hobbs preserved a calm unruffled demeanour, Maning did not wish to show fear. It was not until later that he realised that Hobbs was stone deaf. He then lost little time in getting the boat out of gun-shot range." In all probability that story originated with Maning and Maning was a great story-teller with a good eye for effect.

Hobbs was not stone deaf in 1845—not even hard of hearing. It was not till thirteen years later that deafness and rheumatic ills forced him to retire.

In September, when the fighting was over and the people had settled down, Hobbs left on the Thistle with Warren to attend a meeting of the whole mission staff. It was here that they divided the territory into three sections—North, Middle and South. The North, that is all from Auckland northwards, was to be under Hobbs's chairmanship.

Up till this time New Zealand had been, together with Australia, a Mission field of the English Wesleyan Conference. Now however, the feeling was growing especially in

England, that the time had arrived when they should accept autonomy and the responsibilities that went with it. In 1853 the Revs. R. Young and W. B. Boyce made a tour of Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific in order to prepare plans for the establishment of an Australasian Conference of which New Zealand was to form part. This would mean that with the establishment of the conference in 1855 financial support from England would cease. To prepare the way for this it was decided in 1853 that towns with a European population should support their own ministers. Native circuits were to raise what they could to meet travelling expenses, conveyance of supplies from Auckland, repairs to boats, and the support of Native teachers. Hobbs felt this to be a serious blow. His income would be reduced by about £40. To offset this it was suggested that he do less travelling, but he knew that with the small widely scattered groups under his charge much travelling was essential. He was now becoming inconvenienced by his growing deafness and, questioning his own ability to cope with these changed conditions, he offered to become a supernumerary. The District Meeting or Synod would not agree. Though their refusal was in the nature of a vote of confidence, Hobbs writes in his Journal, "If I should succeed in satisfying my brethren in the District I have no hope of ever satisfying myself." He was not optimistic about getting travelling expenses from the people. "I fear," he says, "I can never get it from these people, whose disposition always has been to get from us as much as possible." It brought home forcibly again a trait of the Maori character that had concerned him and others for many years. A question on the District Meeting or Synod agenda was—Are regular contributions made? The answer in 1838 was "This is not practicable here at present," and the following year, "We hope something may be done bye and bye." There was always this tendency to take, and give nothing in return. Hobbs commented on one occasion, when he had given a Maori some fruit trees which he had grafted. "He seemed satisfied, without asking for more. This perhaps amounts almost to gratitude."

Nevertheless we find him throwing himself heartily into the work. He had always been concerned about education, and during 1853 and 1854 we find him working hard to make provision for a central school in the Hokianga. He suggested a site at Waihou just beyond the piece he had originally purchased in 1827. This however, the Maoris were not prepared to give. Later, however, he completed negotiations for an area on the south-west side of the entrance to the Utakura Valley just three miles from Mangungu, to be given. A deed of gift was drawn up and duly signed, whereby 800 acres was to be given to the Society on the understanding that native children be admitted, fed, clothed and trained in industry and general learning. "They give it," says Hobbs "never to be devoted to any but educational purposes." But he felt a sense of real achievement. He had persuaded them to give something to the mission, and he had hopes of building a fine school there. But late in 1854 his hopes were dashed. Boyce informed them that the Mission Committee could not allow any finance for

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schools, and as the Government funds would provide for only two central schools all his plans went for nought.

In 1856 Hobbs left the north. His health would no longer permit him to carry on the field work. He settled first at the College at Three Kings, and later at "the old Native Institution near Auckland." This was the property which had been abandoned in favour of Three Kings as the school grew. Hobbs's reference to its being near Auckland is amusing when we realise that he is talking about the property in Grafton, where Trinity College stands today. However Hobbs was not yet retired. In January 1857 we find him setting out for New Plymouth where he had been deputed to investigate charges made against another of the missionaries. One of his first duties on arrival in New Plymouth was to preach at a Sunday School anniversary. His account of the service includes the revealing remark, "The organ was not very annoying, though it is much out of tune." Later the same year Hobbs, together with Thomas Buddle and Alexander Reid, formed the Wesleyan representatives on a committee appointed to carry out a revision of the Maori Bible. This was no light task, for from June 17th they met at St. Stephen's School (Parnell) five hours daily (except Saturday) for three months. In 1858 he retired and spent his long retirement in Auckland.

