

# LIFE IN A MAORI KAINGA.

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(CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE).



THE Maoris now bury their dead in the same manner as the pakeha, but formerly the grave was dug in the house of the deceased. In it the body was seated, the limbs being retained in position by bandages. The body was arrayed in fine mats and decked with greenstone and other ornaments. The grave was covered with planks and a little soil. It is still usual to inter the personal property of a chief with him. In other parts the

body was enclosed in a box formed by two lengths of an old canoe, in which it was seated on a frame to allow the flesh to drop off. After a time the bones were scraped, painted with red ochre and oil, then wrapped in a fine mat and hung up in a basket on a sacred tree in the wahi tapu, or sacred groves, or to the ridge pole of the family dwelling house.

parted spirits, and also to have the power of makutu, that is, the evil eye, witchcraft, etc. Te Maroa firmly believed this, and said he had been present when she had conversed with the dead. I wanted very much to witness a sample of her power in this respect, but Maroa was very unwilling to enable me to do so. However, as I often asked him, he said that some time, if either of us had any money, he would take me there, but he dared not go without a hakari (a present) as he feared to offend her, and she knew the value of pakeha money too well to be content with food or mats as were formerly presented. If offended she might put the makutu on us, that is, a spell of witchcraft, as she had done others; that she had done this to others who displeased her, causing them to fall down as in a fit, or to become stupid and unconscious for days; in fact, that he believed nothing but the dread of vengeance from their relatives prevented her killing them.

Some time after Maroa sold a horse at the township, so being in funds, he reserved a part for this purpose instead of spending it in drinking with the others, and one evening we went to old Rita's wharé. It was a low-roofed hut, standing not far from a deserted wahi tapu, at the back of

pipe with amber mouthpiece, which I had in a case (as I had no money), and at length she consented to do what was required. She asked Maroa whom she was to converse with, and he said Apera Maroa (a brother who was dead), so she directed us to seat ourselves on a mat near the door and not to speak. She then withdrew to the other end of the wharé, and wrapping herself in a large mat which enveloped her completely, commenced to intone a karakia, rocking as she did so from side to side. After a time she rose, and, stooping towards the earth, called 'Apera Maroa! ki to haerimi! (Apera Maroa, come hither).' She then appeared to listen, but hearing nothing, resumed her incantations. Again she rose, and stooping, commenced persistently calling on the spirit of Apera, and saying short karakia. Working herself into a sort of frenzy, at length she held up her hand, exclaiming, 'Ki to wakaronga korua (Listen, both of you).' A low murmuring appeared to proceed from the depths below, which became louder, till a guttural voice could be distinguished coming up as it were, out of the earth. I could not hear what was said, being rather deaf, but could distinguish an articulate speaking, apparently from below. I looked at Te Maroa, he was sitting with bowed head, and seemed much agitated. After a time Rita ceased to converse with the spirit, and commenced karakia, waving to us to begone.

When we got outside I asked Maroa if it was his brother's spirit that the old wahine conversed with. He said there could be no doubt of it as the spirit seemed acquainted with his family and their affairs. 'Why did you not tell her to ask him questions about things you would like to know?' I



J. Martin, photo. Auckland.

A MAORI VILLAGE.

The house in which a body was buried was left, and the door fastened and painted with red ochre, to show it was made tapu, and some thought that the spirit ascended to the Heaven of the Gods; others that it descended to Reinga (Hades); others that they did not leave the earth, but remained in the wahi tapu. Belief varied with different tribes. These wahi tapu are still looked on with superstitious dread, as the spirits are thought occasionally to wander from them, causing sickness, etc. It was thought very dangerous for any but tohunga to enter such places, or the houses of the dead. There were many deserted wharés of this description in the kainga, though now they had both a Catholic and Protestant cemetery, and the custom was abandoned. The entrance to Reinga is said to be at the extreme end of the North Cape, North Island. The spirits of the departed go there, and jump from thence into the water, through which they enter Reinga.

Old Rita was said to be able to converse with the de-

parted spirits. The door was so low we had to crawl in. The old woman was seated by a fire in the middle of the floor, plaiting cerements for the dead by the light of totara bark which she threw on occasionally. She had a short, black pipe in her mouth, and appeared very old; her hair was white, and her face like that of a skeleton covered with parchment, but her eyes were very bright and piercing, as I could see when she replenished the fire, contrary to those of Maori women generally, which have a dusky, subdued light. She glanced up, and then continued her work taking no notice of us. After sitting in respectful silence for a time, Maroa told her our errand, but she took no notice till he produced a handful of silver. This charm, powerful as the tapu, roused her, and she said that his wish should be granted, but she objected to the pakeha being present as his people knew nothing, and only ridiculed the mysteries they did not understand. I did not want to be disappointed, so offered her a silver-mounted meerschaum-

inquied. 'Because she told us not to speak,' said Maroa 'otherwise I would. I was afraid of offending her.' 'Was it the sound of your brother's voice?' I inquired. 'No, but of course one can't expect a spirit to speak with the same voice as a live man.' I did not say any more as I did not wish to offend him by trying to throw doubt on this réance, after he had been good enough to take me there, but I have no doubt the woman was a ventriloquist.

There is nothing supernatural about ventriloquism. It may be acquired by anyone, but some are better able to do so, owing to a peculiar conformation of the pharynx, epiglottis, etc. The first thing is to acquire the habit of articulating with the tongue, palate, and throat, without moving the jaw or muscles of the face. To do this, place a bit of leather or something between the teeth, so as to keep the mouth slightly open when the teeth are closed on it. Then practise before a looking-glass, for it is so natural to move the parts referred to when speaking that it is done unconsciously. Try the