

NEW ZEALAND IN BLOOMING DECEMBER.

It was midsummer—in other words, the last week of December—when we reached the shores of New Zealand, whither we had fled from Fiji and the steaming heat of stifling summer days.

We were more fortunate than we at first realized in the time of our arrival; for, being Christmas week, there was unwonted stir in the quiet city of Auckland, and crowds of Maoris, laughing girls and stalwart men, thronged the streets, this being the only season when they assemble in any number in the white man's town, drawn thither by the annual gifts which have hitherto been so freely dispensed by the English Government, in carrying out what is commonly called the sugar-and-blanket policy.

Never in our previous wanderings had we met with a colored race who could assume the broadcloth of civilization without being thereby hopelessly vulgarized; but here we found splendid fellows, who in their European clothes could scarcely be distinguished from well-bronzed whites, while some occasional touch of color, such as a brilliant scarf around the hat or thrown over the shoulders, lent something of Spanish grace to the wearer. Only on a few of the older men did the deep lines of blue tattooing over nose and cheeks appear in curious contrast with the adopted dress. On the girls, however, the arts of millinery were less successful, and hats trimmed with artificial flowers scarcely looked in keeping with the wild shock of unkempt hair, overhanging the great dark eyes and long earrings of greenstone, and the lips and chin disfigured by curves of blue tattooing. It also struck us strangely to observe a casual meeting of friends, when the ceremony of pressing noses together (not sniffing each other, as in Fiji) was substituted for the kiss, which to our notion seems the natural form of greeting.

Many of the girls wore bright tartan shawls, for all the race are extremely sensitive to cold, and even on these hot summer days both men and women apparently delight in warm clothing, and like to exclude every breath of air from their wretched, stuffy little cottages. The inferiority, dirt, and discomfort of these, and their total lack of drainage, struck us all the more from contrast with the cleanliness, comfort, and well-raised foundation of the Fijian houses with which we had become familiar. As a general rule, a traveler would find the prospect of claiming a night's

shelter in a Maori *wharre* quite as uninviting as being driven to accept the hospitality of a very poor Highland bothie. A certain number of the chiefs, however, now own good houses (in most instances built for them by Government as rewards, or bribes for good behavior), and pride themselves on their excellent carriages and furniture, even adopting such effeminacies as white muslin covers for dressing-tables, with dandy pink trimmings.

Much as we admired the Maori race, we were even more struck by the half-castes, all our previous experience in other lands having led us in a great measure to sympathize with the aversion commonly felt toward mixed races, which generally seem to unite the worst characteristics of both. Here, however, this rule is reversed, and the most casual observer can scarcely fail to note the physical and intellectual superiority of the Anglo-Maori. I am told, however, that the physique is not in reality so good as at first sight appears, and that the tendency to consumption is even greater than in the pure Maori, whose ranks have been so terribly thinned by this insidious foe.

Next in interest to the old lords of the land are the geological surroundings of the city of Auckland, which is situated in the midst of a cluster of extinct volcanoes. The largest and most perfect specimen of these retains its true native name, Rangi-Toto, but the principal crater in the immediate neighborhood of the town has had to submit to the common custom of colonies, where old places must perforce receive new names; so it is now known as Mount Eden, and its grassy slopes are dotted with pleasant homes. Only its summit retains traces of the old Maori fortifications, in artificially leveled terraces surrounding the deep crater, wherein, in case of dire attack, a whole tribe might have taken refuge. Every green hillock, far and near, partakes of the same character.

I cannot say we were much struck by the beauty of Auckland, though there are some fine views, such as that from the cemetery, looking across the blue waters of the harbor to the great triple cone of Rangi-Toto, which rises from a base of black, broken volcanic refuse,—a suggestive contrast to the foreground of beautiful tree ferns, which have been suffered still to survive in the valley just before us. But the noble primeval forest which formerly clothed this district has almost entirely been swept ruthlessly away, and wholesale burning has destroyed

what the woodman's axe had spared, so that there now remains literally no shelter from the summer sun, save such English oak and other trees as have been planted by the settlers.

