

The Growth of the Dominion

A Brief Sketch of New Zealand's Progress

On Thursday New Zealand assumed the dignity of the title of a Dominion. At such a time, a brief glance back over the early history and progress under European occupation of this, the first colony added to the Empire under the sovereignty of Queen Victoria, may not be out of place.

THE DAYS OF MAORI OCCUPATION.

Estimates of the time that has elapsed since the Maoris first arrived in New Zealand differ very much, but the best estimates place it at four or five hundred years. According to tradition, Turi, a chief of Hawaiki (the identity of which can only be conjectured), first reached these shores, with the members of his tribe, in a canoe called Aotearoa, landing at Witiāpapa, a bay between Taranaki and Wangānui. Turi obtained his knowledge of the existence of the islands from Kupe, who had sighted New Zealand, and, returning to Hawaiki, reported his discovery. Another canoe called Tokomaru, from the same place, commanded by a chief named Manāia, arrived, and a considerable immigration followed. The new arrivals found a peaceable race of people, called Morioris, already in possession of the land. These they speedily subdued and exterminated, or enslaved, the only remnant of this people, who preserved their racial characteristics till modern times, being the inhabitants of the Chatham Islands, whose isolation protected them from destruction by the more masterful race. The invaders spread over the North Island, and obtained a footing on the South Island. Being divided into tribes hostile to each other, they were often at war, a fact which accounts for the increase being smaller than might have been anticipated. It is doubtful if at any time the Maoris numbered more than 120,000.

DISCOVERY BY EUROPEANS.

Some time during the 16th century the colony was for the first time visited by Europeans. No definite records of any expedition are known to be extant, but everything points to a visit having been paid the islands before the time of Tasman. Of the visit of Tasman there exist good accounts, and it is evident that the Dutchman, who never landed in the country, was, after the massacre of one of his boat's crew at Golden Bay, only too anxious to leave the vicinity of the land he had inadvertently stumbled upon. His object was to sail to the eastward, and, missing Cook's Strait, owing to a gale, he coasted along as far as the North Cape. At the Three Kings he made an effort to land, but the appearance of a number of Maoris on the shore made him lift anchor and sail away. This was in 1642, and from that date till the first appearance of Cook in the 370-ton frigate Endeavour, some 127 years later, there is no reliable account of any navigator visiting New Zealand. As showing what an indefinite idea Tasman had obtained of the colony, it may be mentioned that he named it Staten Island, apparently under the impression that it might possibly be a part of Terra del Fuego, which had some time before been discovered by a Dutchman, and named after the State's General. The Dutch authorities, however, changed the name back to Nova Zelandia, which was that appearing on an old chart showing indefinitely the northern part of the North Island. Cook's researches, which extended over four voyages and comprised 27 days spent in the colony, were so thorough that the map he made is recognised as being wonderfully accurate. He was severe on the natives, but gained their respect. Previous to his voyages the only four-footed animals that the Maoris possessed were a small rat and

a mongrel dog, which they had brought to New Zealand with them. Cook gave them pigs, fowls, and seed potatoes.

A LAND WAITING A CLAIMANT.

The English Government declined to avail themselves of the new land which Cook reported so favourably on, and had taken possession of in the name of the King. Whalers and sealers found its coast, however, a profitable fishing ground, and early in the 19th century established a settlement at Kororāreka. The Maoris were at this time a people of flexible ethics, and Kororāreka, in its earliest stages, inhabited by convicts escaped from the Australian penal settlement and the rick-raft of whaling vessels, was for a considerable period a scene of most horrible orgies, and undoubtedly a blot on civilisation. Following on this early settlement by the scum of civilisation came the missionaries. The Rev. Samuel Marsden, whose dream it had been for many years to Christianise the natives, arrived at Hokianga in 1814. It speaks well for the whole-hearted and disinterested body of men who were the pioneers of missionary work in New Zealand that they obtained such a hold over the turbulent natives. Certain it is that the Maoris appreciated the practical instruction in the ways of civilisation that the missionaries imparted; and the religion they preached appealed to their emotional and poetic nature. Great as was missionary influence over the Maoris it was not powerful enough to prevent the terrible intertribal wars that were waged between 1820 and 1840.

THE STEPS PRECEDING ANNEXATION.

The English Government, although they had so long declined to take over New Zealand, did not reflect in this matter the attitude of the English public. A section of the great British public at least was interested in the reports from the far-off islands. It was perhaps the influence of the missionaries, who desired New Zealand as a field to work out their own designs in, that prompted the reply of the Duke of Wellington, then Prime Minister, when in 1829, in answer to a deputation, he flatly refused to take any steps to bring New Zealand within the pale of the Empire. The New South Wales Government, nevertheless, felt called upon, owing to the large number of whites at that time resident at the Bay of Islands, to do something. They therefore, in 1834, appointed Mr James Busby as Resident at Kororāreka. He was not personally popular, and, being without powers, his position became a sinecure.

In 1838 the New Zealand Company was formed in London to carry out a system of colonisation devised by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, and in 1840 they colonised Port Nicholson. The natives repudiated the land purchases made by Colonel Wakefield on behalf of the Company, and owing to the hasty despatch of emigrants from England the pioneers of Wellington had a rough time of it for some years. The missionaries, in 1833, became convinced of the fact that the French were anxious to colonise New Zealand and they reluctantly came to the conclusion that the only way out of the dilemma was annexation by England. The action of the N.Z. Company forced the hand of the Imperial Government, and to avoid the colony becoming a French possession they eventually decided on its annexation.

THE TREATY OF WAITANGI.

