

PAPERS

RELATING TO

THE REMOVAL AND RE-INTERMENT

OF THE

REMAINS OF THE IMPERIAL SOLDIERS WHO FELL AT OHAEAWAI IN 1845.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND OF
HIS EXCELLENCY.

WELLINGTON.

—
1872.

PAPERS RELATING TO THE REMOVAL AND RE-INTERMENT OF THE REMAINS
OF THE IMPERIAL SOLDIERS WHO FELL AT OHAEA WAI IN 1845.

No. 1.

Mr. HALSE, Assistant Native Secretary, to Mr. H. T. CLARKE, Civil Commissioner, Auckland.
SIR,— Native Office, Wellington, 8th January, 1872.

Adverting to the Venerable Archdeacon Clarke's communication of 6th September, transmitting a letter from Heta Te Haara, of Ohaeawai, relative to the remains of troops who fell in the assault on Heke's Pa, in 1845, I have the honor, by direction of Mr. McLean, to inform you that a gratuity of thirty pounds will be given to the Natives to remove the remains within the churchyard. It is suggested that you should be present on the occasion. Some little show of ceremony should be observed, to convince the Natives that the Government are not regardless of the memories of brave men who have died in defence of the honor of their country.

I have, &c.,
H. HALSE,
Assistant Native Secretary.

No. 2.

Mr. H. T. CLARKE, Civil Commissioner, to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.
SIR,— Tauranga, 8th August, 1872.

In accordance with the suggestion contained in your letter of the 8th January last, No. 277-2, I proceeded from Auckland to the Bay of Islands, on the 21st June, to be present, on behalf of the Government, at the re-interment of the remains of the soldiers who fell at Ohaeawai in the end of June, and beginning of July, 1845.

Immediately on my arrival at the Waimate, I communicated with the chief Heta Te Haara and his people, and after a consultation with them, it was decided that the removal of the remains to the churchyard should take place on the 1st July, the twenty-seventh anniversary of the day upon which the fatal attempt was made by the Imperial troops, under Colonel Despard, to storm the strongly fortified pa at Ohaeawai, which resulted to us in a fearful destruction of life.

The pa, as will be remembered, was held by the Chiefs Pene Tau and Kawiti, two of the leading chiefs associated with Hone Heke in the Northern rebellion.

It was the expressed wish of the Ohaeawai Natives that the remains of the soldiers buried in an exposed position should be removed from where they were first placed and re-interred within the precincts of the old pa. A neat little church has been built by the Natives, at their own cost, on the site of the pa, and the surrounding land has been set apart for a cemetery, many of their own dead having been recently buried there.

The Natives were actuated to this from a respect for our dead, and from a fear lest the remains of their former brave enemies should, by any accident, be disturbed, or subjected to any indignity. The wish was a kindly one, and is one of many incontestible proofs that all bitterness or soreness occasioned by the struggle, which took place in the years 1845 and 1846, had entirely passed away.

The very day after we had made our arrangements, rain set in, and continued with very little intermission for more than ten days.

On the 29th June, the bones were carefully disinterred by some old Native *Tohungas*—a class of Maoris supposed to be particularly competent for the task—and placed in six large shells or coffins, which had been previously prepared. The coffins were afterwards removed to a large building, the runanga house of the village, preparatory to being conveyed to the churchyard on the day appointed.

On Monday, the 1st July, in spite of the wretchedly cold and wet weather, a great number of chiefs from the surrounding districts were assembled, amongst whom were Mohi Tawhai, Kira Kingi Hori, Riwhi Hongi, Hemi Marupo, Puataata, Hare Wirikake, Hone Peti, Wi Pepene, and several others of lesser note. I was also gratified to see many of the principal European settlers from Waimate and Pakaraka present, to testify their respect for the brave men who fell for the honor of their Queen and country.

The British ensign was hoisted half-mast, and a procession formed; the coffins, each covered by a red ensign, were preceded by a firing party, headed by Heta Te Haara, the chief of the place, and the representative of the late Pene Tau, and followed by a train of Europeans and Natives, led by Colonel McDonnell and myself.

