

Through a Glass Darkly: Lydia Brown, a Pioneer Missionary's Partner.

Keith Hallett

Mission history is most frequently written from the perspective of the male missionary leader. This is the direction commonly given by the legacy of the written sources. George Brown, a Methodist missionary to Pacific islands, was especially prolific in his records. His wife, Lydia Brown, accompanied him to Samoa and to New Britain. In later years, however, while George Brown traveled extensively, Lydia remained in Sydney. Brown wrote many detailed letters to Lydia, but in the absence of her own records, it is difficult to uncover her experiences. This chapter explores Lydia's reactions to the demands made upon her, and speculates about some of her compliances, differences and traumas.

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THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY: LYDIA BROWN, A PIONEER MISSIONARY'S PARTNER.

Keith Hallett

Lydia Brown, born 1838 in the North Island of New Zealand, was a daughter of the mission. Her father was James Wallis of the Waingora mission, and his family was deeply involved in mission work, with two of his daughters marrying missionaries, and his son, James a missionary to Samoa. Lydia was a woman who had grown up in two cultures, and who had to adapt to different Pacific cultures as she shared her life with George Brown, D.D., her husband of 57 years, first on the mission field and later as a partner to a highly respected Methodist mission secretary in Sydney. Her life accorded with Patricia Grimshaw's description of the role expected of women in the nineteenth century as the economic transformation of the industrial revolution took place: 'As workplace and home became divided, so too did specific gender identification emerge – the man associated with public life, the woman with the domestic arena, which was valorized in new, emphatic ways as the site of comfort, security, and admirable moral values'.¹

Without the documents that Lydia may have left, her life is accessible mainly through the correspondence her husband conducted with her, and as such, understanding the motivations of this missionary's wife is an elusive endeavor. But over such a long period, the relationship she had with her husband can indicate what were the driving forces of a woman who led a remarkable life in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Grimshaw, in her study of the missionary wives of the Congregational mission to Hawaii, sought to recover the women's history of a discrete group of reformist minded women through the remaining sources, which were domestically oriented, for the meta history of the mission was composed by men: there were 'missionaries' and 'missionaries' wives'. These women enjoyed the evangelical status described by Catherine Beecher: 'To American women, more than any other on earth, is committed the exalted privilege of extending over the world those blessed influences, that are to renovate degraded man, and "to clothe all climes with beauty"'.² Lydia occupied a similar position, but through the support she gave Brown and to mission work there emerges a woman of stature and of independence who won the love of her husband and the approbation of her peers.

George Brown was a man who relished adventure and challenge. From his rebellious youth in England to visits to remote Pacific communities into the later years of life, his autobiography emphasizing that he was a 'pioneer missionary', Brown was never

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content with a quiet domestic life. His wife, Lydia, however, divided her life into two distinct phases, one of being a missionary's wife in remote and very difficult places, and in her later years of remaining in the family home in Gordon, Sydney, as a mother to her large family. George Brown regarded his role as missionary to be of paramount importance, and he conducted his work in Samoa from 1860-74 and New Britain from 1875-81 with his wife mostly at his side, but in later years he was often separated from his wife in distance as he travelled to England and to diverse Pacific islands. He maintained a vigorous correspondence with Lydia, and his letters were always tender, detailed in the experiences he shared with her, and they always assumed the support from a wife who lived so often at a distance from him.

Brown moved from his experience of conversion to Methodist Christianity to missionary with remarkable speed, affirming conversion in 1859, and gaining ordination in 1860. On acceptance by the quarterly meeting in Auckland in 1860, he commented that one of the most important tasks for preparation was to find a 'suitable helpmate'.³ Lydia Wallis, daughter of a New Zealand missionary family, was courted and wed by Brown within two months, and their marriage lasted for a long lifetime, producing nine children, seven of whom survived infancy.⁴ Lydia accompanied her husband for the early years of married life to the mission fields, but on their return to Sydney, she settled to a domestic life, while her husband travelled extensively. There are no available documents from Lydia's perspective of this marriage, and one can only extrapolate from Brown's perspective what Lydia may have felt. To write about Lydia Brown in such circumstances is to see her life from the perspective of Tennyson's *Lady of Shallott*, life from a mirror image, of which the deeper reality may never be known. Hence the prism through which one may meet Lydia is that of her husband's records, and they reveal a sense of his constant love for Lydia, and a sense that he would receive her support for his many endeavours.

