

1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE LATE NATIVE CHIEF, METE KINGI PAETAHI.

MEMORANDUM BY THE NATIVE MINISTER.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

MEMORANDUM by the NATIVE MINISTER.

THE funeral of the Whanganui chief Mete Kingi Paetahi, which took place at the Native settlement of Putiki, near Whanganui, on the 1st of this month, is an event in connection with Native affairs worthy of more than a mere passing notice.

Mete Kingi, or, as he sometimes styled himself, General Mete Kingi, was a chief of the Whanganui tribe, and, since the death of Hori Kingi, may be regarded as the highest in rank on the lower part of the river from which the tribe derives its name. He belongs to a class of chiefs now rapidly passing away, and whose ancient place and authority depart with them. The spread of colonization, the advance of civilization and European customs, and the determination of title to land by the Native Land Court, all render the old form of chieftainship, with its formidable powers, impossible for the future.

From the time British rule was first established in New Zealand Mete Kingi has been a loyal subject of Her Majesty, and his name is repeatedly mentioned in the records of the colony in connection with loyal services. In the year 1863 he was, with a number of other chiefs, selected for the office of Assessor, and he held that appointment, for which he received his salary, until his death. He was also a major in the New Zealand Militia, and thus the military honours he received at his funeral were only those to which his rank entitled him. When the Maori Representation Act was passed in 1867, which provided for special representation of the Maori people in the New Zealand Parliament, Mete Kingi was returned as the first Maori member for the Western Electoral District, and took his seat in the House of Representatives accordingly.

His name is specially associated with the battle of Moutoa, which was fought between the friendly and rebel Natives on an island in the Whanganui River in May, 1864.

The rebel Natives, under the leadership of a Hauhau fanatic named Matene, were on their way down the river with the avowed intention of sacking and destroying the European settlement of Whanganui; and, although they only numbered about sixty, there is little doubt that, had it not been for the devotion and bravery of Mete and his companions, most serious consequences must have ensued, and many lives would have been sacrificed.

The following extract from an official report by the late Dr. Featherston is interesting, and will give some idea of the part taken by Mete Kingi in the engagement:—

“Matene and his followers, immediately on their arrival on the Whanganui River, entered into negotiations with the friendly Natives for permission to pass down the river to attack the town of Whanganui; but, not only were all their overtures indignantly rejected, but they were told that their passage would be prevented no matter at what sacrifice of life. Matene then said he would wait two months, if at the expiration of that time the loyal Natives would give way. The latter at length, sick and wearied of these negotiations, on Friday, the 13th May, sent a special messenger to Matene and his fanatics, proposing that they should do battle on the following day at a certain hour on the island of Moutoa. The challenge was at once accepted, it being stipulated that neither party should attempt to surprise the other, or in any way to violate the conditions of the duel.” After describing at some length the preliminaries, Dr. Featherston continues: “As soon as the first shot was fired by one of the rebels, the opposing forces slowly advanced till they were within thirty feet of each other, when a volley was exchanged. Several fell on both sides, and amongst them the chief Kereti, whose loss seems to have dispirited the loyal Natives, for they immediately commenced to retreat, slowly at first, but when, after another volley or two, their two other leaders, Hemi and Riwai, were killed, they fairly broke and fled. The reserve, instead of coming to their support, also fled, most of them recrossing the river. The battle seemed at this moment completely lost, and probably would not have been retrieved had it not been for the chief Haimona Hiroti, who, when he reached the end of the island, shouted, ‘I will go no further,’ and immediately rallied some twenty men just in time to pour a deadly volley into the rebels, who were close upon them. After this it seems to have been a hand-to-hand fight, but the rebels, having lost their leaders, and Mete Kingi with the reserve having rejoined Haimona Hiroti, soon broke and fled, being hotly pursued till they reached the head of the island, when all who survived (with the exception of a few who escaped in a canoe) took to the river, and were most of them shot down. Matene, though he was badly wounded, succeeded in gaining the bank, but was almost immediately tomahawked by a Native policeman, Te Moro, who lost no time in

"swimming after him. It is scarcely possible to state what the rebel loss was, but forty dead bodies were found on the island, and several more were seen to sink while attempting to cross the river. Nearly all the survivors are known to be wounded. The friendly Natives had twelve killed, and from twenty-five to thirty wounded."

