

'I am half a missionary myself'

WILLIAM INFORMED CAPTAIN WILLIAM MEIN SMITH, Surveyor-General of the company, that he had named the 'Eritonga' valley Hutt and that it was the wrong place to lay out the new settlement's town. Lambton Harbour provided the most sheltered roadstead for ships, which could anchor close to the shore, and there was enough flat or undulating land about Pipitea and Te Aro for the company's town sections; the Hutt could be used for the country settlements. Smith firmly produced his instructions from London which included a plan for the splendid town of Britannia, with 1100 acre sections laid out in a strict geometry. His assistants and labourers had already marked out the first boulevards behind the Petone foreshore. William tried to exert his authority as principal agent but Smith told him that the siting of the town was within his own professional prerogative.

Smith was reputedly a man of strong and religious principle, better suited to the role of teacher or parson than soldier or frontier surveyor, but highly skilled and backed by the credentials of the Royal Military Academy. They confronted each other on Petone Beach in a clash of class and rank. Smith knew of William's Wakefield history and would have held his mercenary colonelcy in some disdain. William saw Smith as an office soldier and, having been in charge of the entire New Zealand expedition for almost a year, would have resented this newcomer's presumption, and his ignorance of people, place and circumstances. But William could bring no moral authority to bear as Smith refused to budge. William turned on his heel, harbouring a resentment that would cause him to harry and vilify Smith at every opportunity.

Leaving Smith to cut survey lines through the swamps and dunes, William turned to korero with the Maori and discovered that, since he was last in Port Nicholson in October, CMS missionary Henry Williams had visited and, as he wrote on 24 January for the benefit of company secretary Ward,

repeatedly told the chiefs here that the white settlers . . . would drive all the natives into the hills; that they ought to have sold their land at a guinea per foot and advised them to insist upon money being paid them on my return. Knowing, as he did, the solemn cession of this territory to the Company and the large payment made for it; aware also of the reserves made for the native families and other beneficial arrangements for them as well as of the native proneness to suspicion and resistance; he could have been actuated in his doings here; indeed in his visit to the place; only by jealousy and a wish to create mischief and ensure the settlers a bad reception.¹

It has been said that William was ‘not quite sane on the subject of the Church Mission’.² Perhaps understandably so. He would have learnt every detail of the unrelenting missionary opposition to EGW’s plans throughout the 1830s and the vituperative personal attacks that this had generated. Sensitive to the social marginalisation the Wakefields still suffered, and ever loyal to his eldest brother, William’s reaction to Henry Williams was partially the snarl of an underdog at the pious carriers of moral banners. And Henry Williams had indeed set out to frustrate the Company’s land purchases and plans. When William left the Cook Strait region the missionary had drawn up deeds covering large tracts of land ‘intrusted to him by the Aborigines’ – including the whole of the Wairarapa and Taranaki – in order to block or invalidate company purchases. Williams always insisted that he had taken these steps out of concern for the welfare of the Maori, to prevent them being duped by the company or other European land dealers. But this was both a political and a humanitarian act, and one that was not supported by his own mission committee; and though it was small, he did have a personal interest in owning land.

No sooner had William completed his first altercation with Mein Smith, and discovered Henry Williams’s machinations, than the first of the settler ships, the *Aurora*, arrived on 21 January. The other five ships arrived at intervals over the following six weeks. Henry Petre on the *Oriental* described how the settlers reached Port Hardy on 22 January to find a ‘complete solitude’ apart from a few ‘natives who came to the ship in a canoe, but with whom none of us were able to hold a conversation’. The ships’ passengers rambled about the hills, thinking they were the ‘first Englishmen who had trod upon that ground’,³ until a lost surveyor’s notebook from the *Cuba* was found and a local whaler, acting as William’s messenger, came to send the ships on to Port Nicholson.

When the *Oriental* arrived at Port Nicholson, Petre’s fellow passenger Edward Hopper was appalled to find cargo landed from the *Aurora* swilling around in the sea below the high-water mark on Petone Beach and that ‘no shelter had been provided for our goods or our persons’. Luckily it was high summer and the lack of preparation for the settlers, William no doubt explained, was that the *Cuba* had taken all of 175 days to make the voyage from England, a month longer than most of the emigrant ships and a full two and half a months longer than the *Tory*.

