

CORRESPONDENCE.

Written for this Paper.

EXPERIENCES OF A MISSIONARY.

PORIRUA, New Zealand, Feb. 21, 1894.—Elders of Israel have a varied experience while engaged in spreading the revealed truths of the Gospel of Christ amongst the children of men, and probably a few jottings from personal experiences may interest some of the Saints in Zion.

Thousands of missionaries, who have returned to their homes after performing their duties faithfully in the vineyard of the Lord, can testify to the seasons of rejoicing experienced while engaged in leading souls to a knowledge of the true and living God. And yet, 'twas not always sunshine. No pen can fully portray the deep anxiety and anguish of spirit in which many of these zealous ambassadors have sought the throne of grace and pleaded for the divine blessing to sanctify their feeble efforts.

How often the messenger of salvation has reflected upon Paul's exhortation, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God giveth the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Occasionally members are gathered into the fold here who first heard the truth preached in their native lands.

It is evident that often seeds sown broadcast, a humble testimony perhaps of an earnest Elder who yearned to see the fruits of his labors, fall into good ground and are afterwards quickened by the Spirit of God. A new member recently stated that she had experienced no peace of mind for nearly fifteen years, until she again met an Elder of the Church. She could never forget the truths which she first heard in old England, though more than twenty years had elapsed before she was again privileged to listen to a Mormon sermon.

May not these appropriately be termed

Seeds that live and grow and flourish, when the sower's hand is cold.

Seeds by idle hearts forgotten, flung at random on the air;

Seeds by faithful souls remembered, sown in tears and love and prayer.

The sowers are not always permitted to see the harvest. Many have passed to the "great beyond" to await "the angel's shout of harvest home," while others remain who are now dead to the work of the Lord. The fruits of the testimonies are seen when some of the testators have apparently forgotten them. The leaven of the Gospel, however, undoubtedly remains in the hearts of many who are now outside the fold. Some time ago an evidence of this was observed in one of the most populous cities of New Zealand.

In a singular manner, acquaintance was formed with a family who always extended a cordial welcome to the Mormon Elder. In subsequent conversations, it was learned that the gentleman was baptized and became a member of the Church in 1848. Nearly ten years were spent in the missionary field, and reminiscences of the past were reviewed with mutual

pleasure. Time had not obliterated the record of earnest work, carefully journalised over forty years ago. An honorable release, signed by President George Q. Cannon, is still sacredly preserved. The recollections of travels to Zion, associations in the city of the Saints, trials and disappointments were all dwelt upon. Subsequent wanderings in other lands, for twenty-five years, had not erased this eventful page from life's history and many queries made with regard to the condition of Utah: "How is William Jennings, Bishop Sharp, Daniel H. Wells and others? What became of some who fell away and who fought the Saints?"

These and many other questions were asked and answered, and the conversations recently culminated in a testimony to the truth of the Gospel message, and the frank admission "the happiest moments of my life were spent in associating with the Latter-day Saints in Zion." Neither the hand nor the heart of the sower is cold, and earnest prayers are now offered that the wanderer may return and again be privileged to rejoice in Zion with those whom he led into the fold.

A prolonged conversation, on one occasion, caused the Elder to miss the train, and he therefore wandered in the streets of the city, waiting for the midnight train to convey him to his Maori home. It was Saturday evening. A typical English "Saturday meet." Colonists rigidly adhere to the customs observed in the old country. The streets were crowded with visitors from the country suburbs, most of whom strolled listlessly along gazing in shop windows, or standing on the corners listening to quacks and vendors.

The Salvation lasses attracted a large crowd with their tambourines and songs and after a few minutes of exhortation, the rest of the evening was spent in singing and begging, their success evidently being gauged by the "brownies" (pennies) cast into the ring. On various street corners preachers addressed passing crowds, but none would remain to listen and reflect. The sonorous and melancholy tones of an exhorter attracted the visitor's attention to a small company in a side street. They were Plymouth Brethren, one of whom was commenting on the doom of the wicked. He pictured the sectarian hell in vivid colors. The scorching fires of a never-ending eternity were described with almost terrifying effect, and Boston, in his "Fourfold State," feebly describes it when he talks of "God holding up the wicked in one hand and tormenting them with the other." A vendor of summer drinks, etc., near by, apparently sought to soothe the tortured feelings of these believers in imaginative horrors by occasionally shouting "ice cream."

A few weeks ago, during an interview with an intelligent lady member of this sect, the writer was surprised to learn that she was born in Salt Lake City, and was raised to womanhood by

faithful Latter-day Saints. Though baptized at eight years of age, and re-baptized subsequently, she had no conception of the Gospel as revealed in the latter days. Claiming to be in a "saved condition through the finished work of Christ," she manifested much anxiety respecting the spiritual welfare of her Mormon parents and relatives. About five hours were spent in searching the Word of God to ascertain the true plan of life and salvation. The lady's forcible declaration, "I know my parents are not saved, for they never taught me the Word of God," contains a pointed lesson for every father and mother in Zion.

If the statement be true it is sad to reflect that Elders should travel seven thousand miles to teach the children of Latter-day Saints principles that they should have been familiar with from childhood.

After the foregoing interview Zion's representative returned and spent the evening with his Maori brethren and sisters.

During a previous visit to this "pah" an earnest soldier of the Salvation army attended the Sabbath service. His badge (a large brass letter S fastened on his coat) indicated his position, and after Sunday school his Bible was produced and an interesting conversation took place, which continued until late in the evening, interrupted only by the afternoon service. The following Sunday the "attack" was resumed, and the discussion of Gospel principles was earnestly listened to, and both parties manifested a kindly spirit. Several months elapsed before this earnest "army" man was heard of again. Returning from a conference in an adjacent district, the Elder stayed at the house of an intelligent young Maori, who informed him that he had been debating "Mormonism" with an "army man" who was working in the vicinity, and that he stated he had previously met Elder _____. Of course, the Maori claimed to have vanquished the "Pakeha."

The next encounter occurred nearly one hundred miles from the first scene. Another Elder had the privilege of continuing the labor with the young man. Again the meeting took place at a Maori "pah." After a long evening's research and discussion, a request was made for another meeting, the subject of conversation to be the Book of Mormon. The request was readily assented to, and it was soon evident that one of the debaters had become a sincere investigator. After examining the prophecies, etc., for several hours, the Elder was surprised and perplexed at his Army friend's query, "Have you got a pocket knife?" Wondering what a knife had to do with such an important scriptural subject, the article was produced. Immediately the young man cut the brass "S" off his coat, and having disposed of his "Salvation" badge, he declared himself ready for baptism. The ordinance was attended to the following day, and soon after the young convert commenced distributing tracts and defending the principles of the Gospel in an adjacent town.

In a previous letter to the NEWS, a brief reference was made to the European meeting, at which a Christadelphian minister endeavored to controvert the doctrines taught.