

# *The Anglican Historical Society of New Zealand* *Te Rōpu Hītori o te Hāhi Mīhinare ki Aotearoa*

## *General Synod Meets in Nelson, 1862*

**Researcher: Shirley Tunnicliff (1936-2014)**

(AHS Newsletter 22, May 2002)

At the beginning of 1862, the Second General Synod of the Anglican Church was held in Nelson, which brought to Nelson all the Anglican Bishops then in New Zealand. From Auckland came the Primate, Bishop G. A. Selwyn, with Bishop J. C. Patteson of Melanesia; from Wellington Bishop Charles Abraham with his wife, Caroline, and young son, Charlie; Bishop William Williams of Waiapu and Bishop Henry Harper from Canterbury completed the Episcopal party. All, with the exception of Bishop Patteson, were guests at the Bishop's house, as well as Archdeacon Hadfield.

**Mary Hobhouse (wife of Edmund Hobhouse, Bishop of Nelson)** promised to keep a record for the family in England of the synodical meetings.

Professor Morrell in his official history of the Church writes of Mary's letter-diary: 'This is the only account known to me of what happened at Nelson, apart from the printed minutes.'<sup>1</sup> Her notes are so revealing and often witty that one cannot but regret, as she herself did, that her advanced pregnancy prevented her from being present throughout the proceedings.

Mary Hobhouse writes to her cousin Augusta:  
(29 January 1862)

'At this moment the Bishop of NZ is staying with us, in anticipation of a General Synod, and one of my first conversations with him threw light at once on the calculation of necessary income for a Colonial Bishop, which I mentioned to you ... last year. He was regretting that he had not advised his Auckland Clergy to bring their tents which they could have pitched in our garden, and so been saved the expense of lodgings, which

poor things they can ill afford. Now I, having but two active girls and one delicate housekeeper as my whole staff (I don't reckon the nurse, whom I never dream of asking to do anything unconnected with the baby) trembled as I saw in my imagination an encamped host of clergy besides our own house full to the brim, to be cooked for and washed-up for, so I enquired how, if people lodged in tents, they were to be fed? Oh, he said, nothing could be simpler; if he and Bishop Patteson had a tent, they should get some tea and sugar, a sack of flour, a piece of bacon, and a frying pan, and they should live very comfortably on pancakes and bacon which they would cook for themselves. I could not help suggesting that most people would have to get new stomachs as well as the articles he named to make this diet agree with them, but that of course a man whose own stomach is like that of an ostrich would not admit. There is another thing which he overlooks, that others do not share his wonderful capacity of working under the most disadvantageous circumstances, and that to most people a certain amount of space, quiet, regularity, and convenience, all most expensive articles here, are as necessary for the dispatch of business as food and air are to their health.'<sup>2</sup>

Mary Hobhouse begins her record of General Synod: (10 February)

'I shall try and begin a detailed journal, my dear Eliza, and to keep it up from time to time during Synod, out of which you may glean some facts that you wish to know and obtain some clear impressions in matters which would otherwise present a blank or a mist. I feel hugely incapable

of furnishing you with a condensed aspect of Synod, presenting its more interesting features, and so can only try to accumulate a heap of material out of which you may perchance form some view of your own.

'You know that the Primate has been here a month already having arrived from Auckland on that Saturday of frightful whirl in which the last English mail went out on January 11. It was expedient that the Bishops should confer together and get matters into shape before the actual meeting of Synod, and he had no direct means of getting here between January 11 and February 11. The following Saturday brought the Bishop of Christchurch, and the Bishop of Wellington was expected a few days later, but to the great disappointment of the Prelates the steamer came in without him, special business having made him determine to wait for one a fortnight later. So, they fell to work without him, and have been sitting daily in conclave in that useful building which has been successively coach-house, bedroom, infant-school and Diocesan Library. (A green-gage tree which grows over it they say has been a great resource during their discussions; the Bishop of NZ declaring that until he saw the Bishop of Christchurch shake the tree, he always contented himself with what he found on the ground).

'You may be sure that in our chronic scarcity of clergy for Sunday Services, the opportunity of this increase in their number is not overlooked. The poor Primate had hardly set foot in the house (looking jaded enough to inspire pity in the heart of any one but a parish clergyman) when Edmund and Mr. Turton were laying their heads together to see what could be got out of him the very next day. Of course, he went into harness directly, but I admired the wisdom of the Bishop of Christchurch who when he arrived the following Saturday from Otago a good deal tired with his exertions there, replied to Edmund's enquiries the moment he had swallowed his dinner as to what he would do? 'That he would rest' and

steadily declined any duty the following day. There were no 'inferior' clergy on the scenes last week except Mr. Butt from the Wairau, who with Mr. Bagshaw, represent the Clergy of this Diocese. The latter, fortunately, will not come till the Synod actually begins, for his critical talents, intense love of meddling, and disregard of peace and charity make him a bird of ill-omen wherever he appears. The Primate lodged a night at his house at Motueka on his way to the Maoris near Collingwood and hoped by talking matters quietly and openly over with him, to ventilate them, but it is to be feared that he will always take up whatever view promises him most field for disputation, and he is the 'bete noire' of those who want to get the real work through in a reasonable time.

'Yesterday (Sunday 9) the whole Wellington forces arrived. The steamer was not due till today, but fortunately I had turned Wakky (family name for the first Hobhouse child, Edmund, from Wakatu, the Māori name for Nelson) out of his nursery and sent him and his suite to Maria (her sister) that we might be ready for the Abrahams and just as we were preparing to go to bed they made their appearance, Mrs. Abraham and Charley as well as the Bishop having walked from the Port, a distance of between 2 and 3 miles. You may imagine therefore how much stronger she is than she was 2 or 3 years ago. They brought with them Archdeacon Hadfield ... but they had to leave the poor man lying on a mattress on the floor at a little Inn at the Port, for the night, as he was too ill and weak from the effects of sea sickness to attempt to walk, and it was too late to wait for a vehicle to be summoned from the Town - so he only appeared today.'