Brown was initially to be appointed to Fiji, but was posted to the perceived easier mission field in Samoa. While there was a period of sixteen years in relatively stable circumstances, still Lydia knew danger, whether it was from close proximity to local wars, or through dangerous travel in boats, sometimes crossing the reefs in extreme circumstances. On considering his future in Samoa, Brown did not call attention to his family needs when he wrote to the Mission Secretary, Rabone, in 1871:

Mine is not a comfortable position here, but so long as I am in the path of duty I care little for that. I leave it all to Him who has hitherto guided me in all things. I wait His guidance, and as the way is certainly blocked up at present. I cannot move until He opens it.⁵

However, there were personal issues to be resolved. One was the continuing illness of Lydia and of Brown himself. Lydia's brother James Wallis was also a missionary in Samoa, arriving in 1869. Relations between Brown and Wallis were not consistently cordial, and Brown reacted angrily in response to Wallis' report to Wallis Senior on the ill health of Lydia and of Brown: 'We both feel a little hurt at James for writing in a strong

way charging me with "murder and suicide" and I naturally feel anxious that you at all events should know the exact state of the case'.⁶

That Brown could include the term 'we' in his letter to his father-in-law suggests that he was expressing Lydia's feelings as well as his own. But James had observed that Lydia was in danger, and we do not know if Lydia had asked James to write in such a manner to her father. But the same letter showed evidence of husband and wife making joint decisions. It was agreed that their eldest girls should complete their education in New Zealand, staying with their grandparents. Rhonda Semple, in *Missionary Women*, placed the status of missionaries as 'at the cusp between middle- and working-class respectability', and financial pressures, future livelihood and a place in respectable British society were always a preoccupation.⁷ The girls' education in New Zealand is an indication of the need to meet such middle-class standards. Lydia remained with her husband on the mission field while the children were young, but as they reached adolescence, and when her husband was based in Sydney as mission secretary, she generally stayed with the children and knew long periods of separation as her husband embarked on his frequent travels. But in Samoa, the decision was made to send the children to their grandparents for their secondary education. Shipping was always a problem, and Brown wrote to his father-in-law that 'Lydia however wishes to decide that they go up by the way of the *Wesley* to Sydney next trip and from there to New Zealand by the steamer. I have agreed to this and so the matter rests at present'.⁸

The tenses in this extract suggest that Lydia's desire was acknowledged, but was kept open to change. And change there was, for the opportunity to sail directly from Samoa to New Zealand presented itself with a small schooner appearing, and a lady passenger on it who promised to look after the girls. It turned out to be a disastrous voyage, the ten-day trip extending to six weeks, and the ship's complement subsisting on the coconuts that the Browns had provided as gifts to the people in New Zealand.⁹ Brown's autobiography reflected on this difficult parting as an experience that bonded husband and wife:

It was indeed a hard trial for my wife and myself when we turned the boat towards the beach and saw the little ones holding out their hands and crying to us most piteously to come back ... We could only comfort ourselves with the thought it was the kindest action for the children themselves.¹⁰

There is no evidence of Lydia's response to the disastrous consequences to the changes in plan, but it would not be unreasonable to suggest that some resentment would occur over the decision to change her wishes on the matter. There is an assumption on Brown's part that he was the decision maker, and that he could rely on his wife's support.

The mission sent requests to New Zealand or to Sydney at regular intervals to order supplies that were not readily available from the local trading stores. The order sent from Samoa in 1873 to Lydia's father included normal items such as fishhooks and bottled drink, but also included an order for a dress for Lydia. It was Brown who sent the details:

A Sunday Dress for Lydia: 1. It must not have any wool in it, 2. It must not be too heavy. 3. It must not be too showy or plain, nor too expensive nor too old. These are as near as I can gather are the principal points to be attended to. It has to be made up also as she wants a pattern. Mother's size will about suit her.¹¹

Why did Brown set the specifications for his wife's dress to his father-in-law? It would not be unexpected that Lydia would have shown an interest in her own wardrobe, and would have written her own request to her mother. Certainly the few pictures extant of Lydia show her as well dressed, in the fashion of the time, with every care for her appearance, even within the wilds of New Ireland. One can only speculate, but while the letter indicates some consultation with her, it could suggest a subservient position at least in the domestic affairs of commerce.