During the years of his retirement he maintained his interest in the Maori Mission, and kept himself well informed over its developments, especially its trials during the Maori Wars of the sixties. Two of his daughters, Emma Kirk and Marianne Gittos, were in the active work of the mission, and kept him in touch with things. He continued to show, too, his keen interest in all new developments of thought and knowledge, and followed the general development of the colony with interest. As the years passed his deafness became worse, and he had recourse to the only hearing aid then available. "The old gentleman with the horn"\* became a familiar figure on Auckland streets, and especially at the Pitt Street Church where the Rev. T. G. Hammond says he used to be seated in the pulpit beside the preacher. Hammond also says that Bishop Stuart of Waiapu always paid him a visit when he could, and said that "there appeared to him a halo of glory encircling the old man's head."

John Hobbs died at three p.m. on Sunday, June 24th, 1883, thus ending an association with New Zealand that went back sixty years. The contemporary account of the funeral service reads like a roll call of great missionaries, Anglican as well as Methodist, and the benediction at the close of the service was pronounced by that other great missionary and Maori scholar the Ven. Archdeacon Maunsell. He was buried in the Symonds Street cemetery Auckland, where rest so many of the great pioneers. This ear trumpet is now in the Museum attached to Trinity College Library, Auckland.

"From the first establishment of Christianity in New Zealand the natives of both the Missionary Societies have been accustomed to take the Sacrament of the



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Lord's Supper at any of the stations where they might be, but now a stop is put to our people going to the Sacrament at the Waimate Church, which is now to be the cathedral, and the members of the Church Society are prohibited from taking communion with us."

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**The Rev. And Mrs. John Hobbs in their later years.**

**"There appeared a halo of glory encircling the old man's head" said Bishop Stuart of Waipu.**

## FAMILY LIFE

The whole question of marriage and the bringing up of a family is a complex one for a missionary. The married man with a family has certainly given hostages to fortune. Family responsibilities tend sometimes to restrict his spheres of service. There arises the conflict of loyalties. We see the problem in Hobbs's life. It was Mrs. Hobbs's health that forced him to retire from the work in Tonga. It was anxiety for the education and well-being of his growing family that made him hesitant about accepting appointment to Port Nicholson. There are some arguments in favour of a celibate ministry on the mission field. But this of course is an unnatural solution to the problem. A man is thus deprived of the comfort of a life's partner with whom he may discuss problems, hopes and failures, fears and successes; deprived of the companionship which means so much to men so isolated from their own kind. The lack of this comfort has on more than one occasion placed on the moral fibre of men a strain which has been too great to be resisted. New Zealand alone provides more than one example of this.

But the idea of marrying and taking a wife out to the wild parts of the earth, and there bringing up a family where both mother and children will be deprived of the most elementary services and needs, is not to be lightly undertaken. In the Instructions to Samuel Leigh, quoted earlier we find official recognition of the dangers of their position.

"You are going not only beyond the bounds of the Church of Christ, the ordinances and privileges of which you must for a time be deprived of, but also beyond the bounds of the British Empire; and will not, like most of your fellow missionaries, enjoy the protection of its power and its laws. You, Brother Leigh, will fix your residence among the rude savages of New Zealand . . .

In this respect you are placed in circumstances similar to many of the first preachers of the gospel. You carry, in an emphatic sense, your lives in your hands."

Hobbs married on August 14th, 1827, Miss Jane Brogreff of Ramsgate. Miss Brogreff, to whom Hobbs says somewhere, he had been engaged for many years, had come out to Sydney (still a convict settlement) to marry him. She had crossed the world only to find on her arrival at Sydney that Hobbs and his colleagues had been driven out of Whangaroa. Yet she married him, and two months later left Sydney with him to make a second attempt at establishing a mission. The difficulties and dangers of facing life under such primitive conditions so far removed from medical aid or the company of other women, beyond the protection of the law, were enough to daunt the bravest heart, but when we add to that, the uncertainty of the welcome they would receive from the Maoris we must admit that hers must have been a courage, a love and a faith