There were grumbles and apprehension but nothing else to be done but make the best of it. The single men revelled in the novelty and adventure. Tom Partridge wrote to the *New Zealand Journal* on 18 March 1840: 'I am now living in a tent I have bought, for the house is not yet landed; and I am very well contented that I have not yet been obliged to sleep with an umbrella over my head, as most others have done. The climate is so fine that everybody laughs at such things.'

It was less easy for the women, who faced domestic difficulties and the bearing and welfare of children. 'A woman lately confined on board [*Aurora*] died. Another who fractured her skull by falling down the hold is not expected to live. A boy who had both his arms blown off by a Gun on board the "Cuba" and a few trifling cases already occupy part of the Infirmary.'⁴

George Hunter's daughter Margaret wrote on 7 April 1840, 'We are very pleased with the natives, who seem to be intelligent and obliging, but very indolent. They take a great deal of interest in the children . . . Baby is quite well, and likes every thing except the cooking, which we are obliged to do in the open air, over wood fires, laid upon the ground; but we are to get a stove and chimney as soon as possible.'⁵

William observed with some grandiloquence that 'the wand of civilization has been stretched over the land'.⁶ Jerningham, exhibiting the literary skills he had inherited from his father and grandmother, created a vivid picture of those early days at Petone:

The sand-hummocks at the back of the long beach were dotted over with tents of all shapes and sizes, native-built huts in various stages of construction, and heaps of goods of various kinds, which lay about anywhere between high-water mark and the houses. Thus ploughs, hundreds of bricks, millstones, tent-poles, saucepans, crockery, iron, pot-hooks, and triangles, casks of all sizes and bales of all sorts, were distributed about the sand-hummocks. The greatest good-humour prevailed among the owners of these multifarious articles . . . they pitched their tents and piled up their goods in rude order, while the natives, equally pleased and excited, sung Maori songs to them from the tops of the ware or huts where they sat tying the rafters and thatch together with flaxen bands.⁷

William and Jerningham bunked together in a room partitioned off from a 'large barn-like store' in Petone pa. It was 'anything but warm . . . the only window being a piece of canvass, and the door a rickety and badly-fitted one from a ship-cabin . . . a "bunk," or wooden shelf, supported Colonel Wakefield's bed. Mine was a cot, placed on the top of a pile of musket-cases and soap-boxes against the partition. The floor consisted of the natural grey shingle which formed the beach; and the roof . . . bent and yielded to every puff of wind. The plan of tying everything together with flax . . . makes these *Maori* houses so elastic that no wind can blow them down.' They had 'plenty of thick blankets, and used to sleep

soundly and turn out fresh and hearty at day-break. Then a sea-bath was close to the door. . . .'⁸

Sam Revans, about to set up and print the first Port Nicholson issue of the *New Zealand Gazette*, wrote to H. S. Chapman, 'At present I am so enthusiastic about the place, that I am almost afraid of being guilty of apparent absurdities in my statements.' Revans, whose surviving correspondence with Chapman and writings in the *Gazette* provide an intriguing insight into the development of the new colony and its leading inhabitants, at first had only praise for William. 'Col. W. Wakefield is a good fellow – a great judge of character and admirably suited to the management of such a community as that which he is presiding over. He walks about smokes his cigar and encourages all to go on and prosper. And by an occasional kindness makes & secures his popularity, tho' prepared at any moment to be severe if need be.'⁹

Henry Petre recorded that the first settlers were never short of food since the company's imports of flour, and later cattle and sheep, were supplemented by Maori pork and potatoes. The Maori were friendly and supportive in every way. 'Our conviction was, that we should be received as friends by the natives, if our conduct towards them was just and friendly. Our most sanguine expectations were completely realized.' But, 'Our numbers indeed astonished them, and they used frequently to ask whether our whole tribe . . . had not come to Port Nicholson.' Te Wharepouri had been so shocked by the crowds of settlers arriving that he had begun preparations to take his people back to his old home in Taranaki. But the prospect of work and goods aplenty from association with the hundreds of incoming Pakeha finally persuaded them to stay.

