OUR ANTIPODEAN LETTER.

New Zealand Has Boomers, Land Courts and Texas Cowboys.

SUCCESSFUL WORK OF THE ELDERS.

"Plansie" Writes Entertainingly of Native Customs.—A Maori Feast and Wedding.—Noise.

[Special Correspondence of the NEWS.]

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 ruminating on the bills enjoying their midsummer holidays, the people of the Southern hemisphere are patrolling themselves against the storm of winter. Bonnies assure us that, in New Zealand, "there are no extremes of heat and cold, as compared with other countries." Certainly, the breeze are ever green, cattle graze on the hills or in the pastures all the year round, flowers bloom in the gardens, and fruits 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 taking a "soaking," as cold south winds and rain storm all day, we are convinced that the cold frosty breezes of "our mountain home" are preferable. The dampy, cold atmosphere is chilling and disagreeable as compared with our freezing and invigorating northern winds.

We are looking forward to an early spring, and farmers are commencing to plow and yet 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 Rotokawa, near Palmerston North, and also a number of European members in the vicinity. We have held a number of conferences recently, and our congregations have been quite interested. Of course, we do not meet with the opposition so frequently which our Elders experience in some countries, but still the enemy is alert, and striving to retard the work.

An Elder and myself ventured to attend one of our Maori meetings 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 Maoris, which was readily granted. He endeavored to contrast our doctrine, and 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 respectfully, 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 doctrines, and we were amused to learn that she had been convinced in a peculiar way that Mormonism was true. An evangelical revival minister had visited the town, and called at her residence while making house to house visits. The reverend gentleman in question had times, assured the lady that he was not proselyting, but was seeking persons who were not church members, for "he believed 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 otherwise 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 4,000 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 out to great advantage, a large square being reserved in the centre, around which are the public business blocks. It contains a very enterprising class of citizens, and will undoubtedly rank as one of the foremost inland towns of New Zealand. A Chorley 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 to 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. After the Manawatu river flows between the mountain ranges—the Tararua and Ruahine. The gorge is the boundary line of the two provinces—the Seas of Wellington and Hawkes Bay. The scenery on the Manawatu side is very picturesque. The railroad is constructed on terraces cut in the rock, 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 the moment like a livery stream and the rest dashing and breaking over massive boulders. The mountains are covered with fine timber and dense bush. An immense landslide occurred recently which destroyed a section of the railroad track, and as our train rushed through the gorge and over the new track I saw many men at work to clear half the mountain had fallen away.

The Hawkes Bay conference of 1891 was held at Takapau, near Dannevirke, on the 3rd and 4th of September. The Maori "pa," or settlement, is situated in an open flat, and on every side is dense bush, or forest land. It is situated near the Takapau station, and on Thursday, Sept. 1st, a carriage load of visiting saints from Manawatu disembarked from the train and received an enthusiastic welcome. The conference was held in a large Maori whare, 100 feet long. The whanau were draped with new curtains, and the walls were also nicely decorated in the Maori style. Chandeliers were suspended from the ceiling, and attached a large cotton-glass door and windows, rendered the place cheerful and home-like appearance. Large tables were spread with the bounties of life, and beautifully adorned with large vases of flowers.

A Maori "feast" may fully be termed a feast of fat things. It's expense is spared in providing for the comfort of all comers, and the only Elder who did not regard the religious exercises as the most attractive feature. However, many ministers are induced to attend by this means, and an opportunity is furnished for preaching the Gospel to them, and application for baptism follows.