far beyond the average. Think of her first home in New Zealand. It was, says Dr. Laws, a native house, "some thirty feet long by nine feet wide but the eaves were only three feet and the ridge pole six feet from the ground. It had been lined with 'plaited green stuff' and a small piece of ground had been enclosed to secure some privacy. The goods were brought ashore in 'boxes and casks' and the women set to work to make the house habitable, parts were curtained off with blankets, boxes of even height served as bedsteads, and thus they settled into their new home. 'It being somewhat uncomfortable,' gently complains John Hobbs, 'and we have begun already-to knock our heads.' " And that was of course the home for the whole party, not merely for John and Jane Hobbs. Soon they transferred to a better house specially built by the natives for them, but even of this Hobbs comments, "It is far from being either windproof or watertight." Later, when they transferred to Mangungu, Hobbs built a weatherboard house but even this was only thirty-one feet by twelve.

John and Jane Hobbs had nine children, four sons and five daughters: Emma born at Paihia in 1828, Marianne born 31st July 1830, at Mangungu, Margaretta born at Keri Keri, 19th November 1831, Richard born 24th February 1833 at Mangungu Phebe born at Tonga Tabu June 23rd 1835, George born at Haapai 11th June 1837 (died at Waimate, Sunday, 18th March 1838) Edward Giles born at Newark 1839, Eliza born at Mangungu 1842, and William born at Mangungu 1845.

The education of a family was no easy task but it was not one a father could afford to neglect. It was his duty to see that in the matter of education as in other things his children suffered on account of their isolated position, no more than could be avoided. We find that it was a problem of which John Hobbs was fully aware. The four older girls attended a school kept by Mrs. William White. At one period a widow, Mrs. Ross, was employed to teach them. Then, too, advantage was taken of the services of young missionaries. So James Buller, who had originally come to New Zealand in 1836 as tutor to Nathaniel Turner's children, is specifically mentioned as having assisted at least with Marianne's education. But undoubtedly the greatest contribution to the children's education was made by Dr. Richard Day.

Dr. Day, an Irishman, had originally arrived in the Hokianga in 1838. He stayed with the Rev. N. Turner at Mangungu while he investigated the possibility of purchasing a block of land on which to found a settlement of friends from Cork. Eventually he decided to purchase an area in the Kaihu Valley in the Kaipara district. This land was tapued (that is a deposit was paid, or an option was taken over it) and settlers were sent for. This was the ill-fated group who lost their lives in the wreck of the *Sophia Pate* in the Kaipara Harbour. The whole scheme of settlement was abandoned, and on August 31st 1842 Dr. Day took up his residence with John Hobbs. Day was to teach the children and also to teach Hobbs to read Greek.

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We do not hear very much of the doctor in the following years although from the references, which appear at intervals, to his work among the sick, Maori and pakeha alike, it is apparent that he was a most valued member of the community. On July 3rd 1856, Hobbs, who was then living at Three Kings, records in his Journal "Dr. Day left us this day to reside at Wesley College and to allow William Watkin to come to Three Kings to assist Reid." That brief entry covers a story of mutual affection and esteem that would not often be equalled. The doctor had shared his home for fourteen years and this at a time when the absence of other settlers and restricted accommodation must have thrown them very much together. The very fact that they could thus live together in peace and friendship for fourteen years, of itself speaks volumes for the character of the two men. And finally they parted only because the growth of the Native Institution at Three Kings necessitated room being found for an additional member of the staff.

When we consider the contribution made by missionaries to the development and civilisation of New Zealand, we must think not only of what they themselves did, but also of the work and contribution of their families. So we think not only of James Buller but also of his son Sir Walter Buller the great ornithologist, not only of the Rev. Robert Ward but also of Robert Ward his son, Judge of the Native Land Court.

