12. ‘A vagabond streak’

Australasia, United Kingdom, North America
1881–1886

It was the time in between, the hinge on which past and future turned. Much later, when the time came for George Brown to record his own story, the period of six years spent in Sydney, from when they disembarked from the mission ship on 2 February 1881 until early 1887, barely counted in his memories. Years of living were condensed to a few pages. The period spent establishing the New Mission was the time to which he had looked forward through the preceding years in Samoa and the time to which he would always look back in the years that followed. It had been a period of intense effort and extreme challenge. Now he faced years of talking about it and being shaped by it.

When George and Lydia Brown arrived in Sydney Harbour on that summer day in 1881, he was a seasoned forty-five-year old ready for the next stage of his ministry. She was a woman who had been through fire but was now ready to begin again. After three years apart, their great joy was to have their whole family under one roof. Not everyone was there, of course. Two small graves lay at Kinawanua not far from the water’s edge and Lydia’s parents and brothers and sisters were only as close as the tiny photographs in the little rose-pink album their children brought from New Zealand. Their four girls, Lizzie, Amy, Monica and Claudia with their brother Fred, were all with them once more, all maturing, with Lizzie and Amy, at nineteen and seventeen, already young women. Perhaps it took some time for them to feel truly at home with each other. Too much had happened while they had been apart and their father, in particular, may have seemed at first a respected, distracted though affectionate stranger. The city of Sydney was unfamiliar to all of them and Lydia may have found the tall sandstone buildings, speeding wheeled carriages and smoking steam trams daunting. Soon, however, they were settled in a narrow terrace house in Surry Hills not far from the harbour. As the last trails of smoke from the bushfire season drifted away it was time to arrange for their children’s education for the new school year. Despite local debate on whether or not higher education might be dangerous to the health of girls, George and Lydia enrolled their daughters in Miss Baxter’s excellent Argyle School for girls in nearby Albion Street, Surry Hills, with Miss Lizzie preparing for matriculation and the hope of university studies at the University of Sydney in 1882.
Invisible threads still bound them to the people and issues of the Pacific. The work of translation tied Brown’s mind to the language of the Duke of York Islands as he worked with Peni Lelei and Timot each day. Lydia worked in the house beside the Samoan couple who had been with her for years. She hung her curtains from long island spears and decorated her home with shells and woven baskets. Whenever Brown was invited to speak in Sydney churches he retold the stories of the islands; the tales polished in the telling, bringing back into his mind the people and the place now seen from the safety of distance. News from the islands, carried by shipping, was heard with keen interest: the health of Ben and Emma Danks; the arrival of the new missionaries Isaac Rooney and then Rickard; the latest troubles with men recruiting labourers; more German traders buying land, more conflicts; more illness. When public debates about the future of those large islands near the equator grew warmer and more strident, Brown began writing letters to the newspaper, under the nom de plume *Carpe Diem* with his opinion that the colonial power of Great Britain rather than Germany should be exercised in that region. His links with the scientific community of Sydney were through his collection of island artefacts and he was gratified that a number of items were at the Australian Museum. Some special pieces were on
display in the Exhibition at the splendid Garden Palace in the grounds of the Botanical Gardens; sadly these were destroyed later in the conflagration that consumed the whole Garden Palace Exhibition on 22 September 1882.¹ Even their connection with the colonists from the ill-fated enterprise of the Marquis de Rays continued in Sydney. A large party of French and Italian migrant families, in despair at the failure of the colony, abandoned the settlement with its poor huts and pointless piles of bricks for an imagined cathedral, and attempted an escape which took them through great trials to New Caledonia and on to Sydney. Before leaving for northern New South Wales where they were to establish a successful settlement, a number of them called on the Brown family in Sydney to share their stories. Despite having their feet on Sydney streets, the minds and hearts of George and Lydia Brown were still firmly located in a distant place, a place of fear and tears but precious, nonetheless.

