

## 5. 'We are all in God's hands...'

### Samoa, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji 1874–1875

The brand new journal was a sign. George Brown's old journal had declined into blank pages. For months he had thought that there was nothing worth recording. Now he was ready for a fresh start. The opening entries were bald and brief: '27 June 1874 Saturday *Wesley* arrived at Saleaula late in the evening.' '1 July Wed Left Samoa about 10 am.' Nothing more. At the time he was too busy, too emotionally exhausted and too focused on the future to record the tears, gifts and speeches of appreciation and farewell from their Samoan and missionary friends. The mission ship, months late, had come at last and that was enough. For eight weeks the Browns, together with James and Jeannie Wallis, travelled first to Rotuma, where they had a happy family reunion with Lydia's sister Lizzie and her husband William Fletcher, then to Fiji for mission meetings and finally through storms to Sydney. In harbour once more, George recognised that Lydia had not just been suffering from seasickness; she was pregnant with their seventh child.

The *John Wesley* came into Sydney Harbour on 24 August 1874. George Brown knew he must face the Mission Board alone. James Wallis, with health failing, had travelled on to New Zealand almost immediately. Would the Mission Board see him as a discomforting maverick or as a visionary leader? He came to them under a cloud to face the criticism of his brother-in-law, the accusations of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and possible censure for actions in Samoa. He was known to the Board mostly through his many long, agitated and demanding letters rather than as a friend. He was coming armed with a new scheme of action which he feared many of them would view with disapproval, or at best caution. Either he would be rebuked and disciplined, or he would be released from the limitations of Samoa to begin something new.

It was a strange meeting. Eighteen men, clergy and lay, met Brown on 9 September 1874 in the Methodist Book Depot in King Street. Brown was encouraged to see some old friends among the group, but he had reason to be apprehensive. They began with the discipline matter. The Wesleyan Methodists had been irritated with the attitude of the London Missionary Society leaders, Brown learned, ever since receiving the letter from them early in 1874, addressed to the Conference. The offending letter was re-read aloud, with their reply. They took strong exception to the language used, rejected the request for a meeting in

Samoa and determined to reserve their own judgment until they heard Brown's version of events. They were not inclined to promise either to withdraw or limit any future expansion.<sup>1</sup> George Brown gave his own explanation of his actions, giving specific examples and reasons in response to non-specific accusations. He pointed out that the LMS men had not given him a copy of their letter of complaint; if they had done so, he would have been able to answer them directly and honestly. This time he could speak persuasively, and not be limited to stating his case, as he had done many times, from the inky nib of a pen. By the time he had finished, and answered questions, the Mission Board recorded 'that this meeting is perfectly satisfied with the explanation given by Mr Brown.'<sup>2</sup> A formal response would be drafted, they told him, and sent to the LMS.<sup>3</sup> He need be anxious no more.

The fog had lifted at last. With great relief, he now painted a picture for the Board members. A new land. A new opportunity. A people who had never heard the name of Jesus. Indeed, a region that no Christian Church had ever even visited. A place where they would not be elbowing any other mission for space, or apologising for being there at all. He had been writing letters about it for so many years, but now he could let these men see the light in his eyes and hear the passion in his voice. Although he had never been to those strings of islands in the north, he had talked with sea captains who had sailed in those little-known waters; they spoke of mountainous coastlines and large populations, of tropical rain and active volcanoes, of the legendary sailors who had glimpsed the region over the past two hundred years—Tasman, Dampier, Carteret, Bougainville, D'Entrecasteaux, Hunter—and the handful of white traders who had attempted to live there, usually retreating in defeat. There were rumours of violence and cannibalism. But, he reminded his hearers, the same could have been said for Fiji forty years earlier, and only a few weeks earlier he had witnessed a generally Christianised Fiji. Best of all, he said, although the LMS had established new mission work on the south coast of the main island of New Guinea in 1872, they were a very long way from the region he was promoting. He displayed charts to illustrate this.<sup>4</sup> Would they permit at least an exploratory visit to the area in the north east known as New Britain and New Ireland?

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1 Letter from Rev. Dr. Turner and Rev. Nesbit, London Missionary Society, Samoa to NSW and Queensland Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1874, 16 December 1873; Letter from NSW and Queensland Conference of Wesleyan Methodist Church to London Missionary Society, Samoa per Dr. Turner and Rev. Nesbit, February 1874, p. 213, both in Minutes of General Missions Committee of Australasian Conference of Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1865–1898, ML MOM 1-4 CY 354.

