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EXTRACTS FROM DIARY OF

Dr. J. A. R. MENZIES

First Superintendent of Southland - 1861

Born Perthshire, 1821, took his diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, at the age of 19. Sailed to Australia 1853, thence to New Zealand. Died August, 1888.

1854.—Jan. 17: Weighed anchor 91 a.m., beating out all day. Cleared Heads 10 p.m.

20th : Bowled into Port Otago and anchored at Port Chalmers, 8 p.m. Eight miles within the heads and about nine from Dunedin to which I came 21st in a boat. The town is rather prettily situated on and at the base of, several knolls which slope down to the shore of the harbour, it is built chiefly of wood, part of the Free Church and one or two houses being of stone and a few of brick, a number of neat cottages peep from the wooded slopes north and east of the town, it has a good jetty admitting small schooners alongside at high water, some of the stores are handsome and well furnished the public buildings are scarcely worthy of notice, the Mechanics' Institute was intended for a very useful purpose, public reading room etc., but is now devoted to other purposes, the Council meet there. The Royal Hotel is a large rambling one storeyed house, not very comfortable, but the charges are very moderate, at the Land Office I obtained from the Crown Commr. Mr. Mantell, much information touching the affairs of the province, communicated in the most courteous and obliging manner. It appears that the recent purchase from the Maoris has extinguished their title to all lands within the province with the exception of some scattered spots which have been reserved for them, this purchase was made by the Commr. on his own responsibility, for which he was much abused here, but the wisdom of the measure is apparent. The price of the purchase in Murihiku (the land of the South) was £2000, to which Sir G. Grey was pleased to add 1600, an obvious proof of his satisfaction with the transaction.

22nd: Went to hear Mr. Burns, sacrament day, the first Free Church I have ever entered, on deliberation I have decided on a ramble to see the country before settling down anywhere, so I shall accompany Mr. Mantell to the south, where he is about to go in a few days to pay the Maories the balance of the purchase money.

24th : Walked to Port Chalmers brought my luggage through the Custom House, and with Hugh prepared for the expedition to the country, prepared despatches.

26th : Started with Mr. M. and Hugh carrying provisions crossed to the valley of Silver Stream by Kaikorai Valley, Green Island Bush and Saddle Hill along the vale of Taieri to Mr. Milne's 22 miles saw a great number of flourishing little farms on the way, the country is covered with grass flax and fern, wood only in occasional patches, the party formed up here, Captain Bellairs, Messrs. Studholme and Lemon, mounted, a corporal of the armed police and six Maories attending Mr. M. camping necessaries etc.

27th : Crossed Taieri went along Waihola Lake for six miles to the Plain of Tokomairaro, to a cluster of settlers' houses, staid all night at Smith's a good deal of fine land is in cultivation here perhaps 70 acres of wheat besides other crops—crossed a great deal of fine pasture this day and the following, distance about 15 miles from Milne's.

28th : Crossed the hills at the lead of Tuakitoto Lake to the Molyneux Ferry 18 miles, descended the Matou branch to the house of Mr. Pillans on the Island, an Edinr. gentleman.

29th, Sunday : Staid at Mr. P.'s a day of rest which enabled me to recover in some measure the use of my feet which were sadly punished by the walk from Dunedin, small blame to them. The Island is an admirable agricultural district the alluvial soil is deep rich and productive, the vegetation is very rank in the wild land, strong grass, flax, Tutu, and fern, there are many patches of excellent timber, in which for the sake of shelter the houses are generally placed, it consists principally of Totara which for building or fencing is the most valuable wood in this (South) Island, Mr. P.'s wood, situated in crescentic loop of the Matou, is one of the best on the Island, called 'Inch Clutha,' and he is engaged in building a neat house for the reception of his sister and family.

30th : Crossed to Mr. Shaw's place.

