

**FIFTY YEARS AGO IN NEW ZEALAND: A
COMMEMORATION: A JUBILEE PAPER:
A RETROSPECT: A PLAIN
AND TRUE STORY. READ BEFORE THE
HAWKE'S BAY PHILOSOPHICAL
INSTITUTE, OCTOBER 17TH, 1887**

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Fifty years ago in New Zealand: a commemoration: a jubilee paper: a retrospect: a plain and true story. Read before the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute, October 17th, 1887 by William Colenso

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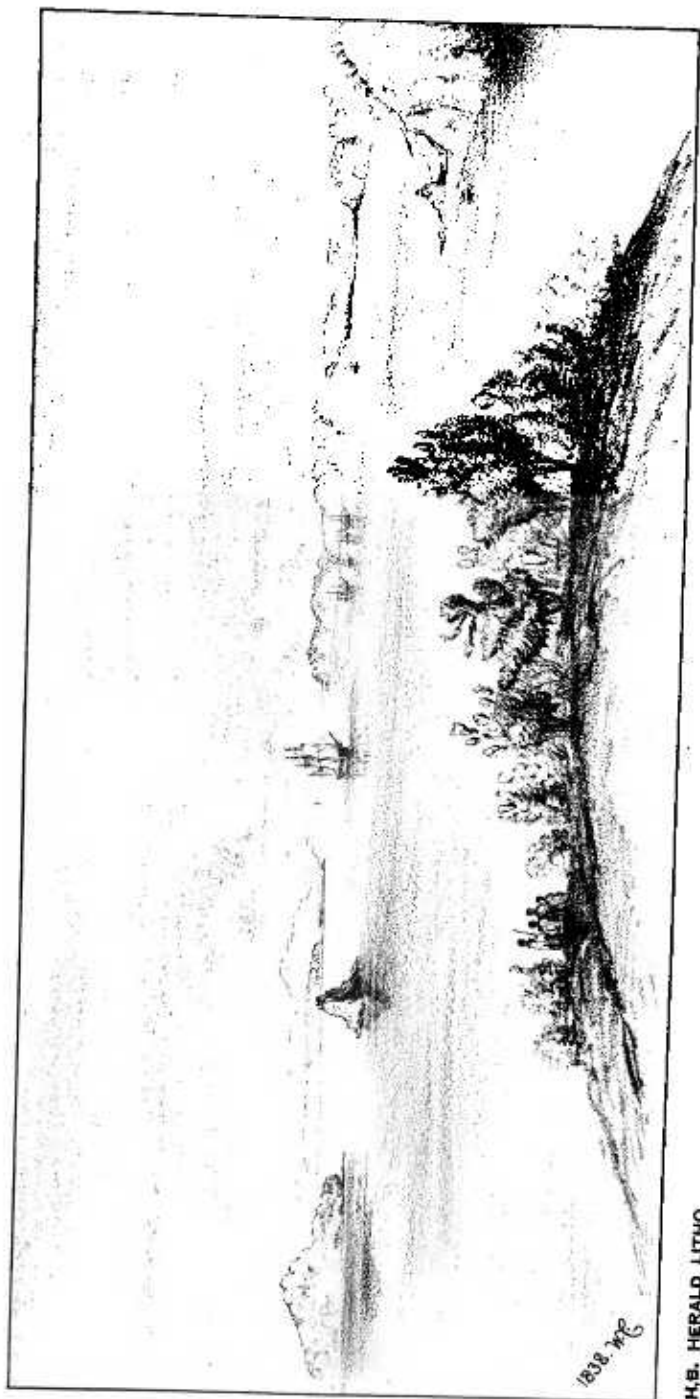
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WILLIAM COLENZO

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1898 H.P.

H.B. HERALD LITHO.

The Anchorage with Russell Bay of Islands
From top of the high hill behind Peahia.

2/11/1898

FIFTY YEARS AGO IN NEW ZEALAND.

A COMMEMORATION: A JUBILEE PAPER:
A RETROSPECT:
A PLAIN AND TRUE STORY.

READ BEFORE THE HAWKE'S BAY PHILOSOPHICAL INSTITUTE,
OCTOBER 17TH, 1887.

BY

WILLIAM COLENSO,

F.R.S., F.L.S., ETC.,

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE.