2 Minutes of Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) Board, 9 September 1874, ML MOM 1 CY 354.

3 Minutes of WMMS Board, 21 September 1874.

4 George Brown to J.W. Wallis, 12 September 1874, in George Brown, Letter Book, 1871–76, ML A1686-2 CY 2767.

How could they resist? After an initial assessment of their improved financial position, they made their decision. It was still a qualified agreement, and if he was serious about this plan he would need to do some significant fund-raising to support it, but they recorded that the Board

regards with favour the proposal to send the Mission ship on her next voyage in March or April 1875 to visit the large Islands of New Ireland and New Britain with a view to the commencement of Missionary operations and if upon enquiry it should still appear that there are openings of importance and that the enterprise is practicable, it will give its sanction to the undertaking.<sup>5</sup>

The Mission Board was attracted to the proposed new field for mission not least because, in a climate of continued unease with the LMS, 'its inhabitants have never yet heard the glad tidings. We cannot, therefore, be charged with building upon other men's foundations.'<sup>6</sup> They approved Brown's proposal that a team of Fijian, Samoan and Tongan men be settled in that region and that a British missionary make regular visits.

That night, George Brown recorded in his Journal: 'I then introduced my plan for a New Mission and advocated it to the best of my ability. It was most favourably received and I have full permission to [agitate? advocate?] the affair. May God help us all.'<sup>7</sup>

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After years of dreaming and frustration, Brown was now free to follow a new direction. Days after the turning point of the Board meeting, Lydia sailed for New Zealand with the younger children in the comfort of the *Hero*, a 1600-ton steam ship that plied between New Zealand and Australia. She would be reunited with her older daughters and her parents once more. Brown recorded, '15 Sept My dear wife and children left today 4.30 pm per *Hero*. I feel very desolate tonight without them but feel also that we are all in God's hands and that I am endeavouring to do his work.'<sup>8</sup> Two days later he sailed for Melbourne. The task of raising funds had begun.

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5 Minutes of WMMS Board, 9 September 1874.

6 Benjamin Danks, *New Britain Mission: A Brief History*, Sydney: Australasian Wesleyan Missionary Society, Epworth Press, 1901, pp. 6–10.

7 George Brown, Journal, 9 September 1874, in George Brown, Journal, 1874–1876, ML A 1686-10-12 CY 2759.

8 *Ibid.*, 15 September 1874.



**Figure 2. George Brown 1875.**

Source: Brown family album per favour Miss Nancy Joyce.



**Figure 3. Lydia Brown 1875.**

Source: Brown family album per favour Miss Nancy Joyce.

It was just as well that Lydia and her children were safely in the arms of her wider family in New Zealand. Lydia knew that, as deeply as he loved his family, George's mind was now focused on a new project, and she was glad for him. For the next four months George Brown was on the road, travelling, speaking, inspiring and then moving on to the next town, the next congregation, the next hosts and the next bed. Stories of Samoa were part of it, but now he was trying to persuade people in the colonies to support what was now called the New Mission, in a place he had never seen. The fundraising journey took Brown through the colony of Victoria in spring. The gold of wattle in bloom and signs of new wealth from the gold diggings fascinated the man from the tropics as he began in Ballarat, finding a responsive audience among the congregations of the city founded on gold mining. By train, by horse and buggy, by stage coach

behind four horses, he traversed Victoria as summer warmed the countryside, speaking in churches in country towns and to large congregations in Melbourne churches and then on to Tasmania. With his growing connections with scientists in the fields of anthropology, botany and natural history, this gregarious man relished visits to museums, botanical gardens and the zoo, as well as cricket matches and picnics with friends. In December 1874, in Sydney the Mission Board decided, on the advice of sea captains, that the small cluster of the Duke of York Islands located between the larger islands of New Britain and New Ireland would be a relatively safe location from which to approach the ‘warlike and savage’ people of that region.<sup>9</sup> In Auckland, Lydia was in the eighth month of her pregnancy. Brown sailed from Melbourne for the South Island of New Zealand to begin another sequence of fund-raising meetings. He was still a long way from Auckland. Although he was impatient to reach his family, he managed to miss the train from Christchurch to the harbour at Lyttelton by one minute and ‘I badgered the Station Master until he promised to let me go by luggage train.’<sup>10</sup> George Brown was finally united with his family on New Year’s Day 1875.

