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For Andrew Anderson

Awhea (?)
 Martinborough
 June 4th 1895

My dear old mate

Your letter I duly received a few days ago & I was pleased to hear from you again. You made a fine job this time of the news you collected a fine lot & some of it was surprising as well as interesting. You had one big winter of storm. I am sure it won't be forgotten for a long time. I suppose the hay was a great price last spring. Hay doesn't trouble the people in this island. Cattle & horses are outside both summer & winter. The grass grows all the year round.

You are under the impression then that the flood you had would beat the New Zealand floods but I am afraid not. There's no rocks to be seen in the rivers here or anything else nothing but clay & sand. Sometimes here a whole valley is flooded but they are so used to it! In my last letter I mentioned something of the intense heat we had all the time & the want of water but now being winter it is raining nearly every second day. There's plenty of water everywhere but the most of it is quite thick so you have to look round for clear water. There's no such thing as a spring of water to be seen anywhere.

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Re the contents of your letter I am pleased to hear of the old society(?) being in a flourishing condition. I see my old opponent Hugh Campbell is still holding up with the Land League. It was good of these learned men to give the lectures. I am sure I would enjoy it very much if I was there but my debating days are over I am afraid. Well I hardly know where to begin with news. I must look over your letter & see what there is you want to know. Well in the first place I must say something of the Maories. Of course you are aware of the no. of Maories in N Zealand. There's any amount of them here. They are not to be trusted much. The best way to be on good terms with them is not to trust them & then you won't get disappointed but after all they are very kind to strangers. They never use knives or forks at meals but they always give them to white people when they call on them. You can never catch one of them out after dark. They are afraid of Tipo(?) that means the devil. They are very fond of eels(?) & the root of the fern tree & they eat also the heart of trees called Nee Co(?) & cabbage tree. All these trees are pretty & grow to a height of 18 or 20 feet high. Also the berries of trees called Mirie(?) & Totara(?). I must send you a letter again describing the kind of trees here. The Maories never think of home culture. They enjoy to see a man build a bridge. They say the white man build a bridge for the black man to cross. They think the white man their slave when he does anything to the benefit of the Maories.

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When building such a thing as a prison they say look at the foolish white man building a prison for himself to be put into – I was one day in summer time passing along a road & I saw 4 Maorie women weeding potatoes & they were sitting on the ground quite content. It's the women that does the little work there is to do. You won't catch the men doing much at any time. I am learning their language fast. I must give you a word or two of it. Tan ack way (good day to you) Capoy wynne means good girl Pickaninnie (a child) of course I spell the words my own way for you to understand better. They are as a rule very dirty in their habits. They always pray to their own god to kill all the white people so that they will get their land back again because before you would get a large tract of land from them for a silver brooch a pair of earrings. Often Polly the daughter along with it & once yourself & Polly got married you did not care if Polly died next day & sometimes Polly was sent somewhere on an excursion but it always happened that Polly someway never returned that has often happened. I must stop of writing about the Maories I will send you a big description of them at some other time. You think Adam Henderson would beat the cowboys with their shooting but I am afraid not. They can take down birds quite easy with the rifle so that is not bad shooting. There's plenty parrots & parquets here like that fancy bird that Davie Bain had but I must not enter into a description of birds because it's too great to give it any justice here in

this letter. I think I gave you an idea of the land system here but I could write a volume on the laws of the land.

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Well in the first place there's one law here passed lately by one called Sir Robert Stout (he is a Skye man). This law is to this effect that any tract of land over 1000 acres in extent can be cut down to suit tenants or purchasers but one clause entitles the man from which the land was taken to expel them to buy up all his land. You will thus observe that the laws relating to land is ahead of the Highland land laws. You think the cowboy's life is grand but it is not so good as you think. They have some very rough riding to do at times. An ordinary good rider at home there would be no better than a child on horseback besides the cowboys. I am learning hard to crack the stock whip. I can do several different cuts with it now. I think I told you that the area of this run was 20,000 acres but I made a mistake. I meant 20,000 acres of cleared land. Now I don't know how many acres is under bush it's miles into the bush. I am getting plenty wild boars yet. I made a present of a nice pair of tusks yesterday. I will beat the whole of them now at the wild hunting. There's no a particle of fear left in me now. I got lost one day a week ago in the bush but came home about midnight. I hardly cared much for being in the bush at night especially alone but I am getting up to a tip or two now like what the black trackers use.

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Well it's a well known fact that the colonies are infested with rabbits but as far as this part of the country is concerned there's more rabbits in Gledfield. They are poisoned here they are at the winter poisoning now but I am told that in other parts of the country you could fire off a gun close your eyes at the same time & you would find a ? dead rabbits. We had a parson here one night lately giving us a sermon. The Boss had a christening so nearly all of us went to hear him. I had a long yarn with him. The parson belongs to Rothesay on the Clyde. He is newly back from having a tour home. There's plenty of people here that doesn't believe in a God & as for that you cannot convince them of it. Now I must describe my own stile of living. Well in the first place in the morning a bell rings at 6.30 to get up then goes again at 7 o'clock for breakfast goes again at 12 for dinner then at 5 for tea so you see we are pretty regular. We have a man cook he used to be a cook on one of the man o'wars so you see we get three meals a day but we can have tea & cake any time we like. Sunday is same as the other days except the morning bell which is an hour later. Now I must describe how we spend the Sunday. I never do anything myself unless I write a letter but nearly all the others are quite busy some away deer hunting others boar hunting perhaps pigeon shooting & the shepherds sometimes working among sheep