Caroline Abraham, embarrassed at their inconvenient arrival, writes to Eliza Hobhouse (the Bishop's sister in England):

'We arrived at Nelson on the night of Sunday, the 9th Feb, instead of in the morning, in time for Church as we had hoped, and we had to present

ourselves at the Bishop's house at the unseemly hour of 10 o'clock and found them just going to bed. Edmund and his wife were both very kind, though I felt rather disturbed at having accepted her kind offer when I found that not only were we to inhabit Wakky's nursery, but also that a companion to Wakky was shortly expected and I am sure your sister must have found the large houseful a trial to her strength in that situation. It made me quite uneasy at first for I felt that I ought to have stayed away, but I hoped as time went on, that she did not suffer from the addition of our trio, having so many – besides, at least she would not allow it, and I was very glad to make further acquaintance with her, which certainly leads one to like her more and more.' <sup>3</sup>

(The two women had probably met earlier in London, at the time of the consecration of their husbands in September 1858).

Mary Hobhouse continues her Journal:

'There is one other Wellington Clerk, a Mr. Stock, whose lanky person and lymphatic face do not seem to announce a great luminary, but I cannot call to mind anything about him. Also, there is one layman said by the Bishop to be a most valuable working man and interested in Church matters from the best motives. There is a great panic lest after all there should not be enough laymen to make a quorum, and consequently no acts can be formally passed. Not a single man from the Canterbury settlement either lay or clerical, but the Bishop! This from the pre-eminently Church Settlement seems rather strange, but they are even more attached to their farms than to Church organization and as the Bishop says, the clergy there are all farmers, and this is harvest time. They are all anxiously waiting to see what the Auckland steamer will bring tomorrow, but I believe the Primate expects no laymen.'

Shirley Tunnicliff comments:

Mary returns to the theme of Bishop Selwyn's happy acceptance of colonial hospitality and

contrasts it with the standards she and her husband insisted on maintaining. If any illustration were required to show why Selwyn succeeded as a colonial Bishop, and Hobhouse failed, their contrasting attitude to what was necessary for entertaining Bishops would suffice. Selwyn had adapted to the new environment and enjoyed with relish the challenge it offered. To Hobhouse, as he had warned his wife before their marriage, it was a constant enemy requiring to be defeated.

Mary Hobhouse continues:

'He [Selwyn] has been busy, making preparations for lodging his Clergy free from expense, and frequently regrets that he did not advise them to bring tents, as he finds our precincts so abound in trees and that we are so much in the Country. I sympathize with the desire to save the purses of the ill-paid clergy, but at the same time I own that I have two conflicting feelings as I see in my mind's eye an encamped host of clergy frying their pancakes and throwing out their slops in our garden. One would feel very inhospitable in not offering to feed them, and in limiting one's hospitality to allowing them a few square yards of ground to pitch their tents on, but I cannot kill our servants, nor in the present state of things offer to share their labours.

'Mrs. Abraham, in order to save a room has brought no servant, which I regret on her account as well as on my own, for the child will be a constant drag upon her, and the room we had destined for him and his nurse, will be occupied by someone requiring attendance instead of assisting in giving it. I cannot but admire the way in which those who have been out long enough to have gone through the privations of early times take everything just as it comes and are satisfied with bare necessaries. At the same time, I am not quite easy at the impossibility of finding out whether one's guests are comfortable and have their wants supplied, or whether they are contented by practicing self-denial. As for the

Primate I scarcely venture ever to offer him anything or ask if he wants anything, he seems to repudiate it with such scorn, as he did my suggestion that many people even if supplied with flour, bacon, and a frying pan, would also want a new stomach if they were expected to live and work entirely on tea, pancakes and bacon.’<sup>4</sup>

Mary Hobhouse's own ideas of feeding her guests reflecting (it can be assumed) the views of her husband, were very different:

‘It is necessary to have simplified one's ideas of the preparation required for guests, especially in the kitchen department before one could with a small house already full and a staff of three maid servants undertake a great luncheon party and another in the evening. But with regard to our inmates, as they have all gone through Bishop Selwyn's bacon and frying pan period, except indeed the good Bishop of Christchurch, one felt that to them roast beef and apple pie must bear the stamp of an ‘advanced thought,’ not I trust a pampered civilization.’<sup>5</sup>

While Mary Hobhouse was thus pre-occupied with domestic arrangements for her large influx of guests, the presence in Nelson of so many clergy known to be sympathetic to Wiremu Kingi, provoked a good deal of criticism from those who strongly supported the settlers in Taranaki. Bishop Selwyn's opposition to the Waitara purchase was well-known. Caroline Abraham with Sarah Selwyn and Mary Martin had published a pamphlet in support of the Māori cause and Archdeacon Hadfield had also produced what Morrell calls ‘a fiercely polemical pamphlet, ‘One of England's Little Wars’, and in this and two further pamphlets demanded the recall of Governor Browne.’<sup>6</sup>

Among the recent arrivals from Taranaki was James Crowe Richmond, the new editor of the Nelson Examiner. A brisk exchange of views took place in the paper during the sitting of the Synod. When Bishop Williams wrote to the Examiner claiming to be heard for the work the

missionaries had done ever since the Treaty of Waitangi, he claimed, ‘the best exertions of the missionaries have been given to promote the peace of the country’ and he concluded with a tribute to Bishop Selwyn: ‘The Bishop of New Zealand has proved himself from the beginning the warm friend of the native race, but, at the same time, there is no man in the whole community who, for nearly twenty years, has been equal to him in the exercise of a self-denying labour, from the northern extremity of the island to the far south, by land and water, to stay the progress of evil among the colonists, or between the colonists and the native race, often amid reproach and scorn, yet pursuing his onward course. And, while his peculiar anxiety has been the care of all the churches, he has laboured, without ceasing, to promote the temporal welfare of his countrymen.’<sup>7</sup>

James Richmond's editorial tartly commented:

‘Bishop Williams hints that Bishop Selwyn's character is above all charges. Now, we may refer him with satisfaction to the Taranaki newspapers throughout the war, in support of his own testimony to the fairness of New Zealand settlers ... The good temper of the settlers has been echoed in their press. And in these newspapers, he will find the character of Bishop Selwyn treated with a generosity which that prelate has won from his countrymen in all places. A manly man, a manly man to be an Abbot able!