And if we went through the lists of the early missionaries— of all churches—and tried to estimate the importance of the contribution these men made to the life of the young country we would be amazed at its extent. Beyond the strict limits of their work as preachers of the gospel and missionaries to the native people, we find them to be leaders of society in almost every worthwhile work—they were among the government's most valued advisers, they were the authorities on Maori language and customs, they were the explorers, the geologists, the authorities on flora and fauna. It would be difficult indeed to assess the value of their work in the first fifty years of European settlement. Not the least of their gifts to the community were their children who, in the church, and in the community at large, served their God and His people. This was true of John Hobbs's family. Emma, his eldest daughter married the Rev. William Kirk, who had arrived in New Zealand in April 1847. Little imagination is required to see that when, in 1848, they established a new station on the Wanganui it was Emma, born and brought up among the Maoris, who was, in the early days at least, the more valuable of the two as a missionary. Even today, despite the great developments of facilities in the Pacific, the provision of education for growing families is a problem for missionaries, and often compels their return from the mission field. We can imagine the problem it was a century ago. This difficulty was however, largely overcome through a scheme which was conceived by the New Zealand missionaries. A school was founded, of which all the missionaries were share-holders of £50 each. This college was to serve not only the children of missionaries in New Zealand, but also of those in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. When this College, the original

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Wesley College was opened in 1850, under the Rev. J. H. Fletcher as Headmaster, Marianne, John Hobbs's second daughter, became an assistant teacher. That, however, was not her greatest service to the Church. In 1857 she married the Rev. William Gittos, who, like herself, had been brought up in the Hokianga, and had a thorough know'-ledge of Maori language, habits and customs. He later was entrusted with the work of re-opening the Waipa Mission after the Maori Wars, and later still became Superintendent of Maori Missions in the Auckland Province. As Father Gittos or Kitohi, he had a tremendous influence among the Maori people, and for more than forty years, with his wife ably and devotedly served his God, his Church and the Maori people.

Richard, John Hobbs's eldest son, in 1853 married a daughter of the Rev. John Waterhouse who had been General Superintendent of the Missions in the Pacific. Richard, who settled in Auckland, served the community as a member of the City Council, a member for forty years of the Education Board, and for ten years he represented the North in Parliament.

Other members of his family have served the church in a variety of ways. And that service continues to the present.

Sister Airini Hobbs, who entered the ranks of the Deaconesses of the church in 1929, is today working among the Maori people of the Waikato. She is a great granddaughter of John Hobbs. So continues till today, the work commenced in 1823.

An interesting commentary on his care for his family is to be found in some of his letters written to his children after they had left home. Writing in 1858 from Auckland to his son Edward in Hobart he says,

". . . it gave me great joy that you are determined to live for heaven. This, my boy, will constitute you a 'Man.' Let no one consider himself worthy to be considered wise without Holiness. This world will pass away and all the flower of the grass with it. My heart is with you. Believe in God and study His word, and you will know His will. . . Be strong in the Lord, my boy. Be strong in the Lord. He will stand by you and strengthen you and help you. Never doubt His Presence and He will carry you through. I was much struck lately in our Revision Committees (joint Committee of Anglican and Methodist Churches set up to undertake the revision of the Maori scriptures) with this passage 'Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward!' Let us endeavour to do the same and we shall find that His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear." There is serenity of mind and heart, the conviction and the authority of one who has found in thirty-six years of pioneering endeavour that "His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear."

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And this letter written to the same son a year later shows us the same father, vitally interested in the well-being of his son but it shows, too, his continued interest in horticulture and also that he was, even in retirement, still eager to learn a new thing.

Auckland, December 28, 1859.

My Dear Son Edward,

We were very thankful to hear that you are so well in health and so hearty and Prudent a Teetotaler. It may be a fortune to you. It wil at least keep you from bowing involuntarily to persons who are not worth(y) of honour, and it will allow your sun to set in the decline of life in serenity. Always be gentle towards those who oppose themselves to your cause. I hope you will continue to prosper and grow in knowledge as well as grace. Dr. (Dr. Richard Day) has just brought home a new work by the Tract Society, called "The Heavens and the Earth." I am delighted with one page he has read about measuring the paralax of some of the stars by stellar points most distant and the Diameter of the Earth's Orbit as a base of the triangle showing the increase and the diminution of the apparent distance of the nearer stars from those most distant, which enables the Astronomer to calculate the distance from this earth of many large fixed stars. Mrs. Low is doing much good by selling the excellent works published by the Tract Society.

We are trying to do as well as we can but my hands are employed to keep me in health and to help the family. Our garden is pleasing and gives us prime cabbage, peas and some turnips, onions etc. etc. We have planted and ate gooseberries and have strawberries and a few Black and Red Currants. Have also planted Apple trees, Pear trees and Peach trees. If others eat the fruit I shall be happy as I do not wish to live for self alone. The man has no happiness who does.

