

Manaia.

(See illustrations pages 728 and 729.)

A TARANAKI TOWNSHIP.

Mania is situated in the centre of the famed Waimate Plains, and is distant ten miles west of Hawera. The town is clean and well-kept, considering the limited finances of the Town Board, the streets are broad and the general appearance of the place denotes prosperity. The Octagon is in the centre of the town, forming a distinct feature compared with other towns on the West Coast. A few years ago a portion of the town was destroyed by fire, the Mania Hotel and several other business premises, including the Bank of New Zealand, being demolished; but these have been restored by more imposing structures. Mania is essentially a farming and pastoral district, and some fine farms are to be seen in the immediate vicinity of the town. Of course grazing is the chief source of income to the district, dairying being extensively followed on almost every holding. Within three miles or so of the town two of the largest dairy factories in Taranaki—Riverdale and Kaurakona—are established. Beyond dairying the industries of Mania and its district are few. There used to be a large flourmill in operation, but it was burned down. A bovril manufactory was started, and after running for a time was closed. It is a quiet-going little town, where business people do a steady trade, supplying the numerous wants of the surrounding settlers.

Mania is of recent growth, and only lately attained its majority. The first sale of land on the Plains was held in the latter end of 1880, and in the early part of the following year a start was made to form a township, Messrs Langley Bros., now of Kawhia, erecting the first building, which they opened as a store; Mr T. Lloyd following shortly afterwards by building the Mania Hotel. The main road from Hawera to Opunake was formed, bridged and metalled before the land sale, thus the early settlers had easy access to their holdings. Mania at this time and until some three or four years after, was guarded by a large force of armed constabulary under (then) Captain Gudgeon and Captain Taylor, the men being located at the fort, now a well-known landmark and a token of the days when there was a feeling of deep unrest on the Waimate Plains. It is easy for those who were not there to speak flippantly of the condition of affairs when the district was only sparsely settled, and the natives liable to rise at any time against whom they considered white invaders. Fortunately, there never was occasion to take up arms on the Waimate Plains, though several times the outlook was none too good. At the time of the Paribaka affair two corps were raised by Mania settlers, a mounted force being captained by Mr W. L. Martyn, and a foot corps under Captain O'Brien. Though the services of these were not required, it is needless to say that they were prepared for a fray at any time. The last time the natives showed a rebellious spirit was when a large force gathered at Mr A. Hastie's farm and commenced ploughing. The Maoris were quickly and forcibly ejected by the settlers. This was the closing scene of their trying to assert their right of possession—a veritable dying effort—and perfect peace has prevailed ever since.

Mania contains many substantial buildings. There are three commodious hotels, extensively stocked stores and drapery establishments, two banks, whilst blacksmiths, wheelwrights and every other line of business are represented. A large public school, under Mr J. K. Law, is well attended, and an effort is being made to establish a district high school. There is a roomy public hall in the town. Religious denominations are represented by Presbyterian, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Wesleyan churches. Regular stock sales are held at Mania by three auctioneering firms, Messrs Stewart and Corrigan, Nolan, Tonks and Co., and the Egmont Farmers' Union, and the town on sale days presents a lively appearance. Communication is by road, and the town has two mail services to and from Hawera daily. Besides the post and telegraph office there is also a telephone service. The present Town Board com-

prise—Messrs J. Hunt (Chairman), W. A. Limbrick, D. Craig, A. L. Young and F. G. Wilson. The Waimate Road Board, a body controlling a long length of district roads, meet at Mania, the chairman being Mr T. A. Bridge, with Messrs F. Wilkie, A. J. Hastie, W. D. Bowdrell, T. Hurley, C. Davis and W. Borrie as members. Mr J. C. Datson is a capable and painstaking clerk to both bodies. In the centre of the Octagon stands a handsome and striking monument, bearing the following inscriptions:—"This monument to the officers and men of the Armed Constabulary and of the Patea Field Force, who were killed during the operations at Patea and at Ngatapa in years 1908-9, is erected by the officers and men of the A.C. Force—Majors Von Tempyke, Hunter, Captains Ross, Brown, Buck, Palmer, Lieutenants Hastings, Hunter, Sergeants Cahill, McFadden, Kirwan, Blaxwell, Heteraka, Menzies, Corporals Blake, Russell." On the opposite side are the names of the places where the brave fellows fell—"Turuturu Mokai, Te Ngutu-o-te-Manu, Te Raupuru, Okotuku, Ngatapa, Karaka Flat, Otatou." The death-roll of constables, privates and settlers is a heavy one, occupying a side of the monument, and the names given are—Constables Smith, Shields, Holden, Ross, Beamish, Swords, Gaynor, Lennon, McKay, Elkin, Fennessy, Hart, Davies, Farran, Gilgan, Lee, Sattler, Path, Urquhart, Eastwood, Norman, Rogers, Kenealy, Brown, McEwan, Sawyer, Ansell, Clarendon, McKenzie, Cummins, Boyle, Barrass, Clowen, Howe, Banks, Horspool, Smith, Barith, Stephenson, Fleurs, Gundry. Privates Wallace, Kerr, Geary, Hughes, Lumsden, Deeks, Wells, Smith, Collins, Devon, Keneally, Nugus; settlers Clark, Squires.