Henry Petre thought that the Maori were 'overawed by our obvious superiority to any physical force that could have been brought against us'.¹⁰ After the last of the emigrant vessels had arrived with the repaired *Tory* on 8 March, William arranged a demonstration of that superiority: line abreast between Somes Island and Petone Beach, '[s]ix large ships, decked with colours, above which the New Zealand flag floated supreme', fired a grand salute. 'A large concourse of those on shore assembled to gaze on the imposing sight.' William stood in the stern of one of three war canoes, *Epuni's*, as the Maori 'shouted their war-song most vigorously as they passed close to each astonished poop-load of passengers'.¹¹

This stirring event marked the end of the first euphoric, make-do summer weeks of the settlement. The idyll of camping on a strange shore, outdoor picnics in lieu of dinner and the novelties of Maori hut building had been dashed by a prolonged southerly storm that caused the Hutt River to flood and wash through the encampments and survey lines. Dr Evans, who had just arrived on the dispute-racked *Adelaide*, made a quick and shrewd decision to set up house by Lambton Harbour. Earlier arrivals began to press William to shift the town settlement across to that side of the harbour, fearful of the river's unpredictable power and the valley's exposure to southerlies. Only a week after his arrival Evans, 'Umpire' of

the settlers law and order council, led a deputation to William requesting that the town site be shifted and followed this with a formal letter which ended by stating that, unless the move was made, 'a very large proportion of the colonists . . . have made up their minds to abandon the undertaking altogether'.¹² This has the ring of a compact between William and Evans to force Mein Smith's hand. More heavy rains and floods in the month that followed left Smith with no option but to concede.

From late March, around the rocky shore of the harbour and by boat, more and more settlers upped stakes and removed to the Lambton Harbour site. The survey had to begin all over again. And though they had no floods to face, there was another problem. Maori living in the area, with pa, gardens and burial sites, occupied the prime several hundred acres. William maintained that he had bought all this land in October, But the resident Maori disagreed: they had never expected to move house for the Pakeha but to share the land. But had Henry Williams not warned them the settlers would come to drive them into the hills?

The very survival of the fledgling settlement was now at risk. It must be resited on the Lambton Harbour site or dissolved. For William, as usual, there was no time to litigate. And was this not what he had been employed for? He remembered his *Instructions*: 'It is only just, in our opinion, that the responsibility which you incur, should be accompanied by the utmost latitude for the exercise of your own judgment as to the means to be employed.'¹³ He was also convinced he had fulfilled the order requiring him to ensure that any purchase of land was 'thoroughly understood' by the Maori and that each party to a sale had received a proper share of the purchase money or goods.

William instructed Mein Smith and his surveyors to begin laying off the land 'with as little collision as possible'. But they were also armed with swords and pistols. Colonel William had been conscious all along of the need to take steps to both protect the settlement and advance its interests with armed force if necessary. All parties to the settlers' council agreement promised to 'submit themselves to be mustered and drilled'. Apart from impressive shows of cannon fire from ships on the harbour, William advised the company that he had also 'built a capacious powder magazine and shall mount the four eighteen-pounder guns from the "Adelaide" on the summit of Somes Island'.¹⁴

The Maori were well aware of the likely consequences of physical confrontation with the Pakeha and what they would lose if the settlers decided to leave the area. So they registered their protest at the survey merely by pulling out the surveyors' stakes and destroying markers. When they did not desist, those settlers eligible to be mustered and drilled put on a show of force to overawe them. The survey proceeded and when sections were finally given out by ballot, the tenths due to Maori were scattered all over the area, often in impossible locations. Six of nine villages at Port Nicholson disappeared. The town was laid out but resentment,

dispute and argument over purchase, payment and survey would now plague the settlement, and William for the rest of his life.

It is not surprising that William flew into a rage when Henry Williams returned to Port Nicholson on 19 April, bearing the Treaty of Waitangi for signature by local chiefs, and claimed rights to 40 acres of Lambton Harbour land which he had negotiated with the native missionary Richard Davis in William's absence (at negligible payment). When they met to discuss this, William insisted the land had been included and paid for under the October deal; and when Henry Williams demurred, William swore at him, causing him to leave the meeting. Evans and others failed to persuade Henry Williams to relinquish his claim but his threat to leave the settlement provoked William's apology. When the missionary understood that the company had reserved the tenths for the Maori, he agreed to 'gift' his land interest to the company, reserving an acre for himself and one for Davis.