Brown initiated the New Britain Mission in 1875, and had spent a year travelling Australia to gain financial support. His wife and children were in New Zealand, staying with the Wallis family while he was absent. Brown sailed via Fiji in order to bring Island teachers as the team to establish the mission. He sailed via Rotuma in the mission ship *John Wesley*, with instructions from Sydney to return on that ship after a brief period of settling the team from other islands. Brown decided to stay on, sending the *John Wesley* on without him, and to return by a later vessel, hopefully early in 1876. This was in contravention of his instructions, and the way by which he informed his wife of these new arrangements suggests that if both did not share in the mission imperative of following what they believed to be God's will, Brown at least believed that this priority was shared by them both. His letter began with a description of the building of the mission station by the local men and women, and after a period of reassurance that the task was safe, he broke the news to Lydia:

The decision had to be made at once and I decided to remain and in doing so I believe I acted in simple accordance with God's will. I love you dearly my darling and long to be with you and our dear little ones. I heartily sympathise with you in your loneliness but I feel that we shall not err when we follow God's guidance and I have confidence enough in you and in your love for the great work to make me feel that hard as it will be for you to bear the trial and disappointment on not seeing me on the return of the *Wesley* the step I am taking will have your approval and you will cheerfully bear your share of the burden. I do not expect to stay here long.¹²

Brown referred to his belief that such a step was God's will several times, and he must have believed that his wife shared a similar belief. Although the uncharacteristically long and poorly constructed sentence suggests, perhaps, a tension that as the news for Lydia was bad, she may not have so understood. But there is a tenderness and a sense of confidence to suggest that a missionary's wife would share similar beliefs, and be sup-

portive and understanding of the need to bear many personal burdens in being the partner of a dedicated missionary.

Brown's reaction to illness demonstrates a similar faith that their lives were directed by God's will. In Samoa, Lydia had an attack of what was assumed to be enteritis. Brown wrote to a colleague, the Rev. Baker, that while she was well again, she had not resumed her strength. He asserted a shared belief: 'We both feel that the affliction was sent in mercy and we trust it has not been sent in vain but is working out in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness'.¹³ Such a statement was an expression of piety, and perhaps the intended reader, a fellow worker, influenced the strongly religious comment. But Brown did not write that he alone believed it was an affliction sent by God, but was specific in claiming that both shared this belief. It would be reasonable to assume that Lydia shared the piety that Brown claimed for her.

Lydia entered the field before the professionalism of women missionaries. She met with Semple's description of early missionary wives as women who had often responded to a call to missions as readily as their partners. Semple argues that the single most important distinguishing feat of such women was their evangelical commitment to spiritual and social uplift through mission work.¹⁴ Lydia's ready agreement to marry Brown, and the perils of her honeymoon journey through flooded rivers and mosquito-infected camping places, prepared her for a life of hardship. An interview with Brown by Lorimer Fison, reported by C. Brunston Fletcher, suggests that Lydia was prepared for the difficulties of an isolated mission station, living within the context of faith and of dedication to the task. Fletcher reported:

He [Brown] declared that she could go through experiences that would try the nerves of the strongest man, and then return to her household duties as though she had been to the shop around the corner. When Mrs. Brown was asked on one occasion whether she felt lonely or troubled at being taken to Samoa as soon as she was married, to live there among natives without white society for nearly fifteen years, she met the question as though it was quite superfluous. 'Oh no', she replied, 'I was quite used to natives in my own home. I lived among Maoris as long as I could remember'.¹⁵

