

PROSPECTING IN MASHONALAND.

(S.A. Catholic Magazine.)

THE following extracts from a letter addressed by Mr Frank Mandy to Mrs Mandy, in Graham's Town, have been placed at our disposal for publication. Although dated as far back as January the letter was received only in April:—

Fort Salisbury, January 26th, 1891.

One who went away in all the pride of his health and strength was the first to die. Upington left us full of spirits, strong and healthy; but before night a message came back with a note which informed us that he had accidentally shot himself and requesting help. We decided that I should stay behind and take charge of the invalids at the camp and that Armstrong should go and see to Upington. He sent us a note the following day to the effect that Upington had had a marvellous escape. He was adjusting the bridle of his horse with his loaded rifle leaning against his breast when the charge exploded and the bullet entered just below his left breast and came out above the collar bone, miraculously breaking no bones and without entering the cavity of the chest. He was comparatively slightly injured and was able to ride and continue his journey. He and his companion had just fired at a fine lion which they almost rode upon in the long grass, and which lay looking at them not more than ten or twelve yards away. It was in order to follow up this lion which was only a short distance off from them that Upington was engaged in adjusting his bridle. Armstrong and Upington arrived at Fort Salisbury and a doctor was sent for at once. He examined the wound and pronounced it slight and not at all dangerous. Everything was going on well and the wound rapidly healing, Upington going to Communion on Christmas Day. But on the next evening when sitting chatting in front of the house he complained of great pain in the wound and a rapid change for the worse set in. In fact erysipelas had come on and though everything possible was done by those around him and the doctor was in constant attendance, he died on the following afternoon at 5 p.m. Father Hartmann gave him the last Sacraments early in the day when he was still comparatively strong. He was in full possession of all his senses, and knew he was going to die, but was fully prepared for it. His heart was strong and brave, and he was cheerful and even joking up to the last. He died quietly in his sleep.

One afternoon who should write up to the camp but Father Hartmann. He had received orders from Father Daignault to visit the native chiefs, not knowing that more than a hundred miles of roadless country separated the different gold districts, and the pioneers are scattered in small parties over five of them. However, Father Hartmann was a very welcome visitor to us. He said Mass for us every morning and helped us to nurse Dr Brett. About fifteen miles to the north of Mount St Mary's was a rather important chief called Zimba, with whom we had maintained very friendly relations. Nothing would satisfy the little Father but that he must pay Zimba a visit for missionary purposes. Providing him with a boy as a guide and food for the journey, we saw him off. He was to sleep there and return the next day. Some hours after his departure his horse came at full speed into the camp, and we knew that he had off-saddled somewhere and his horse had galloped off and left him in the veldt. It was too late to do anything that night, but next morning I saddled up, and taking the Father's horse, started for Zimba to meet him. About midday I arrived at the town, situated on the top of a very high and precipitous granite hill covered with immense boulders. Whilst still more than a mile from the town I heard the drums beating, not only in the principal town, but from the top of all the surrounding hills. The nearer I got the louder grew the din. The tops of the hills and the huge granite boulders that crowned them were fringed with a dense mass of black figures all watching my approach and all shouting at the top of their voices. All this drumming and shouting was in my honour, and I received a most flattering reception. As soon as I arrived on the first plateau of the hill, out of breath with my climb and leading the horses, I was met by a deputation bearing the chief's compliments and a large pot of beer which I drank with great relish. I was then escorted to the chief, whom I found in his hut in company with about fifty or sixty people in a small room. A fire burned in the middle and everyone shone with perspiration—it streamed down my face in rivers. More beer was drunk, and then I told them the object of my visit. The chief informed me that Father Hartmann had arrived the previous evening on foot and had left to return that morning accompanied by twelve men. After drinking more beer and losing gallons of moisture through the pores of my skin, I bade the jolly crew farewell. The whole town turned out to see me off. The drums beat, and long after I had left the town hidden from me by a densely wooded belt I could still hear the drums beating and the people shouting their farewell to me. But I never wished to have such a ride again. Both going and returning I was assailed by millions of blind flies. They covered the horses and their bites nearly maddened the poor brutes. The blood streamed from their bodies. I dared not dismount for fear they should break away from me, as had no doubt happened to Father

Hartmann. His horse had evidently fled the moment the saddle was off his back and gone to our camp, knowing that there at least there were no flies. The bites of the insects are like stabs of needles. I reached the camp and found that Father Hartmann had returned safely.