When the question of Henry Williams's land had been settled, he was 'enabled to obtain the signatures of the Natives of this place' on 29 April. Williams's letter to Hobson on the subject was politic and careful, aware that a deputation of settlers was planning to visit the governor: 'There appeared many strange ideas on our arrival which I hope have now subsided . . . Upon the opinion and advice of Colonel Wakefield and Dr. Evans I have concluded to proceed to Otako lest the French should be beforehand . . . I have been highly gratified to observe the great respectability of the parties who have located to this place. . . .'¹⁵

William's caustic version of events went to the company at the end of May:

I thought it better to compromise the matter with him, and to ensure the support of the Church Missionaries by giving him an interest in the place; and, therefore, after a candid avowal on his part that he wished 'to have a slice for himself' and other confessions equally disinterested and compatible with his pretended anxiety on account of the native reserves, I agreed to give him one acre of the land he claimed for himself and one acre for the sole use of Richard Davis the Native [missionary]; they, in consideration of the land being surveyed, yielding all their rights to the Company. I cannot express to you the feelings of repugnance entertained by the respectable colonists . . . on account of his selfish views, his hypocrisy and unblushing rapaciousness. He frequently said that finding I had been beforehand with him in the purchase of land in the Strait without consulting him he had endeavoured to do the best for himself and had disparaged the Company and its settlers to the natives. On the whole it was only by a great effort, and in the hope of benefitting the Colony, that I could bring myself to hold any terms with this worst of land-sharks.¹⁶

William's intemperate and exaggerated report reflected the fact that he had also been warring with Williams over the treaty which, with its Crown pre-emption on land sales, threatened the scope and security of the company's land purchases. William's fury with Henry Williams was fuelled by his belief that

missionaries should not meddle in commerce or politics. William was to give much praise to the work of Octavius Hadfield, the CMS missionary now established at Waikanae, 'a single-minded and sincere minister of the Gospel [who] well deserves the estimation in which he is held by all parties', because 'He has always refrained from, and, it is understood, declined any interference in, the secular matters of the natives, other than recommending a peaceable intercourse with their white neighbours'.¹⁷ The missionary's role as a spiritual leader, converting, civilising and pacifying the Maori, served the company's interests best. To each his own in making New Zealand British.¹⁸

In the midst of the turmoil caused by changing the town site, and from dealing with recalcitrant ship's captains who were not fulfilling their contracts in properly discharging cargo, William found space to write to 'My dear Catherine' on 25 March 1840.

I have scarcely time to write to my friends, but snatch a moment to let you know that we have accomplished our voyage & object satisfactorily. This country quite equals my expectations & there can be no doubt of the success of our colony. The natives are fast improving amongst us. They like our clothing & observances of the Sabbath. I am half a missionary myself & have perfect control over our tribes here, who have given me the name of Wideawake, by which I am known all over the islands. I have written to Edward [EGW] to send me Emily, but fear he may have left England. If so I trust to you & Charles to look to her, till I can go home for or to her. . . . If you have a son to spare & like to send him to me I can do something for him & he shall not be eaten by the natives. I intend to write to Pris by the first ship to India. I heard from her from the Cape. She & her children were flourishing. . . .¹⁹

There are signs here of William's homesickness, if not for place then certainly for family, and his firm intention to have his only child with him as soon as possible. Emily was now thirteen, attending a boarding school at Richmond and being cared for in the holidays by either EGW or Catherine and Charles. Their brood at Stoke was now complete with the birth of Frances the year before but, of nine children born alive, most of them girls, Anna had already died at the age of twelve in 1838. It is unlikely that Catherine would have taken too warmly to William's talk of a 'son to spare' not being 'eaten by the natives': Henry was just seven and Charley scarcely fifteen.

'Pris', William's youngest sibling, who had been found a teaching position in Ipswich by Arthur in 1833, had answered the call to teach at Mrs Wilson's missionary school in Calcutta in 1835. Surviving extracts from her banal diary show that, at the beginning of 1836, Priscilla was learning 'Bengalee' from a 'Pundit' and confined to the limited social experience of missionary families.²⁰ But she had already met Captain Henry Chapman, an older and distant cousin from her father's generation, whom she married later that year, escaping into her own

household. William's reference to her children was anticipatory. Priscilla was to emulate Catherine in producing a family of nine, and she was almost as old as her elder sister had been when she first became a mother. At the time he wrote, her first child was two and the second not long conceived. Priscilla was to spend some years in India with her merchant husband before settling again in England. Occasionally she made contact with brother Howard who remained a lieutenant in the 17th Native Infantry and on survey work for fifteen years before being promoted to captain in 1840.

