

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

UREWERA COUNTRY.

A REAL MAORI GATHERING.

THE GOVERNOR'S TOUR.

His Excellency the Governor arrived in Auckland on Friday night from Rotorua, having done the trip in a special train in six hours.

His Excellency has made a tour of the widest country in the colony—that almost impassable tract of country between Waikaremoana and Ruatoki, in the Urewera country, itself a rugged land, not easy to travel through, but full of magnificent scenery that makes the arduous journey worth double the trouble. It is a feat never attempted by any previous Governor of the colony, but with the knowledge of the great picturesqueness of the country given such publicity, it is not unlikely that the country will not retain its almost virgin simplicity hereafter. Going overland to Wairoa and thence to Waikaremoana and Waikareiti, the Governor and his party took horse to Ruatoki, traversing a long stretch of country where scarce a vestige of road or trail was to be seen. Riding by day on the sure-footed but desperately uneasy horses of the Maoris, and camping on the roadside by night—a unique experience surely for any Governor of a well-settled colony!—they came at last to Ruatoki, where a great number of Maoris were assembled for the auspicious occasion of his visit, and his official opening of the second Maori Council's Conference. Concerning the events of that visit the reader may learn from the account which follows hereafter.

Leaving Ruatoki His Excellency went to Whakatane to attend the races on St. Patrick's Day, driving the same day to Te Teko, where he spent the night. The next morning the party went by special coach to Rotorua, arriving there in time for luncheon. At a quarter past two the party boarded the special train which brought them to Auckland, as above stated.

This article was specially written for the "N.Z. Graphic" and "Auckland Star" by Mr. Thos. Pringle, Government photographer, a collection of whose excellent photographs we are enabled to reproduce by special permission of the Tourist Department. It will be noted that, in addition to being an expert artist in photography, Mr. Pringle possesses faculties as a descriptive writer of a high order.

IMPRESSIONS OF RUATOKI.

The tent-surrounded marae lies shrouded in moonless darkness, blinking lights throwing tremulous shadows, exaggerated and grotesque as the camping inmates move. Inside, an olla podrida of belongings and an equally ill-assorted collection of humans—grizzly tattooed warriors cheek by jowl with dusky maidens of oddly contrasting attractiveness; infants of apparently angelic goodness kicking their heels with philosophic equanimity. Korowai and broadcloth, silk blouse and skirt of latest fashion, tattered nondescript shirt and skirt, all rub noses with friendly kinship. The omnipresent kuri and pouka are conspicuous by their absence, having apparently been banished pro tem from the family circle, and a distinct but pitifully ineffective attempt been made to "tidy things up a bit."

Across the pah rings out the summons to evening worship, responded to from every direction, till the big runanga house is filled to overflowing with an apparently devout crush of worshippers. The ill-ventilated hall, its raupunga with a mixed assortment of odours, Totori and Egyptian cigarettes clash with Jockey Club and Violet de Parma, all blended together, or rather seeming all to float on a viscid substratum of much unwholesomeness.

Weird chants rise with a strangely quivering monotony, seeming to our non-understanding ears fraught with regretful memories and vague longings—dimly understood, wholly hopeless. Here an impassioned orator harangues for a moment, then breaks almost imperceptibly into waiata, to be presently taken up in chorus, shrilly women's voices predominating, male barytones lending volume and sonority, beneath all, a deep far-away strain of phenomenal bass. It brought back vividly our first hauhau service in the fastnesses of Tuboe Land long ago.

A huge runanga house, windowless and almost doorless, somberly blackened with the smoke of many generations. Darkness feebly pierced here and there by meagre flickering candles. The participants visible as ghosts may be, rising up and sitting down with startling suddenness, but all so intent and highly strung that one felt how little was needed to precipitate an hysterical outburst of religious fanaticism!

Service over, the assemblage turns to lighter mood. Song and story from hoary-headed warriors, who punctuate their narrative with much quivering of taiaha and mere. Or with suggestive gesture which never fails to elicit a responsive roar of delight.

Later, from tent and where, cottage and corn crib, comes sounds of revelry and laughter—of poor instruments, more poorly played, gradually dropping off till slumber and silence reigns over all.

THE AUSPICIOUS SIXTEENTH.