Such an assessment indicated that Lydia was not challenged by difficult circumstances. Yet there is a clear division in her life. Up until 1890, Lydia accompanied her husband to foreign places, and after that date, she rarely left her home in Sydney. One of her last foreign trips was to Tonga in 1888. Lydia stayed in Tonga for some periods on her own as Brown made return visits to Australia, suggesting that she had a sense of self-confidence to deal with this isolation in a politically-charged atmosphere. But it was to be one of her last trips. She had not accompanied Brown on his visit to the United Kingdom in 1886, nor did she accompany him to his hometown of Barnard Castle, Durham, in 1908, when he went, with two daughters, to write his autobiography. Nor did she accompany him on his visits to New Guinea or the Solomon Islands. Lydia seldom ventured beyond her domestic sphere after 1890, and not only cared for her children, but also for her grandchildren, for her daughter Amy died leaving a young family. Her

last prolonged time in foreign lands was in New Britain from 1876 to 1881, and it was a time of tragedy and of trauma.

On 31 August 1876, Brown took furlough, having spent one whole year in New Britain. The Mission Board in Sydney recommended his return, and Brown sailed in October to New Zealand to rejoin his wife and family. He knew he had to ask her to leave her older children if she was to accompany him back to the mission, and he had soon to confirm the Board's request to return there. He told her that he 'deferred to answer until I had consulted her on the subject'. Brown repeated her reply in great detail: 'She simply said: "I can never be a hindrance to you in your work. If it is God's will that you return to New Britain I am sure that it is also His will that I should go with you. God will take care of our children"'.¹⁶

Despite the very formal, even stilted language of Brown's report of his wife's reply, subsequent events support the fact that Lydia did maintain this commitment to facilitate her husband's work, even in the face of overwhelming hardship and of tragedy. They arrived at Port Hunter on 21 August 1877. Brown had brought a prefabricated mission house to erect, but his autobiography does not record Lydia's impression of her new circumstances. While Brown recorded his affirmation that the mission would win converts for Christianity in militaristic terms, there is no record of Lydia's commitment to such aggressive evangelism. Brown records Lydia's arrival in terms of rejoining the family. There is no hint of the experiences that Grimshaw wrote of regarding the women missionaries to Hawaii who affirmed that 'the early mission wives who came to Hawaii came as part of a separate female agenda; the conversion and reform of ignorant sinners in a pagan, distant society'.¹⁷ It is unlikely that Lydia, for all her Samoan experience and personal faith, was so motivated. There was not a sense of the mission revolving around the station, for Brown was frequently absent, and the island teachers decentralised the work significantly. Lydia was preoccupied with three small children, and with many of the mission team to support in times of sickness. She accompanied her husband, and was a strong support to him, but was not expected to take on roles of teacher or evangelist. The times were not yet appropriate for the professional female missionary in New Guinea.

This was however the start of very trying times. By the early new year, most of the mission and many of the white traders were seriously ill, probably with malaria. Two of the island teachers lost children during this period, Miseli having lost two children as well as his wife. Brown recorded in a diary entry on 18 March 1878: 'I got home tired and faint both in body and spirit, but I remember well that these words expressed but very imperfectly the depression of body and mind, which I then felt'.¹⁸ One can only imagine the intense workload Lydia had, as there were so few people to nurse the many sufferers, in addition to the need to maintain her husband's spirits under such circumstances. Perhaps there was not now such certainty that illness was 'working in us the peaceable effects of righteousness' as Brown affirmed while in Samoa. In April 1878 came the murder of four missionaries and the retaliatory raids which became known as 'the Blanche Bay Affair'. The brightest moment in that year was 2 December, when Rev. and Mrs. Danks joined the mission, and Lydia had some support with those familiar with life beyond mission areas.