Although William remained 'my dear Kate, yours very affectionately', thoughts of family were only a brief and rare diversion from the almost impossible task he had undertaken as expedition and colony leader, principal agent of the company and 'President' of the settlers' council that had been formed to administer British law and order in the absence of any national jurisdiction. William did not have the skills to cope with all these roles to everyone's satisfaction. For much of his life, he had deferred to EGW, to whom, it was said, he bore 'rather a watery resemblance'.²¹ The New Zealand venture was this relationship writ large. But when an exchange of correspondence around the world took at least nine months, and William was essentially left to his own devices, he was bound to be found wanting in some of the attributes needed in a settlement founder.

For William Gisborne, the nineteenth-century public servant, politician and commentator, such a man 'should be intelligent, practical, just, firm, prudent, trustworthy, energetic, patient, persevering and otherwise specially fitted to be a leader of men'.²² Modern commentators would probably add that he should have been also a paid-up member of the Aborigines Protection Society and a selfless missionary. Although William announced himself half the latter for Catherine's sake, and might have wished himself to be the rest, even he would have agreed that he could not be all things to all men.

What can be deduced of William 'the inner man'? Beyond the early 1820s in Paris, he had been largely isolated from social experience and often separated from his family. His name was never mentioned in connection with any woman after 1827. The heartbreak, guilt and shame over Emily's death appear to have diverted all his affectionate impulses towards his daughter whose upbringing he was, nevertheless, prepared to leave to others. His own upbringing and military responsibilities had taught him formal social skills, and developed a veneer of charm and sensibility, but his personality seems to have been cramped and his emotions suppressed.

Gisborne, whose description of William has generally been relied upon by subsequent writers, may have met him during the last year of his life, when Gisborne was 22 and William was suffering from stress and nervous exhaustion. Otherwise, his description must be a digest of other opinions. Gisborne wrote, 'One remarkable faculty of Colonel Wakefield was his reticence . . . no one who had an interview with [him] knew what he thought and what he meant to do. His

manner was attractive, and, in outward appearance, sympathetic, but the inner man was out of sight and hearing. The feeling of the interviewer was that of taking a leap in the dark. Colonel Wakefield, like the mole, did his work underground.²³ Only missionaries, apparently, could provoke an outward passion. A lonely, loveless man, William found good company only with fellow military men, some from Spain such as Major David Durie, whose limited but comradely bonhomie he could trust. For the rest, a charming manner and reticence would serve to reserve his judgement, mask his indecision and inadequacies and disguise his political manipulations.

The council and constitution agreed upon by the settlers before leaving Gravesend was intended to provide a temporary but essential system of law and order. When news reached Port Nicholson that Lieutenant-Governor Hobson had arrived in the north to establish British sovereignty, the settlers 'were in daily expectation of being visited either by the Governor in person or by an officer of the Government. In fact we fully expected that Port Nicholson would be chosen for the seat of Government.'²⁴ When nothing happened after a month, something had to be done. So the council was brought together at the beginning of March and a magistrate and constables appointed. In his first local edition of the *New Zealand Gazette* (18 April) Sam Revans published the details of the council's constitution, which had been 'ratified' by local chiefs. By this time, William had been advised by Ward that the council was illegal but he decided not to reveal this information until colonial government was established in Port Nicholson, probably so that a facsimile of constitutional law and order could be maintained.

One of the first to feel the force of the council's authority was a Captain Pearson, who was arrested for assault but escaped and took his barque, nicely named *Integrity*, to the Bay of Islands and alleged to Lieutenant-Governor William Hobson that the southern settlers were setting up their own 'republic'. Hobson, recovering from a stroke, and anxiously awaiting news that his emissaries had successfully obtained all the necessary signatures from Maori chiefs around the country to validate the Treaty of Waitangi, cried 'Treason!'

Hobson had arrived in the Bay of Islands on 29 January, already appointed Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand under Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps. He was armed with a variety of instructions and options from Gipps and the Colonial Office – as well as his own opinions – about the best way of placing New Zealand under British sovereignty, with its law and order, while reassuring Maori that their interests would be protected. He carried with him the conclusions of British officialdom that it was not possible to envisage a 'Maori New Zealand in which a place had to be found for British intruders, but a settler New Zealand in which a place had to be found for the Maori'.²⁵ The actions of the company had been crucial in shaping this attitude.