31st : Our pilgrimage for those two days was in a line parallel to Molyneux and about eight miles distant from it, the country grassy, and the hills on the west dotted with patches and belts of timber. The hills of Popotuna and Moa in the central part alone being wooded, though the burnt fragment occurring along our route denoted that the whole country was densely wooded at some period not very remote. We turned on February 1st at right angles to this course and struck up the gorge of the Kuriwao to the west crossed a great number of small ranges went along a level line of country dotted with peat mosses crossed the Waipahi and Tomaipi and camped on the banks of Kawhera near Otaraia hill on which is the solitary patch of wood seen on the day's journey, distance about 18 miles—Tiresome day's walk.

2nd: To the Maori reserve on the river Mataura at Tutarau.

3rd : Captain Bellairs and Mr. Studholme crossed directly west from Tutarau and set the plain on fire which the wind drove to the north so that when I ascended a bare knoll near the river on 4th I could see no distance off from the smoke obscuring the view. Returning I went along the base of the hill and saw one fine place for a station, the pasturage on the higher ridges seems to be very good, the wood grows on the steep slopes of the hill, so that a dwelling could not be conveniently placed within its shelter, returning we crossed the line of fires four times.

6th : Mr. Studholme and I with Stewart and Hugh made preparations for crossing the plain directly to the Orete, feet getting hardened.

7th : Crossed the River under Tutarau, the swamp narrower there—we in a great measure avoided by going diagonally S.W. to the downs—those are well and finely grassed here and about five miles across to a branch of the Waihopi which drains the western slope of the downs and after passing Oteraumaka wood bends west and by North and eventually falls into the estuary of Waihopi or Orete, here it flows through a swampy valley half a mile broad, nine or ten miles further west we came to a low range somewhat higher than the downs covered with great quantities of water worn quartz pubic anise fern and good grass thinly.

11th: Breakfasted on a Teal (provision had run short) seeing fires on the Bluff we lighted fires in return as we went down the banks, saw the "Eliza" at anchor loading with timber for Sydney. Crossed two tidal creeks with great difficulty, in the first killed 10 ducks with three shots (last of the powder) the brown Teal were very numerous, after crossing those we saw a Maori boat which attracted by our fires had come for us, and brought us to the village of Omaui, here we staid all night sleeping on the floor. The village is situated on the Orete near its mouth at the western extremity of the Bluff peninsula and contains about a dozen of Maori houses it is a "Kaika."

12th, Sunday: Walked over to Bluff Harbour 6 miles off, found Mr. M Mantell had arrived on Thursday, and now waited the assembling of the natives from Aparima, Stewart's Island, Ruapuki etc. My shoes injured lily feet and the sea water on 11th 12th made matters worse, quartered at Jack Tigu's house with Studh. and Hugh.

14th: Studholme started to see the country about Aparima.

15th : Assisting Mr. M. in paying the natives their due proportion of the 1000, at present paid' to them. Some weeks previously a similar sum was paid in Port Chalmers.

18th : Stormy today, party from whaling brig in harbour went to hunt wild cattle a few of which had strayed into the peninsula. The harbour is a very good one, deep water near shore and good anchorage, well sheltered, except from S.E. by E., a strong current sets out at ebb tide, producing a heavy swell in mid-channel when the wind is contrary. The Bluff, on the south side of the harbour, rises high crested and dotted with abundance of timber, the soil is rich and vegetation elsewhere very rank. Tutu, Toi Toi and coarse grass and long fern are the most common, flax in some places, towards the head of the harbour the hill descends, steep and densely wooded to the shore, so that except at low water it is very difficult to pass on the opposite side the east, Tewai's point is bare, a narrow peninsula flanked by the sea on the south and by an arm of the harbour, which runs along for 7 or 8 miles parallel to the coast on the north—this point has one dwelling house upon it occupied by an old whaler and his Maori wife and children, on the Bluff are several whalers with Maori squaws, they possess some hundred's of acres of land there. At some subsequent period this harbour will be more attraction than Otago in consequence of its being the natural port for the agricultural produce of the great plain lying between Mataura and Orete. Hockanui and the coast, a district which, when known to intending emigrants, will be chosen, as it deserves, in preference to any other part of the province, as their future I mines. After seeing the other districts of the Province it may be seen that the plain above mentioned