*(Published under the auspices of the Board of Governors N.Z.I., and with
the approval of the Council H.B.P.I.)*

"Build me straight, O worthy Master!
Staunch and strong, a goodly vessel,
That shall laugh at all disaster,
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle."
LONGFELLOW: "The Building of the Ship."

"Quæque ipsi vidi, et quorum fui."—VIRG.

—"We cannot express any truth without involving ourselves in some degree of error
or occasionally conveying an impression to others wholly erroneous."

—PROF. JOWETT.

Apit:

PRINTED BY B. C. HARDING, HASTINGS-STREET.

1888.



*Extract from a Circular issued by the Council of the
Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute, 18th June, 1888.*

The twentieth volume of the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*, which is now being issued, does not contain the extremely valuable and interesting "Jubilee Paper" read before this Society by Mr. Colenso in October, 1867; and on enquiry the Council find that owing to retrenchment and general lack of funds, this Paper has been "deferred," together with many others.

Seeing that the Paper contains a long and excellent account of the Introduction of the Printing Press into New Zealand, and of the printing of the New Testament in the Maori tongue in 1837 (fifty years ago), together with many collateral and little-known facts and items of colonial and public interest, the Council took steps to procure the return of the Paper from the Governors of the New Zealand Institute, with a view to its publication.

The Board replied as follows:—"The Board very much regret being unable to publish the paper in question, and have therefore directed me to return it as requested. . . . The Board expresses great satisfaction at the prospect of the publication of the Jubilee Paper in another form.—(Signed) R. B. Goss, Secretary."

FIFTY YEARS AGO IN NEW ZEALAND.

A Jubilee Paper.

§ 1. PRELIMINARY.

THIS present year of grace—1887, has been, is, and will be long-known as, the marked "Jubilee" year; probably more so than any Jubilee that has ever preceded it since time began! This arises, mainly, from the fact of its ubiquity, or universal dissemination and observance, more or less throughout the whole globe. We here in New Zealand, the most distant of all the Colonies of the British Empire, situated at the very antipodes,—we have done our best in joining with thankfulness and acclaim in the carrying-out of the Jubilee of Her Majesty our most gracious Queen Victoria.

And in doing so the question has more than once arisen in my mind, whether we (or more strictly speaking, I) have not also a Jubilee to observe, to commemorate? Indeed, all of us who have passed the fiftieth Birthday have such a private Jubilee; which is stronger still when those who can do so (as in the case of Her Majesty), can look back over the long vista of fifty years of active life; and this is still further strengthened, when, in so looking back, we can specify some peculiar useful public work undertaken and completed for the benefit of the people fifty years ago;—especially when such was begun and carried on and finished under singular trials and hardships and difficulties.

As I have reasons for believing, that I am the only one present who has dwelt more than fifty years in this country, I trust I shall be permitted to say at the commencement, (and, in so doing, to meet and cut short all anticipation and conjecture.)—that I do not intend to speak specially of that—my arrival in this land,—in this paper. The Jubilee, or fifty years commemoration of that time, expired nearly three years ago, and was then duly though privately observed by me; as well as a few others since,—special goals or landmarks of some important epochs in

my life now nearly drawing to its close ; a select few of the more important of them I may briefly mention : viz.—

In the year 1835, the printing of the *first* book in New Zealand.

In the same year, the printing of the first *English* book.

In the same year (Dec. 25), meeting with the celebrated *Darwin* in the Bay of Islands, and spending a happy long day with him.

In 1836, the commencement of the printing the *New Testament* in *Maori*.

Having so far cleared the way, I may now state that my present Jubilee paper is intended to commemorate more particularly the completion of the printing of the *New Testament* in the *Maori* tongue at *Paihia* in the Bay of Islands in the year 1837—fifty years ago ! an event that caused a great sensation at the time, both in New Zealand and at Home, (although now, in part, forgotten,) and one that was productive of incalculable good to the *Maori* race : together with the introduction of the Printing-Press into this country ; and also, the gradual formation of its present written *Maori* language ;— with many peculiar and little-known circumstances pertaining to those prehistoric times, and incidental thereto.

And as I have had necessarily a prominent part (active or passive) in almost every successional item or subject that I have to bring before you, I trust, in my endeavouring to fairly and faithfully narrate the same, I shall not be deemed egotistical.

§ 2. INTRODUCTORY.