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Auckland did not feel like ‘home’, despite the presence of Lydia, his children and a wide circle of extended family and old friends. His mind was elsewhere. Although he managed to buy a small cottage in Hepburn Street, Ponsonby for his family during January, it needed renovations and was not ready to be occupied. While Lydia bore the heat of summer in her final weeks of pregnancy, George spoke at missionary meetings, persuading his New Zealand friends to support the New Mission. He also had long conversations with Captain Simpson and officers of the *Blanche*, poring over charts of the coastline of Blanche Bay. Lydia listened with alarm as they gave a very bad character to many of the people, although they assured the Browns that the people of the Duke of York Islands were friendly. Brown was single minded. The unborn child was perhaps a beloved distraction but he was focused on planning a great new enterprise.

Lydia’s seventh baby, Mabel Wallis Brown, was born in the home of Lydia’s parents, James and Mary Anne Wallis, at Grafton Road, Auckland on 23 January 1875, on little Geoffrey’s third birthday. Her father George was there for the birth but was immediately impatient to be on his way. Six days after her birth he wrote, almost apologetically, to Chapman in Sydney explaining why on the ‘earnest advice of the Brethren and friends here’ he had decided not to sail for Sydney the next day but would wait another week and sail on *Hero*, hoping

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<sup>9</sup> Report brought from Captain Saunders of *Alacrity* in Minutes of WMMS Board, 3 December 1874.

<sup>10</sup> Brown, Journal, 22 December 1874.

to arrive in Sydney by 13 February.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps he had shocked his Auckland friends by his disregard for his wife's needs. Yet he seemed to be torn between his family and the demands of the New Mission. He would not be the first or last person to wear the blinkers of preoccupation with a cause. Lydia was no doubt exhausted with a very new baby and six other children and experiencing the emotional and physical upheaval for a woman following childbirth. She knew that her husband was either fearless or more optimistic than realistic. George wrote, Lydia

is still very weak and my departure just now would probably have a very dangerous effect on her. It is well known to her [from the captain and officers of the *Blanche*] that the New Britain natives are very fierce and though she has always said that if it is God's will that I go on with this work she will bear her share of the sacrifice and will not throw any obstacles in my way yet it is very evident that she is fretting about the matter and so all here advise my waiting a few days longer. I spoke to her last night about it and though she told me to do what I thought was my duty to God and to His work it was very plain that she felt it to be a great relief when I decided to stay. She is better this morning.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the fact that the house for his family was not yet ready, he found time to attend the New Zealand Wesleyan Conference that was meeting in Auckland, admitting to Chapman that he was writing his letter while sitting in the Conference. A steam launch for the new work was being donated and he was anxious to reach Sydney in order to organise it. He wrote, 'I should like very much to see my family quietly and comfortably settled before I leave as Mrs B. is quite unaccustomed to colonial life and feels some little anxiety about beginning housekeeping here and taking the sole charge of our children.'<sup>13</sup>

Lydia had no idea how long her husband would be away but knew it would be months. He was going into potentially dangerous situations. She had lost her trusted Samoan staff who had worked with her and helped with the children. She had also lost her ample kitchen garden with the chickens and cow, the familiar tropical diet and the place that had been home for fourteen years. Her parents and extended family were in Auckland, but once she left her parents' house, in many ways she would be alone.

George Brown left New Zealand again five weeks after arriving in Auckland and returned to Sydney to prepare for the New Mission. He assured Lydia that he expected to take a party of islander missionaries to New Britain, establish them

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11 Brown to Chapman, 29 January 1875, in George Brown, Letter Book, 1871-76, ML A1686-2 CY 2767.

12 Brown to Chapman, 28 January 1875.

13 Ibid.

in suitable places, and then return with the *John Wesley*. By the time the Mission Board met on 22 February 1875 he was ready to share with them his latest plans and to be instructed by them.

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For years Brown had been dreaming of new challenges, a New Mission. He had escaped at last from the narrow and crowded world of Samoa. Now he would have freedom to initiate, to plan, to try to communicate the message of Christ to people who had never heard it in any of its forms. Even the Board was giving him discretionary powers to modify their plan if necessary. Inevitably there were delays before he was free to leave. The new steam launch was not ready, supplies were not complete. The Board decided that the *Wesley* should carry arms; recent Anglican and LMS pioneer missions in the northern islands had done so, as the local people were said to be 'extremely savage'. A party of naturalists including Baron Anatole von Hügel requested permission to travel with the *John Wesley*. Brown was open to this, with his own scientific interests and links with the Australian Museum; that year there was much interest in New Guinea, with reports of exploration and debate about possible annexation of the region by a colonial power.