Whanganui has greatly increased since the date of the battle of Moutoa, and is now a large and flourishing settlement; but the event is kept in the minds of the more recent inhabitants by the monument erected in the Market Square in memory of the friendly Natives who fell in defence of their English fellow-subjects. The part taken by Mete Kingi in this important event in the history of the settlement no doubt accounts largely for the interest taken in the funeral of the old chief.

In 1881 Mete Kingi, in a different way, showed his loyalty to the cause of order. After the occupation of Parihaka, when it was desired to remove the strangers to their own localities, great difficulty was experienced in identifying the members of the various tribes who were assembled there. Mete Kingi was sent for by the Native Minister, and responded at once by proceeding to Parihaka. It requires a special knowledge of the circumstances to understand the strain which was thus put upon him. Te Whiti was believed by the Maoris to have the terrible power of *makutu*, or witchcraft, and the horrible dread of this produced in the Maori minds a feeling more intense than the instant fear of death. Mete Kingi braved this feeling. Having ascertained from the Native Minister exactly what was intended, he said, "This is the only war I have ever seen in which neither death nor degradation is intended. I will assist by every means in my power." Then, addressing the Natives assembled in the *marae*, many of whom belonged to his own tribe, he said, "The canoe is broken up; I have come hither to collect the pieces. Come home with me, O, my children!" It was discouraging to the old chief that the only response was from a single voice, "Te Whiti is our lord (*ariki*) for ever, for ever." Little wonder that Mete said sadly, "They have hardened their hearts."

The concourse of people who assembled at the funeral was the largest ever seen in Whanganui, fully five thousand being present either as spectators or in the procession. In addition to this number of Europeans, about twelve hundred Maoris, some of whom had come a considerable distance, were gathered, and about two hundred Volunteers took part in the military ceremony so grateful to the feelings of the Maoris. The day was very fine, and nothing occurred to mar the proceedings, which were solemn and impressive. The Native Minister attended the funeral, following the chief mourners. The Mayor of Whanganui, the member of Parliament for the district, the Under-Secretary of the Native Department, and other official persons were present. Many of the old settlers of the district also attended to pay their respect to the memory of the old chief, who had been personally known to most of them for many years.

The assembled Maoris seemed greatly impressed by the honour done to their chief by the Europeans; indeed the military display and the large concourse of settlers has since been, it is said, their constant topic of conversation. It has satisfied them of what is undoubtedly the fact, that the most kindly feelings exist towards the Native race on the part of the European settlers, and especially the settlers who have been longest in the colony.

An extract from the *Whanganui Chronicle*, giving an interesting and full account of the funeral, is appended.

18th October, 1883.

JOHN BRYCE,
Native Minister.

[Extract from the *Whanganui Chronicle* of Tuesday, the 2nd October, 1883.]

METE KINGI'S FUNERAL.

THE funeral of Mete Kingi, the Putiki chief, so familiar to two generations of Whanganui people, has passed and gone, and the colony at large, as well as this particular locality, has done fitting honour to a brave and loyal leader of a fast decaying and subject race. The knowledge that the Government had decided to accord Mete Kingi the military funeral due to a major, and had undertaken that it should be conducted on a scale to which New Zealand is almost entirely unfamiliar, attracted to Putiki very nearly the entire population—men, women, and children—of Whanganui, as well as European visitors from all stations up the railway lines north and south. Long before the funeral commenced great crowds of people were in and around the pa, and swarming up the hillsides, and it is probable that at the busiest period of the afternoon there were about 5,000 pakehas assembled to do honour to the memory of the dead chief of another race. Count was made of the Maoris themselves in the morning, and it was found that they numbered 1,130, and included representatives from almost all parts of the North Island. Combining together the Maoris and pakehas, Whanganui has never witnessed such a gathering as took place yesterday. Shortly before 2 o'clock the three town companies of Volunteers mustered at the Drill Hall, and were joined by the Garrison Band (in its full strength of twenty), the Collegiate School Cadets (forty), and a mounted detachment of the Alexandra Cavalry. In consequence of the troop being required next week for their annual training, Major Stapp dispensed with their attendance as a body, and remitted all fines and penalties under the regulations, requiring only that a small detachment (about ten) should be furnished to keep the line of march—a difficult duty, which the gallant troopers afterwards carried out very well. The officers present yesterday were: Major Stapp, Officer Commanding the district, who appeared for the first time in the regulation field officer's uniform—a very rich and handsome military attire, and one that drew universal attention to the gallant major's tall and commanding form; Captain Abbot, and Lieutenants Cross and Clapham, of the Naval Artillery Brigade; Captain Watt, and Lieutenants Jones and Foster, of the Wanganui Rifles; Captain Hutchison, and Lieutenants Purnell and Flyger, of the City Rifles; Captain Sommerville and Lieutenant Smith, of the Alexandra Cavalry; Captain Pownall and Lieutenant Newcombe, of the Collegiate School Cadets. All told there were about 230 Volunteers on parade, thus enabling the Government to furnish the quota of 200 required for

