

6. 'I see no reason to die of fear'

New Britain, New Ireland, Duke of York Islands June 1875–August 1876

There was now time to think. Brown had agreed that he would escort a party of island teachers to the New Mission, settle them there, and leave with the ship. This had seemed perfectly reasonable from the perspective of Sydney. Now he was beginning to have his doubts. As the mission ship *John Wesley* began to trace the familiar arc from Fiji to Samoa, there was one delay after another. In Samoa to recruit more helpers, Brown revisited places and people he had thought only a year earlier that he had left forever. Sitting in his old study at Saleaula, looking across the lagoon, he wrote to Lydia: 'It did not seem natural to come here and find no good little wife and merry youngsters to welcome me.'¹ They sailed on to the island of Rotuma to collect Lydia's sister Lizzie and her husband, the Reverend William Fletcher, who were leaving Rotuma after eighteen years of missionary service.

Weeks were passing and they had still not reached their destination. Brown had warned the island teachers of all the hazards; disease, hunger, loneliness, violence, helplessness in their isolation from home. His respect for the families was growing. These good men and their wives were willing to face all the risks. How could he abandon them and sail away for home almost immediately? As they left Rotuma behind, Brown wrote in his journal,

Instead of steering for Fiji as we have been wont to do we are going almost due west. May God grant us His blessing day by day and guide us right in all things. I am quite expecting now to stay behind. I cannot possibly see how I can leave these poor fellows by themselves as we shall have such a short time to prepare the people to receive them.²

1 George Brown to Lydia Brown, 17 July 1875, from Saleaula, Savai'i, Samoa, in George Brown, Letter Book, 1871–76, ML A1686-2 CY 2767.

2 Brown, Journal, 31 July 1875, in George Brown, Journal, 1874–1876, ML A 1686-10-12 CY 2759.



Map 2. Region of New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Solomon Islands.

Source: Drawn by Margaret Reeson.

As they sailed on into unfamiliar territory, Brown pored over nautical maps with the ship's captain, tracing the long necklace of islands spilling south from the great island of New Guinea. Explorers, traders and naval vessels passed through those waters but in the north there were no missionaries. The new maps tempted Brown to some ambitious imagining; if, he thought, a point near the Duke of York island group was taken as a centre, then a sweep of two hundred miles from that point would include many island populations—'an exceedingly compact and densely populated district. All these places are fields open ready to the hand that will first scatter the sower's seed.'³ Passing through the region where the (Anglican) Melanesian Mission was working, he considered their mission strategy; they recruited young men from the islands, trained them on distant Norfolk Island then sent them back to their home areas as missionaries.⁴ He noted,

What a fine field they have here and yet how little seems to have been done. Their system I am certain is a bad one and yet placed as they are

³ *Christian Advocate*, May 1875.

⁴ John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1982, pp.182–85.

without native teachers from any old established Mission tis difficult to say what else they can do. Wouldn't it be best for the Mission to settle down permanently in some central place and work from there?'⁵

Two months after leaving Fiji they were at last in sight of their goal. On their final Sunday at sea, Brown was moved by the preaching of one of the Fijians who spoke on the words from St Paul's letter to the Romans, 'It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.'⁶

A week later, the *John Wesley* moved at last into St George's Channel, with the bulk of New Britain in the distance on their left, New Ireland on the right and the cluster of small islands named for the Duke of York in between. On Sunday, 15 August 1875, they sailed up the channel and, along with the trader Captain Alex Ferguson's barque, *Sydney*, they anchored in Port Hunter, Duke of York Island. Missionaries, collectors and crew stared at the people of the place and the people of the place crowded on to the deck and stared back.

They were not the first to visit these islands. Traders, explorers, naval ships and now scientists and collectors had been coming for some years. Local men had travelled with traders to Sydney and other ports, and come back with tales of strange and wondrous worlds as well as fragments of English language. To their surprise, this latest party of white people refused to trade with them, even though they brought fresh vegetables, fruit, pigs and chickens. The attempted explanation about being unwilling to trade on the Sabbath lost something in translation, leaving the hopeful sellers bemused. The most powerful chief of that part of the island, To Pulu, came on board, confident in his place and power among these interlopers. He, with other local chiefs, saw advantages in recruiting newcomers for his own prestige, the value of their trade goods and to strengthen his authority in the region.