On 1 May 1879, Brown left for Cooktown on the trading vessel *The Alice*, as his health had completely broken down. There was only room for one passenger, and as he left, he told Danks, the assistant missionary: 'I have not told Mrs. Brown, but I doubt whether I shall return. I am sure you will do what you can for her comfort and for the children'.¹⁹ There was no doubt that his health was at the point of collapse, and Lydia must have held the same misgivings. Danks reported that at the parting, she had to accept that there was only room for one. She did so, according to Danks, without a murmur, and with great bravery. She needed that bravery, for Brown did not return until March the following year. The mission staff suffered from debilitating illness. Danks described nine days in 1879:

On Monday, 6 October, Mrs. Danks was still very ill. We had exhausted our little skill and our stock of medicines all to little or no good effect. That night Wallis was very restless and Mrs. Brown was very anxious. News came also of the serious illness of Samuela, one of our best teachers. Geoffrey [Brown] was again taken ill and became very feverish. On the seventh day Mrs. Danks was ill to the point of complete exhaustion. Our anxiety for both Geoffrey and Wallis deepened. On the eighth day I went through a most exhausting attack of fever. On the 9th Mrs. Danks seemed to be rapidly sinking, and on that day I received word Manasa and Josateki were both seriously ill. I immediately sent away the boat to bring them across. On the 12th as I lay on the verandah, weak and ill, and Mrs. Danks in bed very much wasted, Mrs. Brown suddenly cried out:

'Oh, Mr. Danks, he is dying' ...

Never shall we forget Mrs. Brown's brave kindness through all this trying time. Had she been taken ill I really believe we should have all died, for there was no other help.²⁰

In that period, Lydia's son Wallis died in October, and her daughter Mabel in March, just ten days before Brown's return. One can only imagine the suffering that Lydia had to endure on her own, possibly believing herself to be widowed, and losing two children, all the time cut off from family and social support. Brown initially suffered separately to his wife, as he arrived back at Port Hunter on 21 March 1880, knowing of Wallis's death, but not of Mabel's. His diary entry indicates his sense of loss, and of sympathy for his wife, who was not there to greet him, having left the station, as it was too painful to live there alone:

I stood for some time by the graves before entering the house, sorrowing most for my dear wife, who had suffered such bitter trials alone ... I walked into the empty house, and I shall never forget how utterly desolate and miserable I felt as I stood in our bedroom, and saw every where the traces of the painful experiences through which my dear wife had passed. The room was all untidy, just as it had been left when the body of our dear child had been carried from it. Her hat, and I vividly remember, a little pink dress which she wore, were

thrown on the floor in one corner of the room; the dolls and toys with which they had tried to amuse her were still lying near the bed on which she died.²¹

In her study, *Gathering for God*, Helen Gardner has published a photograph of Lydia Brown taken in 1880. It shows Lydia in a familiar, relaxed position with local women. She is well dressed, with a remarkable cleanliness of dress in trying circumstances. Gardner's accompanying comment is revealing of her suffering: 'Following the death of two of her children, Lydia Brown joined her husband on his frequent journeys, taken in 1880 during a traverse across the island, when Lydia was so ill with malaria that she had to be carried most of the way'.²² Lydia did not return to New Zealand, but the pain of her losses meant that she could not abide the mission station, and sought closeness with her husband, who carried on the work. On writing to his benefactor Henry Reed in 1880, Brown commented:

My dear wife has had many bitter trials to bear during these last twelve months but she has been very mercifully sustained through them all ... I feel very grateful to God that we are still spared to each other and we both pray that our spared lives may show forth His praise, may be spared in His service.²³

Here the historian can only surmise what Lydia really felt. Did she share such strong faith? And was she prepared to put such positive responses on her suffering? Brown affirmed a shared piety, but surely there were times that both Brown and Lydia shook a fist at God, though they could not publicly express their sufferings.

Brown and Lydia stayed with the mission for another nine months, until January 1881. Lydia never returned to New Britain, and seldom travelled abroad after her return. In the immediate years after their return she established a home in Gordon, Sydney, nostalgically named *Kinawanua*, after their initial mission contact on the Duke of York Islands. The older daughters returned from New Zealand, and Lydia had the pleasure of a home in Sydney and a husband working in a Methodist parish in central Sydney. Brown was appointed a commissioner to the 1886 Imperial Exhibition in London, and he took two years leave from ministry to attend. Lydia did not accompany him, nor did she go with him as he took leave to write his biography in England in 1908, accompanied by his elder daughters. During both these trips, Brown corresponded frequently with Lydia, sharing his experiences as tourist, preacher and lecturer. The letters are tender and show no sign that Lydia felt excluded from such ventures. Lydia chose a domestic life again, suggesting that her mission work was not her profession, and that the traumas of New Britain in 1879 were enough to cause a longing for a secure and comfortable environment for herself and for her family.