In the year 1833, the Church Missionary Society, having determined to send out a Printing Press and types and all necessary *matériel* to their mission in New Zealand, were seeking a Missionary Printer to be in charge. In the end of that year, I, then residing in London, was introduced to the Secretaries of that Society at their Mission house, and engaged to go out to New Zealand with the Press as a Missionary.

For various reasons matters were not soon ready ; and it was June, 1834, before we left London for Sydney, New South Wales, *en route* for New Zealand. During the long interval, (after my return from the Country in the Spring,) I was

frequently at the large printing establishment of Messrs. Watts and Son, near Temple Bar, about the necessary requirements, (their types, &c., being all cast at their own foundry within the same building,) but all directions, orders, &c., respecting the same, were given by the Under-Secretaries of the Mission-House to that firm without any reference to me. Well do I remember the answers that were returned to my repeated applications for an Imposing-stone, and for page-cord, (not to mention other things,)—"What! 'Coals to Newcastle'!! In that country where the New Zealand Flax grows everywhere wild, and the Natives are all adepts at making such beautiful lines and cords! and where the handsome Greenstone abounds!!!"—I briefly mention this here, as its sure results followed.—After a long passage of seventeen weeks our ship arrived at Sydney.

Here I make a short digression. What a difference! between the Sydney of that period and of to-day!! Then there was no steamer on her waters, and but few ships! then there were only three clergymen of the Church-of-England residing in all Australia;—two of them (the Reverends Messrs Cowper and Hill) in Sydney, and the Rev. S. Marsden at Paramatta. In order to get through their fixed Sunday (or weekly) duties, those Sydney Ministers were obliged to commence them on Saturday afternoons. During my stay in Sydney I assisted them as well as I could.

As no vessel could be found willing to leave for New Zealand, owing to their fear of the Maoris, we were obliged to remain eight or nine weeks at Sydney. At last, after much entreaty, a small schooner of 67 tons was got ready, and we sailed on the 10th December for the Bay of Islands. After a long and eventful voyage of twenty days, (suffering much from want of water, as well as from a complication of *peculiar* miseries!) we landed at Paihia Mission Station in the Bay of Islands, at 9 p.m. on the 30th December; and in the following few days got the Press, type, &c., safely on shore.

§ 3. THE PRESS IN NEW ZEALAND.

1835. Jan. 3. On this day we got the Press and heavy boxes of type securely landed; the lighter packages, including Bookbinders' standing- and cutting-presses, and tools, having previously been taken on shore. It was a very difficult matter

to land the printing-press safely, from the bulk and weight of the iron "*staple*" (it being a large Stanhope Press), and the vessel out at anchor in the harbour, with no wharf nor good landing-place, merely the natural sandy beach open to the ocean; the passenger-boats of the Mission Station being far too light, and the Maori canoes too small and crank; at last we managed it, by lashing two canoes together and so making a deck or platform on them, and working early in the morning before the sea-breeze began. The boxes of type would have been opened on board, but as the little vessel, owing to her novelty, was continually crowded by Maoris, (all of whom were very wild and rough, and some of them not very friendly,) it was thought the parcels of type might be seized for making musket-balls, then in very great demand. It was a matter of very great rejoicing to us when all our precious stores were safely on shore and without loss.

Speaking practically, however, our rejoicing was of short duration; for on unpacking the goods and stores I found many necessary articles to be absolutely wanting! For the information of Printers I will just set down a few of them; though I almost fear my relation will scarcely be believed. There was no wooden furniture of any kind, nor quoins, (cast-metal furniture, so common now, not being then in use,) no galleys, no cases, no leads of any size, no brass rule, no composing-sticks, (save a private one of my own that I had bought two years before in London, a most fortunate circumstance!) no inking-table, no potash, no lye-brushes, no mallet and shooter, no roller-irons and stock, though there was a massy cast-iron roller mould, and (as I have already intimated) no imposing-stone nor page-cord; and, worst of all, actually *no printing paper!!* Moreover, in those days, as things then were, none of these missing articles could be obtained from England in a less time than eighteen months! while they might possibly be got from Sydney in six or eight months.—

Such was the state of things at the setting-up of the Press in New Zealand! At first, and for some considerable time, we hazarded the hope that the deficient printing stores, especially the large bales of paper, might have been left in the Agent's warehouses at Sydney, where the Press and types and Binding tools had been long stored; but time revealed that such was not the case. Fortunately I found a handy Joiner in the Bay, who