

LETTER FROM NEW ZEALAND.

The following letter has been received from Brother Heber Cutler, who is now on a mission in New Zealand. It has been handed to us by his relatives and we gladly reproduce it in these columns:

WHANGAROA, Bay of Islands. New Zealand, November 11, 1890.—I again take the pleasure of penning a few lines to acquaint you with the various circumstances that have transpired in my missionary experience since last I wrote.

Perhaps a short description of my present surroundings will be of interest. We are located at a stock ranch about half way along what is known as the Ninety-Mile Beach, on the west coast of New Zealand, and about seventy-five miles from the extreme north end of the island. We are in an old tumble-down house used by the ranchmen, who have kindly afforded us shelter for the night, and close to the ocean.

At the time of writing my last letter we were just starting for the lower end of our district where we duly arrived. We found the Saints pursuing the even tenor of their way. We found a postal card from Brother Nye, notifying us that President Bingham had arrived in his district, and that he would like to meet us in the next district on the 28th of October, to plan for a trip up north. The place of meeting is about twenty miles from where we were staying. On the morning of the above date we saddled up and rode over to the meeting place, arriving there about 4 o'clock. We were met by Brother Hixson, who told us that Brothers Bingham and Nye had been called away, but would return on the morrow. We made ourselves comfortable with the natives, holding our evening meeting and engaged in such other conversation as is usual with the Maories. The following day Brothers Bingham and Nye returned.

During that evening, after talking over the affairs of the mission, we made arrangements for the trip north. Leaving my companion with Brother Nye, Brother Brigham, Nye and myself started the following day, October 30th. As the journey was quite a long one, it was necessary to have good horses, so my companions borrowed two from the natives, while I used one that I had recently bought. We were well equipped with blankets, rain coats, book sacks, etc. Leaving the little village, we took a trail leading across a somewhat rugged country, over hills and through small valleys.

About noon we rode past a large crater, whose eruption in past ages must have been very great the ground for some miles around being covered with lava. In fact the whole country around seems to be a complete chain of volcanic mountains.

Proceeding further, we reached a little valley where a stock sale was going on. The people for miles around, both Europeans and Maories, bring their cattle, horses, sheep, etc., to this point once a month and a great sale by auction takes place. It put me in mind of our old English market day.

We rode down this valley for some distance, passing through a greasy lane lined with shade trees and shrubbery for about three miles; then we take to the hills again, and in the distance,

situated upon one of the large elevations, we see the smoke arising from the chimney of a large frame building owned by a small tribe of natives. As we propose staying there for the night we turn our horses in that direction and in a little over an hour have dismounted and are saying greetings to the natives, who bid us welcome to their Maori home. The house is situated on one of the most fertile spots of the surrounding country and the natives, for many miles around, come here to plant their crop of potatoes.

This gathering is, indeed, a very merry one. All hands join in the labor—men, women and children. The heavy labor, such as preparing the soil, falls to the men, while the sowing is done by the women and boys and girls. The younger children cut and carry the seed to those that plant. Many hands make light work, and the mirth and jollity that are engaged in make these plantings one of the most enjoyable meetings they have. The planting was just over when we arrived at the village and the natives had returned to their several homes. There are some twenty or twenty-five remaining who live at the house where we were staying. The place formerly occupied by them was a regular rush hut but owing to their chief having died therein, some few months ago, it was burned, a custom always adhered to by this people, who will no longer reside in a house where one of their number has passed away. This lumber house has been recently built and is about 25 feet by 40. The people have no furniture; a few mats, upon which to sit or lie down being all they need. In one side of the house is a large chimney about 8 feet by 10, built after the pattern of those used by the Europeans of this country. This is not only used as a place to do the cooking, but reserved for the chief, as it is considered to be the most desirable location for his bed during the cold weather. These chimneys have a little door on one side, which serves as a means of ventilation and also as a convenient exit to the rear part of the house. It makes no difference to our reception whether the Saints are at home or not, as the outsiders here treat us just as kindly.

About an hour after our arrival we were called to supper and all sit upon the mats spread on the ground floor. The natives gathered around two large pans filled with potatoes and eels. As usual we were provided with a pan to ourselves. Feeling rather hungry after our ride, we dived into the dish and ate our frugal meal with as much relish as though we had been born and reared Maoris. In fact, our success as Maori missionaries depends somewhat upon our ability to eat the food provided, so the natives say, as they declare that unless a person "is strong for food he will not be strong to acquire their language." If this were the case I am sure I have eaten enough already to acquire half a dozen languages. After supper we had prayer, and then a conversation took place on religion between the natives and Brother Nye. Bed-time having arrived, we made preparations to retire. All down one side of the house are spread mats upon rushes, and the natives showed us a spot about the centre of the room where a few extra-rushes have been thrown to render it a little

softer. Here we made our bed while the natives slept close by on either side. All being ready, the next feat is to get into bed. But having become accustomed to "the business," we "slide in" without causing any unusual commotion. The novelty of the situation did not prevent us from going to sleep.

We arose next morning at 6 o'clock, and after a welcome wash in one of the cool streams with which this country abounds, we spent an hour or so in reading, then had prayer, a breakfast of potatoes and bread following. Soon after this our horses were brought from the paddock (field) where they have been grazing. Grass alone comprises the only food of Maori horses, grain being an expensive luxury. In fact Maori horses would not eat grain if they had the chance, their appetites never having been "cultivated" in that direction.

Our road that morning led us over a more level country occupied by about a dozen European families, who have erected a neat little church and school house. A noteworthy feature and one for which the people of this country deserve considerable praise is this: that wherever there are children to the number of twenty, a school is established by the government and a suitable teacher provided.

At noon we stopped by a small brook and let our horses feed, while we partook of a lunch of crackers and dates bought at an inn by the roadside.

During the afternoon we traveled some eighteen miles further and arrived at a Maori village situated on the banks of a tidal river over which we had to cross before reaching the houses. This river is one of the plagues of our lives as it nearly always happens that we arrive at this point when the tide is full, and we have either to swim our horses or wait till the tide goes out, which not unfrequently keeps us till after dark, making the trip a most disagreeable one, especially in winter, when we are compelled to stay out in the rain. The tide was low on this occasion and we crossed over without any difficulty. We then went to a house where lives one of our Saints, a woman, her husband being a missionary, and he was not very well disposed towards us. We applied to him for permission to remain, and after a little talk we obtained his consent. The woman did all she could to make us comfortable. During the evening we held prayer and had some little conversation with the husband, who listened with indifference to what we said; but Brother Bingham bore a strong testimony to him of the truth of the Gospel. We had supper of potatoes and beef, and then retired, having a "cat tail bed" to lie upon.

After the usual exercises next morning we started by 8 o'clock, calling on the balance of the natives to say greetings as we passed through the village. We rode over a rough country during the day and arrived at a canyon about 3 o'clock, through which we passed, crossing on our way a river some twenty-one times. We also rode some distance through a dense forest, the trees and brush being so thick that it was almost impossible to follow the trail. As we emerged from the forest we came into a valley where a branch of Saints are located.