At first glance, George Brown found the people who had come on board 'not at all prepossessing'.⁷ Apart from an occasional string of beads, and a rattle of shells worn by the chief, they were all naked with hair and bodies daubed with white lime or ochre clay. Mouths were stained bright orange-red from chewing betel nut and lime. Many carried their fighting tomahawks or spears. Lydia's sister, Lizzie Fletcher, was present on the ship and watched their visitors from a discreet distance. Lizzie would no doubt report her observations to Lydia; what did she think?

5 'San Christobel in sight,' Brown, Journal, 6 August 1875.

6 Romans 15:20–21, in Brown, Journal, 8 August 1875.

7 Brown, Journal, 15 August 1875.

That afternoon, the two groups gathered on deck. Local people of the Duke of York Islands watched curiously as a mysterious ritual unfolded. Strange sounds not recognised as music, unexplained bowing of heads and obscure gestures, a strange language; they watched and wondered. The shipboard community of fifty-five souls—Fijian, Samoan,⁸ Rotuman, German, Scot, Irish and English and a single local man, their interpreter Teem⁹—thanked God that they had arrived safely and prayed for success for their mission. They were confident in the rightness of their cause. After the sun set in a blaze of brightness over the water, Brown walked the deck in the warm evening. Across the water, hidden in darkness and the dense coastal bush, were the people of the place. Now the missionary team must commit themselves to the next step. Brown thought of his family at home, his health, even his orders from the Mission Board, but decided that when the ship left, he would stay behind.¹⁰

In the morning, in company with his brother-in-law, William Fletcher, Brown landed on the island. There was no time to lose. Within weeks, the mission ship would leave and they needed to find a suitable site for a mission and build bush houses to shelter the team as a matter of urgency. Brown would write to a cousin, 'I am as careful of my life as anyone can be but I see no reason to die of fear. Mr Fletcher and I went on shore and walked all around the Island and did not see the slightest cause for more than ordinary caution.'¹¹

Local ownership of land was a complex matter. When they negotiated for a site on a headland near the village of Kinawanua, overlooking Port Hunter, they needed to deal with three local chiefs, including To Pulu.¹² Building began immediately. Fijian and Samoan teachers and the ship's crew levelled ground, cut bush timber, gathered and bundled leaves for thatch. The whole party would share one single structure for sleeping and stores.

In the first week, the *John Wesley* sailed further up the channel and anchored in Blanche Bay, New Britain. Villagers in nearly a hundred canoes crowded around the ship, excitedly bringing produce and pigs for sale. The crew, thoroughly unnerved and thinking of cannibalism, demanded that the captain supply them with arms but he refused. In the flurry and ambiguity of trade, bartering for curios, confrontation, unfamiliar island politics and snatches of unfamiliar languages, Brown and Fletcher tried to make sense of what they were seeing. Over the next days, they landed in several locations on New Britain, including Matupit Island and Nodup, using the steam launch to travel to places beyond

8 Aminio Baledrokadroka, Misieli Loli, Setaleti Logova, Livai Volavola, Elimotama Ravono, Peni Caumia, Peni Luvu, Mijieli Vakaloloma, Pauliasi Bunoa, Timoci.

9 Brown to Benjamin Chapman, August 1875, written at sea off Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands.

10 George Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908, p. 89.

11 Brown to cousin Lizzie (Buddle) Arthur, in Auckland, 7 September 1875.

12 Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 90.

the range of the ship. The convolutions of local alliances and enmities, trust and mistrust, were still a mystery to the visitors, but the sight of many women and children reassured Brown that they were in no danger. On one of these visits a fight broke out among the people with much brandishing of weapons. Brown's party was temporarily separated from the steam launch and were thankful when they escaped unscathed, though some saw it as proof that it was unsafe to stay in the region. Brown offended some of his group by suggesting that they ought to wear petticoats, not trousers,¹³ but they thought he was unwilling to face reality.

