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**FROM**

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**Letter from Mr. Edward Atkinson**

**Otago, New Zealand, Dunedin, June 13, 1848.**

My Dear Brother and Sisters,

In writing you from this far distant and far famed Country, you will no doubt expect a description far beyond what I can give. In the first place, we had a splendid passage from London to New Zealand, except in the Channel, where we worked about for three weeks or so. . . . We made the voyage in about 3 months and a half. We coasted along from Stewart's Island up to Tairoa's Head, at the mouth of the Otago Harbour. The appearance of the Country from the sea is rather barren, but on nearing the shore it undergoes a pleasing change. From the shore the land rises gradually in long wooded hills covered with grass and wood to the top. The Saddle Hill looks splendid, and is very fine for grazing cattle and sheep upon. You know when you come near the harbour from the appearance of the hill ; it resembles what it is named so very much. In coming off the Molyneux we fired two guns from our quarter-deck, thinking that some whale boat might put off and pilot us, as we were not altogether sure of the mouth of the harbour, but as no one made its appearance we passed on. In coming again towards the shore we thought we were in the direct channel from the aspect of Tairoa's Head, but took the precaution to fire other two guns and lay to, when, to our great joy, two boats came out, the one with Mr. Kettle and a crew of native whalers, the other with the Pilot and a crew of white men, but as we had gone too far to the north we were not able to get in, so dropt anchor outside the heads on a Wednesday in March, I am not sure of the date. On the following morning we hove anchor and sailed right up the harbour to Port Chalmers. . . . When we were outside, the natives came along in boats with quantities of fish, named Barachouta, very much resembling the salmon, and pitched them on deck to any one, and in return our people gave them biscuits or anything they thought proper. On going up the harbour the land is rather high and densely wooded to the top. Port Chalmers is beautifully situated for mercantile men, but Dunedin is the key to the interior, and splendidly situated for parties who intend to carry on agriculture, sheep farming and stock rearing. Ships from six to eight hundred tons can anchor close to the shore ; the John. Wickliffe, nearly seven hundred tons, lay there. . . . After we had been there a day or two, the doctor, a few others, and I went out to shoot pigeons ; We met old Fire, the Chief, and half-a-dozen of his tribe, sitting round a fire dressed in European clothes ; he made a bow, which we returned, and passed on. We got into the bush as they call it, but hush means forest, and came upon two natives sitting round a fire, roasting fish and potatoes. Feeling hungry we sat down and joined them, and in return gave them bread and cheese. After we left them, we lost ourselves in the bush in reality, for we could not find our way out, so we made up our minds to sleep in the bush for one night, and fixed on a spot with a deep gully all round, except on one side, kindled a fire, and set

watch to guard against any sudden attack, as we thought, but if we had known the natives we need not have taken that precaution. We had no blankets, so we lay down on the damp ground and slept soundly. Next morning we got on the surveyor's track and found Mr. W. and Mr. A....

the latter came from Wellington not long ago, and has got a considerable number of sheep and cattle on the Saddle hills. Mr. W. also comes from Edinburgh. It was he who surveyed the rural sections on the Molyneux, and he gives a splendid description of the land there about for agricultural purposes, and stock rearing. The coal field is large and very fine. . . . They (the natives) have no idea of fighting. . . . I have never seen a weapon in their hands since I came. They are all dressed in European clothing, and are very anxious to get work ; their wages are 2s 6d per day to the Company, and 3s to Settlers. They were very handy in getting up houses, &c., for the Emigrants when we first came; they know the value of money well ; they come into the Store for food, and speak good English considering. I know that many parties in Britain are frightened for the natives, but that ought to be the last thing they should bother their heads about, for I would rather go from Dunedin to Molyneux than through the streets of Edinburgh at night ; if you believe me the white men are more to be dreaded in New Zealand, for their bad principles and trickery, than the blacks.