Governor Hobson landed at the Bay of Islands on January 29th, 1840, with his commission as Governor in his pocket, and in May was signed the Treaty of Waitangi, which acknowledged the sovereignty of Queen Victoria over the islands, while recognising the titles of the natives to their lands. It is strange that small incidents have a marked effect on big events. Of the chiefs assembled who spoke on the treaty the only strong supporter of the proposed annexation was the powerful Tairāiti Waka Nene, of the Ngāpuhi tribe. After a long list of chiefs had spoken and in great excitement addressed His Excellency to the effect that the Maoris would not consent to part with their lands. His excited gestures seemed almost a menace to many spectators ignorant of the gist of his remarks, and on resuming his seat he was taken to task by the next speaker, who taxed him with incivility to the Governor. Still excited, the supposed offender leaped on the platform and extended his hand to Governor Hobson in token of good feeling and his wish of being rightly understood. His Excellency advanced and gravely shook his hands. This was the signal for a roar of delight from the natives and a loud cheer from the Europeans, who considered that the discussion had ended favourably from this simple action of one of the principal speakers.

The effect was magical. The feeling of the Maoris changed from one of growing opposition into acquiescence. Only one dissentient voice was raised, and that the voice of Bishop Pompallier, who, being a Frenchman, had other designs for the future of the colony. Fifty chiefs signed the treaty. Proclamation of sovereignty over the South Island was not declared till July, 1840, just in time to forestall the French warship L'Aube, which had come out to take the islands in the name of France.

AUCKLAND CHOSEN AS CAPITAL.

Governor Hobson quickly decided that Russell, the town he founded on arrival at the Bay of Islands, was not a suitable capital. In dealing with the site eventually selected on the banks of the Waitematā, Mr. Reeves, in his book, says:—"He made so good a choice that his name is likely to be remembered therefore as long as New Zealand lasts. By founding the City of Auckland he not only took up a strategic position which cut the Maori tribes almost in half, but selected an unrivalled trading centre. The narrow neck of land on which Auckland stands, between the winding Waitematā on the east, and the broader Manukau Harbour on the west, will, before many years, be spread from side to side, by a great mercantile city."

Governor Hobson died at Auckland in 1842, and in 1843 arrived to succeed him Governor Fitzroy. The latter got things into such a pretty pickle that in 1845 he was replaced by Captain George Grey, who had extricated South Australia from her troubles. A war with a section of the Ngāpuhi tribe under Heke and Kawhiti in the north, which Fitzroy had conducted with fatal results to British prestige, Grey, by decisive and active steps, quickly suppressed, but trouble with the natives in the Wellington province, taking the form of a guerilla warfare, although not characterised by any serious engagement, took longer to completely stamp out.

EARLY TROUBLES.

Many of the troubles and anxieties of the early settlers will probably remain unwritten history. The Government was supported by a wholly insufficient military force, and had to rely very much upon the goodwill of the chiefs. The first serious alarm among the settlers of the North was caused by the intelligence of the fall of Kororāreka, and the news that Heke meant to attack Auckland. It was reported at the time that 2000 natives were willing to join him in an

expedition against the capital. A special meeting of the Legislative Council, held on March 15, 1845, ordered that the Auckland barracks be made impregnable against musketry for the protection of women and children, and that all the male inhabitants be sworn in special constables. At a much later period the Government was unable to punish native offenders when opposition was offered. The Hon. Mr Swainson, in his interesting work on New Zealand, relates a case where a native, convicted of theft and sentenced in the court at Auckland, was rescued by his friends in court who had been listening to the trial, and, upon its conclusion, started up and, brandishing their tomahawks, carried off the prisoner in the face of Judge and court officers. In 1851, Auckland was threatened with attack, arising out of the difficulty in executing justice. A native had been taken into custody in Auckland on a charge of theft, when a scuffle ensued, and an innocent chief was knocked down by a native policeman and lodged in gaol, but at once liberated. The chief left in high dudgeon, and, returning with three hundred armed warriors, landed in Mechanics' Bay, and demanded that the policeman be given up. By a diplomatic negotiation his wrath was appeased, and he departed in peace. Upon the whole, however, justice was very fairly administered even in those days between natives and Europeans.

GRANTING OF A REPRESENTATIVE CONSTITUTION.

From 1840 to 1852 the colony was governed by an Executive and Legislative Council, nominated by the Crown to act in conjunction with the Government. Several proposals for a representative constitution were propounded, but were pronounced unsuitable for the peculiar circumstances of the colony—the absence of any central point of settlement, and the difficulties of communication between the settled communities along the coast rendering the framing of a Constitution adapted to the requirements of the country a difficult task. But, although deprived of a voice in the control of colonial matters, the settlers were encouraged by Sir Geo. Grey during his first term of Governorship to exercise large functions of self-government. He created extensive endowments, and granted a charter to the settlers of Auckland of a very liberal character, which endowed them not only with all the powers of an English municipality within the city, but empowered them to administer the affairs of the surrounding districts, where settlement was rapidly extending. But the colonists exhibited great indifference; the country settlers were afraid of being taxed by the citizens, and allowed the charter to fall in. In 1852, a Constitution, framed by Sir George Grey upon the most liberal basis yet conceded to a colony, was passed through the British Parliament, although with some alterations which have since proved a source of mischief. It created a Colonial Legislature, consisting of two Chambers—an elective House of Representatives, and a nominated Legislative Council; it also divided the colony into six provinces—Auckland, Wellington, New Plymouth (afterwards changed to Taranaki), Nelson, Canterbury, and Otago, with Provincial Legislatures possessing large powers. Under this system of local control, settlement prospered rapidly in each of the six isolated centres. The first session of the General Assembly under the new Constitution was convened for May 24, 1854, by Lieutenant-Colonel Wynyard, C.B., the officer in command of the troops, who became Administrator of the Government during the absence