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The *John Wesley* sailed on 6 September 1875. Only one of the naturalists, young Cockerell, was prepared to stay. One of them was willing to sell his photographic equipment to Brown; this made possible a substantial photographic record in the years to come. At the last minute, an old sailor called Jack Holmes volunteered to stay with Brown to help with the steam launch. Brown sent some last minute letters to his relatives in Auckland with a plea, 'You must all try and comfort Lydia as well as you can. I feel so thankful that she is near you.'¹⁴ As the *John Wesley* moved slowly out to sea, the group on shore knew that they were stranded in those islands for many months. That night they all found a place to sleep, crowded together in the newly built thatched house in among the boxes and bundles. Old Jack, they found, had managed to abstract a collection of very useful items from the ship without the captain's knowledge; Brown turned a blind eye in gratitude. He slung his hammock from poles suspended over the cargo and tucked his treasured photos of Lydia and the children into the woven fibre of the wall beside him. He tried to imagine his distant family. 'My darling wife,' he later wrote, 'I have your picture hung up just by my side and I often look at it my dear, and that of the dear children and long to be with you.'¹⁵ But he was not. He told a cousin, Lizzie Arthur,

Long and anxiously did I consider the claims of my dear wife and little ones and my own health but the matter was simply this. If I returned in the *Wesley* the expedition would be a failure, if I remained it would in all probability be a great success. How could I hesitate in such a case? I feel it to be a great sacrifice and feel it still, but one who is not ready to deny himself has certainly not learned the lesson of self sacrifice which the life of our Lord teaches us.... I should have been miserable and unhappy for the rest of my life if I had proved craven or cowardly in such a case as this.... Pray for us Lizzie, but don't be afraid.¹⁶

13 Brown to cousin Lizzie (Buddle) Arthur, in Auckland, 7 September 1875.

14 Brown to cousin, Tom Buddle, in Auckland, 6 Sept 1875. Tom and his wife lived in Hepburn Street near Lydia.

15 Brown to Lydia Brown, in Auckland, 8 September 1875.

16 Brown to cousin Lizzie (Buddle) Arthur, in Auckland, 7 September 1875.



Figure 4. Brown children 1875: Amy, Monica, Geoffrey, Lizzie, Fred and Claudia Brown.

Source: Brown family album per favour Miss Nancy Joyce.

His decision was not based on heroics or an inflated sense of his own importance. He believed that the New Mission was more likely to succeed if they had an experienced leader. The islander teachers were almost all students rather than experienced men. None of them spoke the local language. They were likely to become ill and he had medication and some modest medical skill. As a British

citizen he had some contacts and resources that the Pacific Islander families did not. Together, their mission had some chance of success. Without his participation, the challenges would probably be overwhelming.

Days later, the friendly trader Alex Ferguson also left the area. In some last-minute letters home, Brown suggested that perhaps he might return to the colonies early in 1876. Maybe. Now their last link with the rest of the world was gone.

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'Not very well again today.' 'I do so wish I was well and strong.... I feel much depressed sometimes.' 'Still far from well all day.... Oh! How I feel the want of my dear wife when I am so unwell. I feel such a longing today to have her near me. Still I feel that I am doing what is right, and God is with us.'¹⁷ A debilitating complaint that had been troubling George Brown since Fiji continued to drag him down and there was a regular refrain about illness, depression and medication in his journal. He was lonely and often homesick. Old Jack and young Cockerell couldn't abide each other. The Fijian and Samoan teachers were willing and helpful but often struck down with malaria.¹⁸ The local chiefs were manipulative, trying to manoeuvre the newcomers to their own purposes. The complexities of local political alliances and understandings of the supernatural and natural world were impenetrable. Although he was gathering words and phrases of the language of the Duke of Yorks, its structure was a complete mystery to him and he was realising that every district had its own language. Human bones tipped the spears he purchased by barter, human skulls were revered in chiefly houses and the odour of decay hung around a nearby tree where the corpse of a respected leader was suspended. Evidence of violent death and cannibalism were always part of their new world. The climate was very hot and humid, sapping energy and leaving most new residents slow and exhausted. Under the weight of all these things, it is not surprising that Brown felt weary, unwell and depressed.