It was not till we found ourselves on Kawau, Sir George Grey's fascinating island home, that we had an opportunity of seeing something of a carefully preserved New Zealand bush. Here every headland is crowned with magnificent pohutukawa trees (*Metrosideros tomentosus*), literally rendered, "the brine-sprinkled,"—so called by the Maoris, because they are said only to flourish close to the sea; but known to the settlers as the Christmas tree, since it invariably blossoms in Christmas week, when boughs of its glossy green and scarlet are used in church decoration as a substitute for the holly berries of Old England. Like many of the flowering trees of the Pacific, its blossom when gathered possesses small attraction, its brilliant color being derived solely from the clusters of bright scarlet stamens, which, however, when seen in masses, produce such an effect of intense color that the whole tree appears aflame, and the overhanging boughs seem to be dripping fire into the clear blue water, while the ground on every side appears as if tinged with blood, the grass being fairly hidden by the showers of constantly falling stamens.

To us, so long wanderers in tropical isles, where a grassy meadow is a thing unknown, and the most inviting green hill-side invariably proves to be a matted sea of tall reeds, it was a positive delight to find ourselves once more rambling over grassy downs, where sheep and cattle pasture peacefully and mushrooms grow abundantly, and where a multitude of English sky-larks make their homes and fill the air with their thrilling warblings. The larks, the bees, and the thistles are alike imported, and all equally thriving. As to the thistles, the size and beauty of their purple blossoms must gladden the heart of every true Scot, especially as the farmers praise them and vow that they actually improve the new soil.

Even the grass itself is not indigenous, all these hills having till recently been densely clothed with a thicket of tea-tree, which is a shrub somewhat resembling juniper or a gigantic heather-bush, its foliage consisting of tiny needles, while its delicate white blossoms resemble myrtle. It is called by the Maoris manakau, but the settlers have a tradition that Captain Cook and his men once made tea of its twigs; hence, they say, the name. It is, however, noteworthy that this plant is called ti by the Australian blacks, so it is probable that the name was brought thither by some colonist from the sister isle. Curiously

enough, the Maoris give this same name, ti-tree, to the *Cordylone indivisa*, a kind of dragon-tree, which here flourishes on all moist soils. The settlers with strange perversity have dubbed this the cabbage-tree, though its cluster of handsome long leaves, crowning a tall stem, is nowise suggestive of that familiar vegetable.

New Zealand seems to be the very paradise of acclimatization, so readily does she accept the office of foster-mother to the products of other lands. Though the combinations did not appear to me so startling as some in Queensland and New South Wales,—where I first saw holly-trees (with wealth of crimson berries) overshadowed by tall palms, and luxuriant camellias loaded with blossoms growing side by side with broad-leaved plantains and tree ferns, beneath the shelter of great pines from Norfolk Island, with a carpet of mignonette and violets,—I believe the kindly soil and climate of New Zealand can nurture almost any plant that finds its way thither.

Here and there the banks are clothed with a handsome green flag, the precious New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*), whose tall, red, honey-laden blossoms, growing on a stem fully ten feet high, offer special attractions to the bees; and great are the treasures of wild honey to be found in these parts, where the busy creatures apparently do not learn the idle habits attributed by some to their brethren when imported to tropical isles, where the supply of flowers never fails through all the circling year. For the first season the newcomers work diligently; but, after having made the pleasant discovery that they have no need to gather a winter store, they are said to abstain from useless toil and thenceforth live a life as careless and idle as any butterfly. I am, however, inclined to look upon this story as savoring of bee calumny.

The long leaves of the flax are nature's ready-made cords and straps, so strong is the fiber and so readily do the leaves split into the narrowest strips, while at the base of each lies a thick coating of strong gum. This, I believe, is the chief difficulty in employing machinery in the manufacture of this flax so as to render it a profitable article of commerce.

With all this natural vegetation the foliage of other lands mingles so freely that in a very few years it will be hard to guess what is indigenous and what imported. For here we find pines and cypresses from every corner of the globe, oaks and willows, Australian gums, and all manner of fruit-trees, more especially apples and pears, peaches, apricots, and figs, which grow in luxuriant thickets wherever they are once planted, and bear fruit abundantly. And after feasting on these,

we may pass through some romantic glen, where the sunlight flickers through the delicate tracery of tall tree ferns, and thence emerge where some quiet brook, fringed with water-cresses, flows sparkling through the meadow.