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There was unfinished business to attend to before Brown could feel completely free. The Methodist General Conference was to be held in Adelaide in May 1881 where men from all the colonies would meet. He knew that, whether he liked it or not, they would debate his actions in 1878. He was already regretting some unguarded letters he had sent out following the ‘New Britain Affair’ and criticism in the colonial press had made him feel ‘rather fightable…. I am tired of keeping quiet,’ as he told a friend.² The criticism of two men in particular had wounded him. The widely respected President-General of General Conference the Reverend John Watsford had written public statements, and former missionary in Fiji the Reverend Joseph Waterhouse had, he understood, published anonymous criticisms in the Fiji *Argus*. Brown told a colleague in Fiji:

> I hope to be at General Conference and then we will have it out and Joe too will have his whack. The two men are very different. I respect one and despise the other. I mean to have the whole affair out. I could not do it before the trial in Fiji. I can now.³

He wrote that, while he did not regret his actions, he did regret the necessity for them and went on,

> I mean to expose J.W. and his *Argus* leaders and test the opinion of my brethren as to the propriety of our acts and then be guided by their decision. I certainly won’t trouble them long if they think they have

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reason to be ashamed of me. We saved our Mission [and many lives] and that will be comfort enough for me until ‘that day’ when the final decision will be given.  

Brown set off for Adelaide with his New South Wales colleagues ready to confront Watsford and Waterhouse and he looked forward to meeting his beloved uncle Thomas Buddle again. It was not to be. Joe Waterhouse would never ‘have his whack’ after all. By the time Brown and his colleagues reached Melbourne they were shocked to hear news of a shipwreck. Joseph Waterhouse was dead, drowned in the wild seas that engulfed the steamship Tararua off the southern coast of the South Island of New Zealand on his way to the Conference, on 29 April 1881. One hundred and thirty-one people had perished, and among the dead were five senior Methodist men who had been on their way to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. Thomas Buddle and other New Zealand Methodists stayed to deal with the crisis. Brown and the others sailed from Melbourne to Adelaide, passing through wild storms along a southern coastline notorious for shipwrecks. It was a sober gathering in Adelaide as five names on the roll were marked with a neat cross—drowned.

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Brown chafed as he waited through days of other church business. He was pleased when his friend Benjamin Chapman was re-elected as General Secretary for Missions. Chapman had been wrestling with a number of challenging issues during the past three years, not only in New Britain but also in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, and was looking very weary. However, with his reputation at stake, Brown waited anxiously for Chapman to raise the matter of his actions three years earlier. When at last the time came, the first speaker to express concern over the ‘New Britain affair’ was John Watsford, former missionary in Fiji who had just completed his term as President General. Watsford expressed mixed feelings—Brown was his dear friend who had almost certainly saved the life of his daughter Emma Danks—but he believed Brown ‘was not infallible … even if he stood alone in the opinion, in his judgment the course pursued was a mistake, and he hoped that such a mistake would never be repeated.’ Another speaker said that although the ‘character and reputation of Mr Brown were very dear to him, the character and reputation of the Church were even dearer still.’ The question, he said, was not one of character but of policy. The debate was

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4 Ibid.
5 Lost at sea with the SS Tararua: the Reverends J.B. Richardson, Conference President; John Armitage, Conference Secretary; Joseph Waterhouse, formerly Fiji District; and Mr E. Connall and Mr Mitchell, lay representatives.
6 Minute Book, Wesleyan Methodist General Conference Minutes, May 1881, ML Methodist Church 580.
7 Weekly Advocate, 4 June 1881, reporting on General Conference sessions of 17 May and 18 May 1881, with acknowledgement to the Adelaide Star.
8 Ibid.
now on. Should Brown, who had already been through church and civil courts in NSW and Fiji, be tried all over again? Men shouted Points of Order. Brown rose to try to defend himself, telling his story over again. At the heart of his defence was the question: ‘You all tell me what I should not have done. What should I have done? No one answers that!’ After long and painful debate it was decided to affirm an earlier decision by the NSW Conference. This satisfied everyone but Brown who, after a sleepless night, asked for the matter to be reopened. The statement still contained the words ‘we can never sanction the use of military measures in our missionary enterprises.’ Brown pleaded that he had not used ‘military measures’; he believed ‘that this was a crisis in his life … with the construction that he put upon the resolution he could not think himself justified in continuing in his position. He could not carry on his work with that resolution unexplained.’

