

NEW ISLAND SCHOONER.

FOR THE COOK GROUP.

CHRISTENED BY THE GOVERNOR.

The christening of the new auxiliary screw three-masted schooner Countess of Ranfurly by His Excellency the Governor yesterday was a very interesting and pleasant ceremony. The Governor was attended by the Hon. Hill Trevor and Capt. Boscawen, A.D.C.'s, and there was a large attendance of ladies and gentlemen invited. The following is the list of invitations to the ceremony:—The Primate and Chaplain, Mrs Cowie, Canon Nelson, Mrs and Miss Nelson, Canon MacMurray, Dr. J. Logan Campbell (Mayor), Mrs Campbell, Mr and Mrs Kidd, Mr Wilson (town clerk), Dr. and Mrs Parkes, Mr and Mrs Thorne George, Misses Thorne George, Mr Moss Davis, Mrs and Miss Davis, Mr and Mrs N. A. Nathan, Rev. and Mrs Gillam, Mr and Mrs Bagnall, Mrs R. E. Isaacs and Miss Isaacs, Colonel and Mrs White, Mrs and Miss Boscawen, Mr and Mrs Kensington, Mr and Mrs H. Brett, Mr and Mrs Wilson, Mr and Mrs H. Horton, Mr and Mrs T. W. Leys, Mr and Mrs J. M. Brigham, Mr and Mrs Frank Dillingham, Mr George Dunnett, Miss Dunnett, Mr and Mrs T. F. Cheeseman, Mr and Mrs H. B. Morton, Mr and Mrs Seegner, Mr and Mrs Mueller, Mr and Mrs J. H. Upton, Professor Brown, Mr and Mrs Tibbs, Mr and Mrs Whitney, Mrs McBeth, Captain and Mrs J. R. Reed, Captain and Miss Reid, Mr and Mrs H. D. Heather, Dr. and Mrs Hope Lewis, Mr Alfred Walker, Mr and Mrs Edwards, Mr Rose (Collector of Customs), Captain Morrow, Mr Major Lane (builder of the schooner), Mr W. T. J. Beil, Capt. T. Clayton. Fifty-six boys from Stephen's Native School, Parnell, attended, under the manager, Mr J. Smith.

The native boys sang the 100th psalm in Maori, after which the Primate offered up prayer as follows:—
O Thou that sittest above the waters, and stillest the raging of the sea, accept, we beseech Thee, the supplications of Thy servants, for all who in this ship, now and hereafter, will commit their lives unto the perils of the deep. In all their ways enable them truly and godly to serve Thee, and by their Christian lives to set forth Thy glory throughout the earth. Watch over them in their going forth and in their coming in, that no evil befall them, nor mischief nigh to hurt their souls. And through the waves of this trouble-world, and through all the chances of this mortal life, bring them of Thy mercy to the haven of Thine everlasting kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord.

His Excellency then christened the schooner by breaking a bottle of champagne on the bow of the vessel. His Excellency said: "I name this schooner the 'Countess of Ranfurly.' It gives me very great pleasure to perform this ceremony at the special request of Makea Ariki and the other chiefs of Rarotonga. When the idea of building a schooner for the fruit trade of these islands was first considered, it was not known that the boundaries of this colony were to be extended to the islands, and therefore it may possibly be that this schooner is not to be used exactly for the purpose and in the manner in which it was originally intended. The intentions were that money should be borrowed somewhere—and the

New Zealand Government came forward when the money was required—for the purpose of building a schooner to carry fruit, and encourage fruitgrowing in some of the islands not regularly visited by steamers, and so enable the people, by the production of fruit, to reap some benefit by their labour. The Union Steamship Company, no doubt, considers the schooner has been built in direct opposition to them. Such is not the case. The schooner has been built in direct opposition to no one. It is purely for the purpose of gathering together the produce from the outlying islands, and, if necessary, to fill her time in, to carry certain cargoes to various ports of New Zealand. The people of Auckland naturally fear that the destination of the schooner may be Wellington. Well, possibly, on an odd occasion or two, it may be Wellington. It is necessary that this schooner should make as much money as is possible for the growers of the fruit, and wherever the market is likely to be best, I presume the fruit is to be sent. It is a well known fact that in the past two or three years the native growers of oranges and other fruit have sometimes been at a loss by growing their fruit and sending it to market. Much of that may be their own fault; it may be due to bad packing, to the want of grading, and to the bruising of the fruit when packing. But we know that the native will not continue to grow fruit if he is to be at a loss thereby. On the contrary, he expects to meet with some reward for his labours, and we must in some manner enable him to arrive at that position, so as to encourage production, and enable more money to pour into these Cook Islands. I, who have visited these islands on two, but too brief, occasions, can only inform you that they are most lovely islands, and that the Maoris who inhabit them are as nice a people as you could desire to meet. In naming this vessel I desire to wish her good luck, and I trust that she may carry out the purpose for which she was built, and that she may be a benefit to the inhabitants of the islands. To Captain Worsley, who is now taking charge, I wish God-speed and a prosperous time in the 'Countess of Ranfurly.'

At the conclusion of His Excellency's speech the boys of St. Stephen's School sang "God Save the King" in Maori, and at the call of Mr Alfred Kidd (Chairman of the Harbour Board) three cheers were given for the "Countess of Ranfurly."

The schooner then went down the harbour for half an hour's trial spin, under her oil engine, which worked very smoothly and well. The motive power is supplied by a Union oil engine (from Messrs W. A. Ryan and Co., the local agents), of 85 horse power, giving the vessel a speed of between 7 and 8 miles per hour. Mr R. Spinks, the firm's engineer, was in charge. There is also a very handy little winch on deck driven by the oil engine. Everything in the engine room ran freely and well, and about 4.35 o'clock the vessel was back at the Railway wharf with her excursionists. The St. Stephen's school boys enlivened the trip by singing a number of songs in chorus. On arrival at the wharf those on board were invited by His Excellency to the Harbour Board shed, where afternoon tea and light refreshments were provided.

The new schooner's dimensions are: Length, 115ft; beam, 25ft; depth of hold, 11ft; tonnage, about 195 tons. The frames are of pohutukawa and hardwood, and the planking of kauri.

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