As with the vegetable world, so with the animal. Though New Zealand, in common with other isles of the South Pacific, could originally boast of literally no four-footed creature save a small rat, she gives such cordial welcome to all new-comers, that all living things imported seem certain to increase and multiply to any extent. Already, in this island home, large herds of fallow deer and Indian elk roam at large; pheasants are abundant, and a good day's sport may be had in pursuit of wild cattle; while kangaroos, or wallabies, as they are commonly called, are so numerous and such easy prey as to be almost beneath the dignity of a true sportsman, so very deliberate is their strange leaping retreat, and so frequently do they pause to gaze wistfully at the intruder. A rare and beautiful variety of kangaroo, called the tree wallaby, because of its squirrel-like habits, has been imported from New Guinea, and is already so abundant on this island of Kawau that a very large number annually have to be shot. It is a small animal, with the richest brown fur, and when feeding in the grassy glades might at first sight be mistaken for a hare, till at the faintest sound of danger it sits upright; then, standing on its long hind legs, it bounds away with a succession of leaps, and reappears springing from branch to branch, and peering cautiously from among the dark foliage of the pohutukawa.

But if tree wallabies sounds strange to Australian ears, what would a Londoner think of gathering oysters from the lower branches of the same "brine-sprinkled" trees? Here, however, he will find them abundantly and of excellent flavor; for these branches literally dip in to the water, and overshadow rocks, all of which are oyster-beds extending entirely round the island, a coast-line of perhaps thirty miles. Indeed the oysters seem equally abundant in all the neighborhood of Auckland, and here, as at Sydney, we found a simple and enticing form of afternoon picnic greatly in favor, where bread and butter and a hammer were the only accessories carried to the feast. True gourmets brought lemons and spoons. I confess to having frequently dispensed with all these superfluities, and to have greatly enjoyed the simple process of knocking my oysters on the hinge with a stone, thereby removing the upper shell, and leaving the dainty morsel unprotected. This did at first sight appear a very savage feast, and for awhile I stood aloof in some disgust; but *ce n'est que le premier pas*

qui colte, and, having once overcome this natural repugnance so far as to *try* (as the colonials say) just one, I plead guilty to having thenceforth been foremost at every oyster festival.

The island being now simply the private estate of an English gentleman, its inhabitants are all his comfortable and well-cared-for dependents, if such a word can possibly be applied to a race so thoroughly independent, and who require to be humored to an extent that would greatly astonish land-owners and housekeepers in the old country.

Only once a year do the Maoris return to this coast to fish for sharks; not the dreaded white sharks, though these also are frequent visitors, but a hideous creature resembling a dog-fish, and from four to six feet in length, which the Maoris split and dry for winter fare. One day a large party of natives arrived in half a dozen good English boats. We rowed out to join them, and they invited us on board the largest boat, in the hold of which were already stowed about fifty of these small sharks. They caught ten more while we were watching,—fishing with line and bait. Each shark, as it was drawn up, received a severe blow on the nose, which was then cut off, and the sufferer apparently died at once. When the fishing was over the boats departed to a small island, where the sharks are hung up to dry, and horrible must be the effluvia. A gentleman who accompanied us told me that in one season they had caught fifteen thousand off this island, and that he had himself seen a pile of dried fish three hundred feet long by six deep, ready for winter use. One of the fishers was introduced to me as the Queen's godson, a fine, stalwart fellow. His father, having visited England, and having been honored by presentation to her Majesty, was granted this further privilege on behalf of his son, together with the accustomed christening cup.

While looking down from my window to the lovely little bay—a beautiful scene, framed by large trees and tall, flowering aloes—I saw on two different occasions a wonderful effect of phosphorescence. The 11th of February had been marked by violent thunder-storms, vivid lightning, and downpours of rain, leaden skies, and a bright green sea. I chanced to look out about eleven p. m., and saw the whole bay glowing with pale white light, and fiery waves rolling right up beneath the trees and around the rocks, which stood out sharp and black. The effect was as of a sea of living light. For about ten minutes I watched it, entranced; then it slowly faded away, and the scene was changed to dense obscurity. Next night I looked out at the same hour, and be-

held only darkness; but about midnight I was awakened by a deafening crash of thunder, followed by heavy rain. I guessed this would stir up whatever creatures caused the strange, weird light; perhaps they are disturbed by the electricity-laden rain-drops, and seek safety in flight, or it may be that they receive a small electric shock which starts them all dancing. Whatever be the cause, the result proved as I expected. Ere I could reach the window, the bay was illuminated by tiny ripples of fire, which gradually increased in size and number till all was a blaze of glowing, dazzling light. This lasted for about five minutes, and then died completely away.