In 1887 Brown was appointed Mission Secretary of the New South Wales and Queensland Conference. This was the organisation that had to respond to the separation and persecution of the Methodist Church in Tonga. Prime Minister Shirley Baker had been censured and had resigned from the Methodist ministry, and was the key person with whom to negotiate. Brown went as newly appointed Mission Secretary to Tonga in

July 1887, and he made suggestions to the 1888 Conference that were conciliatory. He wrote privately to Baker hoping for a conciliatory reply. His comments on his family at this time affirm Lydia's desire for a domestic life:

Lizzie took her BA in Honours and is now at Brisbane teaching in Grammar School, the rest are with us here. It would be a fearful thing for me to break up our home again and I should require to see very clearly that such a sacrifice is demanded before I would consent to do so, and then the financial difficulties are not inconsiderable.²⁴

Despite his plea for domestic stability, Brown left for Tonga as Special Commissioner, and stayed to negotiate a reunion of the churches in four visits between 1888 and 1890. Lydia accompanied him for the 1888 trip, and stayed in Tonga without Brown as he made his return trip to Sydney. He wrote from Auckland to the editor of the *Missionary Review* in June 1888, making a public comment about his hopes for reunion: 'My wife and I however are made strong by the assurance that as in the past so now we do not go alone nor are we dependent on our own strength or wisdom'.²⁵ The inclusion of Lydia, not just in person but also in prayer, affirmed the partnership of previous years. Brown knew that Tonga would be a difficult assignment, and it is reasonable to assume that Lydia's accompanying him was an expression of marital support. Brown quoted from *The Spectator* in his autobiography in tribute to Lydia:

Our readers will remember - no Methodist is likely to forget - the message which that noble woman sent along the telegraph wires to her husband when the General Conference asked him if he could go to Tonga: If you think it is your duty to go I am willing ... it means leaving her children behind her and it means that still ... And when she comes home again she will just step into her vacant place as quietly as if she had been visiting a neighbour round the corner of the street, instead of making a sacrifice which brings tears into strong men's eyes whenever they think about it. We talk about what our missionaries have done, but some of our best missionaries tell us that they feel very small when they compare their doings with what their wives have done and suffered in the mission field.²⁶

Brown owed much to his wife. She accompanied him as requested, was left alone frequently, and suffered privation and grief in the course of mission work. Brown, as with the obituary offered on Lydia's death in *The Spectator*, affirmed her support. He was ready to affirm his debt to her publicly, as in the passage he quoted, and he did so privately:

People often speak kindly of the work which I have done but no one knows as well as I know that if I had not been blessed with the wife I have a lot of that work could never have been done ... You and I however know that the praise

is not to us but to the loving father who has blessed and strengthened us in the work which He gave us to do.²⁷

His autobiography was dedicated to Lydia. Gardner commented: 'As with most dedications, this one hinted at a private relationship but made no comment on it and the loved one was excluded from the subsequent record. There is a sense, therefore, that Lydia Brown pervades the pages of the *Autobiography* rather than appears in them'.²⁸ In the absence of personal papers from Lydia herself it can be assumed, by the comments of those associated with her that she was supportive of her husband and shared a common faith. But it must be wondered why Lydia, having spent years in the Pacific Islands seldom ventured there again, after the Tongan visit, while her husband made such frequent trips to areas she had known so well. It would be of value to know why Lydia did not make a visit to England, when Brown made three such trips in later years. Fletcher's remarks that Lydia could take on a venture into the wilds and return as though she had been to the local shop do not explain her decision against travel after 1890. Lydia had a pleasant home and a large family. Perhaps the adventures of earlier years were sufficient, and a domestic life appealed. Certainly Brown felt her love to the end.