‘Yet surely, he himself will not desire that he should be thought exempt from human frailty. His great exemplar, the first apostle to the Gentiles, was conscious of ‘a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him.’ It is not for one man to ask entrance into the secrets of another's mind, ‘the heart knoweth its own bitterness.’ Yet one can imagine that the thorn which the Bishop of New Zealand in his lot, consists in the very pride and impetuosity by which the Taranaki people think he has wronged them, and in the unbridled admiration of his

many friends, which may tempt him to forget those faults. The complaint of our unfortunate neighbours is, that the rare occasions of his visits there have been marked more by reproofs of imagined sins, than sympathy in too obvious difficulties.'

James Richmond referred to the outbreak of war in Taranaki and continued:

'In all that dreary eighteen months the energetic and benevolent Primate never, by pastoral letter or bodily presence, made known his sympathy or gave his counsel, and they heard of him only in protest against a course which they deemed to be necessary alike for their interests and those of the native race, and in the repeated rumour that he declared that they had brought their misfortunes on themselves.'<sup>8</sup>

James Richmond's wife, Mary, wrote soon after to her sister-in-law that as they were meeting Bishop Selwyn constantly while he was in Nelson:

'We thought it would be well to ask him to spend an evening with us; I hardly thought he would come. However, he came (the day after Jas's article on his address to the Synod) and revenged himself by not letting the article alone all the evening. He pretended to think Annie [her sister] had written it - curiously enough Jas was completely unconscious of what was going on, being absorbed most of the time with Mrs. Cloete and drawings. The Govetts and Fitzgibbons were there and seemed rather puzzled by the Bishop's conversation. It was amusing at the time but left altogether a painful impression. The Bishop was evidently made sore by the article. I was rather sorry that it was written - I agreed with it but it seemed to me rather superfluous and likely to vex the Bishop in vain.'<sup>9</sup>

Mary Hobhouse's Journal (12 February)  
continued:

'Yesterday brought from Auckland or at least by

the steamer from the North, Bishop Patteson, the Bishop of Waiapu, three Auckland Clergy and Archdeacon Govett from Taranaki, so that Bishops, Archdeacons, and Priests abound, but laity do not. So therefore, though Synod has opened formally today, it is not Synod, there not being a quorum of each order. They hope however in consequence of the Primate's urgent letters the needful number will be here in a week, and in the meanwhile they have resolved to go as a Conference discussing matters and preparing them for a formal ratification at the last. They will have but a few days of existence in their formal character for the Auckland steamer goes out in a fortnight from today, and I do not suppose the most zealous member of Synod contemplates the possibility of outstaying her, certainly the Primate does not.

'This day began with Service and Communion at the Church at 9, before adjourning to the Provincial Hall (the Town Hall in fact) in the new Government buildings, which has been politely granted for the use of the Synod. I was not able to get up the hill to Church by 9, but I went into the gallery of the Hall to hear the Primate's opening address. I hear that at the Service there were not half a dozen people besides the members of Synod, and there were only about a dozen or twenty ladies present to hear the address. The room is really a very good one with a proper apparatus of tables and seats at one end, but being empty there was too much echo to allow of my hearing as well as I should have wished ...

'Immediately after the Address the names of Members duly elected were first read over by the Bishop of each Diocese, and then read out as a rollcall to be answered by those present. The poor Bishop of Christchurch having read out his list of absentees once, sat down, but the Primate cruelly called upon him to summon them all by name again, though knowing perfectly there was not one there. They all came rushing back for dinner about 3 and have settled to meet for

General Synodical Conference at 4 daily, but the whole day will be taken up in Committees.'

From Caroline Abraham we have a complementary account of the Synod house party:

'The ways and order of the house are quite what one would desire, and what seemed to recall our old home at St John's College to me very pleasantly. Breakfast at 8, Chapel at 9 - freedom till 1 o'clock dinner - Chapel Service at half past 5, and tea before and after according to engagements, were the framework of each day. I suppose you know the house with its queer gables and rooms above approached by stairs like ladders and odd corners everywhere. Used as Edmund uses it, it certainly is very nice and convenient. The outside rooms do well for Bachelors, and there the Primate and Archdeacon Hadfield were domiciled. Bishop of Christchurch in the house and Bishop of Waiapu over him up his step ladder. Then the arrangement which makes the large kitchen serve for dining hall and above all the change of the Ballroom into a very nice Chapel excited our admiration and almost envy.'<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the formal meetings of the Synod there was a lighter side, both for the house party at home, and for the larger community, as the influx of distinguished visitors gave an opportunity to a selected few of usually isolated Nelsonians for social intercourse with 'those who are infinitely superior to what they habitually see.'<sup>11</sup>

'The party in this house always come back in the evening with their spirits apparently refreshed by their encounters in Synod, and it is most amusing to hear the Bishop of Wellington describing them. Unfortunately, as the Synod sometimes does not break up till 8 o'clock, I am obliged to go to bed soon after their return and am tantalized by hearing them talking and laughing till half past 10 and sometimes later. I believe Mrs. Abraham thoroughly enjoys the meeting of old friends, especially having the Primate in the house, and