the firing party due to the rank of a deceased major. The Volunteers were drawn up in front of the Drill Hall, and put through the funeral movements. Major Stapp (who was ably assisted throughout by Sergeant-Major Henry) taking the warmest personal interest in the smartness and efficiency of the men, in whose soldier-like qualities and mastery of drill the gallant officer takes a justifiable pride. The forces were then marched over the bridge to Putiki, the Garrison Band enlivening the way with some remarkably cheerful strains of music. On arriving at the pa, about 3 o'clock, the armed escort took up its position, and the procession was formed. The coffin, which had been lying in a tent, was taken out and placed on a gun-carriage, improvised by Mr. McDuff, of Campbell Place. It would be more correct to say the coffins, for there were three of them. The body was first of all enclosed in a totara shell; then in a leaden coffin, with a glass face; and finally in a lined totara coffin, handsomely polished and decorated, and bearing the following inscription: "Mete Kingi Paetahi, Rangatira o Whanganui, I hemo ki Putikiwharanui, i te 22 o nga ra o Hepetema, 1883, e 70 nga tau." The coffin was wrapped in the famous Moutoa flag, so vividly associated with the brave deeds and loyal-hearted friendliness to the pakeha which ever distinguished Mete Kingi. On it were laid his epaulettes, sword, and belt. Eight young Natives of the deceased's tribe, each of them wreathed round the head and body with willow boughs, bore the coffin from the tent, and placed it on the gun-carriage. Four horses drew this carriage, the front pair controlled by Trooper Chavannes, and the hind pair by Trooper Smily. Each horse had its nodding plumes and saddle-cloth of sable. The following well-known, and in some cases highly distinguished, chiefs, acted as pall-bearers: Major Kemp (Upper Whanganui), who wore his major's uniform and medals, and looked every inch a gallant soldier; Renata Kawepo (Hawke's Bay), Hoani Taipua (Otaki), Wi Parata (Waikanae), Wiari Turoa (Kukuta), Ngairo (Whenuakura), Rupena (Turakina), Ngahina (Patea), Aperahama Tamaiparea (Waitotara), Tuku Orangi, Kawana Paipai (Putiki), Tiki Kanara (Whanganui), Taiawhio (Putiki), and Hori Kerei (Putiki). The coffin was followed immediately by the relatives of the deceased, including his three children, Henry, John, and Mary, and many grandchildren. Then came Drs. Tripe and Connolly, the medical attendants of the deceased, who were present by special invitation of his family. Dr. Tripe wore the uniform of hon. surgeon of the Alexandra Cavalry, and Dr. Connolly that of hon. surgeon of the Naval Artillery. Then came the Hon. John Bryce, Native Minister, his Worship the Mayor of Whanganui (Gilbert Carson, Esq.), W. H. Watt, Esq., M.H.R. for Whanganui, T. W. Lewis, Esq. (Under-Secretary for Native Affairs), Captain Butler (Secretary to the Native Minister), numerous other official personages, and many old residents of Whanganui and the surrounding districts. A body of Maoris followed the coffin, but their number fell short of what was generally anticipated, most of the Natives remaining in the pa, or quietly making their way to the grave without joining in the procession. The Mission Cemetery lies close to the Putiki Pa, a narrow and inconvenient track intersected by a stile connecting them. The procession was therefore taken round the more convenient and longer lane into the high road, and thence to the cemetery. The Volunteers went first, followed by the Garrison Band (under Bandmaster Hunter) playing the "Dead March in Saul" along the line of march. Then came the coffin and mourners in the order already indicated, the rear being brought up by the Collegiate School Cadets, and the deceased's white charger, bearing his boots reversed in the stirrup irons. Dense crowds lined the narrow road all the way from the pa to the grave, and it was not without frequent struggles and much confusion that even the semblance of a procession was maintained. The mounted troopers did their best, and the police were thoroughly efficient, but the crowding of the people, and the muddy state of the Putiki lanes, threw the funeral *cortège* into occasional disorder. Long before it reached the Mission Church a dense crowd had assembled as near to the open brick vault (close to the church door) as the police and troopers would allow them. On the approach of the procession an open space was quickly cleared, and the military marched into the centre and took their position in good order. Coffin and mourners made their way to the Mission Church, at the door of which they were met by the Rev. T. S. Grace (the missionary clergyman in charge of the district), the Rev. Arona, and the Revs. Eru Hurutara and Henare te Herekau. Of these Native clergymen of the Church of England, the former is in priest's orders, and the two latter are deacons. The coffin was borne into the church, and the burial service was read in Maori, Mr. Grace and his three Native brethren all taking a part in it. The second portion of the service was read by Mr. Grace at the grave, the Maori clergymen and other Natives fluently and reverently repeating the responses. Earth was cast on the coffin in the orthodox fashion, and it was lowered into the vault, with a cross and two wreaths of *immortelles* laid upon it. At the conclusion of the burial service the Rev. T. S. Grace addressed the Natives in their own tongue, and subsequently repeated to the Europeans the gist of his remarks. He described the late Mete Kingi as their fellow-man and fellow-Christian, and as one, who according to his lights had stood by the faith. Though but a half-civilized and half-educated man, Mete Kingi's faults of practice had been those he had derived from contact with the Europeans, to whom he had been always a warm friend, and for whom he had done notable service. Mr. Grace referred to Mete Kingi's share in the defeat of the rebels at Moutoa, and coupled his name with that of Kemp, as men whose loyal support of the Government and the pakeha deserved to be kept in honourable remembrance. He also told how Mete Kingi, with a young chief named Utiku, had gone to Parihaka just before the law was put in force there, and had tried to dissuade Te Whiti from his policy, but without success. Mete Kingi said on his return, "I can do no good; Te Whiti has hardened his heart." The last words which Mete Kingi said to his family before his death were, "Cling to the faith; let there be no more strife;" and Mr. Grace earnestly hoped that the deceased chief, who had done his duty sincerely in this world according to the knowledge he possessed, might meet his reward hereafter. Mr. Grace's remarks, which were delivered with simple impressiveness and feeling, were audible a long way from the grave, and were attentively and thoughtfully listened to by his hearers of both races. He pronounced the benediction, and the ecclesiastical part of the ceremony was at an end. The Volunteers fired three volleys with admir-