Within a week of arriving Hobson, with the help of British Resident James Busby and CMS missionaries (especially Henry Williams), had cobbled together a treaty in English and Maori which sought cession, submission and loyalty by the Maori to the British Crown and constitution while safeguarding their customs and property. The Crown had pre-emption on all land sales, which was presented as securing Maori from exploitation by unscrupulous private purchasers. The full import of the Treaty of Waitangi, of becoming British, was never clear to Maori, least of all that the Crown itself would seek to make profits from land sales to pay for the costs of colonial settlement. William Colenso, missionary printer, was the only one at the signing on 6 February to suggest, greatly to Hobson's irritation, that most of the chiefly signatories did not really understand what was going on. In the much touted 'spirit' of the treaty, Hobson and the missionaries placated any Maori misgivings with paternalistic reassurances of trust.

Years later, in 1858, George Selwyn, the first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, was to say that William Wakefield spent less time on his Cook Strait land purchases than would have been necessary for the 'honest conveyance of a marriage settlement on an encumbered estate'.²⁶ Had William still been alive, he might have retorted that Hobson had spent even less time putting together the founding document of New Zealand's constitution.

Whatever the intentions, considerations or methods used by any party, the nett effect was the British takeover of New Zealand. William's initiation of the Port Nicholson council caused this to be completed definitively and prematurely. Few treaty signatures from beyond Waitangi had reached Hobson when Captain Pearson brought news of the southern 'republic'. Within hours of his arrival on 21 May, and in view of this 'emergency', Hobson proclaimed British sovereignty over the North Island, based on the 'universal adherence of the native chiefs' to the treaty, blatantly false, and over the South Island by right of discovery, an equally dubious claim. Treaty signatures were eventually collected from around the country but it was this declaration and its official gazetting by the British Government on 2 October that turned New Zealand into a Crown colony.

The wording of Hobson's ringing proclamation against the Port Nicholson council two days later left no doubt about New Zealand's new status. In condemning the council, Hobson described New Zealand as 'part of the Dominions of Her Majesty Queen Victoria' and asserted that the council's attempt to 'usurp' his powers was to the 'manifest injury and detriment of all Her Majesty's liege subjects in New Zealand'.²⁷ This would have been unintelligible news to most of them.

Hobson thereupon despatched Acting Colonial Secretary Willoughby Shortland with 30 soldiers and six mounted policemen to force the Port Nicholson settlers to withdraw from their 'illegal association'. Before they arrived, a public notice, by William's order as president of the council, had been printed requiring all male residents between eighteen and 60 to be ready for mustering and drill. This was in the interests of the 'protection of life and property, as well as in

upholding the power and authority of the British race'.²⁸ A mustering was pre-empted, three days later, by the arrival of Shortland's party who were 'well received', according to William's tactful report to Ward on 27 June.²⁹ '[Shortland] holds courts of petty sessions twice a week and is about to build a jail, issue licences etc. . . .'

The 'republic' was dissolved but not without resentment among the settlers towards Hobson and Shortland, who had managed to ignore them for six months, despite their desire for co-operation, and then issued them with heavy-handed proclamations. What else could the settlers have done? Revans made the point on 6 June when he published this notice: 'We would suggest the propriety of giving Colonel Wakefield some evidence of public approbation; for to his kind and judicious management, much of the present quiet and satisfaction is owing.'³⁰

Despite the evident hostility of Hobson and Shortland towards the company, William now tried to fulfil instructions he had received a couple of months before, to do his utmost to assist Hobson in establishing British sovereignty over New Zealand, even to offering him the use of interpreters and ships. EGW had privately offered his own sections at Port Nicholson for Hobson's use and the company was shipping out the parts of a house for the governor whom, they assumed, would wish to be based at their principal settlement. 'Just in proportion as you should be enabled to act in concert with Captain Hobson, will be the Company's facilities hereafter in procuring from the Government or Parliament such arrangements as would conduce to the advantage and prosperity of all.'³¹ EGW's hand is clear in this attempt to proceed with the best of intentions while getting the government to validate the company's settlement and land purchases.

To ensure that Port Nicholson became the colonial capital, William travelled promptly to the Bay of Islands in July, 'in order to carry to His Excellency an address . . . voted to him at a public meeting . . . and to take his instructions respecting his house and other points'.³² William's journey with the address of undying loyalty to Hobson and its invitation of residence, presented with all the charm and persuasion William could muster, appeared to establish an amicable relationship between the two men. But it did nothing to divert Hobson from his plan to establish his residency and capital in the north, if only to keep his political distance from the company. His determination to do this, as well as his indifferent health, meant that he would not visit Port Nicholson until August 1841, a year and a half after his arrival.