Determined to fight against everything that conspired to defeat him, Brown turned to his work at a furious pace. Unless he made arrangements to locate his Fijian and Samoan people with chiefs and village groups who were prepared to accept them, he would not be free to leave the island group for home, even if an opportunity presented itself. He set himself a gruelling program of travel. Using the steam launch and the whale boat, he made repeated forays to meet the leading people of the region. He was determined to introduce himself and the Pacific Island men, and attempt to gain the confidence of local leaders. In each place he tried to gauge whether or not the people would welcome a teacher. He

¹⁷ Brown Journal, 20 August, 11 September, 15 September 1875.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26 November 1875.

was assured by each community that while they themselves were benign, other groups meant him and his companions harm. Despite the sight of many people crowding around their boats as they explored the coastline, Brown suspected that the people enjoyed the drama of displaying their strength to rare visitors, and the presence of children among them was a good omen. Of one visit he wrote,

We were a little uneasy at seeing so many Natives assembled all heavily armed and with spare bundles of spears.... I certainly did not like their appearance but we kept walking quietly on right into the midst of the crowd and I began to barter with them.... I believe that our fears were quite groundless as far as to any intention of the Natives to injure us ... the normal state of society here seems to be one of constant warfare.¹⁹

On another occasion he wrote,

I have long since ceased to believe them when they tell these tales about places they themselves do not visit.... They are at war with almost every other District farther inland and on either side of them. What a blessing it will be ... when the reception of the religion of Jesus will cause the wars to cease and will teach them all to live together in peace and to love each other.²⁰

They were not quite as alone as they had imagined. During October the German businessman Captain Hensheim passed through on his way from Hong Kong to Sydney in his brigantine *Coeran*, and offered Brown a passage back to Sydney. Brown was tempted but declined. In letters home he explained,

You must believe me fully when I tell you that I do not consider it [his illness] at all serious or I would leave by the *Coeran* ... tis much better now.... I hope to see you all before many months are over as I have fully made up my mind to station the Teachers as soon as ever I can now so as to be ready for any good chance [to leave].²¹

Sheer stubbornness pushed George Brown on in the months that followed, and he was rarely at home. He had promoted this cause vigorously in Australia and New Zealand and now would do everything possible to avoid the disappointment of failure before the work was fairly begun. Not all his activities were directly religious. He worked to build relationships with the principal men in the area, explored coastlines, bought local approval through trade and barter, collected artefacts and specimens for museums, tried ineffectually to keep the steam launch functional and attempted to collect words of the local languages. As he became

19 Ibid., 27 October 1875.

20 Brown, Letter Book, 28 October 1875.

21 Brown to Lydia Brown, 25 October 1875.

known in the region, some village leaders accepted the offer of a teacher to live among them. Fijians and Samoans began to move to strategic locations away from Port Hunter. With their families, men risked being separated, sometimes by several days travel, from their original settlement, and went to live on other small islands in the Duke of York island group and in villages on New Britain and New Ireland.²² Brown continued to travel to visit them for encouragement and support, bringing quinine and other medication when they were ill. The first of their party died at the end of November, and they all knew that he would not be the last to die far from home.

Scrambling through the dense thickets of entangling jungle, finding his way along pathways leading to places he had never seen, Brown must have wondered when things would become clearer. He was entangled in a web of suspicion, and dire warnings against enemies. Should he believe them? He tended to assume that most new groups would become his friends in the end. It was his belief that the principal men were jealously guarding their own authority by warning against all others. In his journal he noted that 'King Dick [To Pulu] told Mr Blohm the other day that we are a most intractable set of white men! Other white men (he said) did what they told them, and only went to places where they told them to go, but we go anywhere and everywhere. Poor Dick, he doesn't like it.'²³

In his more reflective moments he wondered whether it was wise to interfere in local matters. When was a risk too great? When a local chief attacked and almost killed the favourite of his seven wives, Brown and the Fijian teacher Beni Luvu gave the stricken woman refuge in the bush mission house at Port Hunter. The furious chief demanded that Brown and his colleagues give the woman up, so that he could kill her and give her body to his allies for a feast. Vulnerable and fearing that the angry man would torch the dry thatched roof over their heads, Brown attempted to bargain for her freedom with a good steel axe. To their great relief, the axe was finally accepted and the crisis was averted. In later years he 'often wondered whether we were wise in the action we took.... If we had been killed we should no doubt have been blamed for our folly ... the question still remains, apart from success or failure: was it right to interfere and take the risk? And I certainly believe that it was.'²⁴

In the week of his fortieth birthday, George Brown was a long way from his birthplace in Barnard Castle in northern England, a long way from Samoa and a long way from his wife and seven children in New Zealand. He was travelling

22 Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 176. Aminio Baledrokadroka was appointed to Molot, Misieli Loli to Urakukuru, Setaleti Logova to Utuan, Ratu Livai Volavola to Nodup, Elimotama Ravono to Kabanut, Penisimani Caumea to Matupit, Peni Luvu to 'Bulilalai's village', Pauliasi Bunoa to Kalil, Mijieli Vakalolo to Waira.