The search for a form of words went on, words that protected the Church from accusations of sending out militant missionaries, armed and violent against native races, but gave comfort to a valued member who was hovering on the verge of resignation. At last they added a statement reaffirming the principle which underlies all our missionary operations—that military enterprises cannot be sanctioned in their conduct—it records its judgment that in the present case Mr Brown acted in defence of the Mission teachers and their families, has not violated the regulations which govern our Mission work, and retains the full confidence of this Conference.10

‘Has not violated the regulations … retains the full confidence….’ indeed. A great weight of anxiety was lifted. At last he was free to go on with his work and his ministry without the shadow that had darkened his way for three years. He had not lost the respect of his peers, after all.11

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As May moved into June, Lydia Brown faced her first winter in many years. It was a dark period. Her husband was often away. Smallpox broke out in the streets around them in Surry Hills, introduced by shipping and carried in the very inadequate systems of sanitation in the growing city. News of illness and death seemed everywhere. Waterhouse, drowned; Barnabas ‘Ahongalu in Samoa, dead; scientist Kleinschmidt in the Duke of Yorks, murdered; chief To Pulu, ill with measles; Minnie Rooney, young missionary wife on her way to New Britain to join Ben and Emma Danks, dead from malaria. Closer still,
Lydia’s sister Lizzie’s husband William Fletcher was dying after a long illness and died not long after George Brown returned from Adelaide. William and Lizzie Fletcher were their closest family in Sydney and the loss was felt keenly.

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Although George Brown meant to give his full attention to the work of translation in Sydney, there were always distractions. Travelling to speak about the New Mission, attending meetings, writing political and scientific letters and meeting with friends. Despite these other demands, with the help of language informants Peni Lelei and Timot, Brown continued work on the translation of Mark’s Gospel. According to Danks this was ‘of necessity slow work, made slower by the Deputation work put upon him at the same time in the Colonies. Then, too, the knowledge of the language on the part of all was yet imperfect.’ The language was unlike any of the Pacific languages known to Brown and was only one of many languages in the region. It was challenging but they pressed on.

One Monday morning in September 1881 Brown was shocked and saddened to read the news that his good friend and mentor Benjamin Chapman had just died after a very short illness. Not only had Brown lost a valuable friend but now he was asked to help the President of Conference with mission matters as well as travelling to three colonies as a mission speaker until they appointed a new General Secretary. Squeezing translation work into every free moment, Brown and his co-translators managed to complete their work just after Christmas 1881. When the little book was at last in his hands, the dimensions of a postcard, he knew that the words of the Gospel of Mark were likely to be flawed as the words made the uncertain journey from one language to another, but were a gift from the heart from those who had done their best with it. The next year more translation work was possible, this time helped by the presence of Ben Danks, who was in Sydney for some months recuperating from illness. This work included a catechism, short scripture selections from the Gospels, prayers and a collection of hymns written by Brown and Danks.

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It was no surprise that his church appointed him to a circuit once his translation task was complete. Early in 1883 Lydia Brown supervised the move from their latest terrace house on Upper William Street to the Parsonage at the Methodist

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12 William Fletcher died 20 June 1881, Joseph Waterhouse died 29 April 1881, To Pulu died in February 1881. The smallpox epidemic in Sydney began in June 1881, Theodor Kleinschmidt died April 1881, Barnabas ‘Ahongalu died 9 May, Minnie Rooney died on 13 June 1881.
14 Brown to Chapman, 7 February 1879, published in the Weekly Advocate, 5 April 1879.
Church in Bourke Street, Darlinghurst, complete with all their exotic masks, clubs, spears and mats. The work in Bourke Street Church was going to present a very different challenge, with a large congregation of prosperous middle-class people, many with large households and a lively community of children and young people, gathering in the splendour of a fine sandstone building with Doric columns and balconies for the crowds. Before he began the new work George Brown kept a promise to his wife and took her to New Zealand to see her parents and other family members; she had not seen them for seven years. The visit was a rich time of reunion. Not long after they arrived home in Sydney, however, Lydia realised that at the age of forty-four she was pregnant again.

For George Brown, the world was lived in two spheres. While he busied himself with the congregation at Bourke Street, with all its enterprises, growth and Sunday School of four hundred children, he could not help letting part of his mind attend to the island world that had been his for so long. His children were now all at school and university, absorbed into the opportunities and enrichment of their local society. In the islands to their north, young people were being recruited unwillingly as labour on distant plantations; Rooney had recently written of 105 lads taken from New Britain to Samoa as labourers, some of whom ‘had been with our teachers and had been sold by their parents for muskets etc.’ The people at Bourke Street were enthusiastic about the new congregation begun that year, in the developing suburb of Randwick, while in the north teachers were beginning new congregations in remote places that Brown had explored. In Sydney, Brown was now a member of a number of church committees, including the group to plan for the first Methodist secondary school for girls in Sydney, to be built at Burwood. At the same time he was part of the Committee on Tongan Affairs, which was to continue to struggle with the issues of church conflict in distant Tonga. As discussion in Sydney town was of release of land for new suburbs along the Parramatta and Cooks Rivers, Brown was absorbed in debates on land and property as it affected traders, planters and villagers in the north and east, beyond the colonies of Australasia—a tug-of-war between nations vying for access to the potential of the islands.