This town enlarges wonderfully, and settlements are forming at Mangonui, Bay of Islands, Whangarei, Mangawhai (Mangawai) etc. etc. etc. Our chapel is to be again enlarged, but is not filled though all the seats are let.

Mr. Buddle leaves per steamer for Sydney and Melbourne iso I go to accompany him to the wharf. May God direct the steps and councils of the church. (Rev. Thos. Buddle was apparently going to attend a meeting of the Australasian Conference of the Church). Hoping you will write freely and fully by way of Journal.

*I am my Dear Son, your Affectionate Father,*

*John Hobbs.*

*All join in love to you all.*

The responsibilities of a family was a considerable part of the price a missionary had to pay in those days to serve his God. But his family was indeed so often a very important part of his contribution to the development of the country.

## RETROSPECT

Now we are in a position to evaluate Hobbs's general attitude to his life and work, his special contribution not only to the mission but also the Maori people and New Zealand as a whole.

While he did not subscribe to the orthodox belief held in the early nineteenth century, that the best way to convert the heathen was by first civilising them, it is probably true that he did more than any other Methodist missionary of his day, to bring to the Maori people the better arts of civilisation. Not only did he train many lads in simple carpentry and the use of tools, but also he was constantly urging upon them need to improve their housing, to build better, more permanent houses in healthier positions, and to make better sanitary arrangements. Writing to the Missionary Society in 1857 and recording the death of one of the local chiefs who had died of pneumonia, he says, "but who can tell the load which hangs upon my heart when I reflect on the difficulty of getting them to make for themselves proper homes. Would to God they had not one hundredth part so much land as they have at their disposal. How are they ever to become civilised while they are continually changing their residences, to keep up their title to the numerous places, where they build temporary houses to serve them while they take three or four crops out of each newly burnt off patch of ground? Such a system leaves them no home." Such a system incidentally served to make the missionary's work much more difficult. He had to be prepared to follow his flock when they moved to another locality. He was very concerned about their health. Particularly after his term in Tonga he was well equipped to give simple medical advice and assistance, and this he did whenever he could prevail upon the people to accept it. His one regret, so often expressed, was that they would not avail themselves of this help more freely.

A further way in which he tried to raise the standard of living of the people was by improving their food supply. He records with the greatest joy the harvesting of the first crop of native grown wheat at Mangungu in 1845. Another of his activities in this line was the propagation and distribution of fruit trees. An excellent gardener himself, he raised large quantities of various fruit trees, and freely gave them to the people to plant in their own villages. Years after Mangungu was abandoned (1845) Rev. James Buller paid the place a visit. In his *Forty Years in New Zealand* he writes:—

"Near the site of the old Mission house there were trees of luxuriant growth—pears, apples, peaches—which Mr. Hobbs had planted, and also pines and oaks and acacias: but these were but silent witnesses of things that had been. The old church was still standing but forsaken and empty. I looked within—it was traced with cobwebs."



A recent (1955) aerial view of the Hokianga River showing Kohukohu (right foreground). The Narrows (left centre) and Rawene (Tongue of land at left centre) White's Aviation Photograph

The church has now gone. The mission house was taken in 1855 to Onehunga, and erected there to serve as a parsonage. But the oak trees and the pear trees remain and the pear trees, now well over one hundred years old are still, according to the present occupier, bearing fruit.

Before leaving this subject of the arts of civilisation mention must be made of education. The first work other than labouring that Hobbs is recorded as undertaking back in 1823 was education. He organised a school at Wesleydale within a few months of his arrival. Almost the last big task he undertook before his retirement from the field was to prepare for the establishment of a central or district boarding school in the Hokianga.

It is significant that every appreciation of John Hobbs written about the time of his death or the centenary of his arrival in New Zealand makes special reference to his loyalty and attachment to the Queen. Captain William Hobson had a very real respect for the Missionary body. In 1837 reporting to the Governor of New South Wales on the state of New Zealand he writes: "Heretofore the great and powerful moral influence of the missionaries has done much to check the natural turbulence of the native population," and again in 1841 addressing the Legislative Council of New Zealand he said, "Whatever difference of opinion may be entertained as to the value and extent of the labours of the missionary body, there can be no doubt that they have rendered important service to the country, or that, but for them a British Colony would not at this moment be established in New Zealand." This statement of course refers to



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the missionaries as a whole but all that was said may be applied very definitely to John Hobbs. Reference has already been made to Hobbs's influence on Nene and others at the Treaty of Waitangi.