23 Brown, Journal, 17 January 1876, quoted in Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 143.

24 Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, pp.188–92.

north along the western coast of New Ireland, beyond the usual range of traders and collectors. In a village he tried to talk with the local chief about his purpose in coming but found him very distracted. 'I scolded him for his inattention,' he wrote in his journal that night.²⁵ One of his young travelling companions, Kaplen, seemed very uneasy. That evening, weary from travel and with aching head, Brown gathered words of the local language from a group of men in the house before a restless sleep. It wasn't until they were well away the next day that Kaplen explained his agitation. While walking in the village he had come across a hut behind the chief's house where a woman was baking a human leg and thigh on hot stones; the chief had murdered his victim the previous day. He did not mention this to Brown at the time because, he said, 'I knew he was such a fool that he would try and get it (the thigh and leg) away from them. Then they would be angry and would probably kill him, and if so, I knew they would kill me also.'²⁶ With the whaleboat, they continued north. On a beach they encountered a large armed crowd, 'the wildest lot I have yet seen and I was glad to get well away,' but Brown believed that even these men meant them no harm.²⁷

On Sunday 5 December 1875 the first service of Christian worship was conducted at Kalil on New Ireland, observed by a group of curious people. The watchers, armed with tomahawks and spears with shafts of human bone, listened bemused to the mysteries of the preaching and praying, though Brown thought that 'we managed to make them understand very well.'²⁸ They had agreed to receive a Fijian teacher. By the end of the week of hard travel, Brown was unwell, weary and sunburned; 'I want to do all I can whilst we are here, but this Body of mine rebels occasionally,' he noted.²⁹ Even so, despite everything, he was feeling very positive. In his journal he recorded, 'No mission could have had a more promising beginning than ours has had in all these islands.'³⁰

Somewhere between that first service at Kalil on New Ireland and a night spent with his crew rowing slowly back to Port Hunter, Brown passed his fortieth birthday. The day would come when the events of that week, and all the other weeks of that period of first contact and exploration, would have been told and retold, embellished, dramatised and turned into legends. The day would come when *Boys Own Magazine* would publish his story to entertain their young readers.³¹ At the time, with the sting of sweat and dried salt spray crusting on his body, skin peeling off his sunburned nose, skinny frame chafing against

25 Brown, Journal, 30 November 1875.

26 Ibid., 1 December 1875; Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 134.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 5 December 1875; Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 135.

29 Ibid., 3 December 1875.

30 Ibid.

31 *Boys Own Magazine*, 6 November 1913; Letter from Alfred Cooper in UK to Brown asking for a photograph to accompany an article about Brown for *Boys Own Magazine*.

whaleboat timbers and bamboo beds, digestion playing up and every muscle aching, he was not in the mood for heroics. He did, however, feel hope. He wrote in his journal, 'The reception of the religion of Jesus will soon produce peace and order where now all is discord and confusion.'³²

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The mission ship *John Wesley* did not come. Months passed with no sign of a familiar sail, even though it had been promised early in 1876. Far away, his family was living without him in the cottage in Hepburn Street, Ponsonby, but the distance between them seemed impossible. Six months after leaving Fiji, a trader brought him his only letters from Lydia—and then nothing. The faces of his family, frozen in time in the small card photographs near his hammock, must be changing as they matured; but he was not there to see. Nor would they be able to imagine the sights and sounds that filled his world; the rattling of spears, the rows of human jawbones hanging from house rafters, the glimmer of the tiny fire they had built after almost drowning from a capsized canoe. He was often ill, frequently feeling weak, depressed and suffering fearsome headaches. The best remedy, he decided, was 'more work and plenty of travelling'.³³ As the months passed, the sense of both homesickness and alienation from home grew.

