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MISSION TO THE ABORIGINES.

Annual Report of the Aboriginal Mission, at Lake Macquarie, New South Wales, 1835.

To the Honorable Colonial Secretary,
ALEXANDER M'LEAY, Esq.,
&c. &c. &c.
Ebenezer, Lake Macquarie,
December 2, 1835.

SIR,

In the absence of the Venerable the Archdeacon, it becomes my duty, and I have the honor to forward the Annual Report of this Mission to you, in order to its being submitted to His Excellency the Governor.

In the month of February last several Aboriginal Natives were tried, convicted, and sentenced for transportation for life: one was left for execution for a rape, whilst the others had their sentences commuted for a shorter period of confinement to labor on Goat Island, where they are being taught to read English.

Mickey, the individual to be executed, was attended to during his confinement in the condemned cell until his execution took place, and every exertion was used by me to instruct him in the knowledge of God our Saviour. At the first he stoutly denied being at the place when the crime was committed, and appealed to a person in proof thereof; but on enquiry it was most satisfactorily proved, that he had not been in the employ of that party to whom he referred. He afterwards adopted a threatening tone, and assured me, that, "*If the White Men hung him, all the Blacks belonging to his and the surrounding tribes up the country, would come, encompass and burn Sydney, together with the gaol in which he was confined.*"

Conversation, however, softened down his mind, and he wept. In a subsequent visit he

assumed a more bold aspect, and in an undaunted manner declared, "*That the Blacks had a much more powerful Being than the Whites had,*" who, he assured me, with English oaths, "*would, if he were executed, put out the eyes of all the Whites, and smite them with total blindness!*" This led to a conversation on the power of the True God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, to which he apparently paid attention, and henceforth ceased to make threatenings.

On the morning of his execution, he was asked if he had prayed to Jesus in the night, and for the first time replied that he had. Suitable passages of Scripture were read to him, whilst the irons were being removed, and he repeated prayers, which were also composed in his own language as we walked to the place of execution; he there knelt down joining in prayer, and then ascended the platform. Whilst the rope was being adjusted round his neck, he uttered a deep expression of sorrow, and with a becoming demeanor, was launched into the presence of the "Judge of All."

Hitherto, the Blacks under confinement had not been permitted to be present at the executions, in consequence of a general order respecting all prisoners in the gaol to that effect; but, at my suggestion, the Aborigines under confinement were allowed to behold the sentence carried into effect. Their pale visages, their trembling muscles, indicated the nervous excitement under which they labored at the melancholy sight. Some, who were about to be brought to trial, urged me to speak for them to the Judge, and all requested that I would ask the Gaoler not to hang them during my absence. To use the expression of M'Gill, who was present with me, he said that, "*he thought when the drop fell, that he should have shed his skin!*"

Previously to this, it was a matter of joke amongst the Blacks, their being sent to any gaol ; * * * * * This painful task, together with attendance at the Courts of Justice, occupied nearly six weeks at Sydney.

It is pleasing to be able to report, that no further outrages have been committed in the neighbourhood whence these Blacks were taken; and also, that when I visited Goat Island, where the Aboriginal culprits are confined under the

superintendence of Mr. Langhorne, they were improving fast in their English reading. This gentleman informed me, that on asking the Blacks, “*Who made all things?*” one of them, to his surprise, immediately answered “*God;*” and on being further questioned as to his source of knowledge, he replied, “*it was at Lake Macquarie.*”

In August last I was again subpoenaed to the Supreme Court, in consequence of outrages having been committed by the Aborigines in the vicinity of Williams’ River; when another Black, named **Charley**, was found guilty of murder, which he did not deny, even when arraigned, but pleaded in justification the custom of his nation, justifying himself on the ground that, a Talisman, named **Mura-mai**, was taken from him by the Englishman, who with others were keeping a Black Woman amongst them, was pulled to pieces by him, and shewn to the Black Woman, which, according to their superstitious notions, subjects all the parties to the punishment of death; and further, that he was deputed with others, by his tribe, to enforce the penalty, which he too faithfully performed.

It was deemed necessary, for the tranquillity of those disturbed Districts, that Charley should be executed at a place called Dungog, nigh to the scene of violence, and my duty was to attend him whilst under confinement in the Gaol of Sydney, and also to the place of execution. In this painful part of my office, much satisfaction was derived from the great attention, and submissive behaviour of the unhappy culprit.