The following letter from the Governor to John Hobbs gives further emphasis to it.

Government House, Russell.  
22nd February, 1841.

Sir,

Much agitation and disquietude having been created amongst the native population by mischievous and unfounded reports respecting their lands, which have been very generally circulated throughout the country by certain disaffected persons, I am encouraged by the ready zeal with which you and your brethren of the Wesleyan Missionary Society have hitherto supported the beneficent views of Her Majesty's Government, to request that you will take such measures as you deem best to disabuse the minds of the natives of any suspicion that the Government means to dispossess them of their lands or that they entertain any designs towards them, but such as are best calculated to promote their peace and welfare.

With this view, I beg that you will take every means of assuring them that no land will be taken possession of by the Government until regularly purchased and that dealings of this nature will not be considered valid and complete until all the tribes who have a just claim to the land shall have been satisfied.

*I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Your very obedient servant,  
W. Hobson.*

Rev. Mr. Hobbs,  
Hokianga.

Another writer referring to the 1845 War in the North says, "It is not too much to say that it was mainly due to his (Hobbs's) influence for good amongst the Ngapuhi that Nene, Mohi Tawhai and Eruera Patuone came out so staunchly as allies at the time of the country's peril when Heke declared war."

His advice was sought by the government on other occasions, as for example in 1856 when the Legislature was pressing to have the control of Crown Lands and Native Affairs removed from the independent control of the Governor and placed in the hands of the elected assembly. Sir Thomas Gore Browne then wrote Hobbs asking his opinion. Hobbs was very definite in his reply, ". . . I am of the opinion that the entire management of Native Affairs . . . should be reserved to Her Majesty's Representative distinctly and entirely (his underlining). I am also of the opinion that this Colony would not now exhibit the unanimity it does between the two races if the Representative of Her Majesty, from the establishment of the colony, had been at all

fettered with respect to Native Affairs." However, the Governor, even with the support of authorities such as Hobbs, was not able to resist the demands of the Assembly. It is interesting to note that at least some historians have expressed the opinion that the Maori Wars which soon followed, would not have occurred had these two matters been reserved to the Governor.

In such a large organisation as the Wesleyan Mission had become by the late 1850's, with its agents covering practically the whole of the west coast of the North Island as well as two considerable areas in the South Island, two types of worker were required, those with administrative ability and also field workers. It might appear that Hobbs, with his years of experience and his intimate knowledge of the Maori people, would have made a good head of the Mission. Yet this was not so. On one or two occasions he, as senior missionary, acted as Superintendent and, for a time, he was chairman of the Northern District. But he did not enjoy this work. He was not suited to it and it irked him. When he learned that the Rev. Walter Lawry had been appointed Superintendent in 1843 he writes, "I would here record that I hail Mr. Lawry's appointment as a pledge of the Divine Goodness to his people ..... It will moreover tend to relieve me from a great portion of that anxiety which has for a long time haunted my mind and distressed my heart." He was most willing to lay down his responsibilities. Moreover he was probably not fitted by temperament for such work.

He was every inch a field worker. We find James Buller from Tangiteroria remonstrating with him because he had not come down from Mangungu to visit them at Tangiteroria. The demands of his own people and his own work were so great on him that he did not feel that he could afford the time to make those periodical visits for encouragement that a superintendent should. His journals show him to be essentially a man for the field. Throughout all his record, beyond or behind all his claims to be remembered for his versatility and his inventive genius lies "the passion of a true missionary for the souls of his people." Many a Journal entry concludes with the prayer "Lord, give me some souls for my hire." The only payment he asked for his services, the knowledge that he had succeeded. It was among the people that he was at home. Here he was in his element. This was the work at which he was an expert—an authority.