A painted tin crown perched incongruously on the head of the chief To Pulu; the memory struck Brown as significant. When the German ship Ariadne had visited the Duke of York Islands in 1878, a crew member had fashioned a mock crown out of tin and painted it with the colours of the German flag. It was presented to To Pulu, a man wealthy in local valuables, and he was ‘crowned’ as King Dick. Ben Danks had observed more recently, ‘That crown has undergone

16 Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), Board Minutes, 10 January 1883 in Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Correspondence and Papers, vol. 1, ML CY 1365.
18 Weekly Advocate, 2 February 1884.
German colours or British? French or American? The debate was gaining pace and passion with many interested parties in the colonies giving their opinions. Should the people of New Britain and New Ireland, or the people of the great island of New Guinea, or the New Hebrides or the Solomon Islands for that matter, be left alone? Ought they to come under the jurisdiction of the Western Pacific High Commission? Did they need protection from unscrupulous traders in labour? Or were they needed as a source of labour for growing agricultural and other industrial needs in the colonies? Were the people of the islands, like To Pulu, interested in using the traders, missionaries and explorers for their own purposes, and did not care from whence they came? Under the cloak of *Carpe Diem*, George Brown wrote a series of letters to the *Sydney Morning Herald*; it was his opinion that the people of the northern islands would welcome annexation or a protectorate ‘for their own protection’ and that the abuses of the labour trade ‘could only be remedied by the establishment of an authorised authority in the different groups.’

The authorised authority he had in mind was the British Foreign Office. After a series of dramatic moves and counter moves throughout 1883 and 1884, it was the German flag that was raised over the region of New Britain, New Ireland and the north-eastern coast of New Guinea in November 1884. Brown was disappointed and angry, blaming the shillyshallying of the British Foreign Office which allowed German pressure without insisting on German responsibility.

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For Lydia Brown, the period when the family was all together in Bourke Street, Darlinghurst was rare, precious and brief. It was the only period during their marriage when her husband was likely to sleep at home in his own bed. Her children were with her, all busy with studies and interests and with their house crowded with friends. Her daughters were better educated than she had been and were interested in the growing influence of women through organisations like the Young Women’s Christian Association, and the new Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. It was a time of prosperity in the community where anything seemed possible. Her Lizzie graduated from the University of Sydney as one of the first two women graduates there, listed among the ‘Honour men’ in Classics; Lydia remembered teaching her little girl her first lessons in half-built houses in distant Samoa. After years of isolation, Lydia was near to women friends once

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19 *Weekly Advocate*, 15 March 1881.
20 *Carpe Diem*, 4 December 1883, *Sydney Morning Herald*.
more. She loved to fill her home with guests and to offer hospitality to all; her husband told her once that he had seen a splendid dining room ‘large enough and broad enough even for you.’ There was grief, too, at that time. A tiny boy was born at their Wesleyan Parsonage on 9 January 1884. They called him Fletcher, in memory of their dear friend and brother-in-law William Fletcher. He lived for three days. When an album of family photographs of the extended Wallis family was presented to Lydia’s parents James and Mary Anne Wallis to honour their Golden Wedding, the images of three of her children, Mabel, Wallis and Fletcher, were not there.

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For so long George Brown’s focus had been on the southern hemisphere and the islands of the western Pacific. Now a dream of going ‘home’ to England after thirty years became possible. He had permission to take leave from his work at Bourke Street Methodist Church as well as his many committees, and also the honour of being one of the commissioners for the New South Wales exhibit at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London later in 1886. Lydia would stay in Sydney maintaining their home for the rest of the family; they would have to move house yet again. Brown’s hopes were to meet his sisters and step-mother again, to make his mark within British Methodism and to connect with the scientific community. He set off with high expectations, a collection of exotic limelight images and a human skull among the artefacts in his luggage. When he sailed from Sydney on the 3000-ton steamship *Mariposa* on 22 April 1886 his daughters Lizzie and Amy were already living and working in Brisbane. The Brown family was scattering once more.