In this country on the plateau the climate is glorious, never hot, and the air exhilarating. Even down where we are at Mangame I do not think the climate is unhealthy. The fever from which our party suffered was very mild and was caught from our proximity to the river.

You can form no idea of the esteem in which Father Hartmann is held by all in this country. I don't say a word too much when I tell you that he is really loved by one and all—Protestant and Catholic. The little man was actually about to start from my place on Mangame for the goldfields on the Umfuli, more than seventy miles away, without a guide or anyone to go with him, to visit the Catholics down there. But I would not allow him. I told him that I had just received a letter from Father Daignault asking me to take care of him, and my first act in that direction was positively to forbid him to attempt such a thing. Endless forests, no roads or even paths, numbers of lions, rivers liable to become impassable at any moment and full of crocodiles, in fact, dangers of such a character as to make the journey without a guide or an escort nothing short of folly. His duty to his superior would have made him disregard every danger but for my opposition. The terrific thunderstorms alone should prevent such a journey. The surest way to get fever in this country is to get wet.

The more I see of this country the more I like it, although in its wild uninhabitable state there are many vexations to put up with. Plagues in the shape of flies—blindflies in millions, which bite as I have before described, other flies not by any means blind and quite an inch long with eyes as big as peas. When these last stab you, you jump and say naughty words. Midges in billions—"flying fleas" I call them—which settle on you and cause intense irritation. Other midges which settle on your face, hands and hair in a thick crust and each one with a sword. Then there are lions, wolves, and a number of lesser evils, which will all disappear when the country is occupied. Mind these pests don't come on all at once; one takes the place of the other as time rolls on, in the summer—the preceding plague ceasing almost immediately on the appearance of the fresh one. For two months on the Mangame two lions were our constant nightly visitors. They would spend the night roaring seldom more than two hundred yards away from our camp, and would often not leave us before 8 o'clock in the morning, but they never did us an injury. When Father Hartmann came to the camp they left us—I hope for good. Wolves are very impudent and sometimes come right into the camp stealing antelopes heads and skins. Now the rest of the pioneers have heard of our whereabouts, numbers are flocking to the new fields discovered by us, and we shall soon have lots of company.

Besides the sad disaster resulting in the death of Upington, there has been another tragical occurrence in quite a different part of the country. A number of pioneers went down to the eastward to occupy the Manica country. With them was a gentleman named Baumann. Whilst on the march he suffered somewhat from the chafing of his boots. He remained behind to take them off, telling the others he would catch them up. They went slowly on but as Baumann did not appear men were sent back to search for him. The place was found where he had sat down, but since that time nothing had been seen or heard of him. Denis Doyle and 200 natives had been scouring the country high and low—but in vain. The thing only that can have befallen him is death from having been seized on by a lion, for since then a party of natives was camped on the same spot, and whilst sitting on the ground in the broad daylight a lion sprang into their midst and carried off one of them. Other fatalities have occurred in other parts. On the road up a young man was gored to death by an ox. Another was seized by a crocodile. There is some small amount of sickness in different parts of the country, and the universal opinion is that we are in the richest gold country in the world, and one unsurpassed for agricultural advantages and general farming.

The various Trades Unions of Wellington took the occasion of Mr T. Seward entering upon the proprietorship of the Pier Hotel to entertain that gentleman at a smoke concert. A splendid spread was provided in the large room of the Pier Hotel, to which about sixty did ample justice. Mr Graham occupied the chair, and after the usual loyal toasts had been given, Mr Millar proposed the toast of "Our Visitors," coupled with the names of Mr Judge and Mr Slater, vice-president and secretary respectively of the Otago Trades and Labour Council. The toast of "Our Guest" was the next on the list, the honours being most enthusiastically given, with one cheer more for "Takapuna Tom." "The Parliament of New Zealand" was responded to by Mr George Fisher, M.H.R. Several other toasts were given during the evening, being interspersed with songs and musical selections by the band. The party broke up at a late hour after having spent a most enjoyable evening, all present joining in cordial good wishes towards Mr Seward in his new venture.