Not long before the *John Wesley* was due to sail for Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, to collect the planned pioneer band of island missionaries, news came that put the whole scheme in jeopardy. In Sydney they already knew that there was an epidemic of measles in Fiji, begun in January 1875. They had not realised how devastating the epidemic had been. In Fiji the death drums had been beating a rhythm of fear and tragedy; among the thousands of people who were estimated to have died within a few weeks were a great many Wesleyan church members, nine 'Native Ministers' and two hundred catechists. Men who had volunteered to be part of the pioneer group for the New Mission had died, or were too damaged in health to leave home. When the *Wesley* sailed from Sydney on 27 January 1875, they were under orders to bypass Fiji, only pausing to unload passengers and cargo at Levuka.

Brown was shocked when he arrived in Fiji. His whole scheme depended on having the help of men from the islands. Now he heard that, because of the measles infection in Fiji, Tonga was also applying strict quarantine to its borders to protect its people. The Fijian Methodist Church had lost a great many of their trained leaders.<sup>14</sup> Brown wrote disconsolately that a key minister who had intended to lead the pioneer group was now an invalid 'and we found it

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14 A. Harold Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church, vol. 11, Fiji*, Melbourne: Aldersgate Press, 1978, p. 202.

difficult to get another in his place.<sup>15</sup> If Fiji, which he knew had a fine system of training Fijian men for Christian ministry, could not help, Tonga was out of bounds and Samoa could afford few men, then the whole vision of beginning a New Mission based on the service of islander ministers and teachers would fail before it began.

At this point, George Brown chose to exercise the 'discretionary powers' the Board had permitted. Against instructions, he left the *Wesley* in harbour in Levuka. He met with the missionaries in Fiji and with their support told the Board, 'We fully considered the case and have decided to try and carry out our original plan.'<sup>16</sup> They could take fewer men, they would only take men who had already recovered from measles (the doctor had assured him that was safer) and they could take precautions against further risk of infection. 'On coming on board,' he wrote from Levuka, before any men had volunteered, 'they will be rubbed all over with Carbolic Acid and Oil and all old clothes destroyed.'<sup>17</sup> Confident that the man on the ground knew better than a distant Board, Brown set off through the islands to try out his new steam launch, named for his benefactor *Henry Reed*, in an attempt to recruit a new team. A faintly apologetic letter was sent to the Board justifying his actions. The Board noted the letter and, ominously, added to their Minutes, 'No action was taken.' Perhaps there was some vigorous debate about what should be done with a disobedient pioneer who took it on himself to 'deviate from instructions'.<sup>18</sup>

The journey through Fiji, unauthorised or not, confirmed for him many things about this new enterprise. He began in Levuka, with the beach community on the island of Ovalau, where some hundreds of whites lived. British authority had been established only months earlier in 1874 after the formal cession of Fiji; colonial law and order, he saw, could be applied to warring tribal groups. He visited the island of Viwa where his one-time mentor, Dr Richard Lyth, had served thirty years earlier in a time of great brutality and spiritual transformation; therefore transformation must be possible even in the most unpromising places. Then to visit Bau, a small island of great potency, where the power of chiefs and custom had terrified generations; now the killing stone where victims had been clubbed on their way to cannibal ovens had become a baptismal font. Brown knew that it was naïve to imagine that a Christianised and colonised Fiji was now free of problems. As the little steam launch made a noisy moonlight passage up the Rewa River, startling the villagers along the

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15 Letter from George Brown from Levuka, Fiji, June 11, 1875, in George Brown, *Communications Respecting the Wesleyan New Mission to New Britain etc.*, Leaflet published Sydney, 20 July 1875, NLA JAFp BIBLIO F7493a. Men who had originally considered going with the pioneer group included the Reverend Ioeli Nau and Silas Naucukidi.

16 Ibid., Brown to Chapman, 21 May 1875, from Levuka, Fiji.

17 Ibid., Brown to Chapman, 21 May 1875, from Levuka, Fiji.

18 Minutes of WMMS Mission Board, 14 July 1875.

river banks with its fiery huffing and its siren, Brown was reminded of the murder of the Reverend Thomas Baker in that region six years earlier, as well as continued tension and violence between tribal groups, white landowners and the local people, the newly appointed British authorities and the planters and businessmen, and between planters and their migrant labour force. Yet the Fiji of 1875 was a very different place from the Fiji of 1835. The thought of being at the beginning of something new and raw, with the hope of witnessing a spiritual and social transformation, must have excited him. What he needed now was a team of workers.

