

to keep it alive among their people during the dark days when the missions were bereft of any priests except the devoted Dr. McDonald and, for a space, one or two others. One of the speakers said: 'Three Bishops came here to us—one (Dr. Pompallier) on foot, one (Dr. Viard) on a horse; and one (Dr. Cleary) on a motor car.' Father Becker also spoke, and Father Bruning gave an entertaining account of the Bishop's motor trip to Houhora and the far North, which interested the bearers in the highest degree. His Lordship replied in Maori to the speeches of welcome.

Next morning (Sunday, January 31) the Bishop celebrated the principal Mass at 10 o'clock in the pretty church. Nearly two hundred persons were present, including a few non-Catholics. The proportion of children is very high among the Catholic Maoris at Whangape, and their numbers are steadily increasing. A lucid and 'taking' explanation of the Sacrament of Confirmation was given in Maori by Father Bruning. A considerable number of both sexes were confirmed after Mass. During the day the Bishop went over the earthworks and *wahi tapu* (cemetery) of the old *pa*, accompanied by Mr. McMath, who gave an interesting account of that and another old fortified place of the tribe on a steep conical hill just across the river, which was the scene of some heavy Native fighting as late as the 'fifties. In the oldest cemetery, where Mr. McMath's grandfather lies buried, there still remain some of the miniature houses where the dead were enclosed before underground interment was generally adopted here. One Catholic interment of this kind (coffined) was conducted here some twenty years ago. It is the Maori counterpart of the shelved vaults that were formerly fairly common in the British Isles. The contents of those receptacles for the dead were removed a good many years ago and consigned to regular earth-burial.

Some two hundred Natives sat on the ground in long double lines to discuss the generous supply of eatables, fresh from the fierce steam of the Maori *hangi* or hot-stone oven. These provisions were placed, in characteristic Native profusion, on a lengthy strip of neat Native floor matting made from the *phormium tenax*, better known by its wrong name of 'flax.' During the afternoon two fine Native (clothing) mats (one of them a feather mat) were presented to the Bishop, who suitably replied in Maori. Questions were also asked and satisfactorily answered regarding the work of revision of the Maori prayer book and catechism, now in hand.

Matihetihe.

Whangape is one of the most isolated communities in New Zealand. The entrance by sea is over a bad bar, then past a big black rock, after which the river channel takes an almost right-angled turn towards the south, leaving the vessel broadside on to the waves: next the incoming craft sharply rounds another menacing rock to the left, while near it there lies the storm-tossed relic of a former wreck to encourage the hardy navigator. While the Bishop was in Whangape, there was a local dearth of flour, soap, matches, and tobacco, and the settlers were endeavoring to get supplies of these commodities by pack-horses over the wild mountain tracks from the Hokianga.

On Monday, February 1, the Bishop, accompanied by Fathers Bruning and Zangerl, a small cavalcade of Whangape Natives, and Mr. Heremia Te Wake (Whakarapa) toiled on horseback up the breakneck 'Golden Stairs' that lead towards the Catholic village of Matihetihe, on the crest. The narrow track is terribly steep and crooked, and would be very dangerous to any horses but those accustomed (as were all the present party's mounts) to such uncivilised 'road' conditions as those with which, after some sixty years of settlement, the wealth-producers of these promising districts have to be content. For the greater part of its course, this pig-track runs along the *arite* or back-bone of a steep hill, where a false step, or a slip, or a heavy gust of wind, would send horse and rider rolling over

and over for hundreds of feet to the white foaming edge of the salt water far below. In the winter the track is a greasy clay puddle, down which the sure-footed local horses sometimes slip, guiding themselves as they go, till they fetch up against a piece of rock or stump or tree-root.

The distance from Whangape to Matihetihe is eight reputed miles. But they seem to give pretty good measure in these parts; for it took three hours to traverse the distance, and the Bishop remarked that the Whangape mile is like an Irish mile—you know where it begins, but heaven alone knows where it ends. Part of the trip was over rocks so tumbled and rugged and steep, that all the riders but one dismounted and led their mounts slowly over them. The exception was a Maori youth. He stuck to his horse as the nimble brute scrambled up and bumped and slithered down the torn and rugged rocks, in apparently imminent risk of many a crashing fall.

At Matihetihe the visitors were greeted with an imitation of the old-time Maori challenge. Far inside the fence of the Marae or village enclosure the population were gathered together, most of the adults ready for the war-dance, all with feathers in their hair, and many with old-time weapons, such as the *taiaha*, etc. From among them came the challenger, with painted face, grotesque grimaces, protruding tongue and cries of defiance. He was selected for his swiftness of foot. Outside the enclosure there awaited him the rival champion. The challenger threw a white wand at the rival. This was a signal for a wild race between the two. If the rival champion, in the old time, caught the challenger, he was entitled to break the latter's neck; his side were, so far victors, and the fight might not, perhaps, proceed any further. If the challenged party's runner failed to make a 'catch,' the victory so far rested with what we may call the home team. In the present instance (perhaps out of compliment to the visitors) the incomers were allowed to catch their man. But, of course, no harm befell him. After this curtain-raiser, a fine war-haka was danced. Afterwards, the formal *karanga* of welcome took place outside the church, the Bishop and priests standing on mats spread under nikau palms. The Bishop replied in Maori, in figures of speech which appeared to be much appreciated by hearers always keen to hear new terms of thought or of expression. That night the Bishop and the clergy were guests of the Kendall family.

The next morning the Bishop celebrated Mass at 9 o'clock. This was followed by a fine discourse in Maori, by Father Bruning, on the Sacrament of Confirmation. At Whangape, Matihetihe, Whirinaki, Motutu, Motukaraka, Waihou, and Whakarapa, Father Bruning spoke also, with much eloquence and effect, on various other matters affecting Native Catholics. There was a good number of candidates for Confirmation at Matihetihe.

An elaborate and finely-cooked open-air dinner was served in European fashion by the Natives. The table reserved for the Bishop and priests was set under a bower, erected for the occasion, and covered on all sides and above with the long, graceful fronds of the nikau palm. Beyond it stretched a single row of long tables, set under the shade of open nikau palms, carried from the gullies up the adjoining hills and planted on the village *marae* as if they had grown there. A new church is soon to be erected at Matihetihe to replace the quaint old one, built long years ago, its inner walls and roof adorned, in the Native fashion, with neat-looking, but highly inflammable stems of the *raupo*, a sort of big bulrush.

After the farewell words were spoken the Bishop, Father Bruning, and several Natives set out on fresh horses (with one pack-horse) along the beach and over the barren sandhills on a visit to the various Catholic missions on the Hokianga River and its tributaries. But that is another story which remains to be told.

Dr. J. J. GRESHAM

PAINLESS DENTISTRY

MAIN STREET, GORE

: N.Z. TABLET :
Present this Coupon and get
5 per cent. discount