Earlier we quoted John Warren's famous description of his achievements. Add to that his ability as a builder, not only of houses and churches but also of boats, the fact that practically unaided he mastered the use of a printing press, that he became an authority on the Maori language, speaking it in its purest form, and you have some picture of his accomplishments. With regard to his printing, it is interesting to note that while in Tonga he printed a total of one hundred and twenty one thousand, eight hundred and four books, comprising portions of the scriptures, hymns, catechisms and rules and regulations of the church.

## Brother John by T. G. M. Spooner

From the very beginning of his service he was seized with the importance of translating the scriptures and hymns and other material into Maori. On his return to New Zealand in 1827 he had brought with him copies of hymns, some of his own translation. The strong plea he made at that time for a scholar to undertake the work of translation shows great foresight. It is interesting to see too, that he was impressed with the need to have good translations—hymns that were good poetry—not merely literal translations of the English—scriptures that were good idiomatic Maori. "We want more native hymns," he writes one Sunday in September 1838 when he records that he has been composing a hymn while confined to the house ill, "and I most earnestly wish them to be made with a proper attention to accent which has as yet been but very partially attended to in the Polynesian languages, much to the detriment of that part of the worship of God which is rendered so delightful by good hymns and good tunes." His enthusiasm for the language is evidenced by entries in his journal such as the occasion in 1839, when, on his return from a journey to Oruru and the North, he records his joy at finding a word which is a good translation for the word sacrifice, a word he had wanted for years. It is impossible not to feel his exultation. Of the scriptures themselves, he translated the book of Job and the Song of Solomon.

He was a consecrated labourer in God's vineyard, a man of great enthusiasm and zeal, a tireless worker, shrewd in his judgement of men and affairs, loyal to his fellow workers, and a faithful servant of the missionary society. He was very willing to accept authority when authority was backed by wisdom and experience, but not afraid to voice his opposition when he knew from his experience, or believed in his heart that those in authority were wrong. We see that in the conflict that arose between William White and him at Mangungu, and in his expression of his opinion that the appointment of Bumby as Superintendent was a mistake. He was not one to suffer fools gladly. He came to feel increasingly impatient of those of whom he did not approve. His impatience shows through in some parts of his journal as when, during his term in Tonga, the wife of one of his fellow missionaries, disap-proving of the length of his sermons, refused to attend church. The occasion when, as a mark of protest, she left the church before the sermon was ended he records as "another display of bad temper." On one occasion when writing to the committee in London stressing the need of the appointment of a binder to assist in the work of publication he refers to one worker already on the field as supposed to be a binder "but afraid to get his hands dirty." You can almost hear him snort as he says it. Such an attitude was so foreign to his own nature.

This sense of criticism of others, or irritation with their weaknesses and shortcomings, is hardly surprising when we remember his years of service. It is characteristic of all pioneers to see the shortcomings of those who follow, those who complain about conditions which while poor are infinitely better than the original pioneers endured. Then too, John Hobbs was a man so far above the average in ingenuity, versatility, the

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ability to cope with a difficult situation, that he no doubt found it hard to understand the inability of others to do what he would have done himself. The life he had led as missionary, accustomed to direct and to rule, supreme in his own domain, would tend to develop autocratic tendencies. But most of all his health took its toll of his nerves. We know that, from 1848 onwards, his deafness made it increasingly difficult for him to carry on his work. But this was only one handicap. While there is no complaint in his journals, it is obvious that he was suffering from rheumatism and allied ills. This is not surprising when we consider the conditions under which he travelled. These troubles all combined to sap his physical (strength, and this must in turn have affected his nerves. No wonder that he sometimes gave expression to his exasperation, his criticism of others who, he felt, were not doing the best they could.

When Turner, Hobbs and the others from Wesleydale, Kaeo, were fleeing to Keri Keri after the destruction of their station, there occurred the memorable and well known meeting with Erura Patuone. Having stood by the missionaries until his war party had passed Patuone turned to them and said, "Haere ata koutou" (Go ye onward). Those words were given merely as a courteous indication that it was safe to proceed. They became however more significant, and we can imagine that Beloved Brother John took them as his motto. Certainly throughout his missionary service he acted upon those words. Whatever the difficulties, the discouragements, the problems, he pressed on to do his utmost for his God and for the Maori people he loved so well. "Haere ata koutou."

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