The procession was met by the Venerable Archdeacon E. B. Clarke, and conducted to a large grave that had been dug at the chancel end of the church. The Archdeacon then read, in Maori, the beautiful and impressive service for the burial of the dead, amidst a profound and reverend silence. As soon as the service was completed, three volleys were fired over the grave. I then addressed a few words to the Chiefs and Natives present, expressive of my thanks, on behalf of the Government and the Europeans generally, for the kindly feelings which prompted them to suggest and take a part in the act which had just been performed. I took occasion to draw a contrast between the scenes enacted on the spot twenty-seven years before—the causes which led to the Northern war and its results; and the present good feeling, singleness of purpose, and perfect unanimity which very apparently existed

between the Ngapuhi and their Pakeha neighbours, so much so that they might be truly styled one people, with interests and aims closely bound together.

At this time, the rain began to descend in earnest, and we were forced to adjourn to the large runanga house. After the visitors, both European and Native, had partaken of the hospitality of Heta and his people, the korero was resumed.

The principal speakers were Mohi Tawhai, Kira, Hau Wirikake, Hemi Marupo, Mitai, and others.

It was a great pleasure to listen to the good advice offered by the loyal old chief Mohi Tawhai to his people. He reminded them of the misunderstanding which arose amongst them in former times, the result of bad advice and false statements put in circulation as to the ultimate intentions of the British Government towards the Natives of these Islands—the causes which led him and his friends to take the side of the Government. He touchingly alluded to the deaths of the two principal men who assisted in putting down Heke's rebellion (Mokoau Taonui, and the brave and loyal Tamate Waka) : he appealed to his hearers whether the opinions that they held at that time were not fully justified by subsequent events.

Mohi then entered upon the subject of the Waikato King party, and expressed his opinion strongly, that Waikato wished to humiliate His Excellency the Governor, by making it appear to the rest of the tribes that it was the Governor who was anxious to make peace, and that was why they wished His Excellency to go to Tokangamutu. That, on a recent occasion, Tawhiao sent an embassy to invite Hau Hongi, the only surviving son of the famous Hongi Hika, to visit him : that Ngapuhi, distrusting the designs of Waikato, would not let him go, but sent Mangonui in his stead : that when Mangonui arrived at Kuiti, he was grossly insulted.

Kira followed in the same strain, and corroborated Mohi's statement regarding the insult offered Ngapuhi through their representative, Mangonui. He added that he had had a personal interview with Tawhiao's messengers, and, from what they said, he came to the conclusion that the great object of Waikato was to win over the Ngapuhi to their way of thinking, and that was his reason for strongly opposing Hongi's going to Waikato. He said that Waikato need not repeat their efforts, as they would be useless. All Ngapuhi were united in the determination to adhere to the Queen's Government. The younger men followed in the same strain as their old chiefs, and desired me to express to His Excellency the Governor and the Honourable the Native Minister the sentiments they held. After discussing the subject of schools and other questions of less importance, I returned to the Waimate late in the evening.

I was particularly struck with the unanimity that exists between the European settlers and the Natives of the different districts in the Bay of Islands. When meetings are convened for the discussion of any matter of interest, the principal Europeans are always invited to attend and take part in the deliberations. The opinions and advice of their Pakeha friends are always listened to with respect, and generally followed.

This may, in a great measure, arise from the fact, that most of the leading young chiefs have grown up side by side with the settlers, but I also believe it to be the result of the great interest some of the leading gentlemen of the district evince in all that concerns the welfare of the Natives. It is to be desired that the satisfactory relations existing between the Europeans and Natives of the Bay of Islands may extend to other tribes. I feel sure that the result would be that the serious misunderstandings which are, unhappily, of such frequent occurrence amongst the people of the two races, would almost entirely cease.

In closing this report, I desire to express my thanks to the Honourable the Native Minister for having deputed me to represent the Government at the removal and re-interment of the remains of those brave men who fell at the storming of the Ohacawai Pa. I received a severe wound on that day, and it was a melancholy pleasure to me to do honor to, and convey to their last resting place, the remains of my brave but less fortunate companions.

I have, &c.,
H. T. CLARKE,
Civil Commissioner.