



*The town's most impressive landmark.*

"Come inside," she said. "Come inside quickly and wipe your feet." The party of a dozen or so sightseers filed through the door careful to obey instructions. We stood in a little room from one corner of which a narrow staircase wound to the other floor. The walls were hung with oil paintings and water-colours, and the furniture and knick-knacks were Victorian, but facing the door, below the painting of a horse's head, hung poi balls and a carved Maori box. Three doors led from the room, but before we had a chance to explore further Miss Maxwell began to tell us of the history of the house.

She told us of how the Station was started in 1838, though Archdeacon Brown had been in the locality off and on from 1834, and how he and his wife lived in rush huts until 1847, when the present house was completed. All the wooden buildings of the Mission—store, library, and chapel—were built from logs brought from as far away as Thames, because there were no forests handy to Tauranga. After being floated round the coast, the kauri

trunks had to be manhandled to the site and pit sawn on the spot. "Imagine my uncle's dismay when fire destroyed all the joinery for the new house and all the tools and seasoned timber! Eighteen months to get new tools from Home and all the work of seasoning the new timber and making the doors and windows again! Such a disappointment! It was probably at this time that he asked another station for the loan of three nails to complete an urgent job!"

In spite of this disappointment the house is a tribute to its builders. Ninety-seven years have given it the beauty of age and its timbers are as sound as the day Archdeacon Brown completed it.

"That staircase is a gem of the wood-worker's art. It was the first to be built in New Zealand and its hand-rail is carved in only two pieces. Visitors have scarcely believed it possible." It did seem difficult to imagine any one making this staircase with only the most simple tools. It was slim yet solid; dainty almost and perfectly proportioned.

We went from room to room looking at the furniture, antiques, and curios. Waterford crystal, Sheffield plate, Indian shawls, crazy-work quilts, pieces of needlework, miniatures, china; anything under a hundred years old seemed young. Some of the items were well into their second century, while the family silver was said to be five hundred years old.

In the living-room we saw a table at which, Miss Maxwell told us, some of the officers of the British troops stationed at Tauranga sat down to dinner the night before the Gate Pa fight. "Of those guests," she said, "one alone survived the next day's battle."

Only a mile or two from the centre of the town the road dives through a small cutting, and on the left is a park in the concrete gates of which are embedded old muskets and bayonets. A notice tells you that this was the site of the Gate Pa battle. To the right a little church crowns the crest of the low hill, and in its grounds are trenches filled now with long grass and lilies. From these trenches the Natives repelled the British regulars in 1864.