Bishop Patteson constantly here, (he is Mr. Turton's visitor) but her spirits never seem to rise. I wish much on her account as well as my own that Mrs. Selwyn could have been here for, I suppose the life and exuberance of spirits which she is said to have retained through everything would act more inspiringly than anything else could on Mrs. Abraham ... It is a happy thing that her husband's spirits are so unflagging. He is certainly the great source of life to the whole party, for one reason because I think he is the only person in it who is thoroughly at ease with the Primate, and thoroughly himself in his presence. It would be too much to say that we are all afraid of him, and yet it is certain that we all (excepting the Abrahams) talk more and differently in his absence. One feels that it is so much better and worthwhile to listen to him than to talk, and one also feels that his mind is too strongly pre-occupied with his own ceaseless flow of ideas to be in a condition fully to take in the drift of one's replies, and so one gradually utters little beyond monosyllables and short questions.'<sup>12</sup>

Caroline Abraham described the social side of Synod:

'The one sitting room is charming for hot summer weather and with the verandah is sufficient for a large party or comfortable with a few. The coach house for diocesan Library, charmed the Primate and there the Bishops used to sit at work in the morning till the Synod began ... Bishop Patteson was at the Parsonage, but a good deal with us. Though, as the business commenced after the opening on Wednesday the 12th, we had not much leisure time with any of them. They rushed home at one - from Committees - to go back to work and return at an uncertain hour in the evening - but still one did get snatches of chat in that charming verandah with its festoons of hops and vines above, and the lawn with the bright-eyed convolvulus opening to the sun in the morning - and the moonlight shadows at night.'<sup>13</sup>

The conversations during the hot February evenings must have been a pleasant relaxation from the more formal business of the day, and an occasion in which the women could participate with enjoyment. Topics discussed must have included the Taranaki land question with so many passionately committed protagonists present. The Examiner editorial itself would have come under attack. Bishop Hobhouse must have refrained from comment. He had told his sister on the outbreak of the war in 1860:

'Bishop Abraham, who, I imagine reflects the mind of the Primate as he certainly does of Archdeacon Hadfield, thinks the Governor's attack on William King as exceedingly rash as well as unjust, and he believes the Natives to be capable of maintaining resistance for two or three years.'<sup>14</sup>

But as Hobhouse had then been in New Zealand only a year, he modestly added that he was not yet competent to judge for himself:

'I am therefore not unhopeful that this outbreak may be the prelude to a happier state of things - but you must not suppose that my brief experience, confined as it is chiefly to this Island, warrants me in pronouncing very safely upon any part of the Maori question.'<sup>15</sup>

However, fifteen months later he had come to conclusions of his own:

'Your Report of dear Caroline Abraham's Letters on Maori Matters does not surprise me. On the Maori Subject she gets her Husband's Views - which in Him are not duly restrained by His Office and Position or by His own good Sense, and of course in her, are unchecked by any such modifying Causes. I never mention the Subject to any of my Brethren, and avoid it with most Persons. I cannot see now how anyone can say that the Maori King Movement was not essentially a Rebellion, calling on the Governor's strong Arm as soon as it was strong enough, to crush it. I humbly hope that it is now strong

enough and that its strength may be both wisely and mercifully wielded. One smart Blow would I conceive, be the greatest Blessing to the Maori People. This Dream of an impossible Independence is withdrawing Them from the steady pursuit of Industry, by which they were raising their social Condition. They are now spending their time in Koreros (Colloquies) and Feastings, and their Money in buying Munitions of War, and in making provision for the regal Estate of their Monarch.'<sup>16</sup>

With views like these it would hardly be expected that a courteous host would have allowed himself to express them with guests of such pro-Maori sympathies as the North Island Bishops and Archdeacon Hadfield. Other subjects that absorbed their attention on that vine-wreathed verandah in The Wood at Nelson included America and Italy as well as philosophy and theology. The news of the Prince Consort's untimely death had just reached New Zealand and the threat of war with America appeared a very real possibility.

'(Selwyn) set forth one day so grandly his Vision of America and England continuing to maintain the Peace of the whole world - to arbitrate in all National differences - to promote trade and manufactures - and in short to fulfil, a noble Destiny for the Anglo-Saxon race,' and he was 'groaning over the utter ruin of the fair vision he had formulated.'<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the sad news of the American Civil War, the news from Italy was more optimistic. The rapid progress towards unification of the Italian States roused Caroline's enthusiasm:

'I hope you are interested in Italy. I had no idea that there could be such men as Manin in Venice - and Cavour - I mean the patient constitutional mind dwelling on law and order, and duty and Cavour's life ... open a new view to me of Country Gentlemen in Italy. One never knew of anything of the kind on the Continent, unless in the shape of German Barons.'<sup>18</sup>

Mary Hobhouse shared her enthusiasm for the heroes of Italian unification.

'I am amused to see how people in spite of their principles cannot help wishing well to Garibaldi. I rejoice I have lived to see those miscreant Bourbons driven out of Naples and think Garibaldi('s) right seems quite as divine as Francis III's.'<sup>19</sup>

Selwyn and Hadfield discussed philosophical subjects and Caroline found them 'very interesting' to listen to. The Archdeacon always falls back upon Butler- as impregnable ... Butler's Analogy and sermons he read again and again and was never weary of.'<sup>20</sup> One other topic talked about would have caused division. Caroline Abraham had hoped to discuss *Essays and Reviews*, published in 1860, in which seven Anglican theologians tried to come to grips with the new Biblical criticism, and with the impact of Darwin on traditional theological doctrine. Jowett, of Balliol, would have been known to Selwyn and Abraham. The book caused a huge stir in Church circles, though twenty years later one of the authors, Temple, became Archbishop of Canterbury. A conservative like Hobhouse was predictably horrified:

'I have been reading the Quarterly Review of Oxford *Essays and Reviews* - most terrible. Baden-Powell barely removed from Atheism, having pledged Himself to the Impossibility of a Miracle - dear Temple much more deeply implicated than I imagined ... The unhappy men cannot possibly stand where they are - they must recoil (wh. God grant) or advance. Alas that they should retain the Profession of Xtian Teachers, when in their view nothing remains to be taught - much to be untaught - the whole revealed word to be subjected to each man's internal consciousness and 'verifying Faculty' as genuine (sic), authenticity, and Interpretation.'<sup>21</sup>

Caroline Abraham had written in July 1861 that the controversy was sad and was fearful of the consequences but continues:

'Charles has only read Dr Temple's on Education as yet and is not alarmed at that as far as it goes but says I may learn something for Charlie from it. He fears he shall find much more serious matters to object to in some.'