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By the time he sailed at last up the Thames in late June 1886 he had sailed across the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean and travelled across North America from San Francisco to New York by rail. He had left London as a rebellious nineteen-year-old lad and returned as a fifty-year-old tourist, wide-eyed at the famed sights of the city. It was quite overwhelming and he told Lydia that he was ‘very busy running about every day and I am almost tired of this big, big city…. I shall not be at all sorry to be back in Sydney again. I am tired of travelling about this big world of ours.’ It seemed strange to see the familiar objects from New South Wales in the vast Colonial and Indian Exhibition in South Kensington where they had become exotic. To his disappointment, he soon realised that because it was summer it was almost impossible to arrange any opportunities to speak in public; public meetings for churches and for scientists were held

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24 Brown to Lydia Brown, 2 July 1886, from London.
in the winter months. As an unknown person from the colonies, he had little chance to be heard, even though he had been able to secure a speaking role at the annual British Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Meeting at the end of July. He told Lydia, ‘That is all I want. Let me have a chance at talking and I am pretty certain that the tale I have to tell will take with English Methodists.’ In the meantime he set off to visit France and Switzerland and then to crisscross England, seeing regions of his homeland that he had never known. He visited his half-sisters; Anna married to a Church of England vicar in rural Lincolnshire and Emily living with his step-mother in Barnard Castle, County Durham. These women were all virtual strangers to him but he valued the chance to be with them once more. ‘I am very glad that I have come,’ he told Lydia.²⁶

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The British Wesleyan Methodist Conference began late in July 1886 and at first the unknown visitor from the colonies found it rather dull. When the Missionary Meeting began, with crowds curious to hear heroic tales from India or China or the West Indies, he knew that they would never have even heard of New Britain. Brown was to be the third of six speakers, each to tell their missionary story for a maximum of twenty minutes. The first two speakers, however, did not know when to stop. When Brown rose to speak, he used his astute understanding of audiences. Plunging straight into a gripping word picture of their first landing on New Britain, he soon had their rapt attention.

I was in the midst of telling them one of the most exciting incidents connected with our mission, when Waruwarum wished to take one of his wives from under our care for the purpose of cooking her, to which proceeding we strongly objected, when I noticed that my allotted time had expired. I stopped suddenly and stated that I must defer the completion of my story till some other time. There was at once great excitement in the audience, and cries from all parts for me to ‘go on’.²⁷

Despite this urging, he told them that he would not take up the time of the speakers still to follow. Predictably, he soon found himself being invited to speak in many places all over the country and the unknown man would be soon very well-known.²⁸

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Once the round of autumn and winter meetings began, George Brown was constantly in transit, using the extensive railway system to carry him around

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²⁵ Ibid.
²⁶ Ibid., 21 July 1886.
²⁸ Ibid.
the country to speak in churches and to scientific bodies. His tales of exotic places captivated his audiences and people began to suggest that he write a book. Brown warmed to that idea and told Lydia, ‘If ever I do write a book this visit of mine will do much to further the sale of it. I mean to set about that work as soon as I get home.’

For a man whose early education in a small rural town had been limited, Brown relished his new opportunities to rub shoulders with Oxford professors, colonial governors and knights of the realm as he dined in such company and addressed their scientific organisations. In Oxford he donated a skull and other items to the new Pitt Rivers collection and although he assured Lydia that after ‘a day of bigwigs I should much prefer being quietly at home with my dearly loved ones,’ the recognition and admiration of the scientific community was very gratifying. At a meeting of the Geographical Club at London University, for example, he spoke, ‘and kept them roaring with laughter every now and then. I felt quite at home.… It was no trouble at all for me to speak and I have no fear of dignitaries when I am talking about matters about which I know more than any of them.’

Even in England, though, he could not escape reference to the ‘Blanche Bay Affair’. At a dinner party he met a fierce critic of his actions, Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, anti-slavery campaigner and journalist Frederick Chesson. Their host invited Brown to tell the story of the events of 1878. To Lydia he wrote later, ‘I told my story and Mr Chesson admitted that he had long seen the matter differently especially since he had seen Sir Arthur Gordon on his return. Then Sir William said, “Oh and did Sir Arthur Gordon distinctly approve of what Mr Brown did,” and Chesson had to say “Yes.” Poor fellow, he must have felt uncomfortable.’