At the mouth of the Rewa River, on the morning of 1 June 1875, George Brown met with a gathering of eleven missionaries—British and Tongan.<sup>19</sup> They had met at the Navuloa Theological Institution. Brown pleaded his cause. Unless a party of Fijian workers travelled with him to establish the New Mission, the whole vision would fade. If no Native Minister was available, could he appeal to the students at the Theological Institution? It was not an easy decision, given the newly fragile state of the Wesleyan Church in Fiji. Even so, these leaders made a critical decision. If suitable men and their families were willing and the colonial surgeon pronounced them fit, then Brown was authorised to form a team of Fijians to pioneer the New Mission. In the evening eighty-three Fijian theological students, many of them still recovering from measles, listened to Brown. Sitting in semi-darkness in the school hall, the light of a few small lamps casting deep shadows, the men heard Brown speak of the dream of going to a people who were known to be barbarous but had never heard the name of Christ. The people of those northern islands were cannibals, he told them, and beyond the rule of law. The climate was trying, diseases like malaria would threaten them and their families, the food would be unfamiliar, they would be alone and isolated from family and church support. It would undoubtedly be hard, and perhaps some might even die there, far from home. Were they willing to risk such a difficult challenge? ‘The whole matter was placed before them in its blackest and darkest colours,’ he would write later. ‘Who is willing to volunteer?’ he asked, but the Institution Principal Joseph Waterhouse interrupted him.<sup>20</sup> Waterhouse wisely urged the men to pause and consider, to talk with their wives, to listen first to God in quietness. Then they could give their answer.

The following day they met again. In later years the dramatic story of the Fijian students’ response to the appeal for missionaries would be told and retold. At the time, Brown wrote simply, ‘We had plenty of volunteers from the students;

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19 This decision was signed by D.S. Wylie, Lorimer Fison, Arthur J. Webb, William Weir Lindsay, Joeli Bulu, Eroni Fotofili, Jemesa Havea, Tevita Nauhaamea, Meli Fifi, Joeli Nau and Joseph Waterhouse. Appendix 1, 1 June 1875, in Brown, *Communications Respecting the Wesleyan New Mission to New Britain*.

20 Brown to Chapman, 2 June 1875, in Brown, *Communications Respecting the Wesleyan New Mission to New Britain*, p. 5.

in fact they all volunteered.<sup>21</sup> The impressive old missionary from Tonga, Joeli Bulu, with memories of his many hard years of struggle in wild and cannibal Fiji, rose to challenge the young men to imagine a day when the people of wild and cannibal New Britain also would be changed by the power of the gospel of Christ.<sup>22</sup> Nine men, six of them with wives and families, were chosen from the many and within days were on their way to Levuka ready to sail.

Their path was still not clear. On 12 June, Brown wrote 'We hoped to have sailed today but the action taken by the Government here has prevented us. We heard a slight rumour yesterday that they were going to throw some obstacles in our way.'<sup>23</sup> The 'slight rumour' was the understandable concern of the representatives of the newly established British Government in Fiji for the well-being of the Fijians; were they indeed volunteers and did they understand the hazards they faced? Brown was instructed to bring the mission party to the Council Chambers to meet Administrator E.L. Layard and Colonial Secretary John Thurston with the Executive in the Council Chambers.<sup>24</sup> Layard pointed out to Brown that as the Fijians were now British subjects it was his responsibility to ensure that they knew what they were doing. Brown then described the steps that had been taken, with his original instructions, the first group of men who had volunteered and the impact of the measles epidemic:

then of our coming here and not being able to collect these men, and so having to make a second call for volunteers. I told them that in response to that call the whole of the students of Navuloa volunteered, that we had selected nine of the number who were now present, and finished by assuring them that no one had spoken to the teachers on the subject.<sup>25</sup>

Mr Layard spoke through an interpreter to the Fijians. They were British subjects, he explained, and could not be compelled to go and 'that he was responsible for their safety; that if any of them went away now and got killed and eaten the Government here would be blamed by the Home Government.' Layard then repeated that the people in New Britain were 'great cannibals and very fierce,' that the islands were unhealthy with great risk of disease, food was

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21 Ibid.

22 Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church, vol. 11, Fiji*, pp. 65, 148–49.