As the Abrahams prepared to leave for General Synod on 30 January, she wrote:

'We hope to find Bishop Patteson as well as the Primate at Nelson. Perhaps we may have some talk with him of Jowett and the *Essays*. I think Charles quite wishes that the objectional (sic) points in *Essays and Reviews* cd. be met rather than assailed.'<sup>22</sup>

What Patteson thought of the *Essays* remains unrecorded but Bishop Williams of Waiapu would have been as opposed as Hobhouse. Darwinism he regarded as a denial of 'the work of an almighty creator', and he accused these 'scientific men' of 'taking out the keystone of the arch, to crumble down the whole structure'<sup>23</sup>

During the day other light relief was provided by the children. Caroline wrote to Eliza Hobhouse:

'Wakky is an immense fellow and looks very sweet-tempered reminding me at times of that pretty sweet look in your Mother's eyes and the shape of his brow and head is like your Father's, I thought and found Eddy (Bishop Hobhouse) thought so too. It is nice to see him playing with his little Boy, or rather great Boy, for he had to come to the rescue and save his wife from lifting the fellow. Wakky was pleased with Charlie and soon knew his Papa too and like to sit on one knee with Charlie on the other and play at Jack and Gill.'<sup>24</sup>

Mary H. had sent Wakky and his nurse to her sister Maria's house for the duration of Synod but she reported that Charly Abraham:

'is a dear good little fellow and gives wonderfully little trouble. He did not quite understand playing with anything so small and tottering as Wakky who was very much occupied with him and used

to run after him with his eyes fixed on him and his little round white newly cut teeth clenched tight in his eagerness. But they did not see much of each other as Maria had my nursery for me all the time they were here. Charly is very intelligent and observant. One instance I will give you. He went up to spend a day with Maria and identified from their windows at a long distance a house with a large gable that he had passed on the road, describing it as 'that upwards house that is wider at the bottom than the top.' The 'upwards' struck me very much as conveying the feeling of gabled architecture.' <sup>25</sup>

Plans were made to entertain quite large numbers of local people so that the Bishops could be 'exhibited' to the local population. Mary Hobhouse wrote:

'We had at one time hoped to have a huge parochial tea-party, with the Bishops and clergy introduced informally, to talk a little and then speechify a little - and so on - but when it came to a close view of the undertaking in order to set measures on foot, we could not see how it was to be done. It would have been necessary to admit all the Church people, not far short of 2000 in number - one had no means of guessing within hundreds how many would come - and where could one have them? And how provide refreshments, and funds to pay for the refreshments? And so, after much talk it was abandoned greatly to my regret. I suppose the place is too large for a thing of the kind.' <sup>26</sup>

Instead, the Bishop and his wife gave more select parties for a chosen few:

'I really must relate to you how yesterday evening your largest paraffin lamp shed light upon six Bishops and some thirty-five to forty other persons as they aired themselves by turns in the vine wreathed verandah turned for the occasion into another room.

'I never before embarked on so spirited an undertaking as the hospitalities of yesterday, but the real gratification afforded to the good people

of Nelson and our country neighbours by the gathering and by the opportunity of seeing the Bishops assembled here for the General Synod quite repaid one for the trouble. And it must be said some of them are well worth seeing and hearing independently of the scarcity of distinguished and agreeable people in our ordinary society ... one had to consider one's means of satisfying those [claims] of the persons invited to meet them, and with regard to those at a distance I have always remembered the signal success of our good friend Mr. Tudor's primitive 'dejeuner a le fourchette' given in our honor to his Motueka neighbours, and I was encouraged to tread in his steps.

'Having made my preliminary arrangements, I was at first rather dismayed, when it came to getting the supplies, to find I had lighted on one of the many seasons of scarcity that occur in Nelson. Not a fowl nor winged creature to be had for love or money! The last tongue and ham in the place were gone, so we had to shoot our own young hens and use up our last resources in the way of home-cured tongues and hams and with the help of a proper cook to furnish forth pies and pastry we did very well. Then we secured the services of a man to wait who having arrived early made himself thoroughly master of the ground and proceeded throughout the day as if he had been one's butler for a year.

'I feel myself inexpressively grateful to him for when our 30 daylight visitors departed (after coffee on the verandah) I enjoyed an hour's repose of mind and body before the arrival of my candlelight guests and this bring me around to the paraffin lamp (and several stable lamps which much to the admiration of the company illuminated the festoons of vine and hop in the verandah) and so (as the man used to say in shewing the Tower) you end as you begun.' <sup>27</sup>

Mary Hobhouse was well pleased with the result of her entertaining:

'These parties to exhibit the Bishops to the

Nelson would have taken up a good deal of time and thought which one was inclined to grudge just at this moment, still, it was not only an evident gratification to people to come, but it is such a good thing to have a bond of the kind to bring them together and to bring them into contact with those who are infinitely superior to what they habitually see, that I am very glad we made the exertion. The Wellington people and the Bishop of Christchurch express their surprise at the extent of our social circle but considering the elements that a parochial circle does always embrace, I wonder that we should be bound to entertain so small a portion only of the 4000 inhabitants of this place.'