Returning to Auckland, our next expedition was a five-hours' trip by steamer to Grahamstown—in other words, the Thames Gold Fields. We sailed at sunset, with a good three-quarter moon. This was obscured for a few minutes by a slight shower, which was followed by a very beautiful lunar rainbow—a phenomenon which must surely be more common in the southern hemisphere than with us, for the ship's officers spoke of it as by no means rare, whereas this was my first sight of the ghostly, pallid rainbow of the night.

Ere midnight we were luxuriously housed near the great baby town, where, till about ten years ago, not a sound disturbed the deep stillness, save the ripple of the sea around the steep, richly wooded shores. But swift change followed the discovery of gold. Too quickly the hills were denuded of all their timber, and left bare, and red, and ugly. Adventurers poured in and burrowed for the precious ore, till the hills now resemble one vast rabbit-warren. So great is the amount of refuse thus cast out that it has served to reclaim a tract of land from the sea, thus considerably enlarging the site for building purposes, which, even thus, is but a narrow strip between the sea and the steep hills. Here a large, straggling town has sprung up, and mighty batteries, whose tall chimneys darken the air with black smoke, work with deafening noise, crushing the auriferous quartz; for you must not confuse the gold fields with "diggings" where the precious nuggets lie embedded in alluvial deposit, and entail only digging and washing. Here the gold is traced to its original home, where it forms part of the quartz veins which traverse the hard rock, and has to be sought by tunneling and by the pickaxe with patient toil. Truth to say, a few days' acquaintance with Grahamstown greatly disturbed my preconceived ideas of life at the diggings. Here I found a large, scattered town, peopled wholly by miners, but nowhere have I seen a more orderly and respectable community. Every miner

has his tidy house and garden; most have a wife and children. On Sunday all work save that of the great pump ceases, and the large churches of every denomination are crowded by congregations who certainly retain no trace of having been working in mines all the week. Various volunteer corps, including a fine force of Naval Reserve, a large regiment of Scotch volunteers, and one of cadets, turn out in excellent order, and march to one or other of the places of worship. The law of order prevails here as thoroughly as in any quiet English village. All matters relating to the mines are regulated by a printed code of rules, and inspectors are appointed, whose duty it is continually to visit every corner of the mines, and who, in their turn, are responsible to the Warden of the Gold Fields. The great pump is one of the marvels of the place. Its shaft is six hundred and ninety feet deep, and it drains the whole neighborhood. The water pumped up deposits silica in such quantities that the great tubes through which it passes are coated every few days with an incrustation about an inch thick, which has to be removed with a chisel. Small objects, such as wicker baskets, are occasionally left to soak for a short period, and re-appear apparently carved in white stone.

We were fortunate in the time of our arrival, as large quantities of gold had just been discovered in the Moanitairi mine, hitherto considered almost worthless. Of course the shares flew up, and the excitement was tremendous. We saw fortunate holders of old shares who, a few days previously, had been poor men, suddenly transformed into men of large capital. Indeed, we ourselves were sorely exasperated by the persistency with which our friends in Auckland and elsewhere would congratulate us on the successful speculation which they assumed we must have made. Unfortunately our sole acquaintance with the gold was as sight-seers; and first of all we were taken along the great main tunnel whence the side-drives diverge in all directions, following the lead of the quartz veins.

The great tunnel extends three-quarters of a mile, and is lighted by gas, to say nothing of the tiny green lamps of multitudinous glow-worms, which, together with a fluffy white fungus, cover the sides and roof. On reaching the far end, we came to the shaft leading down to the lucky Moanitairi, and were urged to descend and have a look at the gold; but the journey appeared so uninviting that we contented ourselves with exploring some of the side-drives, where we found the men, generally in couples, working hard with pickaxe and shovel, each in his own bur-

row, like so many rabbits. On our appearing they worked with renewed energy, that they might "show us the color"; and though the particles thus revealed were infinitesimal, we had the satisfaction of having ourselves seen them brought to light.