able precision, the silence between each volley being strangely broken by the wailing cries of the women round the grave. The military salute completed the funeral, a Maori female quietly dropped Mete Kingi's mat on to the coffin, a crowd of Europeans pressed round to take a last look at the vault, and then the vast assemblage dispersed in all directions. The Volunteers were marched from the cemetery into an adjoining field, and drawn up in line. A general salute was given in honour of the Native Minister, who, accompanied by Major Stapp, went up and down the line and carefully inspected the men. The forces marched back again to town, the Garrison Band playing merrily all the way, and the Volunteers were dismissed at the Drill Hall. Before dismissing them, Major Stapp stated that he was requested to convey to the officers and men Mr. Bryce's thanks for their attendance, and his high appreciation and approval of the efficient bearing and soldier-like appearance of the Volunteers of Whanganui. Mr. Bryce also warmly congratulated Major Stapp on the proficiency the men were attaining under his command, and no one who saw the imposing military muster of our citizen soldiers yesterday could say that the Native Minister's congratulations were undeserved. Although the crowd yesterday was simply immense, the arrangements were conducted without a hitch, reflecting credit upon Mr. John Anderson, to whom the burial ceremonies had been intrusted. Yesterday's gathering and ceremony were calculated to impress Europeans and Maoris alike, and cannot but tend to establish improved feeling and relations between them both. Some idea of the crowd may be gathered from the fact that, on the return journey, the foremost part was nearly over the bridge before the rear had struggled out of Putiki. Notwithstanding the crowding, climbing into trees, scaling fences, wading creeks, and even straddling the ridge-poles of houses, which marked yesterday's assemblage, the whole affair passed off without an accident worth recording. The day was magnificently fine and bright, and, if the dead be happy whom the sun shines upon, the shade of Mete Kingi had nothing to complain of. It is hardly necessary to add that yesterday afternoon was observed in Whanganui as a close public holiday, all places of business and schools being shut up. As a result, there never was seen such a collection of children in this district. The little people contributed at least one thousand out of the five thousand people which good judges consider were present.