Music in Nelson came in for praise from the visitors:

'The Bishop of Christchurch envies Nelson its musical eminence which is very gratifying, and all the Clergy from the other settlements are struck with the extent and heartiness of the congregational singing in Church, for which one is very thankful, especially as when we first came here it was so little the practice, that when one sang audibly people turned round to see, I suppose, whether one of the choir had got out of his or her place. A lady with a strong clear soprano voice who is now one of Maria's chief assistants in her choir practices says frankly that she never sang in Church before thinking it unladylike, and when she first began, she was very nervous about it, though she had frequently sung solos at the Harmonic concerts to an audience of half Nelson.'

Among other guests to meet the Bishops was J. P. Robinson, the Provincial Superintendent:

'Well, on Saturday we had the people's representative, the Superintendent, and his wife at luncheon to meet the Bishops. But the Primate could not be dragged off the scene of action even for an hour, so that I had to send down food for him which Edmund insisted on his retiring to gulp down. I could not but admire the

Superintendent, a cabinet maker by trade, who can never have associated with gentlemen till his elevation to office five years ago, for his combination of modesty and self-possession, and the absence of anything that could be called vulgarity. We are fortunate, considering that the cry of the place is always to have a working man, not to have some upstart demagogue in his place.'

That same Saturday morning an historic opportunity was lost:

'On Saturday too we had a great disappointment and failure. It had been suggested by someone and hailed by others, that all the Bishops should be photographed in a group, the photographers came two or three times to know if they would consent and when they would be ready, but they could not be got to give any answer, and always went off upon every possible subject except what we wanted to pin them to. The Bishop of Wellington too vowed that there was one photograph too many of him already, a frightful thing that had made him resolve never to be done again. So, I resolved in despair to fix 8 o'clock in the morning, our usual breakfast hour, without consulting them, to have breakfast earlier, and then give the Bishop of Wellington the choice of being taken with only his back visible. We breakfasted accordingly, they all consented and assembled in the verandah which was to be the background of the picture (Bishop Patteson had attended the muster) and by a provoking misunderstanding the artist never appeared, and they all dispersed never again to re-assemble! The Primate worked till nightfall, and on Sunday the Abrahams took their departure.<sup>30</sup> It was very provoking, and though the Bishop of Waiapu has been very well done here singly, and the Primate promises to sit tomorrow, that is not the same thing as having the group for which so rare an opportunity offered. If they all meet again at Christchurch this time three years, Mrs. Harper being a woman of quicker and decided measures than myself, will

not I am sure let them slip through her fingers - but who knows whether they will all meet there - or anywhere?'<sup>31</sup>

A sad prophetic note. When next General Synod met in Christchurch in 1865, Mary Hobhouse was dead, and her husband had resigned.

One of the pleasures of the Synod for Mary Hobhouse was the rare opportunity to meet other Church leaders of whom she had heard much. Unlike her husband, Mary never moved out of Nelson during her life in New Zealand. She occasionally wrote wistfully that Edmund had brought news of Mrs. Selwyn and the much more stimulating atmosphere of Auckland, or of the little 'English' houses, and the plans for the cathedral in Christchurch and the whirl of social activity in the Harpers' houseful of daughters. She looked forward to the distant day when she would be free to travel with her husband. In the meantime, she enjoyed the brief time afforded her between Synod business to hold conversations with her guests:

'I often regret having the party so condensed - for except the Primate and Bishop of Christchurch whom we have had for some time before the rest, there seems such an 'embarrass de richesses' of people, each one of whom would have been at another time a prize in himself - one has not time to extract half the good of them.'<sup>32</sup>

By 25 February, the Abrahams and Bishop Harper had departed:

'so we have only the Bishops of New Zealand and Waiapu, and Bishop Patteson at the Parsonage. The Auckland Clergy are also still here but not under our roof. Archdeacon Mansell (sic) had a service on Sunday in our Chapel for the Maories which gave them immense delight. The Bishop of Wellington who attended it did not listen with such unmixed feelings, though he was very much struck with the genius displayed in his oratory, for he said his acting amounted to the most perfect mimicry of Maori gesture and ranting and he was sometimes squatting on his heels Maori

fashion, when he ought to have been kneeling or standing.'

Deborah Hill, the housekeeper who, like Maunsell, came from Ireland:

'had great difficulty in suppressing audible symptoms of her amusement. The Archdeacon has a station on the Waikato, and when they came out of Chapel the Maories were heard saying to each other 'Can't Waikato do it?' Maunsell whose exceptional knowledge of the language made him more sensitive to Maori culture than most Pakeha,<sup>33</sup> had used the Waikato dialect for his Grammar, considering it to be 'in its original purity.'<sup>34</sup>

Mary Hobhouse continues with some comments on the old CMS missionaries:

'He [Maunsell] and another Auckland Clergyman are representatives of the old school of Church Missionary watchdogs who sincerely believed it a part of their duty to worry Bishops. But that feeling happily has in a great degree worn off, and it has been remarked how much more cordially they have worked with the rest just now, than they would have done in former years. Archdeacon Hadfield, though a Church Missionary, must have always been superior to that party spirit and jealous, and so must dear old Waiapu. Oddly enough everyone fixed on the latter as the closest representative of an old English Bishop, of all his brethren assembled, though I should think he was the one of the whole to whom a palace and purple liveries would seem most incongruous and unnatural. I regret very much the want of opportunity to draw out from him the interesting histories of the early days of the Missions that he is able to give. He does not condense, nor give things in a few touches but likes to set to and tell a story full length, and this is just what time has lacked for. It has been a great gain to oneself to hear even in a disconnected and fragmentary way so much of what has been and is going on all over these two Islands, to have living images instead of names

for so many people and to connect people and their work with spots the names of which, it was impossible to retain when that was all one knew of them.

