

Nursing Echoes.

* * *All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith, and addressed to the Editor, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W.*



ON the 20th inst. Her Royal Highness Princess CHRISTIAN, President of the Royal British Nurse's Association, graciously granted an interview (upon her return to England from New Zealand) to Miss ANTOINETTE BIRCH, one of the earliest members of the Association. Her letter to us will, we feel sure, greatly interest her fellow-members.

DEAR EDITOR,—I now write to tell you that according to arrangement I went to the office of the Royal British Nurses' Association yesterday afternoon, when our President, H. R. H. the Princess Christian, gave me a most kind and gracious reception, and of which I shall always retain a most pleasant recollection. She was pleased to accept the specimens of the Natives' flax work, and desired me to have a message conveyed to them of how very much gratified she felt at receiving a present of their work, which message I have sent off to-day to a Mr. Camille Malfroy, one of the government officials at Rotorna, and also a chevalier of the Legion of Honour of France. I know that he will deliver the message better than anyone else there, and will have it translated into the Maori for them; it will indeed be a proud day for Tukaw Kimi and Pekeranzi Menehira, the day that they received a message to themselves from the Princess, the daughter of the Queen of England. The "Arawas," the tribe that live at Rotorna, have always been loyal to the English Government. I only hope in their joy they will not indulge in too much wai-piro, which is a failing of the Maoris. Now I will try and give you a short account of the very out-of-the-world place where I have been living for the past four years. Rotorna is not quite two hundred miles from Auckland, and being about a thousand feet above the sea level, possesses a very fine bracing climate. Until quite lately the journey from Auckland used to take two days, the first day by train and the second by coach, over a very rough road; indeed, a person must travel by it to really understand what it is like, but it passes through most lovely bush scenery, and when one is not too much occupied with holding on and looking out for the ruts and branches of trees laid across the road to fill up holes, one is filled with admiration. But last month the railway was completed right through to the township, which will be a great boon to the number of invalids who frequent the place, though I understand a coach will still run as formerly for tourists, who may wish to view the bush which is very beautiful. Rotorna is known as the Hot Lakes District, or Wonder Land of New Zealand, and abounds with boiling geysers of water and also of mud. Many of them have a most weird and uncanny appearance, and the smell of sulphur that pervades the whole of the place is at first very unpleasant, though in time one gets accustomed to it. At the Government Sanatorium, of which I had charge, in the gardens there was a geyser at a temperature of 212 degrees—that pool was used to supply a large swimming bath, known as the blue bath, on account of the colour of the water. Then also in the grounds there is an alkaline pool with a temperature of 180, known as the Rachel Caldron, and which I am told has never been

fathomed. That is, conveyed in pipes to the bath-house, and is of great benefit in many cases of skin disease; then there is a Priest's Bath, which is sulphurous and strongly acid, and much used in cases of rheumatism; besides many others, and all of them possessing curative properties. It is quite a Maori population, there being only about a hundred and fifty Europeans altogether, consisting of Government officials, the work people, and the hotel, boarding-house, and store-keepers, with their families. Of course, in such a place it is very difficult to get domestic servants, one always having to send to Auckland for them; and, having to engage them without a personal interview, they often prove unsatisfactory, though, on the whole, I was very fortunate. My cook I had for four years, which used to rather astonish people. In the laundry I had two Maoris, a mother and daughter, named respectively Maramina and Pipi, who used to take it in turns to come—for the Maoris will only work when they feel inclined—one could speak a little English, the other none at all; so you can imagine, I used to have some droll interviews, and used to have to make constant visits to the laundry, and insist upon "plenty water, plenty rub," or else the things would have been put into the copper straight off. But the climate and the life they generally lead make them not care to work, and their wants are few. Pig, known as Captain Cookers, and potatoes, satisfy them, the pork in one kit or flax bag, and the potatoes in another, placed in a natural hot hole, and taken out when cooked, is a very easy way of preparing a meal. They are a very hospitable people and would share all they had with a stranger, but they expect the same in return; and often I would find that the husband and children had come for the day with the one who had come to do the work (those I used to welcome and send food out to) but I used to draw the line at cousins, though I got on with them all very well; and when I used to go to the native settlements near they all used to welcome 'Te Whine,' as they used to call me, which meant 'The Lady.' But one cannot employ them in the house, as they are not at all neat in their ways or punctual. Often when I have wanted to fix a time with some of them to come and see me at the Sanatorium, with regard to things that they have wanted, I have been met with the reply, 'Oh! wait, me come,' but the Maoris have no time. But I fear I must tire you, so will conclude, though in everyday life with such people one is always meeting with droll sayings and doings.—Believe me, yours faithfully,

ANTOINETTE BIRCH."

* * *
WE draw attention in our Editorial this week, to the principal events which have transpired in the Nursing world during 1894, feeling sanguine that the good work thus recorded is but the shadow of coming changes and successes in our profession, to be accomplished in the near future, if we Nurses are only true to ourselves.

* * *
WE would draw the attention of our readers to the important letters, in this week's issue, headed the "Midwife Question" and the "Massage Question." With regard to the former, we have only to add that the fact of the uncle of one of the most active members of the Midwives' Institute, having acted as Chairman of the Select Committee to which the House of Commons referred this question, greatly depreciated the influence of its decisions upon all professional people; and that our views remain that Midwives, pure and simple, are an anachronism, that Midwifery adopted as a speciality by thoroughly-trained Nurses is a useful branch of

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)