

BISHOP CLEARY ON VISITATION

ON THE HORSE-TRAIL.

(From an occasional correspondent.)

Hokianga, February 8.

From Ahipara, his Lordship the Bishop of Auckland had arranged for a visit to what is known as the Sweetwater gumfields. The direct objective was that part of it known as Sobrisky's, which was most conveniently situated as a centre for a gathering of Catholics.

The track was hardly suited even for the strenuous motoring by which the Bishop established, on this trip, a number of 'records' for the North. The journey over the soft sandhills could, indeed, have been accomplished by his self-propelled vehicle, but, in such wet and stormy weather as then prevailed, only at an expenditure of trouble and of energy out of proportion to the results achieved in mere progression. It was, therefore, decided to accept the kindly help of Mr. Bernard and his buggy and pair; and he and the Bishop set out in the beating rain for Sobrisky's early on January 29. The rough and toilsome ascent of the sandhills and the other hills was achieved after some six miles of beach, and after a total drive of two and a-quarter hours the newcomers found a considerable number of Maori and Dalmatian gum-diggers assembled for Mass. Father Bruning had been preparing them since the previous evening. A Maori welcome was accorded to the Bishop, who then celebrated Mass in a gum shed. He also briefly addressed the congregation in English and Maori. There were many communicants, and after Mass a number were confirmed.

The increasing rain and a howling gale made the return trip extremely unpleasant. A fierce and blinding sand-storm blew from the soft sandhills along the beach, filled the atmosphere, stung the faces, penetrated everywhere, and twice brought the horses sharply up and nearly capsized the buggy. After a long buffetting, the party reached the hospitable roof of the Reid family at Ahipara. The same afternoon the Bishop and Father Bruning left the Ahipara beach by motor, accompanied part of the way by Mr. Bernard and Mr. Bergham, who gave valuable assistance with spade and otherwise, which enabled the Bishop to get off the beach to the main road, in fine style, on the unaided power of his own car. (Motorists may, perhaps, be interested in the following bit of information. The day after his first arrival, on his own power, on the Ahipara beach, the Bishop discovered a way which, with about two hours' work, could be negotiated to this magnificent beach by cars of moderate power. The way in question is to the left of the sandy-floored road cutting; it lies to the west of the usual horse and wheel track, in the direction of the Native *whare-hui*, or meeting-house, past some nikau palms, and along the beach-side of a fence. It leads to a part of the beach where there are only some twenty yards of fairly soft sand, which could be traversed on power or by the aid of coconutmattings, which, unless 'anchored' to the ground in the way devised by the Bishop, is crumpled up by the driving wheels and is often, in very soft sand, a delusion and a snare. His Lordship succeeded with the unanchored matting on two occasions; on the third and only other occasion on which he needed the matting—in a long tract of very deep, soft sand—the spiking or 'anchoring' of it, which was very speedily accomplished, made it almost as rigid as a board. On the hundreds of other occasions on which soft sand was passed, it was done on the car's own power, with only the aid of six chains on each driving wheel.)

Herekino and Further South.

From Ahipara to Herekino, the next stop, the trip was made in steady rain that made the narrow road—especially on the long, winding ascent and descent of the gorge—dangerously greasy. At Herekino the Bishop and Father Bruning covered up the car and 'stabled' it in an open paddock. They stayed at Mr. Gartner's boarding-house. Next day (Saturday, January 30)

they set out, in fine weather, for the isolated port-township of Whangape. The wheel-road ended some two miles past Herekino, so the car was left to rest in its paddock, while the Bishop and Father Bruning mounted on trusty steeds brought for them from Whangape by Father Zangerl and two Native youths. A pack-horse carried the visitors' necessary belongings to Whangape. For a few miles the horse-track was graded; then, over a high 'saddle' in the ranges, it became worse and worse, even for dry weather, while in winter it is in great part quite impassable.

On their way, the land kept steadily improving, with little homesteads here and there in the mountain waste of low scrub and fern, and little fertile flats planted with kumeras and maize. There must have been a considerable Maori population in these wilds in olden days. Evidence of this is afforded by the earthwork remains on several fortified hills (*pas*) and the (sometimes buried) piles of *pipi* and other shells which told of many an old-time feast. Heavy fighting is said to have taken place around one of those old hill-top *pas* as late as about 1850. Arrived at

Whangape,

the visitors found the sawmills closed for lack of water for the engines. A small steamer lay idle at the timber-wharf. Beyond the deep tidal river, on rich flats, lay the scattered Catholic village of Whangape, with its pretty, spired wooden church on a height at the back of the old fortified *pa*. The village on the North side of the river is Protestant.

At the river's edge all the horses were unsaddled or unpacked. The four Whangape horses then waded of their own accord in the river, deliberately selecting the narrowest part, and swam strongly homewards across. They were caught and held on the other side for the final run of about a mile to the village, partly over rough rocks specked over here and there with bits of copper ore. The other two horses knew not so well the ways of Whangape, so they were led astern from the ferry-boat, which carried the party and their belongings to the south side of the river. The led horses took not kindly to their enforced swim, and labored heavily and blew sudden and resounding breaths as the wavelets of the incoming tide flapped upon their nostrils.

There are over two hundred Catholic Maoris, and a few Catholic whites, in Whangape. The Maoris accorded the Bishop and his party the customary Native welcome, waving green palm-leaves or leafy branches, with loud cries of 'haeremai' ('come hither—welcome'); they also sang to a quaint old air the following ancient chant as the party entered the *marae* or enclosure of the fine new Native home (Mr. and Mrs. McMath's) where the visitors stayed: 'Haere mai ra, e te manuhiri tu a rangi, ma taku potiki kor, i tiki atu ki te taha tu o te rangi, kakume mai ai. Haeremai.' A literal translation into English cannot be supplied by the present writer. Even Father Becker, with his profound knowledge of Maori, would not attempt it. The words are all known, the construction is the puzzle. Here are a few of the principal ones: 'Welcome,' 'guest,' 'sky,' or 'heaven,' 'latest born pet,' 'pull this way,' 'welcome.' The reader can make them 'read' as best he may. The present writer 'gives it up.' A few days later, at Whirinaki, the Bishop had an opportunity of testing Father Becker's statement that Native 'explanations' of those old chants and *pas* are almost always unsatisfactory. An explanation of some old tribal sayings was asked for by the Bishop. It took over an hour for two elderly Natives to explain them. Before the 'explanations,' the sayings were a puzzle; after the 'explanations' they were a mystery as deep as the *Ælia Ælia Crispis*. After the chant, the large gathering of Natives drew up in a crescent, in the customary single file, and as the Bishop passed along the line, they shook hands with him and kissed the episcopal ring. The *Korero*, or speeches of welcome, then began—often in picturesque and happy phrase. Among the speakers were a venerable old man and woman (Peri Te Huhu and Ngawini) who had received the faith in Bishop Pompallier's time, and helped

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