‘Archdeacon Hadfield I should like to know more of. At first sight he strikes one as a man of smaller calibre and slighter build than the rest, and as more quick-witted than wise. But when one sees more of him and finds how much capacity and cultivation he combines, how he has kept up his general studies in the midst of the roughest missionary life and how he dared to venture the first into the territories of one of the most savage and cruel of the old chiefs, being himself a fragile excitable, nervous man and more addicted to books than to active life, one admires him more and more.’

Obviously, the discussions on Butler and other philosophical subjects on the verandah had impressed Mary and led her to change her original opinion! While so many of those who had missionary experiences to relate were in Nelson, Selwyn wanted to make the most of introducing them to as wide an audience as possible. On Friday evening, 21 February:

‘There was a missionary meeting of which the only fault was that there were too many speakers. The Primate’s idea was to bring forward the speakers in chronological order, exhibiting the progress of the Church in New Zealand from its first missionary efforts, down to its latest offshoot the Melanesian work. Thus good old Bishop Williams as one of the early missionaries was to begin, others to follow, then the Primate was to come in himself, then the Bishops of Christchurch and Wellington as representatives of the later Colonial Church - but this was a part not understood of the vulgar, who as they said ‘could not see what they had to do with the missions’ - the idea of the oneness of the endowed Colonial Church and the missions to native races being rather too abstract a one for them. However, people were greatly interested,

and I hope the interest will not be a passing one. I was very much grieved not to be present - but as it was necessary that some one person should stay at home, it was obviously best that I should be the person - both on account of the difficulty of getting there - and because the servants have so many fewer opportunities of the kind. Archdeacon Mansell (sic) an Irishman, and one of the old Church missionaries, was I believe the most diverting of the speakers - but the freshness of Bishop Patteson’s mission and the self-forgetting earnestness and simplicity with which he pleads for it made his speech one of the most acceptable.’<sup>35</sup>

The Colonist was also impressed Archdeacon Maunsell told the audience about the generosity of the Māori in the Taupo area and the Waikato in giving money and labour to build churches:

‘And here he would correct a statement of his friend who had just sat down (the Bishop of Waiapu), who stated that the East Cape was the only part of the country where the natives had built good churches. I can tell you (said the Archdeacon) that at my place, at Kohunga, there is a church far better than yours at Nelson and built by the natives too. (Laughter). He dwelt on the thousands of acres given generously by Maoris for schools and the support of good works. Asked his audience what they’d done for 900 souls requiring guidance in this province.’<sup>36</sup>

By Thursday 27 February

all the guests had gone, and Mary Hobhouse concludes her Journal with an almost audible sigh of relief:

‘This will be my last sheet of Journal, as they are now actually all gone - and I do not think I should have written this but to tell you how much interest was shown in the work of the Bishops and clergy by the attendance at the service they had yesterday in our Chapel before the final breaking up. As there was scarcely a person at the service on the opening of Synod, Edmund

thought it would be the same now, and so though it was announced in Church on Sunday that there would be a service and Communion, he determined to have it in our Chapel in which there are only seats for about 24 people, since the Sunday service there has been given up. Hearing however as the time approached that many people were dropping in, we got more benches and chairs -and I suppose there must have been at least 40 people altogether. The Primate gave a very brief address, it could hardly be called a sermon ... He began and ended his address by referring to the enquiry 'Why should one take any interest in the Synod?' and of course he did not fail to make the subject interesting though I confess I failed to see how the machine itself was interesting, however interesting some branches of its working might be. It must require great enthusiasm to delight in the forms of business, however great the importance and significance of the business itself.

'In conclusion I must tell you that I have kept but fragmentary notes during the time of Synod, so though these sheets profess to have been written during its course, but a small portion has been really so. I could only for many days together make a few pencil scribbles as I rested on the sofa.'<sup>37</sup>

All that was now left was the clearing up:

'Edmund and I may now sit quietly 'tete a tete' clearing up after Synod for of course it has left him some little legacies in the shape of papers to arrange, proofs to correct and deficiencies to supply in the material put into the printers' hands. However, a General Synod will not again sit at Nelson for I suppose twelve years, if it is to go in rotation.'

She made a last caustic reference to the Selwyn ideas of hospitality:

'I am glad to find that at the next [General Synod] a regular Committee will be formed beforehand for arranging the accommodation for clergy and

laity from a distance. In one or two cases here, I am sure the Synods-men were a great nuisance and burden to those on whom they were quartered, and yet it appears to me (with all deference to the Primate) that the days when tents and frying-pans were appropriate accommodation for them, are now gone by.'

Although there was relief when all their hospitable exertions were over, Mary Hobhouse has a postscript to her Journal which has significance for the future:

'I am sorry to say that in spite of the abatement of work this week, Edmund's head does not appear at all to improve, and I am disappointed to see in comparing him with others, how much more he suffers from the same amount of work.'<sup>38</sup>

The symptoms of stress and over-conscientiousness which characterised Bishop Hobhouse were apparent to his colleagues during the Synod. Caroline Abraham reported to his sister:

'The only drawback was that your brother seemed too much overstrained by work or pain to enjoy the gathering of friends, and the occasional converse between them, as others seemed to do. He was suffering from pain in the face and ear - when free from headache - and looked oppressed. It seems a pity that he gives himself so much of the labour of the work in detail which others could do for him - at least so I gathered from talk between Mr. Turton and the ladies who were always wishing to spare him. Mr. Turton was complaining that although he had nominally given up the Parochial charge into his hands at the beginning of this year, that it made no difference - he did everything himself just as he used to do so. It seemed as if every matter however small passed through his hands as well as others and made needless work. My Husband tried to persuade him to give himself just then for the ten days or so entirely to the Synod work and thought, and put aside Diocesan

and parochial matters as much as possible - and he did not object in words to the idea - but he did not act upon it, and the attempt to carry on all the ordinary routine as well as the extra work was evidently too much, and I fear he was suffering all the time.’<sup>39</sup>

