

Marsden, 1913

Quote

Old age, it seems, is not always querulous; its retrospects are not always in favour of the past; the aged Christian walks with a more elastic step as he sees the fruit of his labour, and anticipates his own great reward. "Mine eyes," he concludes, "are dim with age like Isaac's; it is with some difficulty I can see to write."

Nor had the weakness and credulity of advancing years led him to take for granted, as in second childhood old age is wont to do, the truth of first impressions, or the accuracy of every man's reports. He still gave to every subject connected with missions the closest attention, penetrated beneath the surface, and formed his own conclusions. While in New Zealand, for instance, he addressed the following queries to the Rev. J. Matthews, one of the missionaries, on the subject of education:—

April, 1837.

I will thank you to return me what number of native young men there are employed from your station on the Sabbath in visiting the natives, I mean the numbers who occasionally visit their countrymen and instruct them. What schools there are at the station, and who are the teachers? Have you an infant school, or a school for men and boys? a school for women? What do they learn? Do they learn to read and write? Do they understand figures? Have they renounced generally their former superstitions? At what period of the day do they attend school? Have they any meeting in the week-days for prayer and religious instruction? Do they appear to have any views of the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour?

Any information you can give me, along with brethren, will be very acceptable to the lovers of Gospel in New South Wales.

SAMUEL MARSDEN

After describing the happy state of the Christian settlement at Waimate, Mr. Marsden goes on to say:—

On the opposite side of the harbour, a number of Europeans have settled along with the natives. Several keep public-houses, and encourage every kind of crime. Here drunkenness, adultery, murder, etc., are committed. There are no laws, judges, nor magistrates; so that Satan maintains his dominion without molestation. Some civilized Government must take New Zealand under its protection, or the most dreadful evils will be committed by runaway convicts, sailors and publicans. There are no laws here to punish crimes. When I return to New South Wales, I purpose to lay the state of New Zealand before the colonial Government, to see if anything can be done to remedy these public evils.

"I hope in time," he says again, in a letter, dated the 16th of May, 1837, from Pahiia, to Mr. Matthews, "the chiefs will get a Governor. I shall inform the Europeans in authority how much they are distressed in New Zealand for want of a Governor with power to punish crime. The Bay of Islands is now in a dreadful state. It is my intention to return to New South Wales by the first opportunity."

That opportunity soon appeared, and the venerable founder of its missions, the advocate of its native population, the friend of all that concerned its present or spiritual welfare, took his last leave of the shores of New Zealand.

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