

BISHOP CLEARY ON VISITATION

HORSE-TRAIL, MOTOR LAUNCH, AND
JOURNEY'S END.

SAND, SAND, SAND.

We left the Bishop of Auckland (Dr. Cleary) on his way, by saddle, from Matihetihe, on the west coast of his diocese, to the Hokianga River settlements. His Lordship was accompanied by Fathers Becker, Bruning, and Zangerl (of the Mill Hill Native Mission), by Heremia Te Wake (Whakarapa), and by sundry Maoris from Matihetihe. The first part of the way led along a fine sandy beach. After some distance the party turned off the beach up the sandy bed of a shallow stream, crossed some rough country of swamp and ti-tree, bounded on both sides by steep, wind-swept, and desolate looking sandhills. Then again up the narrowing stream, where the moving sandhills closed in to meet each other and overlay the running water. Near this point there grew beside the water great clumps of the finest *toetoe* (the New Zealand variant of pampas grass) that the visitors had ever seen, the long, feathery plumes reaching up to a great height and waving majestically in the westerly breeze. Through a break in the feathery line the party suddenly began the ascent of the steep sandhills, in which the horses bogged and plunged at times almost to the knees. Thenceforward for miles the way lay over sand, sand, sand—up and down steep pinches that tried the strength and mettle of the mounts, past fantastic cliffs and pinnacles rasped and torn and scored by the sandblast, over great dome-shaped hill-tops, down gullies, and past the place where a former lake lies buried full many a fathom deep beneath the wind driven accumulations from the western beach. An ooze of water that fans out into an inch-deep streamlet is now the only reminder of the sand-buried lake. And from the northern Head at the entrance of the Hokianga River the sandy desolations have been steadily spreading for many a year, overwhelming what was once pasture or tillage land, and overlaying what once were farms. A sharp contrast is presented by the country from the South Head of the Hokianga, and all the left bank of the big tidal river: it is green with forest and farm, and hopeful with areas of ringbarked trees and burnings which mark fresh clearings and new fields that spread over the hills and far away.

On the Hokianga.

The party's track over the sandhills was a short cut which saved a long and weary ride around the long nose of the north Hokianga Head. It brought the party to the broad river some two miles or so north of the Head. Near a spit of soft sand the visitors were met by Heremia Te Wake's motor launch skillfully engineered by his wife and navigated by his son. Here they parted with the horses and the Natives from Matihetihe, and after a run of less than two hours, the Bishop and Father Bruning were enjoying the genial hospitality of Father Becker and his two assistants, Fathers Zangerl and van Beek, at Purakau, near Rawene. That was on February 2nd.

On the following morning the Bishop and Fathers Becker, Bruning, Zangerl, and van Beek went on the back of the tide to the Native village of Whirinaki in the small, open mission launch. This launch is one of the venerable institutions of the river: it is now pounding the water with its second engine (a two-cycle one), which, even at half-throttle, sets the little craft in a tremor, its frail gunwale shaking like a palsied hand. On that broad tidal river, wind (which is mainly from the west) and tide are in frequent conflict. Then you have to ease yourself in waterproofs to meet the frequent onset of spray and of sheets of curling, green water. In roughish weather the open craft must act, at times, as if it thought it was a submarine; and in rough weather it has to stay at its moorings by the ti-tree wharf at Purakau. During his stay on the river, the Bishop got some heavy drenchings in the launch,

despite enveloping oilskins. Father Becker has been for the past two years trying to save part of the cost of a covered launch, and whites and Natives are, your correspondent understands, backing him up in an effort to provide the local mission with better and safer means of riding the troubled waters of the Hokianga.

At Whirinaki.

The Native village of Whirinaki is on a tributary of the Hokianga. It was reached about 1 p.m. After the customary Native welcome, and replies in Maori by Fathers Becker, Bruning, and the Bishop, the generous hospitality of the *kainua* (village) was partaken of. Then ensued an entertaining description of the Northern trip by Father Bruning, which proved a delightful entertainment to the grouped brown folk. Squatted on the ground in circles, in the Native fashion, the Bishop and the other visitors were, in turn, entertained by the Maoris with puzzling 'explanations' of old *whakataukis* or proverbial sayings, and with vivid descriptions of Hongi's and other rival tribes' attacks upon the two old local *pas*. The earthworks of one of these are still in a fine state of preservation, but (as elsewhere) the old timber stockades have long ago mouldered into dust. To the Bishop, at least, a highly amusing novelty in the long-drawn *koreros* or talks of that afternoon was a picturesque speech which a local Maori magnate delivered in fine Native style, and which (he declared) he would deliver at the funeral of Father Becker, who is greatly beloved by the brown people on and near the Hokianga. Father Becker was present, and also greatly enjoyed the hearing of his funeral oration long (it is hoped) before the event.

The Bishop passed the night in a neat room attached to the local church, with the cries of the wild birds round about. This is the second Catholic church of Whirinaki. The first was a *raupo* (bulrush) hut or *whare* hurriedly erected by the procrastinating Natives of a generation ago. Whirinaki was the first (or at least one of the first) place visited by Dr. Pompallier when he landed with the first Catholic mission to New Zealand over seventy-five years ago. Even after many of the people had embraced the Catholic faith, no place of worship was built. The venerable Dr. McDonald at last endeavored, on his periodical visits to the place, to have this defect remedied; but the Native policy of *tuhou* ('bide a wee') wore him down. Finally, on a summer day, he came to Whirinaki, accompanied, as was usual with him, by twelve Native servers—each endowed with a sturdy appetite. The Doctor and his youths stayed a week; and showed no signs of desiring a change of scene: then a second week, and still no sign: then a third week. Native politeness could not, of course, dream of suggesting to the visitors the benefit derivable from a change of air; but, meanwhile, the devastating appetites of the Native servers were making portentous inroads into the modest communal stock of village *kumeras* (sweet potatoes) and other victuals. Self-preservation at length moved the head men gently to sound the Doctor as to the length of time he and his companions would afford the village the light of their presence. The brief reply was: 'Till the church is built.' It was built in three days—in the Native fashion, with *raupo*, and without the use of a solitary nail. Then the most beloved and most famous of the Catholic Maori missionaries blessed the new edifice and the people and went his ways. So the story runneth.

On Thursday morning, February 4, the Bishop celebrated Mass, administered the Sacrament of Confirmation, and baptised a child (the fiftieth on this trip). By the noon tide the party left the fertile flats and slopes of Whirinaki and proceeded in Heremia Te Wake's launch to the entirely Catholic Native village of Motuti, on another tributary of the Hokianga River.

At Motuti.

There is a population of some forty souls (all Catholics) in and around Motuti. They have lately built a new church on a commanding situation over the hamlet. Lack of water is one of the trials of these Native owners; and the Bishop showed several of them how to use ti-tree twigs and *wiwis* (rushes) in locating