One wonders whether those who had known him earlier in England were having doubts about having persuaded Edmund to come to New Zealand. Caroline hinted at this possibility:

‘I don’t know why I tell you these things, as you can do nothing to remedy the mistake – but I began thinking you would like to know how things struck me; and also that it would be a satisfaction to you, could you see how very happily and judiciously his wife meets all his wishes, and is yet on the watch to procure rest and such recreation as he will take, for him the early breakfast and walk or ride whilst the general meal is going on. She does not oppose or tease though she regrets and wishes he would spare himself needless work. Her own energy is wonderful under her circumstances.’<sup>40</sup>

This impression of Mary Hobhouse and her domestic life is one of the very few objective accounts extant recorded by an articulate observer well placed to give a glimpse of the constant effort she was making to protect her husband from breaking down under stress. This in itself must have been a strain but during that General Synod she was seven months pregnant, and had a houseful of guests as well, let alone ‘the pressure of the English mail.’ Caroline had been at first a little intimidated by the manner of Mary and her sister, who seems to have been constantly with her:

‘At first it seemed to me that she and her sister were both so absorbed in business that they could not enter conversation or enjoy society or

enter into new interests. But I believe it was the pressure of the English mail, and other matters, at first, for I think the impression decreased as we stayed on. Perhaps too, one has a feeling oneself while in a place where the talk is about the things of the place and in that way a clique talk such as the Clergymen and the ladies that help him in a Parish often keep up. Mr. Turton and Mrs. Cloete, and your sister of course, had much talk of this kind and then the invitations to the three parties and consultations and preparation occupied much time, but I found after a while that Mrs. Hobhouse was quite inclined to converse when time allowed and reserve was broken through and when I felt less afraid of being intrusive; with Mrs. Cloete I did not succeed in getting through the stiffness but I found she was suffering from a sore throat and deafness, either of which indispose one to conversation.

‘Mrs. Hobhouse and her sister were both very kind to me and to Charlie and he soon became at ease with them, and when he had also made friends with the maids, I felt freer to be with the others.’<sup>41</sup>

As for the Bishop’s own feelings, he wrote a brief note to his sister when Synod began on 10 February:

‘The Buzz of General Synod about my ears and too-heavy pressure of Business on my Brains.

11 March: I must leave dear M.E. to write, for I am much worn with the Effects of Synod and a House full of Company - cut off all Chances of Retirement. I am suffering from Neuralgia Pains in the Head, besides singing in the ears and am quite incapable of any sustained mental Exertion. But I trust to get some lengthened Relaxation after Easter ... and meanwhile hope to benefit by two or three days of country parochial visiting.’<sup>42</sup>

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Morrell, W P, *The Anglican Church in New Zealand*, Dunedin, 1973.

- 
- <sup>2</sup> Mary to Augusta, 29 January 1862. ATL 414/4.
- <sup>3</sup> Caroline Abraham to Eliza Hobhouse, 6 March 1862. ATL.
- <sup>4</sup> Mary' Synod Journal, 10 February 1862.
- <sup>5</sup> Undated fragment accompanying the Journal.
- <sup>6</sup> Morrell, op. cit. p.74.
- <sup>7</sup> Nelson Examiner, 19 February 1862.
- <sup>8</sup> Idem.
- <sup>9</sup> Letter from Mary Richmond to Emily Richmond, 10 March, 1862. Richmond-Atkinson Papers, Vol. I, p.75l.
- <sup>10</sup> Caroline Abraham to Eliza Hobhouse, 6 March 1862. ATL.
- <sup>11</sup> MEH, Journal, 21 February 1862.
- <sup>12</sup> MEH, Synod Journal, February 1862.
- <sup>13</sup> Caroline Abraham, op. Cit.
- <sup>14</sup> Bishop Hobhouse to Eliza, 13 April 1860. ATL 414/.
- <sup>15</sup> Bishop Hobhouse to Eliza, 13 April 1860. ATL 414/.
- <sup>16</sup> Bishop Hobhouse to Eliza, 4 July 1861. ATL 414/
- <sup>17</sup> Caroline Abraham to ? 4 April 1862. ATL.
- <sup>18</sup> Idem.
- <sup>19</sup> MEH to Eliza, 8 January 1861.
- <sup>20</sup> Idem.
- <sup>21</sup> Bishop Hobhouse to MEH, 11 April 1861.
- <sup>22</sup> Caroline Abraham, 30 January 1862. ATL.
- <sup>23</sup> W Williams to C Heathcote, 9 April 1873, Williams Papers MS69. Quoted by Frances Porter, *The Turanga Journals*, p.609.
- <sup>24</sup> Caroline Abraham to Eliza, 6 March 1862.
- <sup>25</sup> MEH's Synod Journal 21 February 1862.
- <sup>26</sup> Idem.
- <sup>27</sup> Part of an undated fragment copied in Eliza's writing. ATL.
- <sup>28</sup> MEH's Synod Journal 21 February 1862.
- <sup>29</sup> Idem
- <sup>30</sup> Idem.
- <sup>31</sup> Idem.
- <sup>32</sup> Idem.
- <sup>33</sup> DNZB, Vol. I, p.286.
- <sup>34</sup> R Maunsell, *Grammar of the New Zealand Language*, 1842, p.121, quoted by Frances Porter *The Turanga Journals*, p.316.
- <sup>35</sup> Journal, 25 February 1862.
- <sup>36</sup> Colonist, 25 February 1862.
- <sup>37</sup> Idem.
- <sup>38</sup> Idem.
- <sup>39</sup> Caroline Abraham to Eliza, 6 March 1862. ATL
- <sup>40</sup> Idem
- <sup>41</sup> Idem
- <sup>42</sup> Bishop Hobhouse to Eliza, 10 February and 11 March, 1862, ATL 414.