King's weather ushered in the morning of the auspicious sixteenth. Everywhere busy hands preparing heaped-up baskets of kumaras and rewi. Beef and pork exhaling an appetising steaminess. Some mystic unmusical horn-toots are apparently underlarded of the busy workers. The kai is soon dished up, and a singing, dancing procession comes wending up to the great dining shed. Everything apparently chaotic—in reality working with perfect unison.

Then clarion lungs thunder forth the summons to kai "Ngapuhi," "Te Arawa," "Hokianga"—and so on through the long list of tribal visitors. Each summons replied to by an orderly procession, who take their seats with admirable quietude, and for quite a while nothing is heard but the clatter of utensils, or the oft-repeated cry, "Waiter! Waiter!" It is an apparently healthily hungry assemblage, prepared to be pleased and do fullest justice to the lavish hospitality of their Urewera hosts.

THE WARRIORS APPEAR.

Then comes a short respite, filled with eager expectancy. Punctually at ten His Excellency takes his place in front of the runanga house. Across the marae a band of semi-naked warriors stealthily creeps with realistically feigned circumspectness, endeavouring apparently to pounce upon an imaginary enemy unawares. Swifter and more swiftly they crawl along, coming nearer and nearer, till with a sudden whirlwind rush they swoop upon their challengers, voice, tongue, eyes, gestures all breathing defiance, contempt, scorn, hatred! Indomitable elder warriors spur and entreat to still greater feats of agility and valour, each tense muscle quivering, living over again bygone times, when their efforts had a more sinister inwardness than the entertainment of a Governor! Not for long could this high pressure last, and the serrated ranks sank in a picturesque and perspiring group in front of His Excellency. Then through the deep circle of spectators breaks a long file of daintily-dressed Maori girls, their bright and wholly unconscious youthfulness thrown into strongest relief by the immediate background of grizzled warriors. What a splendid bit of fine stagecraft the contrast made! With them comes the musician. A preliminary crash of notes brings an answering bow from the straight line of dancers, who immediately plunge into a dainty measure.

Poi-balls are soon whirling with lightning rapidity, anon beating time with a tat! tat!! tat!!! Every muscle, limb, feature keeping time! time!! time!!! with an eerie regularity. It is the acme of perfect unanimity, bespeaking a highly-strung sense of rhythm and time, a sensitive appreciation of delicate motion and graceful pose.

Roll the years back awhile. Substitute fans for poi-balls, and one can almost imagine themselves once more north the gleaming naples of Kyoto!

THE KORERO.

Haereimai! Haereimai!! Haereimai!!! Thus begins the korero. Speaker after speaker in eloquent never-halting periods bearing but one tale—Welcome! Welcome!! Welcome!!! Protestations of affectionate regard, unswerving loyalty; regretful references to his Excellency's departure; messages to King and Queen; aroha to the Countess of Ranfurly; all ending as they began, Haereimai! Haereimai!! Haereimai!!! White-haired Kaumatua rise here and

there in the assembled circle and in quavering tones take up the universal keynote of Haereimai!! Breaking into waiata of welcome and farewell, fitfully edging closer and closer to their august guest, at whose feet they lay their gifts of korowai, patu, piu-piu, or what not.

An emphatic hoi! hoi! from the marshals commands silence as His Excellency rises to respond. In pregnant sentences he bespeaks unswerving loyalty to the Throne and Government; gives kindly advice and counsel; begs their serious attention to matters of sanitation, education, land culture and thrift. Quotes, with evident approval on every hand, the old Urewera proverb, "Kotuku tau unga tahi," speaks with evident feeling of the warmth of their welcome, and with still greater emotion of his approaching departure.

Kapai! Kapai!!! Kapai!!! Kia ora! Kia ora!! Kia ora!!! A perfect fusillade of gratification and pleasure greets his Excellency's adieu sitting.

An almost imperceptible thrill of anticipatory expectation runs round the auditors as the Hon. the Native Minister rises.

His eloquent periods come rolling out with the freedom and fluency of a born and practised orator. Gifted with cunning turns of phrase, graced with classic allusion, brightened by lively wit, unpalatable truths cunningly concealed in proverbial philosophy, or rendered more digestible by a coating of humour.

A QUIANT PICTURE.

Looking round the assembly the eye is dazzled by glaring colours, Oriental in their daring vividness, yet unexpectedly harmonious en masse.

