

South, Horwood Hawkes Bay

New Zealand

18th June 1910

Dear Mrs Armstrong.

As my old friend does not care much for writing I am taking the liberty of addressing a few lines to yourself. Since I wrote to you last which is a considerable time ago, I am glad to say we have been in the best of health and well enough off which I hope is your case also. Some time back my wife and self went for a holiday to the northern part of this Island to see the sights at Rotorua where there are boiling springs, steam jets coming up out of the earth geysers and other wonders. You must know that now a railway runs through the length of the North Island from Wellington in the south to Auckland in the north.

We took the train here in the morning and by travelling all day and I might say all night arrived at Frankton Junction here one branch goes to Auckland and the other to Rotorua.

We took the latter and before night came in sight of the town and the lake which is six or seven miles in diameter has in its centre a high rocky island of say a few acres. The train by which we arrived was pretty full but we managed to get good accommodation at 30/- a week. In the morning a small party of us went to have a look round, there are many fine houses public and private broad streets 44 yards wide and in some a row of trees on each side of the street, the soil is of a light volcanic nature and the place is clean. We walked into the well kept, well laid out gardens beautiful lawn tennis

and croquet lawns, asphalt paths, trees and flower beds and a Commodious sanatorium for Consumptives erected by the government. One of the first things we noticed was a small pond of 30 yards or so across in the middle of which was a large rock and out of one end of the rock there came cold water and out of the other there rushed boiling water and steam, afterwards we found this to be quite common - boiling water and cold to be not far apart. There are many buildings in these grounds for the use of rheumatic invalids and others, in the buildings there are baths of various temperatures, there are also open air outside baths, known by many names, for instance there is the "Postmaster" an outside warm mineral bath where dozens can bathe at the same time, screened off of course. There are the "Kens" bath, the "Rachael" bath &c private, in the building, and these baths are the chief attraction from all parts of New Zealand for invalids and those who are troubled with rheumatics. On the outskirts of the town there are many Maori houses, a large hall church or meeting-house carved wooden figures everywhere a cemetery &c, there are many boiling springs to be seen hereabouts deep holes four or five yards across full of clear perpetually boiling water, we saw kits of potatoes and other Maori food being cooked. In another direction we came to boiling mud-holes, the colour of the mud was chocolate always boiling, a continuous cluck cluck cluck could be heard many yards away, this and the noise of the hissing steam close by made some of the ladies in our party feel timid, these boiling mud springs are situated in scrub six or eight feet high, there are narrow paths

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through the scrub from one spring to the other and on one side of a path there is a boiling spring and on the other a spring of cold water. After going through the scrub we came to where a Maori was digging potatoes, his house was near by and within six yards of his door there was a boiling well of clear water and a small stream running from it.

The owner of the accommodation house where we stayed has a steam launch on Lake Rotorua, our party went across the lake with him and after landing walked through what you would call a wood on to a creek of beautiful cold water up which we went in a punt to where there was a high bank and underneath the bank there is a powerful spring three or four yards across which supplies the creek with water, there are many pennies on the edges of this well, the water comes up with such force that coins will not sink in it, most of us had a drink of this clear spring water, nearly all tourists visiting Rotorua have a look at this well, At another place further on we saw a peculiar cave and a waterfall and after this we reckoned we had seen enough for one day.

Nineteen out of twenty tourists visiting Rotorua must do what is called the "Round Trip" and without doubt there are some wonderful scenes here. There are coach loads of people I may say the year round who go the trip a distance of 27 miles round one lot go the right hand way and another lot take the left, they meet and pass each other half way on the journey and go back to Rotorua in their respective coaches. We took the right hand side along a good road, went past high fern clad hills

Saw a great many acres of young trees planted by prisoners
a few wild horses but no houses, it is Moari land of middling
quality. At the end of fifteen miles we came to a tea house
where the Government Guide resides and beyond this there is
nothing but rough barren barren country, the coaches cannot
get any further, we are on very high ground and get a good
view of the surrounding country, away in the distance we see
~~we see~~ the monster mount Tereverea that in 1886 was responsible
for terrible havoc in this neighbourhood, there was an eruption
one end of the mountain was blown up, red hot stones mud
&c covered the adjacent country, a Moari pah & its occupants
was buried the noted white and pink terraces destroyed, a
building miles away - McRay's hotel demolished, a man
named Bainbridge killed - an English visitor, a portion
of the building fell on him before he could get clear, the noise
was heard here in Hawkes Bay, it was like the discharge of
cannon. From the high ground on which we stood we saw before
us a wide barren valley on each side of which was high rugged bare
mountains, on these were sharp-topped ridges and gutters eight
or ten feet deep between and these deep gutters the Guide informs
us was caused by the action of the rain washing the mud off the
hills down into the valley. The rain of mud at the time of the big
eruption got this far but not to where the tea house stands.
The first curiosity we noticed from our high ground was a small
green - deep green lake some hundreds of feet down below,
we then descended after our guide and soon got into a region of
warm water and steam, by making a hole in the sand with