A dark winter descended over England while in Sydney Lydia watched purple jacaranda blossom against a sky of clear cerulean blue. Her household was in yet another house, this time in the dusty building site of the new suburb of Paddington, while they waited for Brown to return. Brown, living in the dense fogs that settled over London ‘like a thick dark yellow cloud of smoke and soon you can scarcely see your way,’ discovered a deep sense of homesickness. He had always thought of himself as English, but now ‘I love the sunny south the best now as a place to live in,’ he wrote and, observing the thrashing of the Australian cricketers in England that year, ‘I am an Australian here and always stick up for them.’ He was missing his family deeply, not least because he was

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29 Brown to Lydia Brown, 30 September, 19 November 1886.
30 Ibid., 25 November 1886.
31 Ibid., 5 November 1886.
32 During 1886 Lydia Brown resided at 4 Radford Terrace, Brown Street, Paddington.
33 Brown to Lydia Brown, 25 November 1886, from London.
34 Brown to Lydia Brown, 17 August 1886, from Paris.
absent while Amy was being courted by a young man. He told Monica and Claudia, ‘You must take the broom handle to any young fellow who may come prowling around while I am away and if that doesn’t do Mother can give you my revolver or one of the Fijian clubs perhaps would be best. And see here, mind you keep clear yourself.’

From the far side of the world he wrote loving letters to his children, assuring his sons of his pride in them both as they grew into ‘great and good Christ-like men.’ To his daughters he wrote, ‘I am proud of our girls, distinguished as they are for Learning, Flirting, Painting, Music and other Fine Arts to say nothing of Teaching and Scone and Rock Cake making.’ He was trapped in an endless series of commitments in England, with many uncertainties about future appointments in the United States and finding it hard to finalise travel plans for the homeward journey, but now he was turned toward home and Lydia. He told her how much he longed to be with her and concluded, ‘God bless you, my own good dear wife. You have been a great blessing to me and you are dearer than ever as time goes on … as ever, my dear old woman, your loving husband Geo Brown.’

The key question that hung over Brown as he concluded his time in England was: where would Conference appoint him in 1887? He had been learning some things about himself as he travelled. Observing the very quiet rural village where his sister Anna’s husband was rector, he wrote, ‘I should not like to be shut up in such a place.’ In his travels he had been impressed by what he had seen of the effective use of lay people as evangelists as well as the work of women in the church; ‘It is amazing how some of these Methodist ladies do work. I have been quite surprised.’ Rumours had begun to filter through to him that, with the failing health of the new General Secretary for Missions, the name of George Brown was being mentioned for that role. He told Lydia about the rumours and asked,

Have you heard anything about where we are likely to go next year? You do not say a word about it so I suppose you have not done so…. I do not object to a Circuit but would object to go far into the country. Between you and me I do not care to lift a finger for the Missionary Secretaryship but I do not see how I could refuse it if appointed.

35 Brown to Monica and Claudia Brown, from Boston, USA, 7 January 1887.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Brown to Lydia Brown, 9 December 1886.
39 Ibid., 5 July 1886, from Miningsby, Lincolnshire.
40 Brown to Lydia Brown, 19 November 1886.
41 Ibid., 17 September 1886.
After many delays, George Brown sailed from the English port of Liverpool on 11 December 1886. The experience had taught him much but now he wanted to go home. The homeward journey proved to be one hazard after another; a gale during the Atlantic crossing, delays and frustration in New York and Boston, fierce winter snow storms blocking his rail journey across Canada and a painfully slow vessel from Vancouver to San Francisco. He feared he would miss the *Mariposa* and was profoundly relieved when he was safely on board and heading west across the Pacific. A letter from home told him that almost all of his family, including Lydia, had been away from home at times during the summer and wrote, ‘I wonder what folks think of us. They must think there is a vagabond streak in my composition that has descended to the children and even infected the wife.’

While he was at sea, Conference was meeting and his future had been decided. Perhaps, as the ship approached Auckland, he dreamed of an appointment that would permit him to sit at his own table for dinner, enjoy the conversation of his own family, sleep in his own bed, write his book and stop this relentless, endless travel.

The *Mariposa* docked in Auckland. He soon learned the news from Sydney. Conference had appointed him as the new General Secretary of Missions. His first journey in the role was already planned. In January the former missionary and now Premier Shirley Waldemar Baker in Tonga had survived an assassination attempt. The new General Secretary must travel to Tonga as soon as possible.

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42 Brown to Monica and Claudia Brown, 7 January 1887.