Tom Partridge, one of the company settlers and a business partner of Revans, was in the Bay of Islands when William arrived and expressed to him the considerable local dissatisfaction with the lieutenant-governor: 'Capt. Hobson I have not yet seen, he is a valetudinarian and seems borne down by the difficulties of his position, which his education does not seem to enable him to reach. – He appears to be in complete subservience to Sir George Gipps and the N.S. Wales faction – and cannot bestow but the most trivial appointments. . . .'³³

Hobson irritated the inhabitants of Port Nicholson even more when William read out his response to their address at a public meeting after his return in August. Hobson declined their offer to provide him with a proper residence, 'from a conviction of the advantages of fixing the seat of Government in a more central position, and one better adapted for internal communication'.³⁴ Hobson bought land on the southern shore of the Waitemata to establish a capital he called Auckland. Hobson meant 'more central' in relation to the larger concentrations of Maori, who then comprised more than 90 per cent of the population. To the Port Nicholson settlers, Hobson's 'central' was not only a geographical absurdity but a clear snub to their significance. From this time on there would be little pause in the antagonism between the company's settlers and successive governors and their Auckland establishments which was not settled until the capital finally shifted south in 1865. Nevertheless, William saw that the company kept its word and shipped Hobson's house north to his chosen residence. Appropriately, it was accidentally burned before it could be erected.

The immediate feeling of being under official siege was not helped by the notification by Shortland that the company's land purchases would be subject to a commission of enquiry appointed in Sydney. William wrote, 'I have no reason to think that the titles I have acquired for the Company are exceptionable; but, – the feeling of Sir George Gipps towards the Company, openly expressed, leads me to expect a nomination of Commissioners unfavourable to our interests'.³⁵ Governor Gipps had called the settlers 'adventurers'.

Revans editorially banged the drum: 'It is true that we are adventurers. We have adventured property and life, our own prosperity and that of our children, in an undertaking which was rightly called by the sagacious Bacon heroic. If this enterprise be successful . . . we shall have realized for ourselves independence, and probably wealth; but at the same time we shall have substituted in this remote region civilization for barbarism, Christianity for heathenism. . . .'³⁶

This was all very fine but, in William's absence, the attempt by Mein Smith to allot town sections according to his survey turned into a fiasco, and details of Gipps's New Zealand Land Bill had arrived, creating confusion and panic. On his return, William sorted the sections muddle but there was immediate trouble when settlers tried to take up residence on land already inhabited by Maori. This culminated in violence when Sam Revans began to have his house erected within Te Aro pa. Colonial Secretary Shortland finally discovered that Te Puni had sold the Te Aro land to William without its owners' consent: 'How could I help it, when I saw so many muskets and blankets before me?' he said.³⁷ Shortland took control of the Te Aro land on the basis that anyone who wanted to take it up before official examination of title must apply to him through William. It was a useful if temporary finesse. And early conflict between settler and Maori was eased by the speculations of absentee owners: there were many vacant town sections on which displaced Maori could squat.

For any problems involving survey and sections, William, in his despatches to England, relentlessly blamed and criticised Mein Smith. But this scarcely disguised the other reality that there were simply not 110,000 acres of agricultural land available near Port Nicholson for the country sections. In this respect, Hobson was right. The Waitemata environs had much more land available for agricultural development – and a better climate. A couple of years later, Lieutenant John Wood observed: 'Auckland, in the course of years, must become the chief colony, for here nature has done what neither capital nor puffery can do for Wellington'.³⁸ But there was no political or commercial chance the company would concede an inch of that.

In search of extensive farmland, Ernst Dieffenbach and William Deans explored the head of the densely forested Hutt Valley in August 1840 but found no way out of its limitations to the Manawatu or Wairarapa. Although Dieffenbach and Charles Heaphy travelled to the promising Wairarapa via the coast in September William made no company move to explore it for early settlement. He preferred the prospects of the Wanganui region. In May, he had sent Jerningham there who confirmed William's 'purchase' of the land the previous November with goods he valued at £700 (£100 by a missionary observer). In the same mad wrangle that had characterised the Tory Channel purchase, the goods were snapped up by a *mêlée* of Maori; but few of them were actual owners of land. When William visited the area later he discovered that, yet again, Henry Williams had shadowed him and in December 1839 had given local chiefs a piece of paper saying that he had purchased all the land for the benefit of the Maori, without giving them 'even a fish-hook or a head of tobacco'. Wanganui was turning into as big a mess as Port Nicholson – or Wellington as it had become on 14 November when news arrived of the company directors' May decision. EGW had finally repaid his debt of honour to 'Old Wooden Head'.