In 1908, while writing his autobiography in his hometown of Barnard Castle, he wrote frequently and copiously to Lydia telling her of his trips, functions and meetings. He was unfailingly affectionate in tone:

My own dear wife,
Just 48 years this month since you and I started for Samoa in the *John Wesley*,
and I am more fond of you now than ever I was then when you were a bright
happy girl though you did think that I was tired of you after three weeks of
married life. I only wish I were with you now either in Australia or here.²⁹

There is no doubt of Brown's love for Lydia. But the letter is a warning that the recipient does not necessarily feel the same way, as indicated by the tension that Brown referred to in the early weeks of their marriage. All indications are, however, of a happy and loving relationship.

Lydia was not the forerunner of a professional missionary, preferring the domestic life as a mother and wife. The Church preferred to express the relationship of George and Lydia as one of mutual involvement in mission work. A letter to them by the Secretary of the Papuan Synod on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary was written in terms of both partners 'as ranking among our noblest veterans of foreign Mission warfare'.³⁰ The official portraits of the Browns were often framed with George and Lydia occupying complementary facing positions. It was in Lydia's obituary in 1923 that the official emphasis of the Church categorised her life as a serving partner, and revealed their lack of insight into the woman herself. After commenting on her 'gracious ministry both on the Mission Field and in the homeland', and recalling her 'sweet and winsome personality', the obituary recorded at length an incident of her selfless support in the New Britain mission forty-three years previously.³¹ An obituary that relied on cliché and the restatement of one incident suggests that Lydia was a private person whose

deeper insights were not shared in the public arena. It would be valuable to explore Lydia's own responses to the demands of her long life, but as is so often the case, her own words were never part of the public record. Lydia was publicly renowned as a supporting partner and worker, but there are depths of privacy that I believe, if explored, would reveal a woman of great insight and strength.

Endnotes

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- 1 P. Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), xii.
 - 2 *Ibid.*, xiv.
 - 3 G. Brown, *Pioneer Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 20.
 - 4 It would appear that the Methodist Church followed the same policy as Rufus Anderson, Secretary of the American Board of Missions, that celibacy was not to be encouraged in missionary men. See Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*, 6f. Brown followed the same policy in the selection of native teachers, selecting those who were married above those who were not.
 - 5 Brown to Rabone, 14 October 1871, *Letterbook*, Mitchell Library [ML] A1616 -1, 421.
 - 6 Brown to Wallis, 30 August 1872, *Letterbook*, ML A1686 - 2, 262.
 - 7 See Rhonda Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2003).
 - 8 Brown to Wallis, *Letterbook*, ML] A1686 -2, 261.
 - 9 Brown, *Pioneer Missionary*, 59.
 - 10 *Ibid.*
 - 11 Brown to Wallis, 20 February 1873. *Letterbook* ML A1686 -2, 309.
 - 12 Brown to L. Brown, 23 August 1875. *Letterbook* ML A1686 -2, 601.
 - 13 Brown to Baker, 8 May 1871, *Letterbook*, ML A1686 - 2, 26.
 - 14 Semple, *Missionary Women*, 192.
 - 15 B. Fletcher, *The Black Knight of the Pacific* (Sydney: Australian Publishing Co., 1944), 65.
 - 16 Brown, *Pioneer Missionary*, 222.
 - 17 Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*, 193.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 248.
 - 19 W. Dean, *In Wild New Britain* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1933), 35.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, 58f.
 - 21 Brown, *Pioneer Missionary*, 346.
 - 22 Helen Gardner, *Gathering for God* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006), 64.
 - 23 Brown to Reed, 28 May 1880, *Letterbook*, ML A1686 - 3, 563.
 - 24 Brown to Baker, *Letterbook*, ML A1689 -19, 15.
 - 25 Brown to Editor, *Missionary Review*, 27 June 1888, ML A1686 - 19, 155.
 - 26 Brown, *Pioneer Missionary*, 439.
 - 27 G. Brown to L. Brown, May 1902, *Letterbook*, ML A1686 - 7, 385.
 - 28 Gardner, *Gathering For God*, 29.
 - 29 G. Brown to L. Brown, 3 September 1908, *Letterbook* ML A1686 - 7, 425.
 - 30 A. Ballentyne to G. and L. Brown, 13 October 1910, ML A263 -1-2.
 - 31 *Missionary Review*, 4 December 1923.