Running through the frenetic activity of Brown's days was a unifying thread. Some might say that he was in those islands to escape the tensions of Samoa, prepare for a colonial enterprise, collect rare artefacts, or to relish the excitement of exploration and first contact in a little-known world. Though there was a truth in all of those, he was clear about his essential purpose. What drove him on was his belief that God valued all humankind and wanted those who had never heard this message to discover that their Creator loved them. He believed that God had called him to this work. Nevertheless, it was far easier to nail together a little bush church building than communicate great themes in an unknown language. Brown would sit for hours in a village with an interpreter, local leaders and people, talking and listening, back and forth, testing the communication with questions. It seemed to him that long conversations with a chief by moonlight would be repeated, discussed and debated long after he left, and were of more value than any attempt at a sermon. His themes were the love of God for all people without favouritism; Jesus Christ, Son of God, who came 'to save sinners ... to make us fit to go and dwell with God, where God is, in heaven' and practical instructions for living that would benefit them; 'build better houses, wear clothes, live peaceably with all men and stop this continual fighting.'³⁴ He did not focus his preaching and teaching on the wickedness

32 Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 136.

33 Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 220.

34 Brown, Journal, 23 July 1876; Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 206.

of the people and their need to repent but rather on the love of God and the transformation that was possible for a society that lived in continual fear, suspicion and brutality. A Scripture that encouraged him was from St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,'³⁵ and he dreamed of the day when the people of these northern islands would be changed.

In the meantime, the barrier of language was still defeating him. There was more than one language in the region and he soon realised that, even if he managed to learn one language or dialect, there would be another beyond the next range or river. He knew that he was deluding himself about how much the people understood of his message about one called Jesus Christ and wondered 'how long it would be before these people rightly understand what we are trying to teach them.'³⁶ Even if he could speak fluently, there would still be mystery, meanings concealed, secrets kept. Were the people of these islands simply buying the rights to the new and foreign rituals, just in case they were efficacious? There were periods of deep discouragement and yet he clung to the vision that one day these people too would be among those of every tribe and nation and language who would worship God together, and as St Peter had foretold, 'Sing the praises of Him who loved and redeemed them, and called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.'³⁷

There were occasional gleams of hope. Meeting with his dear friends the teachers and their families in April 1876, two of the men reported some good news. A village group that had been feuding with another for a long time, and had intended to fight that day, asked the two to take a peace-offering to their enemies with a message: 'It is to make the road good between our villages.... Let us embrace the *lotu* [Christian message] and live in peace.' The enemy villagers had responded with their own peace-offering and the message 'our mind is also to *lotu*, and to live in peace.'³⁸ Buoyed up with hope, Brown wrote, 'I have been homesick today but I feel glad that I am privileged to take part in this great work.... I feel so conscious of doing so little, and yet having such good results, and I feel certain that our success is simply God's answer to the prayers of his people who plead with him for us.'³⁹

One year after he had first landed in the Duke of York Islands, the *John Wesley* finally anchored again in Port Hunter on 10 August 1876. Mission Board and mission ship had been distracted by events in other parts of the Pacific, with

35 Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 195; see 2 Corinthians 5:17, King James Bible.

36 Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 155.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 205–06; see Revelation 7:9–10; 1 Peter 2:9–10, King James Bible.

38 Brown, *Journal*, 23 April 1876, in *George Brown, Journal, 1874–1876*, ML A 1686 CY 2759; Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 196.

39 *Ibid.*

significant problems in Fiji and Tonga, and the needs of the New Mission had slipped out of sight for a time. Now the ship brought a pastoral visitor, the Reverend Eroni Fotofili, to meet the Fijian and Samoan teachers, bringing a new team of Fijian missionaries to strengthen the work. It was nearly time for George Brown to leave. Before he sailed he was able to make arrangements for appointments for all the new workers, provide supplies and make some final visits to more remote areas with the help of the mission ship. He had made contact with many groups of people in many locations. He had survived illness, danger at sea and physical threats. Sometimes foolish, often foolhardy, he had brushed off perceived danger with a refrain of 'they never meant any harm'.⁴⁰ Often exhausted, frequently depressed or unwell, regularly angry or frustrated, he was patient in some things but short-tempered in others. Homesick, but rarely, he realised, really lonely. It had been a very tough year.

On 31 August 1876, George Brown sailed from Port Hunter with the *John Wesley*. He was on his way home.

40 Brown, *George Brown: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, p. 145.