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John Liddiard Nicholas

Excerpt

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NARRATIVE

OF A

VOYAGE TO NEW ZEALAND.



CHAP. I.

Introductory remarks—Benevolence of Mr. Marsden—Mission to New Zealand proposed by him to the Missionary Society—Approved, and Missionaries chosen—Tippahee, a New Zealand chief, visits Port Jackson—Particulars respecting him—Duaterra, his successor, brought to New South Wales—Some account of him—Character of the Missionaries—The disposition of the natives tried and found favourable—Mr. Marsden resolves on going with the Mission himself—The Author's reason for accompanying him—Second visit of Duaterra to Port Jackson—Two other chiefs come with him—Description of them—New Zealanders abhorred at Port Jackson—Proclamation of the Governor.

OF all the various islands in the Pacific Ocean, there is none with which Europeans in general are so little acquainted as New Zealand; and none, perhaps, which more deserves their particular attention. Ever since the time of Captain Cook, whose enterprising spirit could only be equalled by his indefatigable perseverance, this island has

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been almost entirely neglected, and the partial visits made to it, have in no instance been favourable to a permanent intercourse. The persons who at distant intervals resorted thither, were men, as will presently be seen, of callous hearts, who were as little disposed to conciliate the friendship of the rude inhabitants, as they were to pay a due regard to their own character; and, in addition to this, the odium thrown on the natives themselves, by being viewed as ferocious cannibals, served, as it were, to interdict any cordial communication with them. Dreaded by the good, and assailed by the worthless, their real dispositions were not ascertained; the former dared not venture to civilize them, the latter only added to their ferocity.

Too long had they continued in this state of obnoxious barbarism, when a man, whose benevolence is so closely connected with the subject of this narrative, that I must necessarily advert to it, came forward, in the genuine spirit of philanthropy, to rescue their persons from insult, and their minds from ignorance.

The individual to whom I allude, is the Reverend Samuel Marsden, his Majesty's Principal Chaplain in the territory of New

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South Wales. This excellent man, not restricting himself to those particular duties which more immediately belong to his appointment, has extended his labours to a more enlarged sphere, and consulted not only the spiritual but the temporal welfare of the numerous savage tribes who inhabit the neighbouring islands. His zeal and activity in vindicating their rights, and opposing the wanton aggressions made both on their persons and property by the unfeeling crews of several merchant-ships, who have long been in the habit of committing every kind of outrage against them with impunity, entitle him not only to the praise of every good man, but even serve to blot out the national disgrace which his country has too long sustained by the frequency of such atrocities. These inhuman practices have been carried to a degree which must shock every lover of humanity, and we have the testimony of Mr. Marsden himself,* to shew that even murder has been committed without the least provocation on the part of the unfortunate victims.

* “— As it is well known that the Europeans have thought it no crime, to murder and plunder these islanders upon the most trivial occasions, and often from mere wanton-cruelty.”—*Proceedings of the Rev. Samuel Marsden, inserted in the Missionary Register for November 1816.*

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Encouraged by the success which has attended the endeavours of the English missionaries, to civilize the inhabitants of Otaheite, in which he is well known to have taken so leading a part, Mr. Marsden had contemplated a similar establishment at New Zealand. The extent of its territory and population, afforded a noble scope for the exercise of his benevolence, and the remarks he had made on the character and genius of the natives of New Zealand, as they occasionally visited Port Jackson, induced him to augur favourably concerning its issue.

In these favourable hopes, however, he stood nearly alone. His plan was by most persons deemed wild and chimerical, and a sacrifice of the life of every one was foreboded, who should venture to carry it into execution. The New Zealanders, as will be seen in another part of this work, were represented at the Colony in the blackest colours; and any attempt to impress their minds with a sense of religion and morality, was judged not only hopeless and impracticable, but rash, absurd, and extravagant.

Not deterred, however, by this discouraging representation of their character, Mr. Marsden still entertained hopes of being

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able to execute the design he had formed. He weighed thoroughly and impartially the facts adduced against them, and considered with himself whether the implacable enmity which they were said to harbour in their hearts against Europeans, might not be the consequence of just provocation; and whether the cruelties occasionally committed on the crews of vessels, were more than retaliations of similar outrages.