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or perhaps killing sheep & if not that out burning bush in any weather. Now if not doing anything out they are bussy washing their clothes. Every one has to wash & mend their clothes "eh" man what a change of things but we get used to it I suppose we have to. I may say Sunday is a very enjoyable day here. You mustn't think that it's the colonials alone that does that but Scotch Highlanders as well more to their shame. I don't like it myself. I am to try & get on one of their stations nearer the valley & people. As for books & papers I get plenty of them. Deadwood Dick's line of books are very much in vogue but although your papers are held in preference to any others you did grand one while you sent me two or three in succession but then you stopped till you sent me the one containing the report of "The Deer Forest Commission" which is grand. I must take care of it but send me papers although they would come three times a day. You asked if I was out in the hut yet. Well I was only a month out there. I am at the homestead long ago. We only get the mails every Tuesday. I get the Glasgow Mail regular every week from Wellington but there's not much north news in it. The Chronicle or Courier is best.

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How about bush fires man they are fine I got nearly burnt once myself. I got in someway & got almost surrounded by the fire which as you know travels at the rate of greased lightning but there are some grand fires to be seen in any weather! There's any amount of merino sheep here & to describe them I could not but if you would imagine how Auld Nick would look with a fleece of wool on his back you see a fair picture of a merino sheep. Wool grows on their feet & faces down to the point of their nose. They have

horns also. They are ugly looking things. Now if you could come across any of Rolf Bolderwood's works particularly "Robbery under Arms" or the "Squatter's dream" get a colonial edition by McMillan London. It describes very well colonial life & living. You may not understand the slang words or names in it but they are grand books for all that. Man Andrew if we would meet out here wouldn't we have a yarn on old times which as Burns says of the flakes of snow falling on water A moment there then gone for ever. You think that Ta Gaelic is nowhere but in Ta Hielands but man the next station to this one of a hundred thousand acres. There's nearly a dozen that can talk the Gaelic.

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I would like grand you would come out here. Anyone will not be afraid of coming here if he takes care of himself & conducts himself properly but man you would be wanting some grand job something toffish you know & you are past the age to begin the world. Man but I was surprised to hear of White's sister who would have thought it but tell me who is the Daddie of it. I suppose she will be tripping him up on the heels for his gevershan [Gaelic?]. Big Betty is kept bussy rearing up grandchildren. You never told me if McOmash got my letter be sure & tell me next time you write has he any word of getting a wife yet. Tell Maggie Wilson that the last information I got of her brother is that he was over 20 years ago keeping a hotel at the gold diggings of NZ. Now all that is in the south island & far from me but I intend going down there soon & will make every enquiry myself. I have no doubt but I will find out something about him. I found out all my own relations every one of them. All the money my Aunt left for them in London was never paid them so of course I gave them some of the particulars & none of them knew how to go about recovering it so they placed it in my own hands & I am to get half the amount

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for my trouble of course I made the thing more complicated than what it really is. I hope the half will amount to two or three hundred anyway. I'll work it so good as I can. Now I think I will turn back to the Maories & give you a few more of their words. Cap oye le Pockie ie means you are a good white man et tha come here. I will send you a big letter containing plenty of words again. As you desired to know as much as I could tell you about the Maories I'll try & send you some more information of their habits. Well nothing in the world pleases a Maorie more than to plead ignorant of everything & to praise anything belonging to them. They take great delight in showing you round their lands & even every corner of their houses & almost all they got of the world. They are not fond of saving money but they like gaudy dresses like our home people. There is one part of the country near Auckland called the King Country. There's Maories there that never seen a white man yet. There's another place not far from here called the Forty mile bush. This bush is 40 miles anyway you like to go through it. Well there's any amount of them to be found there. They are not very good at shooting but they use a thing called Boomarang. It's shaped like a half moon. They can throw it almost any distance they like hit anything & come straight back to them again.

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There is another great custom I must tell you of. Although you would meet one of them on the road & say good day he comes & shake hands with you though you were total strangers to one another, but when they are on very intimate terms they shake hands & rub their noses together but they only do that as a special mark of respect or affection. Of course you are aware that they go in very much for tattooing. Now to distinguish a single from a married woman is a woman when she gets married she has her lower lip tattooed. That's what they use instead of a ring on the finger. Their form of marriage I will describe in my next letter. So much for the Maories. Tell me are you still in the Academy or not. If you don't send me newspapers I will go straight home & give you a good flogging. Tell me what was wrong with Eliza when she wasn't well. What is White doing. What men & women have you got now I mean servants. Your relative Mr Matthew Henry stays at Palmerstone North not very far from here. I have not seen any of them yet. Might go that way sometime. I will be looking for a long letter again when you get this but write smaller & you can put more news in it. Kind love to your Grannie your Aunt Uncle & your noble self.

From yours very truly Donald Ross