Turning from grave to gay, Mania was always a great sport-loving place, and horseracing flourished before a racing club existed. In the early days many a keen and exciting contest eventuated on the Mania road, a level, straight run between the township and the bush, Saturday afternoons being set apart for matches. A live racing club was formed, but when the reduction of totalisator permits was brought about, Mania was one of the clubs that had to succumb, and the organisation was left lamenting with a credit balance of about £150, which sum has since earned a goodly amount in interest. A trotting club ran for two or three meetings. Cricket was a popular game in the A.C. days, but interest has waned. Now all the enthusiasts of plainmen is given to football, and the Waimate Club, with its senior and junior teams, holds a capital record. Around Mania are many champion footballers of the past, the Good Bros., Lambie, J. McCarty, Hughes and Bolger occurring to the writer as players who have well upheld the honour of Taranaki between the posts. Bowling is also a popular game on the Plains, the Mania green being equal to any on the coast. A well-kept tennis court adjoins the bowling green. A rifle club is another of the institutions of Mania. It has a numerous membership, including some crack shots. A hockey club finds considerable support. There is a pretty recreation ground in the suburbs, the old A.C. camp adjoining, and at these places leisure hours are spent pleasantly. The watch-tower is kept in good repair. From the top a splendid panoramic view of the sweeping surrounding country is obtained. The Ronnd Bush Reserve, another of the beauty spots of Mania, is within easy distance, and is largely frequented by picnickers.

Close to Mania are several well-known stud farms, Messrs J. D. Mitchell's and Andrew Hastie's beautiful places having reared Clydesdales that have well upheld the prestige of the Plains as a horsebreeding centre. Then there are Messrs R. W. Foreman, J. J. Campbell, Sellars, Washer, Forsyth, and others, whose sheep and cattle have been prominent at shows.

There is an eight-page tri-weekly newspaper—the "Waimate Witness"—published at Mania, and from its appearance it is liberally supported. In connection with Mania and newspapers, I might be pardoned for introducing the following—"Just twenty-one years ago a then well-known journalist engaged another pressman and the writer as the 'staff' of a new paper he proposed starting at the City of the Plains. We proceeded to the little hamlet, installing the plant with a view to producing a paper that would boom the town and district.

Our hand press was the most awkward and unwieldy concern I ever saw. I'd seen a few, too, because I'd been employed for a few years preceding by a gentleman who made a business of starting papers, and hand presses were our primitive printing machines. We set up the paper, and were about to go to press, when something suddenly went wrong with the arrangements, and the mighty organ that was to become a sounding power in the land was never printed. For my own sake I wasn't sorry either, because the eagle, mighty and weighty, that stood defiantly at the top of the printing works, was in a decidedly insecure condition, being liable to swoop down at any minute on the pressman or roller boy, whilst the understandings of the press were in a state of collapse. I did not know until the other day that the old press had a history. It was first used in Sydney in the early days, printing either the "Morning Herald" or the "Daily Telegraph"—my informant was not certain which. A few years ago the proprietors endeavoured to trace their first press, and succeeded, the wreck being unearthed in a heap of old iron in the Manawatu district. The dilapidated concern was taken to Australia, again set up, and occupies a central position in the Sydney printing room as a striking example of the difficulty of printing in years gone by compared to the splendid machinery of to-day.

The change that has come over Mania since I first saw the place is surprising indeed. The high fern and flax that disfigured the landscape is gone, and everywhere one looks now there is a pleasing prospect. The cleared paddocks bearing a luxuriant growth of grass, the sleek-looking stock, here and there fields of promising crops, the comfortable homes of the settlers, go to show the industry and perseverance of Plains people. The greatest change of all is in the clearance of the forest that adjoined the open land. Back to the forest reserve the land is cleared and in splendid grass, and the once impenetrable bush district now supports hundreds of happy and prosperous families in small holdings. Townships have risen in the out-district, and miles of roads

have been formed and metalled.

Of the early Plains settlers many of the original selectors remain to reap the reward of their perseverance. Of the pioneers of the town Messrs P. McCarthy, M. Franklin, A. W. Budge, and Sinclair occur to the writer as early residents, whilst in the outskirts Messrs J. D. Mitchell and A. Hastie are gentlemen who, like the gentlemen named above, have always identified themselves closely with the town and its best interests.

One cannot close a sketch of Mania and its fertile district without reference to Mount Egmont, standing out bold and defined a few miles north of the town. Any mention of the mountain would be incomplete without the name of the late Mr Dawson, formerly postmaster. It was wholly due to his untiring efforts that a practicable route to the summit was discovered from the southern side. "Dawson's Falls" are named after the deceased discoverer, who endured many privations during his plucky single-handed explorations on the mountain slopes.

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