Next we were taken to see the huge batteries, where the quartz is pounded into white mud, through which quicksilver is run to amalgamate the gold. The mixture is then distilled, when the quicksilver evaporates, and is again condensed, ready for use, leaving the gold comparatively pure. The refuse from the batteries, known as tailings, is heaped up to be eventually subjected to closer scrutiny.

Our last visit was to the bank, to see the process of making golden bricks. Twelve thousand ounces of Moanitairi gold was brought in, already roughly run into lumps the size of a man's head. These had to be broken up with wedge and sledge-hammer into pieces sufficiently small to find room in the melting pots which stood ready on the furnace. I confess the use of such tools in working gold was to me quite a new impression! The molds were then well oiled, and into them was poured the liquid ore, which, being cooled with water, soon formed a heap of solid golden bricks, bearing the bank stamp—very pale gold, however, the proportion of silver therein contained being about thirty per cent.

Leaving Grahamstown one lovely afternoon in the comfortable little steamer *Te Aroha*, we proceeded up the river Thames to Paeroa, where we arrived at sunset. It is a most beautiful river, flowing sometimes through rich pasture land, alternating with large forests of white pine, called by the Maoris kakikatea, while here and there the banks are fringed with graceful weeping-willows, which were imported not many years ago from Britain, and have already attained a larger growth than is often to be seen there, showing that, like the sweet-brier and peach-trees, they take kindly to their adopted land. The latter have already overspread the country, forming thickets where the traveler may halt and feast to his heart's content, while his horse munches the red berries of the sweet-brier which covers large tracts of land, filling the air with fragrance.

As we neared our destination, we had the opportunity of seeing a Maori pah in full fighting condition, two of the neighboring tribes being at variance. It did not appear very imposing, its fortifications consisting of the usual reed fences. Nevertheless, its defenders were all on the alert to prevent the passage of any foe, for which purpose the river was barred, only leaving space enough for the steamer to pass.

At Paeroa we found horses awaiting us, and a lovely moonlight ride brought us to

Mackaytown, where we were gladdened by a bright fire and a cordial welcome. Sorely did we regret that we had not so planned our days as to allow time to see something more of this beautiful district of Ohimimuri and its gold-fields, where life in the heart of wild forests and mountains must necessarily be of a far more primitive stamp than in the orderly city of Grahamstown—perhaps more like our ideal, derived from Bret Harte and kindred writers. But ruthless fate urged us on, and at the first peep of day we started, having before us a twenty-five miles' ride, which was considerably prolonged by the necessity of making wide circuits to head treacherous swamps.

Our first mile lay through the most exquisite tract of bush it has ever been my good fortune to behold in any land; groups of tall red or black pine (native names, rimu and matai) mingled with fine trees of various sorts, matted by luxuriant creepers, through which the sunlight stole tenderly, to reveal the treasures of beauty below. For the glory of this fairy dell lay in its tree ferns, no new delight to me, for I have seen such wealth of these in the various isles of the Pacific as I thought could never be excelled. But in this one tract of New Zealand bush it seemed to me that Nature had surpassed herself, that she might revel in her own loveliness, so artistic was the grouping of each several cluster of these dainty trees, some of them towering above their fellows, with foliage crowning stems from twenty to thirty feet high, and so rich was the undergrowth of all manner of humbler ferns. Imagine my feelings of disgust when, on alluding to this dream of beauty to a practical settler, he at once recognized the spot, saying: "Oh, yes! that block has been reserved for fire-wood!"

Above us lay a magnificent forest of the giant kauri pine, which is found only in this northern part of the North Island. It is a noble tree, and the tall, upright stems were ranged like the pillars of some mighty cathedral; and so highly is it prized as timber that it is largely exported both to the South Island and to Australia. So extensive a demand has already well-nigh denuded many vast tracts, which but a few years ago were clothed with primeval forest. Hence the necessity which has caused Government to take what remains under its special protection. It is from the scrub-land which was formerly occupied by kauri forests that are dug the large, amber-like lumps of gum which are so valuable in commerce. They are found within two feet of the surface, and are by some supposed to have been formed by the melting of the resin when the forests were burned. The industry affords a livelihood to a large

class of men, both Maori and European, known as gum-diggers.

