



# The Rev. Samuel Marsden.



By J. W. DUFFUS.

**T**HE life history of Samuel Marsden should be of special interest to every resident in New Zealand. He has been justly styled "The Father of the Church" in this colony. The correctness of the following brief sketch may be relied on, as it is compiled from his life, written by the Rev. R. Taylor, of Wangauui, who was a personal friend of Mr. Marsden. He was born at Horsforth, a village in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where many of his relations still live. He was originally a blacksmith, but his mind being fixed on the ministry, he used every opportunity of preparing himself for it. An anecdote is related of him, that even when employed at his trade, and blowing the bellows with one hand, with a bit of chalk in the other, he wrote out the declensions on the fire-board of his forge. Mr. Stone, the clergyman of his parish, perceiving his serious turn of mind, kindly took him to live with him, and brought him up for the ministry.

After the independence of our North American colonies, it became necessary to form a fresh penal settlement, and New South Wales was selected. When the first fleet was on the point of sailing to commence the colony, the Minister of the day was waited upon by two philanthropic men, who pointed out the duty of sending a clergyman also. He laughed at the idea of any benefit being derived by such a set of abandoned wretches, and inquired what clergyman would be persuaded to take such a duty upon him? Eventually the Rev. R. Johnson accompanied the party. He was, however, soon discouraged by the fearful state of depravity which prevailed in the infant colony, and returned home. Mr. Marsden was next selected, and sent out. His com-

mission was dated January 1st, 1793. Possessing a great degree of firmness and determination, combined with plain good sense and fervent piety, he was admirably fitted for the arduous duty he had accepted.

To strangers his look and manners were not prepossessing. There was an unpleasant degree of sternness in his countenance; but the peculiar circumstances of his position doubtless impressed his unflinching firmness on his face. Few can form a just idea of the dreadful state of depravity which prevailed amongst all ranks in the early days of the colony. Two instances may here be given, as showing the necessity of severe firmness in the minister, and a key to the cause of the bitter enmity he experienced from those in power. At the commencement of the colony the sale of all spirits was monopolised by the officials, and it was the endeavouring to do away with this practice which afterwards caused the deposition of Governor Bligh. When vessels with female convicts arrived, they likewise took in turn the selection of the fairest of them as companions, and not only was this generally done, but it was winked at by the highest authorities, and these females, as well as their partners, were actually admitted to Government House.

Mr. Marsden very properly would not sit at table with them, or sanction their conduct by his presence, and thus, by declining the invitations on such occasions, and plainly stating his reasons for doing so, the bitter hostility of the Governor and his officers was excited against him. Public records were falsified, and such representations sent Home as called for a searching inquiry into the chaplain's conduct. The result of this was that the Governor received a command to make known to the reverend gentleman, not only