

Monday, 23rd.—I started early this morning with a force of 130 armed men in six large canoes. There was evidently a gloom hanging over them—they paddled lustily enough, but there was no singing, no chaffing, none of that exuberant excitement which usually prevails amongst Maoris congregated in numbers, especially when engaged upon an expedition attended with danger. Our programme was first to proceed to the appointed place of meeting with Pehi, and then to take the prisoners. On passing Tawhitinui, where the chief Te Raimona was, Hori Kingi, who was sitting behind me, said, in a low tone of voice, almost a whisper, “Petatone, my heart is very dark about my children, especially about Te Raimona. This is the first time I have passed this place without calling; the hearts of all the chiefs and their people are dark, very sad this morning.” Hori Kingi here paused and sobbed bitterly, and then continued, “So sad are the hearts of all of us about these prisoners that many of our people prayed this morning that they might be excused from joining this expedition. These prisoners you have said are the Queen’s prisoners, and must be surrendered to the Queen. We come with you to take the prisoners, and we shall take and surrender them all into your hands. But still our hearts are sad because of these prisoners. They are our friends and nearest relatives; but we shall take and give them up to you.” This is simply a *precis* of Hori Kingi’s appeal. To understand and appreciate its pathos every word must have been heard and the speaker seen. I replied that the Governor alone had the power to pardon the prisoners; that my duty was simply to insist upon their being surrendered to me; that they had been taken fighting against the Queen, and were rebels liable to a severe punishment, but, “Hori Kingi, so fully do I recognise the services you have rendered, and the reason why all your hearts are dark, that I promise this—if you and the other chiefs will write to Governor Grey, explaining the services you have rendered, how in your successful attempt to protect your Pakeha friends you have fought against and killed your relatives and friends, and how you have further shown your loyalty by surrendering the prisoners, and will then ask the Governor to grant a free pardon to the prisoners, I will as strongly as I can back your request, and I don’t think Governor Grey will refuse our united prayer, and until Governor Grey’s answer is received I promise that the prisoners shall not be removed from Wanganui, and that the wounded amongst them shall be sent to the hospital and treated as kindly as the friendly ones.”

The old chief’s eyes glistened with delight; he sprang up and hailed the five canoes in advance to stop, and then as soon as they were all close together, he did not repeat our conversation, but simply gave them in a few words the slightest possible hint of what had taken place between us. But this was quite sufficient; the gloom which had hung over them instantly disappeared; a cry of joy burst from the whole of them, and off they started, plying their paddles with tenfold vigour; and there was no longer silence, but the usual cries and songs resounded from every canoe.

On arriving at Peterihama (Bethlehem), Hori Kingi came up to me and said, “You must keep in the middle of us.” Here we found Pehi accompanied by no great number of followers. The chief of the pa (Paroa) is said to be loyal, and if I don’t mistake is an assessor, though his talk did not appear to me to be very satisfactory. The *korero* began by Pehi asking whether we intended to insult him by not partaking of his hospitality. We at once relieved his mind by assuring him that we were quite ready (we saw a bullock just killed before us) to do justice to anything he might have prepared. In a very short space of time we partook of a sumptuous repast of stewed beef and potatoes.

After a *tangi* of no long duration had been performed, Hori Kingi got up and addressed the meeting. I ought to mention that he and Pehi never approached within ten yards of each other. Hori’s speech was simply one of salutation. Pehi replied in a similar strain, but deprecated in the strongest possible terms the conduct of Matene and his fanatics, whom he designated as “mad dogs.” After he had sat down, Hori Kingi said to me, “You must get up and broach the subject of the prisoners,” to whom neither he nor Pehi had made the slightest allusion, though they were uppermost in the thoughts of each. They both knew it was delicate ground, and most diplomatically avoided treading upon it. I reminded Pehi of the visit I had paid to him and Hori Patene in September, 1862, at Pipiriki; recalled the pledges they had then given me that they would not allow the peace of the Wanganui river to be disturbed; expressed my regret that after what Hori Patene had then said to me that he should have gone to Tataramaika and there fallen, for that there was no chief in whose word and good faith I had ever reposed more implicit confidence; admitted that Pehi had so far fulfilled his promise to me that he had done his uttermost to dissuade Matene and his followers from making their recent raid, but that I could give him credit for nothing more; that he had hitherto stood on “the outside,” and had rendered no active support to the Government; that the time had now arrived when he must declare himself; that it was always better in time of war to have an open enemy than a doubtful friend; that when the house was set on fire, as the Wanganui river had been by Matene and his “mad dogs,” as he (Pehi) had called them, the Governor could only regard those who sat idly by without making any attempt to extinguish the flames as something worse than doubtful friends; but that the Government did fully recognise and appreciate the conduct of the friendly natives engaged in the recent conflict, who had at the sacrifice of their lives endeavoured to extinguish the fire. “You, Pehi, must declare on which side you are; you can no longer be permitted to stand on the outside.” I then told him I intended to take the prisoners down to Wanganui with me, and the promises I had made in regard to them to Hori Kingi and the other friendly chiefs. Pehi replied that “as the prisoners had not been taken in battle, they belong to me; your share is the great number killed,” and then made an appeal to Hori Kingi to this effect—“If you will assist me in preventing these prisoners being taken to Wanganui, I promise that henceforth there shall be peace between us and between our people.” Hori Kingi, without replying to him, whispered to me, “Who believes him? He has said nothing; what guarantee can we have that Pehi will keep his word?”

I reminded Pehi that instead of assisting the friendly natives in repelling Matene and his fanatics, he had himself kept out of the way, while most of his people had joined Matene, and had taken part in the engagement at Moutoa; that it was absurd in him or any chief to lay claim to men taken prisoners while fighting against the Queen. Pehi made several more appeals to the friendly chiefs and to myself to be allowed to keep the prisoners, but when I finally told him that it was no use talking more about them, that I had come up to take them, and take them I would, he got up in a state of considerable excitement and said, “If you take the prisoners, I follow you down the river *quickly*,” and so ended the