On Saturday, September 3rd, the Hawkes bay conference was called to order by Elder John G. Nelson, 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 Waikato district, and Elders F. P. Thomas and J. Goddard, from Manawatu district. There are seven branches in the district, and reports from them were received in good condition by the president. Elder Nelson 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 concerning the duties of home teachers, and the necessity of honor being the holy priesthood. The first Sunday in the month is observed as fast day, and the second day of conference was, therefore, a repetition. The Sacrament on each days is administered during the afternoon meeting. After Sacrament Elder Cox addressed the Saints, and related to his early experiences and explained the first principles of the Gospel. In the afternoon about fifty Europeans were present, and the apostacy 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 Douglass 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), accosted 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 people were present no expression of opinion was required from them as the elder's claim jurisdiction in such matters. It was finally decided that they should be married, the ceremony to take place in the evening. During the afternoon "karakia," or prayer, Elder Nelson addressed the Saints on the subject of marriage and the importance of observing the law of chastity, etc. The bridegroom and bride then came forward and were united in the bonds of holy matrimony in the usual manner. Afterwards the friends and relatives greeted the newly married couple and danced over the celebration of the nuptials. The company then enjoyed a social time.

Land matters receive considerable attention in this country, as all the land originally was claimed by the native tribes collectively. Land courts now are organized to grant the land to individual claimants. The Maoris own 10,000,000 acres of land in the North Island, two-fifths of which is agricultural, and the rest grazing land. A considerable portion of it is covered with dense timber or brush, and is quite mountainous. The government has control of all the land courts and the Maoris complain of the heavy assessments and taxes levied upon their lands. Land is often taxed to Europeans, and, in many cases, the assessment exceeds the rental. In order to remedy this evil, the Maoris are organizing what is termed a Maori parliament, and petitioning the government to grant them absolute control of their own land affairs. Hapiata Mangakahia, an educated native lawyer, is leader. He is one of the chief members of the Church, and was present at our conference. He stated that about 25,000 Maoris had signed the agreement and petition for said parliament, and that the object was to control the management and sale of the land, also to encourage the cultivation of it and to locate and build towns after the European style. The proposition is receiving the support of prominent settlers, and it may probably emancipate the Maoris to be more industrious and energetic.

The News is always a welcome visitor in this well-loved land and we are all interested in the progress of affairs in Zion. Even political questions are not overlooked and Cleveland and Harrison men are sometimes met with who would be glad to cheer for your respective candidates.

We are gratified to notice the increased demand for justice to Utah and that so many now acknowledge the loyalty of her citizens.

The following literary gem, received from a "Mormon" friend, contains sentiments which may convince some of our sceptical opponents that there are as loyal hearts in our mountain valleys as can be found in Uncle Sam's domains.

PLANSIE.

Our Nation's Natal Day.

Lines addressed to "Plansie," written on occasion of the Fourth of July, 1892.

We stand and watch her street swaying
From the loyally scattered fires,
And her stars vie with the glowing
Rose of hard pressed sunset
While the shell soars in the azure
Then, circled in flame,
Fans the wind gaining
Some spot on the mirror fair.

Then the rye grass are paling
Beneath spring, "the a-tore"
"Old ten thousand thousand stormed!"
Here from a thousand range,
Like to oceanic lightly roar—
Forever and a second silence
Then the wonders shall be no more.

In the sand, the dust, in our children,
Where the earth cries, but sounds,
In the sun is easy as cleanly
And God's humanity has to
Know to know ever so far,
Year we can to remember Love,
To remove the gone that separate
Freedom's fire consumed cover.

For and which is hard on nations,
And a nation's sacrifice years,
Rose responsible into years,
Where all nature with her part
Like a rock of ship thunderous
Is shed to Creation's night.
But hope cries the vers forever
And hell rose a lower city.

The tomb, the home, and with fear thunder
Like a vast sacrifice were,
Shake a home too with gladness
For the homes of the tomb,
Hurl and repeat it immortal reason
In a million this to cries
Emblem of our strength and union,
Of home, God upon earth.

Hail the birth of God's redeeming
Hail the cause the same day,
Planted with humanity of man, and brother,
Time and life, so let to stand
Love to love each man the cause
Of the country's redeemed lay—
Brother forest, pine and oak,
Sound and dance and shake.

Hail, redeeming, my soul hail, hound
And hail, hail the same refrain,
The open heaven sang by Freedom
Into the world, we hail and shake,
Hail, hail, hail, hail, hail, hail,
Hail, hail, hail, hail, hail, hail,
Hail, hail, hail, hail, hail, hail