walking stick steam would emerge. ⁵ We came to what is called
the "Frying pan", an acre or so of level sandy looking soil, on it
is an inch or two of bubbling boiling water making a noise
resembling water or fat being boiled in a pan over a hot fire.
Close by is the "Grid iron" - a patch with low bars and shallow
boiling water. Between them, a little further on the most wonderfu-
sight of all is to be seen, it is the famous "Blow Hole", here a
vast column of steam comes roaring up out of the earth,
which can be heard half a mile away. It would make you
think there were a number of stokers down below working
some powerful machinery and sending up this tremen-
dous force of steam, it continues for eight minutes and ceases
for six then starts for another eight and quieters for six and
so on all the year round. The wet ground we walked on was
moist and watery and the soles of our feet were hot. Further
on is Waimangu some time ago famous for its Geysers. A
party of tourists going past here, two sisters more venturesome
than the others went on dangerous ground at the wrong time,
the geyser blew up and overwhelmed them and the guide who
tried to bring them back from danger. Our guide pointed out
the spot where the bodies were found half a mile from where
the accident occurred in a channel, now dry, where the con-
tents of the geysers rushed down. Further on we came to
Lake Rotomahana and here we met the crowd who had
just disembarked, the ones who had taken the left hand track
from Rotorua in the morning. We embarked on the launch
they had just left, we exchanged guides and went on our way

Lake Rotomahana is deep and the water over except near the bank where the over-casting steam issues, here for some yards is in front the bank the water is boiling and foaming, the only sign of life was a few wild ducks on the lake, all was silence and desolation, after crossing we walked up a steep ridge and waited for our guide to rejoin us, he pointed out where the Moari pah and 138 moari's lie buried in I don't know how many feet of stones and mud, the site of the pink & white terraces either blown up or covered. This is a disputed point, and mount Tarewera looked as if one could reach it in fifteen minutes and yet it was several miles away. There it stood with one end missing, blown up and distributed years ago. We followed our guide over hard cinders cinders scoria and what was belched forth from the mountain on to another lake - Tarewera and after crossing this we said good bye our guide, his house is here the only one in the neighbourhood. Another guide met us and after we had refreshed at a teahouse showed us over the "Buried Township". Here is the remains of McRay's hotel, the site of where a church stood, the remnants of some Moari huts &c. There seems to be a depth of ten feet of mud in and about the place, but grass trees and scrub grow on it now. Beyond here we found the coaches awaiting us and coming along a fairly good road we passed the blue lake on our left & on our right high fernclad mountains then another lake to the left and a continuation of the monster green mountains and valleys until we got within a few miles of Rotomua and this ended our "Round Trip". The weather was perfect, sunshine & calm.

On the following day we visited Whakarewarewa two miles outside Rotorua, a great many Maoris here strong and healthy looking one wonders how they live, they require no fires to cook with for there is an abundance of boiling water, there are nice tracks up and down - the place is uneven - leading from one object of wonder to another. On one piece of high ground there is oozing from below a chalky substance perfectly white and slowly spreading, it is supposed to be the initial stage of the formation of a white terrace, at another place there is an upheaval of clear boiling water to a height of twelve or fourteen feet this goes on continually, here a photographer is at work taking groups of friends near the steam & boiling fountain. At another place amongst smooth water-worn rocks the boiling water is ejected only at intervals, a Roman Catholic priest had a good gaze down here whilst it was quiet, he hadn't gone more than a few seconds when up flew the boiling water with its usual force, had he remained only a little longer he would have come in contact with the most unwholesome water he ever felt in his life. Outside this place there is level ground and a sheet of shallow water continually on the boil, there are also hot baths for visitors & the usual charge - 6 and 9 and so on.

One meets some nice friendly people in their travels, an affection springs up, my wife corresponds with some of our Rotorua fellow travellers. There are tourists from all parts of N. Z. and Australia, some from England and America. During our stay of a week we were not favoured with a view of a proper geyser & work, sometimes one of these burst up & rises several hundred feet.

We now thought we had seen enough of Potomua, it was my wife's second visit, and you my dear lady ~~are~~ is getting tired of boiling water mud and steam. I can only give a feeble description of the place and do it in a roundabout way. We went to Auckland and stayed there a week. It is the largest town in New Zealand a splendid harbour fine buildings - museum + public library electric tramcars running in all directions, much business done. We were not sorry to get back home and see the sheep and cattle again. I purchased an additional 40 acres last year. We have now 800 sheep 40 head of cattle + 5 horses.

I was glad to get the "Irish Weekly Times" which you sent me, a letter from you I would highly treasure. How is your family? Is your son still at Belmont? Is the country prosperous? Are the people more loyal than they used to be?

New Zealand in this respect is like a part of England.

Is there much or any frozen mutton used in Dublin?

The price of fat stock has been low here this season. 15/- was the highest price I got for fat wethers a good deal of wool on them too and 12/- for fat ewes. We are close on the shortest day - the 22nd June and the weather is good. We mean to milk 30 cows for the factory this coming season, we must employ help. Boy milkers get from 10/- to 15/- a week and board, men 25/- and 30/- men working by the day are paid 8/- and sometimes 9/- and 10/- when finding themselves.

And now my dear friends I must conclude + remain

Yours faithfully
Sam^l Brabazon