The climate of the country is certainly very fine, beyond all doubt, for European constitutions ; for my own part, if I had suffered the same privations in Britain, as I have done in New Zealand, it must have been my death, what with sleeping in the bush, and wet nearly up to the middle for six or eight hours at a time, and yet without the slightest injury to my health ; let the labour be what it may through the day, you get up next morning quite invigorated ; in fact I thought the voyage was a great means of restoring my health. To parties not strong, the air here is pleasant, and there is something light and exhilarating in it ; it does not create that tickling sensation in the throat you experience in Britain, which, I think, is often the means of bringing on consumption and other diseases. This is the winter season and we can sit in the house with the door open. In the morning I have often gone out with nothing but trowsers and boots on, and gun over my shoulder, to get a shot at the ducks. . . . Pigs thrive well from the great quantity of fern root they eat ; they are never put in styes, but allowed to roam about ; we very much want a good breed of English pigs • they are quite easily brought out, and should have plenty of water on board ship. Any one coming out who can afford it ought to bring a Clydesdale horse and Ayrshire bull and cow, and get broad canvas belts made to sling them in when the ship rocks. An improved breed of sheep will be of importance, say Leicester and Cheviot for wool, and black-faced for mutton. Beef is now selling at sixpence and sevenpence per lb., I never tasted anything like it in Britain. Plenty of grass seeds must be brought, and be sure and exclude them from the air. Cuttings of fruit trees ought to be brought. All should be packed in air-tight cases to exclude air and damp, and on landing, opened immediately and put into the earth. Bring a great quantity of garden seeds of all kinds. Turnip and cabbage grow to an immense size. The following articles are of great service:—Good strong spades ; augurs from an inch to two inches across the mouth for fencing ; axes, there is no axe better adapted for cutting New Zealand wood than the American bill-hook, it is of great service for clearing land for the plough ; pit saws ; whit saws ; and cross-cuts, and files for ditto, saws being of no use without them ; needles and thread ; small blocks for boat masts ; real navies boots (as they are called) laced up the front, with nails in them ; strong knit socks ; strong corduroy and moleskin trousers for the country, nothing better for the bush; Glengarry bonnets best for the bush ; a good broad belt with buckle better than braces for the bush ; blankets are very dear, what we can get in Britain for 12s or 16s are here 30s to 40s; a good sized camp oven for baking bread, which is baked the same as in the North of England ;

carbonate of soda is from 4s to 6s per lb.; a good churn for making butter ; stable buckets for bringing water ; tin dishes and common crockery very dear. Bring a great quantity of shingle nails, and all other kinds. Shingle nails are sold from 6d to 2s per lb. Gunpowder, shot and caps useful, but on these you have 30 per cent. to pay of duty at the port. Bring a good pair of Skye terriers to keep down rats. Paint brushes and trowels ; iron wedges and sledge hammers for splitting wood for fences are wanted. A flour mill would pay in a year or two. Sheep shears bring out. Red ocre, a small quantity for sawyers. Tanning would pay very well. Straw hats, the same as I got from Burnett, on the South Bridge, Edinburgh. Shoemakers' rosin and thread. Boots that can be bought in Britain for 10s and 12s are not to be had here for less than 18s and 21s. A pocket compass—rope for boats' masts, wanted. Tackets for navies' boots of great use. Table salt, starch, blue and soda, very dear. Cabin biscuits same as mine sell very well, (fine water biscuit.) Oatmeal is in great demand. Some good pick axes with broad and sharp ends, for grubbing out fern and flax roots, handles not of much consequence. Some steel pens, writing paper, and ink—common tin lamp for fitting into candlestick, lamp, and candle wick, very useful. Common tea and tablespoons, knives and forks, common tin teapots, and hooks for cutting corn would pay for a short time. Cast metal tea kettles would pay. Three or four pronged grapes very useful. Overhaws for going after cattle, and agricultural implements of all kinds, will be in demand. Good grubbing hoes very serviceable for cleaning purposes, as in many cases we cannot afford a plough. Bring also lucifer matches, round wooden boxes the best ; door hinges, cheapest you can get ; and two or three cases of large headed pipes, but they must be cheap, from a wholesale house.

In stating the above mentioned articles, it is for the purpose of shewing you what is really wanted in the colony,' and supposing anyone was to bring them they would pay. Captain Cargill has appointed me storekeeper. I feel thankful that I left Britain, because I see that, if a man keeps steady, and industrious, he will attain more in five years, than he would in twenty, at home ; parties who have no wish to indulge immoderately in intoxicating liquors, with the assistance of Providence, could not but get on. I shall not say to any to come out here as all depends upon their own conduct. On board of ship, you have everything you require, but you may take some preserves and pickles if convenient, two good pillows and a mattress, as the ship's ones are too thin, sheets and blankets, a tin wash-hand basin, a little frying pan and goblet, cinnamon, arrowroot and sago, and a few cabin biscuit ; mine were put below and only got at on arrival, but I sold them for 7s per stone, cost 3s 6d; also take a little oatmeal, you will find a relish for it. Be sure and take care with whom you associate ; be attentive and clean ; keep near you some books, as well as your brush and comb, knives, forks, and spoons ; and purchase marine or salt-water soap. If it is possible to send the Seraphine, do so, and I will pay the freight. The vessel sails to-morrow, so my time is short. The dog is my constant companion and very useful in the store. Remember me to all parties kindly at home, and living in the hopes of seeing you with God's assistance,—I am, &c.

Mr. Atkinson was a John Wickliffe passenger.