As an Englishman, he was desirous of shewing to this bold, high-spirited, and inquisitive people, the proper character of his country; and as a Christian, of calling them from their gross idolatries to a knowledge of revealed religion, enlightening their minds and humanizing their pursuits. To a man, however, of less firmness than himself, the numerous and authenticated proofs of a hostile disposition on the part of the New Zealanders, would have been appalling, and subversive of every hope as to the success of the undertaking. Tasman, the first navigator that ever visited the New Zealand coasts, is well known to have had a boat's crew cut off shortly after he had sent them on shore, and to have been so dismayed at this loss, as to sail away immediately without daring to

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make a second attempt. The inhabitants were no less hostile to Dufresne Marion, the Commodore of two French sloops, who in the year 1772 entered the Bay of Islands. They surprised and murdered twenty-eight of the men who were sent on shore, and were very near getting possession of the ships: while no later than the following year, two midshipmen and eight sailors, belonging to Captain Furneaux's expedition, were suddenly surrounded, and not only murdered, but (shocking to relate) eaten by the barbarians who captured them. In addition to these facts, which were but too well ascertained, and afforded more than sufficient proofs to counterbalance the good opinion which Captain Cook entertained of these people, when he ventured to penetrate so far into the interior of their country, and recommended the island as admirably calculated for an European settlement; the fatal attack upon the Boyd* was still fresh in the recollection of every one, and left an impression of horror and detestation which nothing could efface. This ill-fated ship having touched at New Zealand in 1809,

* The particulars of the loss of the Boyd will be found in a subsequent part of this work.

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while on her return to Europe, was actually seized by the natives in spite of the resistance of the crew, who were all of them murdered, and many of them in like manner eaten.

To any other man except Mr. Marsden, these instances of vengeful enmity would have demonstrated the danger, and shewn the almost total impossibility of bringing such savages to a state of rational improvement; but he was determined to have himself practical experience of the dispositions of some of them before he should abandon his purpose.

That he might be enabled to obtain a clear insight into the character of the New Zealand tribes, he carried home with him from time to time, and took under his roof, such individuals as were occasionally brought to Port Jackson by the different whalers; and as no man is more capable than himself of discriminating the various passions that influence the human heart, the plan he adopted and the practice he pursued were both equally judicious. By minutely inspecting their conduct and tracing their motives, he was led to form an estimate of the character of their savage brethren; and while the natural disposition of his rude guests insensibly developed itself, the result

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was no less creditable to themselves than gratifying to their benevolent host.

He found them possessed in an eminent degree of many excellent qualities of the heart that would do honour to the most civilized people; such as a cheerful readiness to the interchange of friendly offices among each other, a natural evenness of temper which never suffered them to break out into any turbulent excesses, unless when war, their great ruling propensity, was present in their minds, and a confidence the most implicit on being once assured of safety.

Among the different New Zealanders thus brought to Port Jackson, some were chiefs or kings, supposed to have considerable influence with their countrymen, who yielded a ready obedience to their authority. The most remarkable of these was Tippahee, who came to the colony during the time of Governor King, from the Bay of Islands, where, by the account he gave of himself, he was a ruler of great power and extensive possessions. Both the Governor and the gentlemen of the colony were particularly attentive to him, nor were they a little surprised to find in a man totally unacquainted with any one rule of civilized comportment, an acute

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shrewdness of remark, and nicety of discrimination, which they had never before thought compatible with a state of rude barbarism. The colonists still hold in remembrance many of his remarks, which equally shew the solidity of his understanding and the justness of his conceptions. On our remonstrating with him on the absurdity and inconvenience of his customs, he immediately censured some of our own as far more ridiculous, and many of his arguments were both rational and convincing. Like most of the New Zealand chiefs, he was highly tattooed, a mode of disfiguring the face which is generally practised by all the savage tribes in the Pacific Ocean. The barbarous process consists in pricking on the face with a sharp instrument, a variety of semi-circular and other figures, and rubbing into the punctures a kind of blue paint, or sometimes charcoal, which gives to the countenance a most disgusting appearance, and makes it truly hideous to the eye of an European. On being laughed at one day by a gentleman for having disfigured his face in so unnatural a manner, the sagacious chief immediately retorted with pointed sarcasm; telling him he was quite as much an object of derision him-

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self for having put powder and grease in his hair, a practice which he thought was much more absurd than the tattooing.

He could not reconcile the rigour of our penal code with his own ideas of justice, which were certainly regulated by strong feelings of humanity. A person who had been sent out to the colony as a convict, having stolen some pigs during the time the chief happened to be there, was condemned to death, and Tippa-hee, on being made acquainted with the crime and the punishment, inveighed against the latter as unnecessarily cruel and unjustly severe. Reasoning on the subject with a great deal of natural logic, he said, if the man had stolen an axe or any thing else of essential utility, he ought to suffer death, but not for stealing a pig, to which he was prompted most probably by hunger. He interested himself very warmly in favour of the culprit, and earnestly pressed the Governor for his pardon, while dining one day with a large party at his Excellency's table; but he was told it was impossible it could be granted, as the man had acted in direct violation of the laws of his country, which secured to each individual the safe possession of his property, and punished with