

NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST WRITTEN LANGUAGE.

A Rare and Valuable Manuscript
of 1840. *Kendall's*
Grammar was published 1820.
(FOR THE NEW ZEALAND FREE LANCE.)
1. 2. 1929.

AN old manuscript book of nearly 300 pages, the actually first transcription of the Maori language, is the property of a Manawatu settler who intends to deposit it for safe keeping in the Turnbull Library.

It is the handwriting of Professor Samuel Lee of Cambridge University, who wrote the sounds from the dictation of Hongi and another Maori from Waikato. They were accompanied by Mr. Kendall, who translated the words to the Professor.

Two interesting features of this unique treasure are the delicate calligraphy of the old-time scholar, in which there is not a single error, omission, or erasure, and the fact that this copy was the first ever written. In this, the whole English alphabet was used, whereas in the same month Professor Lee discovered that the proper sounds could be produced by discarding no less than 13 of our letters. Thus he made the simplest written language in the world, and one to which no subsequent alteration or improvement could be given.

A connoisseur hazards the opinion that the unique manuscript would command a very high figure if submitted to the competition of treasure hunters in London; but the owner desires that it should be held for the generations of New Zealanders who will appreciate it more and more as the years go by.