Beyond the dark forest we could see the tiny tents of the gold-miners gleaming like white specks, high on the mountain side,—a most romantic site for a camp, and one which we would fain have visited, had time allowed. We found no cool shade inviting us to halt, till we reached a Maori village on the shore. Thence our route lay for some miles along the hard, yellow sands, with the wavelets rippling right up to the horses' feet,—a beautiful ride, had there been leisure to enjoy it; but before us lay a wide tidal creek which it behooved us to cross before the waters should rise, so we had to get over the ground at a swinging pace, which, however pleasant under ordinary circumstances, is scarcely so enjoyable when you are holding on to a large umbrella, with opera-glasses flying and bumping on one side, and a large traveling-bag, containing night-gear and sketching materials, somewhat insecurely strapped to the pommel, and all beneath a burning sun. I was a novice at bush travel, and had not yet learned how little can be carried in lands where no patient and much-enduring coolies await the white man's pleasure.

After all, we reached the ford too late, and had to wait a couple of hours at a lonely little telegraph station till a boat was ready to take us across; a circumstance which, in my secret heart, I did not much regret; for, under any circumstances, the creek is very wide and muddy, and the ford difficult and insecure. So we left the horses to enjoy their supper, while we found friendly shelter at Kati Kati, a district inhabited solely by settlers from Belfast. The next afternoon we rowed down the lake to Tauranga in a small boat, a distance of about twenty-five miles. It was midnight before we arrived, and bitterly cold, but all weariness was soon forgotten in the cordial kindness of our reception by total strangers, previously known to us only by name, as friend's friends,—a title, however, which we found in every case to be a sure passport in this genial land.

The interest of Tauranga centers around the Gate Pah, in the capture of which so many brave English soldiers and officers were slain during the Maori war in 1864. They were buried (together with many others, including sailors and marines, who perished in the same useless strife) on a green headland beside the sea,—a lovely spot, and lovingly cared for, where bright blossoms bloom beneath the shelter of weeping-willows, and scented geraniums grow in wild profusion among the rocks. On the many head-stones and crosses are inscribed names still precious to many a home

in Britain. The Gate Pah itself, despite its historic interest, has been leveled with the ground and nothing now remains to mark its site.

Of the unsatisfactory results obtained at the cost of so much bloodshed there can, I suppose, be no doubt. It seems as if it had but taught the Maoris their own strength, and left them in a position which, to the settlers, must be galling indeed, they being often compelled to submit patiently to overbearing insolence on the part of the natives, who know full well that their white neighbors are practically without redress in a land where the Queen's writ does not run. Imagine that, within twenty miles of Auckland itself, a murderer is safe from British law, no officer of justice daring to pursue him into "the King Country," where no white man may travel, save by special permission of the chiefs—a permission often withheld, even when the traveler carries letters of introduction from their oldest and long-tried friends, as one of our party proved, much to his annoyance.

Even the white man's religion has fallen into contempt with a vast multitude, who previous to the war were apparently most reverent and devout Christians, but who at that time either banished or murdered their teachers, and invented new religions for themselves—strange compounds of many creeds, mingled with the most utter absurdities. One sect has retained the custom of reading daily lessons, but the Scriptures from which they are drawn are the ancient Maori legends collected and published by Sir George Grey, which the natives consider on the whole more edifying than those of Syria and Palestine. Many of the once flourishing mission stations are now deserted, and the churches stand silent and forsaken.

As regards the future, there are many who consider that the attitude of the Maoris is decidedly hostile, and that a fresh war may even now be imminent. Should this prove to be the case, the whites would now fight at a greater disadvantage than ever, both owing to the loss of prestige due to over-familiarity and to the fact that the natives have now accumulated such stores of fire-arms as they formerly could never have hoped for. But, after all, it is only within their own reserved lands that they show so firm a front, and perhaps we have small right to blame their determination to resist further aggression. Undoubtedly, their dealings with white men have, on the whole, been just and honorable; and, possibly, had their positions been reversed, we might be disposed to view matters very differently.