

LETTER FROM NEW ZEALAND.

PALMERSTON NORTH, New Zealand, Sept. 6th, 1892.—At this season of the year, our friends in Zion usually seek cold mountain retreats, and, while many are rusticating on the hills enjoying their midsummer holidays, the people of the Southern hemisphere are protecting themselves against the storms of winter. Boomers assure us that, in New Zealand, "there are no extremes of heat and cold, as compared with other countries." Certainly, the forests are ever green, cattle graze on the hills or in the pastures all the year round, flowers bloom in the gardens, and frosts are not severe enough to destroy vegetables. But this does not make it a paradise. Rain, rain, rain is the order of the day, and a Mormon missionary has many opportunities of testing its searching qualities. After facing a "tonga," or cold south wind and rain storm all day, we are convinced that the cold frosty breezes of "our mountain home" are preferable. The damp, cold atmosphere is chilling and disagreeable as compared with our bracing and invigorating northern winds.

We are looking forward to an early spring, and farmers are commencing to plow and put in crops.

The work of the Lord is still progressing in this part of His vineyard, though it is principally among the Maoris. We have a good branch of the Church at Rotoatane, near Palmerston North, and also a number of European members in the vicinity. We have held a number of cottage meetings recently, and our congregations have been quite interested. Of course, we do not meet with the opposition or ill-usage which our Elders experience in some countries, but still the enemy is alert, and striving to counteract the work.

An Episcopal minister ventured to attend one of our Maori meetings a few weeks ago, and listened attentively while the Elders explained the principles of life and salvation. At the close of the meeting, he asked the privilege of addressing the Maori's, which was readily granted. He endeavored to controvert our doctrines, but our Maori brethren soon took the matter in hand, and discussed the principles of the Gospel with him, and soon confounded him by presenting the truth, with scriptural proofs. He was glad to retire repressed, carrying with him many testimonies, as food for reflection. The Maoris needed no help from the traveling Elders, as many of them are living compendiums.

We often find instances of the old spirit of intolerance and bigotry among those who profess to be ministers of Christ. A visit was paid, a short time ago, to a lady who had been investigating our doctrine, and we were amused to learn that she had been convinced in a peculiar way that Mormonism was true. An evangelist or revival minister had visited the town, and called at her residence while making house to house visits. The reverend gentleman in smooth, bland tones, assured the lady that he was not proselyting, but was seeking persons who were not church members, for "in heaven there were many Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, etc." "Are there Mormons in heaven?"

queried his listener. At once the reverend gentleman's countenance changed as he indignantly replied, "Decidedly not, madam;" and then followed the usual abuse of a people, of whom he afterwards acknowledged he was ignorant. He convinced the lady that he did not possess the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus, and she is now ready for baptism.

There are a number of small towns in the northern part of Manawatu district, including Palmerston North, Foxton, etc. Palmerston North is the chief town, and the railroad lines to various parts of the island radiate from this point. The borough comprises an area of 4800 acres, and is laid out in a natural level clearing. Usually the country is covered with heavy brush and timber, and this has to be cleared off to prepare the land for cultivation. The brush is rapidly disappearing in this vicinity, and small farms are now under cultivation in all directions. The town is laid off to good advantage, a large square being reserved in the centre, around which are the main business blocks. It contains a very enterprising class of citizens, and will undoubtedly rank as one of the foremost inland towns of New Zealand. Arbor Day was observed this year, and a large number of trees were planted, which will tend to beautify the town. The chief industry is sheep and cattle raising, and public auction sales of horses occur weekly. A familiar figure on the streets is the Texas cowboy, as a company have located here, and are engaged training horses and conducting a livery stable. The population of Palmerston North is about four thousand, but it is rapidly increasing.

Foxton is a small town situated on the Manawatu river. It possesses an excellent wharf, and has fine shipping facilities, as the river will permit small steamers and sailing vessels to enter, which trade regularly between Foxton and Wellington in the south. Considerable flax is prepared for shipment in this vicinity, and there are many flax mills constantly at work.

Manawatu Gorge has always been a point of interest to tourists. Here the Manawatu river flows between two mountain ranges—the Tararua and Ruahine. The gorge is the boundary line of the two provincial districts of Wellington and Hawkes Bay. The scenery on the Manawatu side is very picturesque. The railroad is constructed on tortuous side-cuttings, and at times appears to be winding along the edge of a precipice. At the bottom of the yawning chasm the river may be seen flowing at one moment like a silvery stream and the next dashing and breaking over massive boulders. The mountains are covered with forest trees and dense brush. An immense land-slide occurred recently which destroyed a section of the railroad track, and as our train rushed through the gorge and over the new-made road it appeared as though half the mountain had fallen away.

The Hawkes Bay conference or Hui was held at Tamaki, near Danevirke, on the 3rd and 4th of September. The Maori "pa," or settlement, is situated in an open flat, and on every side is dense brush, or forest land. It is situated near the railroad station, and on Thursday, Sept. 1st, a carriage load of

visiting Saints from Manawatu district, alighted from the train and received an enthusiastic welcome. The conference was held in a large Maori whare, 100 feet long. The windows were draped with lace curtains, and the walls were elaborately decorated in true Maori style. Chandeliers were suspended from the ceiling, and, at one end, a large stained-glass door and mirrors contributed to its comfortable and home-like appearance. Large tables were spread with the bounties of life, and beautifully adorned with large vases of flowers.

A Maori "Hui" may fitly be termed "a feast of fat things." No expense is spared in providing for the comfort of all comers, and many attend who do not regard the religious services as the most attractive feature. However, many outsiders are induced to attend by this means, and an opportunity is furnished for preaching the Gospel to them, and applications for baptism often follow.

On Saturday, September 3rd, the Hawkes Bay conference was called to order by Elder John G. Kelson, president of the district. The following Elders from Zion were present: Elders W. Douglass and T. L. Cox, of Hawkes Bay district; Elder Wesley Gibson, from Wairarapa district, and Elders P. P. Thomas and B. Goddard, from Manawatu district. There are seven branches in the district, and most of these were reported in a good condition by the presidents. Elder Kelson greeted the Saints, expressing his pleasure in meeting so many of the members, and heartily welcomed the many visitors from Manawatu district. Elders Thomas and Douglass and several native Elders also addressed words of encouragement to the people, exhorting them to faithfulness. A priesthood meeting was held in the evening, and instructions were given on the duties of those holding the holy priesthood. The first Sunday in the month is observed as fast day, and the second day of conference was, therefore, so regarded. The Sacrament on such days is administered during the forenoon meeting. After Sacrament Elder Cox addressed the Saints, and referred to his early experiences and explained the first principles of the Gospel. In the afternoon about fifty Europeans were present, and the apostasy of the primitive church and the restoration of the Gospel was treated upon by Elder Goddard. A testimony meeting was held in the evening. Elder Gibson addressed the people and afterwards Saints bore their testimonies, and the meeting continued until midnight. The following day five persons applied for baptism.

On Tuesday a scene occurred characteristic of Maoridom. After morning "Karakia," or prayer, one of the rangatiras (or chiefs), suggested the marriage of a young couple, who had met for the first time during conference. In olden times children were often betrothed by their parents, and marriages were seldom solemnized without consulting the whole tribe. Often a whole day and night is spent discussing the subject in order that the tribe may unanimously agree upon it. On the occasion referred to all forenoon was spent in arranging the union, and though the young couple