

Kaipoi Maori Pah.

CHAT WITH MRS. REEVES REGARDING THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MAORIES.

[By PROFESSOR R. WHITE.]

On Monday evening, June 3rd, it was a pleasant sight to see the old and young Maoris of both sexes entering the hall at their Pah, four miles from Kaipoi, to hear a lecture, which was illustrated by limelight views, on "The human face, and how to read it," by the writer. They paid the greatest attention to all that was said, and applauded, in a most vigorous manner, any points that met their fancy or approval. Quite a large number "came up" at the close of the lecture. Their young Maori faces fairly shone with intelligence, and it was a pleasure for me to read them publicly. As I had offered a prize to the boy and girl with the best heads, I had some difficulty in deciding, as there were so many really good ones amongst those who came up to compete.

Mrs. Reeves, the head school teacher at the Pah, kindly invited Mr. Hall, my assistant, and myself to tea, prior to the lecture. Seated before a bright cosy fire, we had quite an interesting chat about the manners and customs of the Maoris at the Pah.

"How long have you lived here, Mrs. Reeves?" I asked.

"About thirty years in the district," she replied, "and during the last twenty-two years Mr. Reeves and I have been in charge of this school. But Mr. Reeves is on the sick-list in Christchurch at present."

"Do you like teaching Maori children?"

"Yes; even better than European children."

"Do you think they learn as quickly and with as little trouble as children of English parents?"

"Much quicker and easier," she answered somewhat promptly and warmly. "My experience here has made me a great admirer of the Maoris, especially the younger generation."

"Why the younger generation?"

"Because," she replied, "the old Maoris had a strong prejudice against the English and our ways of living, which the younger ones have not."

"Do you think the Maoris will be able, as a race, to hold their own, or to amalgamate with the European settlers?"

"Certainly, I do," she said, "and in some respects surpass them."

"But while they learn quickly as children, is it not a fact that they cannot take in the higher education and more abstruse kinds of knowledge?"

"No, I don't think so. Many of my Maori boys have passed through College and University as well or better than most European youths."

"In the Pah here, do the Maoris live as contented, as peaceful, and as happy lives as English settlers?"

"Undoubtedly; and they live, as a whole, very happily. It is rarely they have any quarrels, and they are more satisfied with their condition in life than most Europeans."

"Was there any kind of marriage system among them before they adopted ours?"

"Yes; but it had very little ceremony, and it might not be binding for life unless they—the man and wife—wished it."

"Oh! they had some system of divorce then?"

"Yes. If they found after living as man and wife for a time that they could not agree, they went to the chief of the Pah and told him so. He then called a meeting of other chiefs, and they dealt with the case. After hearing what both had to say, they usually decided that they might separate; and if they had any children, a chief or childless married couple would take them, or as many as they felt disposed, but neither of the parents could have any. Thus they started life free

again, and might try and have another chance for connubial bliss."

"But did not this introduce too much of the element of parting company?"

"No; there was only separation granted when it was shown the two concerned were irreconcilable. It was generally found, on reuniting with others, they both afterwards led happy lives. Sometimes now, under our marriage system, two quarrel. They go to the chief for relief, as of yore, but he simply shakes his sage head, and says: 'You have adopted civilised, Christian customs, young people, and I can do nothing for you. You must live together whether you quarrel or fight for the rest of your natural lives; no parting now.' This often leads to immorality amongst them, as viewed from our standpoint."

By this time tea was finished, and I had to prepare for my lecture, so I thanked Mrs. Reeves for her kind hospitality and information.

The Pah is about half a mile long, of one street or well kept road, with Maori houses on each side; but most of them on the left, walking from Kaipoi towards Woodend. There are about fifty houses, some of them being really comfortable, neat cottages with gardens in front of them of English or rather New Zealand style. There is one Church—Episcopalian—without appointed minister, and one school, over which Mr. and Mrs. Reeves preside. Everything is neat and orderly in the Pah, and I left it with a higher opinion of the Maoris than I had held before of them.

The land system in New South Wales, says *Sydney Table Talk*, is about the worst in all Australia, giving satisfaction to neither pastoralists nor farmers. Mr. Reginald J. Black, in a very instructive paper, says the system has put "fully £10,000,000 into the pockets of the speculator and has succeeded in despoiling the Crown lands, except in the western division, of well-nigh all water frontages and choicest blocks, thereby maiming the public estate for all time." Mr. Black gives the following example of the working of the Act of 1876, allowing free selection:—The squatter had £7000 on deposit and a prosperous leasehold estate. To secure himself from selectors, he expended £18,000 buying river frontages. "Selectors and blackmailers" still coming, he continued buying out, sometimes giving as much as £2 10. per acre for mere grazing land, until at last he had borrowed £80,000, when droughts, low prices, and interest on loans made him insolvent. Mr. Black estimated that in New South Wales alone, banks and other financial institutions have now on loan £45,000,000 on pastoral securities.

Justice Vaughan Williams, during the hearing of the examination of the directors of the New Zealand Loan Company, asked Sir Thomas Paine, of the well-known firm of solicitors, to produce his firm's bill of costs. The bill was handed up, and proved to be a formidable document. His Honour looked it over with comical concern, weighed it in his hand, and then asked with judicial gravity, "Is there an index to this?"—*Melbourne Punch*.

They are trying to get the thin end of the wedge in over in England. A bill has been introduced into Parliament "to enable women to be elected and to act as county councillors." The bill is a model of brevity. It consists of three lines—three lines of much pith and moment—so brief, indeed, that evidently the ladies had no hand in drafting it. The bill proposes to enact that "It shall be lawful for women to be elected and act as county councillors and aldermen in the same manner and on the same conditions as men." Query—How can women be aldermen? We don't know exactly; but we have had an awful example of how they can be mayors.

CARAFONT'S

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