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NATIVE MEETING AT WAITARA.

HISTORY OF THE KING MOVEMENT.—PREPARATIONS BEING MADE.

THE Native meeting to be held at Waitara is for the purpose of "burying the hatchet," the "rubbing of noses," and a general reconciliation on all sides. Rewi would not have come to that historical spot to meet Sir George Grey unless he had thoroughly made up his mind to renounce his allegiance to the Maori King; and there is little doubt but that the brave old warrior will express his mind in pretty clear language as to his reasons for renouncing a league of which for many years he was such a staunch supporter. Many of the old Maori chiefs have lived to see that the King league was a mistake. The movement doubtless arose from an innocent love of imitation—the romantic idea of a king presenting the strongest attraction to the Maori fancy. For a considerable time it was purely local in its character, being either ridiculed or frowned on by the neighbouring tribes. Indeed, those most conversant with the Maori disposition were of opinion that the movement could not spread beyond certain circumscribed limits, inasmuch as the prevalent tribal jealousies would present an insurmountable barrier to its progress. Their experience, however, was at fault. The confederation of powerful tribes under the Maori King league became largely augmented; and, in place of the harmless display of imitation royalty that was expected, *runangas* were continually held throughout the length and breadth of this Island. These repeated *runangas* had the effect of powerfully exercising the Native mind; and under the harmless device of a white flag with red crosses, and the cry of "Our King Potatau," subjects of the gravest import to the colony at that time were discussed and decided on. One of the strongest features in the effect of those councils was the evident determination to oppose the sale of land to the Government. Indeed, this was one of the professed objects of this Maori combination. One by one the tribes which had hitherto treated the subject with derision caught the "King mania," and joined in the ranks of the royalist until the movement had extended over the greater portion of the northern Island. It was about at its strength when Ihaia sold his land at the Waitara to the Governor, and Wiremu Kingi, who claimed a sort of "manorial right" over the land, forbade its sale. The Governor, supported by his Ministers, took a very firm stand, and in unmistakable language told Wiremu Kingi that neither he nor any other chief or leader of a tribe would be allowed to trample on the right of minor chiefs—that he would not be permitted to prevent any of those lesser chiefs from selling lands of which they (the sellers) were the sole owners. Backed by the King party, Wiremu Kingi tested the question with the Europeans by force of arms, and then followed a series of years, which have been termed very appropriately the "wretched past." The Natives as well as the Europeans have learned a lesson by that "wretched past," and it is to be hoped that, having done so, they will profit by it in the future.

On visiting the Waitara yesterday we were surprised to find that the Natives who are expected to take part in the meeting had not yet put in an appearance, and that, beyond the Natives who permanently reside in the township, the Maori element was conspicuous by its absence. On making inquiries, the main reason for this appeared to be that a grievous blunder had been committed in the accommodation provided for the Native visitors. The house which had been erected for them near the railway station had, for some cause or other, been put on a site which, to say the least, is of a decidedly moist character, it being ankle deep in water. The Maoris naturally object to this, saying, that there are places in the township which would have been far more suitable than that which has been chosen. Rewi has also expressed himself as very dissatisfied with the arrangement. With a view to remedy the evil, drains have been cut, and these have carried off a large body of water; but the "Government House" is still far more suggestive of rheumatism than of hospitality.

It seems a great pity that more care was not exercised in providing suitable accommodation for those who are meeting together on perhaps the most important occasion in the history of the settlement. We are informed that application has been made for tents to be provided for the Natives, but whether these will be furnished or not we are unable to say. In all probability a fresh site for the camp will be chosen on the bank of the river in the vicinity of the Waitara Rowing Club's boat-shed. The Waitara Natives very much regret that two camps had not been formed, one on each side of the river, so that the Waikato and Taranaki tribes might be kept apart, as, owing to old feuds between these two sections of the Maori race, they very much fear that, if brought into close proximity to each other, there may be trouble.

It is said that, at both Urenui and Waihi, about four miles from Waitara, there is a large number of Natives, including Rewi and Te Wetere in their number, the latter chief having, within the last few days, visited Waitara several times. These two bodies of Natives are expected to enter Waitara this morning at 10 a.m.

A brief description of the houses erected for the Natives may be interesting: The structure is erected on three sides of a parallelogram, and is 1,020 feet long, 8 feet high in front, 6 feet high at back, and 9 feet wide. It is roofed with corrugated iron, and contains 27 doors. The building is supposed to be capable of accommodating 500 Maoris. It was put up very expeditiously by the contractor, Mr. J. C. George; it being erected by eight men in a period of six days.

Mr. Baker has fitted up a large and comfortable office adjoining his store, for the accommodation of the Ministerial party; whilst Mr. Coombes, of Auckland, and Mr. W. R. King, of New Plymouth, have opened clothing stores; the former in the large store of Mr. Pennington next the Bank of New Zealand, and the latter in a house situated at the rear of Mr. Pennington's building.

The colonial steamer "Hinemoa" arrived yesterday afternoon at about 4 o'clock, after a somewhat rough passage of twenty-three hours. The passengers by her were Sir George Grey; Hon. Mr. Sheehan, Native Minister; Hon. Mr. Fisher, Mr. Moorhouse, M.H.R., Wi Tako, Hon. Hoani Nahe, Matene Te Whiwhi, Wi Parata, Karaitiana Takamoana; Messrs. Grace; Mitchell, the Premier's private secretary; and Mr. J. A. Jury. There were a large number of Natives who had come from Kapiti, Otaki, Waikanae, and other places to attend the Native meeting at Waitara. The following are the names of the principal chiefs of the Nataraukawa tribe:—Wi Parata, Hoani Taipua, Matene te Whiwhi, Tamihana te Hora, Kirioana Whamaro, Roera Hukiki, and Metara te Karaha. Of the