possesses advantages which none of the others can lay claim to. The extent is at least twenty miles square dotted with belts and islands of timber, the soil is alluvial, overlying clay—it is well watered grass covered as it nearly all is, the plough may be laid on immediately while in its wild state the cattle of the settlers have a free range of pasture, and finally no point of this "rolling prairie" is much above twenty miles from water communication, being flanked on either side, E. and W. by rivers navigable for 40 miles by boat, carrying two or three tons—whilst, eventually a heavy level line of road may be made to the Bluff, the voyage from which to Sydney is ten days on the average, from the Bluff to Otago the time may range from two days to three weeks, as the wind's along the coast are extremely uncertain, again for ships from home coming round south the voyage to the Bluff *would* be several days shorter than to Otago and *might* be weeks.

21st: Mr. M. and Stud. returned from Aparima, the latter went up the Aparima about thirty miles and described the country as being superior to that on the Orite, he did not select a run.

22nd : Went to the Waimakaka and camped, found Capt. Bellairs there having taken his stores up that river for a short distance—but he was by no means satisfied with his prospects having insuperable difficulties to contend with as he said, he started 24th with us for Dunedin, crossed Tituoa, Kuriwao, Moko iurutaha, or Wyndham and Mimiao camped there at dark. We due, tip roots of Maori cabbage and found them very good vegetables the miter part resembling Swedish Turnip the inner like parsnips. I admire the locality and three or four days after applied for it. It was interjected run between Wyndham and the Tut. run.

2nd: To Warepah some three miles below Moa Hill, a fine place, good wood and soil—next day by Mr. Shaw's to the Island to Mr. Pillans found them finishing their wheat harvest which is a good crop.

Captain Bellairs has been named Member of Legislative Council for Otago, as he goes to Auckland, he gave up the idea of going to Matura to occupy the run he took up there, a foregone conclusion perhaps, as he (lid not appear to be satisfied with it, when he visited it, he has, sold to me the stores he had at the Waimahaka, and his horse etc. I got a pair of pack bullocks and after sundry preparations have been made such as buying utensils, stores and many other things.

March 27, 1854: Started 81 a.m. with Hugh and charges picked up bullocks at Green Island, put on their packs at the Taieri Creek and went to Milne's. Next night to Tokomairaro.

30th: When crossing Tokomairaro plain met Mieville and two of his men to town when he is shortly to be married to Dr. Richardson's daughter, he is the occupant of the next run below mine on the south.

27th May : Mr. Mieville and his bride passed home from Dunedin.

6th June: Went to see my neighbours at Glenham, much pleased with Mrs. Mieville's air of contentment with her present circumstances, a mere shell of a small house, earthen floors, clayed walls still damp, but one apartment, *few* if any? comforts around her, no female, except natives, in the district and these twenty miles away—altogether a cheerless situation for a bride of nineteen. She is a spirited little woman and makes herself quite at home. M.'s sheep were dying of dissipation on Tutu in the morning.

15th November : Loaded the boat and started 7 a.m. to ascend the Matura with the full hope of achieving the opening of its navigation notwithstanding croaking predictions to the contrary at noon having sailed nearly all the way up the noble stream, were opposite the Tarpaulin at Titiroa some few miles higher the tideway' was passed and the current strong. Made about twenty miles easily, camped at a sandy point on left banks.

Jan. 3rd, 1855: Went over Flagstaff to Blueskin for sheep, found them shorn and ready for a start, counted them out on 4th and 5th started them for the south, returned myself by the Port.

6th : Trying horse with very little satisfaction to myself but to the great edification of the curious townspeople who crowded to the hill to see the fun.