23 Brown to Chapman, 12 June 1875, from Levuka, Fiji, in Brown, *Communications Respecting the Wesleyan New Mission to New Britain*, p. 6.

24 Present at the meeting were: 'His Honour the Administrator, E.L. Layard, Messers Thurston (Colonial Secretary), Horton, Bentley, Frazer, Ratu Mele, Ratu Tevita, Scott (interpreter), Secretary of Council, George Brown and nine teachers,' Appendix 3, in Brown, *Communications Respecting the Wesleyan New Mission to New Britain*.

25 Brown to Chapman, 12 June 1875, from Levuka, Fiji, in Brown, *Communications Respecting the Wesleyan New Mission to New Britain*, p. 6.

scarce, and they would be left alone without protection for months. If they still wanted to go, however, he would ‘wish them God speed.’<sup>26</sup> One of the Fijians, Aminio Baledrokadroka, replied and Brown described the scene, as Aminio

with deep feeling said that they were not surprised at what they had just been told, that it was not a new thing to them, as they had heard it all before from the missionaries before they volunteered for the service. He said, ‘We have fully considered this matter in our hearts; no one has pressed us in any way. We have given ourselves up to do this work, and if we die, we die and if we live we live.’<sup>27</sup>

Layard and Thurston persisted. They did not want to hinder but to protect, they explained. To satisfy everyone, a statement in Fijian language was prepared to which the group agreed, then all signed an English translation. The statement read,

We the undersigned Wesleyan teachers, do solemnly and truly declare that we were fully and carefully informed by the promoters of the mission to New Britain, New Ireland, etc., of the dangers which may be incurred to life and limb ... and we declare that fully knowing all this, we make an election to proceed on this mission of our own free will, not compelled thereto by orders or authority of any, but simply desirous of spreading the knowledge of the gospel of Christ among the heathen inhabitants of those islands.<sup>28</sup>

When Brown concluded his long communication with his home Board, he did not know how prophetic his next statement would be. He gave the Government officials

credit for sincerity in the matter. They have instructions from home to look after and protect the Fijians; and may believe that we also are going to sacrifice our men in some fanatical way. As they suppose if any Fijians are murdered in the islands to which we are taking them, there will be an enquiry into the matter as they are now British subjects, and they naturally desire to be in a position to prove that all due precautions were taken by them to protect the interests of the people whom they are appointed to govern.

He added honestly, ‘Most of the whites here have a most unreasonable prejudice against the mission.’<sup>29</sup>

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Appendix 3, Department of Native Affairs, Nasova, June 12, 1875, in Brown, *Communications Respecting the Wesleyan New Mission to New Britain*.

29 Brown, 14 June 1875, in Brown, *Communications Respecting the Wesleyan New Mission to New Britain*.

Even though permission had been granted, they were still not yet free to go. There was official paper work to be completed, customs to be cleared, duty to be paid on their cargo—'duty calculated on every pound of pepper or package of bath bricks ... it was really sickening.'<sup>30</sup> To make matters worse, the Fijian recruits, who Brown believed were a fine lot of men, were being subjected to taunts by their countrymen:

Every day as any of our teachers pass along the beach some friend of missions will laugh at them and try to frighten them. 'Are you one of the fellows going to the New Lands?' 'Yes.' 'Oh, Oh! What a fool, you'll be killed and eaten most certainly, etc. etc.' It is really wonderful that some of them don't get fainthearted about it.<sup>31</sup>

The naturalist von Hügel had decided not to travel on with the *John Wesley* after all. Brown was not greatly disappointed at this news. He wrote, in that context, 'I always had some doubts about the propriety of men landing with arms and firing away before we might be able to inspire the people with confidence in us.'<sup>32</sup> As a final act before sailing, Brown presented his long record of the meeting with Layard and the Executive to the British officials to confirm that the record was correct. Brown concluded:

The whole thing was a grand triumph for us, and yet the Government was not placed in the position of a defeated party, but was rather considered by us a helper. This takes away all feelings of soreness which is a good thing.... I had a really kind letter from Mr Thurston this evening wishing us God speed, and assuring us of the deep interest they will feel in our voyage.<sup>33</sup>

The last-minute yams were loaded, the final pieces of cargo received, the steam launch secured back in its place on deck, the travellers embarked. Early on 15 June 1875, the missionary party sailed in the *John Wesley* for Samoa and on towards the islands in the north.

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30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 12 June 1875.

32 Ibid., 21 May 1875.

33 Ibid., 14 June 1875 from Nausova.