Brilliant reds predominate; glaring oranges and yellow; pinks light and dark; blues from lightest sky to darkest peacock; greens of jacinth, grass and olive; taken individually shock the eye with their loud brilliance. Korowai with beautifully wrought taniko of coloured flaxes; sombre kahuakiwi, gleaming tui, kaka, kereru. To the artist a glowing virgin soil filled with teeming possibilities. To the mere photographer bound by the limitations and rigidity of his materials, a despairful spectacle! Minor incidents abound on every hand. Each hour of the livelong day brings before the interested observer facts ethnological, racial, tribal, suggesting a glorious field for patient, skilled, above all sympathetic observation and investigation.

Friends long sundered meet with the universal hongi; mutual griefs beget a mutual tangi. What a haunting weirdness quivers through its inexpressible sadness! How those minor cadences receding and repeating cling to one's memory, piercing our pakela reserve and appealing to our sense of loss and bereavement.

Here a merry group squats amidst the sugar cane, chewing its saccharine succulence; there, a laughing-eyed tamaiti-tane squatted in a melon patch, his face and head momentarily lost to view as he worries through a ripe specimen; further on groups of women busily scraping rewi or preparing ovens, with much fluent interchange of evidently amusing tit-bits, scandal, criticism, witticism. Everywhere and always a happy-go-lucky, enjoy-life-while-you-can feeling is in the atmosphere, catching, infectious. "We're happy, be you likewise." Over there a swarth alien hawkker drives a roaring business, cheap slops, brumma-gem jewellery, knick-knacks, all disposed of at prices which must greatly gratify the vendor. Behind the big corn crib a surreptitious poi practice is going on, preparatory to to-morrow's competition. Further on the under-ground ruas are being possessed by late arrivals, who find themselves bedless, shelterless. Now it is a group intently

hanging on an elder's periods—legend, history, folk-lore, battle, or a little circle recalling the old waiata, sometimes hesitatingly feeble from unfamiliarity, more often full and strong. Is it mere imagination, or is there actually some subtle kinship, common origin? Else why do these Maori songs so invariably recall the old Dumio songs as we heard them years ago by the Inland Sea?

The day is too full of incident to exhaustively chronicle, but in bidding farewell to Ruatoki we feel safe in echoing both his Excellency's feelings and our own with a long-drawn and fervent

E NOHO,

and fancy supplies one long burst from our interesting hosts:

HAERE-RA! HAERE-RA!!

NGARUAWAHIA REGATTA.

Once a year the picturesque village of Ngauruawahia, at the meeting of the waters of the Waikato and Waipa Rivers, throws off its garb of peaceful prosperity to assume gala attire and to welcome some thousands of visitors who invade the river banks ostensibly to view the regatta. Ostensibly because three or four thousand people who patrolled the river reserves on March 17 paid practically no attention to the aquatic events. But the visitors spent a pleasant day, nevertheless, the day being perfect for an outing, a cool breeze tempering the autumn heat, while the pretty little village, with its tree-shaded promenades, formed an ideal spot for a day's holiday. Visitors were present from all parts of the Waikato, while two crowded trailroads went up from Auckland, the regatta being the most successful yet held. The scene through the afternoon was a varied and animated one, the bright colours of the Maoria adding greatly to the attractiveness of the picture. The cheapjack plied a busy trade through the day, while all sorts of side-shows, merry-go-rounds, shooting galleries, Aunt Sallies, and skittle allies tempted the guileless native and the countryman to part with his silver.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY.

SPORTS IN THE DOMAIN.

Favoured by fine weather, the Irish section of the community held their annual sports gathering in the Domain cricket ground on March 17, in commemoration of the anniversary of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Early in the morning the children were astir, busy in their preparations for their annual outing. The Roman Catholic city churches were thronged with worshippers bedecked in green. About half-past nine the general rendezvous at St. Patrick's Cathedral was crowded with children, and the footpaths in the vicinity with onlookers. The children's faces wore expressions of contentment and expectancy. It is doubtful if any more enjoyed the situation than the little boys from Lake Takapuna Orphanage. They mustered about sixty strong and received great attention from the by-standers. The Hillmen were present in fair numbers. When the whole procession formed up into marching order it presented a very pretty sight. The St. Patrick's children and the orphans had been joined by the children from the Sacred Heart Church, Ponsonby, the orphans from the girls' home and the pupils of the Marist Brothers' Sacred Heart College. Looking down the rows of merry faces it was at once apparent that there were considerably more children present than at the last annual gathering, and when the divisions from St. Benedict's, Newton, and St. John's,

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