His dialect was a little different; he, like the former one, was a perfect stranger to me, but when my dialect differed from his, he would enquire minutely, and correct my language to accord with theirs. From him no murmur arose, no threat of vengeance escaped his lips, but only an expression of sorrow that he had listened to his tribe, and of lamentation that he knew no better, his tribe had deceived him.

When urged to believe in, and pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, he asked, how was he to address him; on being taught what we deemed suitable prayers, in his own tongue, he repeated them; and subsequently, when asked, if he had

prayed in the night, his reply was that, “*he had asked Jesus to cast away all his evil deeds, and to receive his spirit when the Whites kill his body.*”

Owing to some little confusion in the arrangement of the concern when we landed at the Green Hills, he appeared angry, and with a louring aspect, took from his cap bread and biscuit, and threw them, with much displeasure, to the dogs. Seeing him agitated, I informed him this was not the place of execution, nor the day on which he was to suffer; he then gave me a slip of paper from those with which I had furnished him, to know the days he had to live, and found he had but three left; he then resumed his usual appearance.

On the morning of his execution at Dungog, after reading and praying with him, he said, “*when I am dead, shall I make good houses, and be like the Whites in the other world;*” this led to reference to the “*House not made with hands; Eternal in the Heavens*”¹ — and to the fashioning of our mortal bodies to “*the Glorious Body of Christ ;*” the executioner then arrived, and we walked to the fatal drop through an escort of military, he kneeled and prayed, we ascended the gallows, he stood firmly, saying, “*I am now cast away tor death;*” he repeated the prayer, “*Lord Jesus receive my spirit,*” the drop fell, and eternity must develope the triumphs of the Cross.

Six weeks were thus occupied before I could return home, making with the former execution, a period of three months out of the present year, employed in a useful, though unpleasant part of my Missionary duties.

My first detention in Sydney afforded me a more favorable opportunity of hastening through the press “*The Australian Grammar,*” than could have been had I remained at the Lake, and I have much pleasure in announcing its completion; copies of which have been forwarded to the Colonial Secretary. Owing to the arrangement, by His Excellency the Governor, that part of the expense of printing should be defrayed by Government, being made

¹ For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2 Cor. v.1]

subsequent to the printing, precluded the acknowledgment with thanks in the work itself.

The following subjects have occupied, and still occupy my attention in the Aboriginal language and Mission, viz :

1	An Australian Grammar.	Printed.
2	The Gospel of St Luke.	
3	A Selection of prayers for public worship	under revision.
4	A Spelling book.	In manuscript.
5	Reading lessons selected from the sacred Scriptures	In progress.
6	Instruction of two native youths in writing and reading in their own tongue.	

During the present year, the Measles have been very prevalent amongst the Aborigines, and have carried off many of the Natives, from whom Mrs. Threlkeld and our nine children caught the complaint, and were laid up at one time. Providentially, the disease has now subsided.

Several of the Blacks belonging to this District, headed by M’Gill, are travelling to Windsor, Parramatta, and Sydney, in order to teach other tribes a new song and dance, which have lately been brought from the regions far beyond Liverpool Plains, where my son has ascertained that the song exists, though the dialect is different to that used in these parts on the sea coast. It is not discouraging to reflect that when “Knowledge shall increase amongst these tribes, then, the same custom which promulgates the new Song, will convey throughout Australia “The glad tidings” of “A Saviour, Christ the Lord.”

Having thus stated the progress of, and circumstances connected with the Mission at Lake Macquarie, it only remains for me to mention, that my intention in the ensuing year is, to endeavour to complete the elementary works for the Aborigines, and also to introduce their use, when printed, amongst them; humbly depending on the powerful influence of that Holy Spirit, to cause these very dry bones in the

wilderness to arise, and become an exceeding great army to the praise of Him who can excite “Kings to be nursing Fathers, and Queens to be nursing Mothers,”² to these miserable objects for whom “The Messiah died.”

Trusting that the progressive state of this Mission will not disappoint the expectation of His Excellency the Governor, of the Venerable the Archdeacon, during his protracted detention in Europe, or of His Majesty’s Government, in England.

I have the honor to remain,
Sir,
Your most obedient and humble Servant,
(Signed) L. E. THRELKELD.

² **And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers:** they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me. [Isiah xliii.23]