According to Jerningham, the settlers took up the directors' name change 'with great cordiality'. But the situation at Wanganui was not helped by his return there at the end of 1840 and his establishment of a kind of baronial residence where he held court wearing an ostrich-feathered hat and a Maori mat for a toga. 'The centre remained an open hall . . .' with a keg of rum at either end of a long table ' . . . where all but known bad characters of either race might assemble and be welcome round the ample chimney-corner. But the separated rooms were kept strictly *tapu*, and not even the chief himself ever ventured into them without my permission. In the absence of established laws and usages, I found this sort of feudal system very effectual. I had always a crowd of attendants ready to perform any task. . . .',³⁹ not least wahine in one of the *tapu* rooms. Twenty-year-old Teddy had succumbed to the power of an absolute hedonism found only beyond the reach of regular social order and discipline. It was the top of his personal slippery slope.

News of the debaucheries of Teddy and his friends filtered down to Wellington. Revans wrote: 'I hear he is leading a very vicious life at Wanganui . . . a life he

knows his friends would not countenance. A wish has been expressed that he should go home, but he is obstinate and will not listen to it. I should be truly sorry that the father should be made to suffer pain by the doings of his son in a place for which he has done so much as EGW has for New Zealand.⁷⁴⁰

This was just another annoyance William could do without. The brief summer of his new settlement had turned quickly to winter; the fabric of all his designs was threatening to unravel. William had no time for problems with Teddy as he fought an endless war of attrition against an often inept colonial government and, increasingly, settler disillusionment with the company and his own actions, both of which were usually financially constrained.

Some settlers had gone off to Australia, others had been lured to Auckland by Hobson and others had gone Home with tales of hardship and incompetence. Revans was scornful: ‘Many leaving will be laughed at when they get home . . . I know nothing that can be said excepting that it is windy; but the wind will not check the progress of the place.’⁷⁴¹ Those who stayed were buoyed by stubborn optimism – ‘The colony has gone on (under the unmerited neglect and malevolence of Capt Hobson) beyond my utmost hopes. . . .’⁷⁴² – or stoic common sense: ‘Although the colony has had some difficulties to contend with, and some real causes of discouragement, I am still of the same mind . . . namely, that the country is excellent, and that the wisest act I ever did was to come out here . . . a man would have been mad to suppose that a body of Englishmen, proceeding to a country inhabited only by savages, and that, too, without the sanction or protection of their own government, could possibly be free from difficulties. They have, however, been very small, and I do not believe we shall have any which men cannot conquer.’⁷⁴³

Dealing with the company itself was easier for William with the ameliorating advantages of distance and time. If his carefully crafted reports were sometimes threatened with the sabotage of critical letters sent Home by the disaffected, William knew he could always rely on EGW to set things right among the directors. When F. A. Carrington arrived in December 1839, buoyant with news of the company’s improving fortunes and enthusiasm for his task as chief surveyor of the second settlement for the Plymouth Company, this was no Christmas present for William. He sent him off to choose his spot, which became New Plymouth in Taranaki, and resigned himself to more problems. He had lost much heart and enthusiasm: the adventure and novelty had been replaced by politics and business. Although he could have done with Emily by his side, the settlement remained insecure, and she was too young to call away from the benefits of English family and education.

A picture of William at the anniversary of the settlement was drawn by the prolix Revans in his chain of letters to H. S. Chapman: ‘The Colonel is generally liked as a companion. We are excellent friends . . . [he] is no man of business and it is plain he has no pleasure in the pursuit of Company’s agent – it is

distasteful. How often I have longed that E.G. Wakefield was here . . . he would have made the place. There is no go in his brother who loves ease and retirement. We want a suggesting mind – a mind with imagining power like that of which E. G. Wakefield has. . . .'⁴⁴

A couple of months later Revans expressed almost complete disillusionment with William: 'He anticipates nothing but yields to progress reluctantly and with bad grace. He has proved a miserable representative of his brother's daring and energy. All agree that he is the coldest mannered man they have met with. No man ever left him stronger in faith or determination to act . . . you can understand the mischief of such a character in such a position. Great credit is due to the Colonists for their conduct throughout our trying circumstances and none to the representative of the Company.'⁴⁵ Revans could be a contrary character, but his private comments represented a growing body of opinion in the settlement.