

Bevin Gee

Contributed by Lachlan
Sunday, 22 July 2007

Dearest Mei-Ling,
I am well and I hope you are too so please don't worry about me.
As I said in my last letter, I arrived at Port Nicholson and headed south to Tuapeka in the South Island.
It was a great surprise when I got to Tuapeka, Poh-poh wasn't lying at all!
There really IS a Chinese camp and it's called "Lawrence Camp". The camp is settled by Chinese people and not only that, but it is also close to the Tuapeka river where the source of gold is.
You remember Xu Koon Fay from Primary School don't you?
Well, he is here too! I met him at the grocery store the other day when I went there to buy food. He was joyful and excited to see me there and now he is more than a friend but my companion as well. I am glad Fay is here to share this adventure with me as I don't know anyone else and he also keeps me company.
I have found work at the camp. I work at Mr. Chins Market garden, which isn't too far away from my bunkroom and am working there till I can afford a pan to mine for gold.
So far, I've managed to save up L9 so I still have a wee while to go till I've reached my target, which is L12.
Although the pay is moderate and the weather isn't too bad either, there is one thing about Mr. Chin.
Mr. Chin is a homosexual, which means that he is attracted to the same sex.
Imagine that, a homosexual amongst a Chinese community! At first, it didn't worry me too much but whenever he looks at me, it sends shivers down my spine. I hope to save up L3 more so then I can buy the gold pan and start my fortune and look for gold.
Being in New Zealand makes me feel as if I've fallen asleep and then woken up to find myself in another world. So many new things to learn, do and see about these "Pak-Gwey", especially their customs and the food they eat. Their customs and traditions are very different from ours.
I also met what they call a "Maori". A "Maori" is a person like us but his skin is darker than ours and he has feathers in his hair, clothes made out of flax and a name in which I can't pronounce no matter how many times I try! They seem nice people though, but their children are a bit wild and the women have marks under their chins.
In the camp, A-Pok has set up a gambling store where you can play Mah-Jong and buy Lottery tickets. Fay has earned a lot of money from playing Mah-jong. He's so good at it, he may be better than you!
Just the other day, I went mining with Fay and while he got nothing, I found a gold nugget the size of my thumb! I was so happy!!! I went down to Dunedin and exchanged it for some money. The money that you have found in this envelope with this letter is for you to buy a ticket so you can come to New Zealand and be here right beside me till the day I die, but make sure, Mei-Ling, that you have L100 as there is now a Poll Tax for Chinese immigrants arriving into New Zealand.
I am tired now, and the kerosene lamp is fading away slowly.
I will write to you soon and keep on sending you the money I find through the gold mining.
Your beloved husband,
Wing-Wah.