

# Royalty at Rotorua

## The Great Maori Gathering.

### Rotorua in Festive Attire.

Wet mists enfolded the soft green wooded peaks of Mokoia, the "Sacred Island of Tinirau," set in the still waters of Rotorua, and wreathed in heavy, fleecy clouds the adjacent bush ranges, when I paid my preliminary visit of inspection to the great Maori assemblage on the racecourse, which lies midway between Rotorua township and the Geysers Valley of Whakarewarewa. Rotorua in mid-summer is chiefly remarkable for its inexhaustible supply of dust. Just now the most noticeable feature of the township and its surroundings is the all-pervading mud. The skies have wept over the assembling tribes for the last week. But given a spell of dry, clear weather the mid-winter season in Rotorua is far pleasanter than the summer. I have seen the lake in June for days at a time a motionless sheet of polished silver under a cloudless sky, its surface unrippled by the faintest breath, with the classic isle of Mokoia rising like a glorious emerald from the shining waters. Such is not the aspect of the Rotorua-aui-Kabu at the time of writing.

It is hard to put in words the colour, the animation, and the babel of sounds which are some of the things that strike one at this great congress of over four thousand people of the native race, representing every tribe in New Zealand from the North Cape to Otago. It is a good deal larger than the great gathering held at Taupiri in 1894 at the tangi over King Tawhiao, and is also a very much bigger affair than the important meetings held at Kopua and Hikurangi in 1878 and 1879 between Sir George Grey and the Kingites. In fact, there are only two meetings which will at all compare with it—the Remuera gathering of 1844 when the night of Waikato under the redoubtable cannibal warrior Te Whero-who made such a martial display that the white population of the infant capital trembled, and the conference of tribes at Kohimarama in 1860. But this Rotorua "hui" of 1901 outshines them all, and will be remembered in time to come as the last great combined display in force of the New Zealand native race. In the symbolic language of the Maori, the "Wai-tai" has come to meet the "Wai-Maori," the salt sea-coast dwellers have journeyed to greet the "fresh water" tribes, the inland people of the soil, pilgrims to a Geysersland Mecca. It is a fitting occasion too, in the Maori eye, for the tribes from east and west, and north and south, to meet on common ground, for the visit of the Great White Queen's "moko-puna" is the event of a life time; the sons of the soil like the Duke to do the proverbial "Kotuku-rerenga-tahi," the rare white crane whose flight is seen but once and no more in the span of one's life.

The old order of things has been temporarily revived at this "hui." On the wide racecourse flat we see the olden Maori costume, the ancient weapons—"rakau Maori"—the savage looking tattooed faces of historic Aotearoa. Centuries old songs, snatches of weird incantations, dating back to the legendary Hawiiki, of the thousand-isled South Seas, are heard as the long-severed clans greet each other, and the orators pace up and down, spear in hand, and leap into the air and pour forth poetical greetings, as in the days of old. Yet it is a curious mingling of the old and new. Deeply tattooed warriors, whose memories go back to the cannibal era, who have, as it were, hardly emerged from the stone age, sit side by side with young bloods who ride bicycles, and pound the big drum in the village brass band. The attire of

the people is a wonderful mixture, too. A great many are dressed in the height of pakeha fashion, and some sport frock coats and bell-toppers, mats of flax and feathers abound, many of them very fine examples of Maori garments, and thrown over the shoulders or worn round the waist, they give just the touch of picturesque which is needed to redeem the costumes from the prosaic associations of European stores. But the ladies' dresses certainly cannot be called prosaic, or common place. They are all colours imaginable; a pakeha ballet or a pantomime is nothing to a Maori "hui," when the softer sex give their boxes a holiday.

The encampment itself forms a sort of great semi-circle on the eastern side of the racecourse, and separated from the cleared ground in front of the Royal grandstand by a wide belt of very short manuka scrub. The one wide and long street is flanked on either side by many scores of tents, and by large raupo whares, and from the main avenue branch off various small lanes forming the divisions between the camps of the various tribes. Some hapus are housed in large marquees, others are detached in sections, like a regiment of soldiers in a line, or a square of bell tents; others make themselves at home in the familiar raupo huts, and all are happy, merry, and good tempered.

Every Maori tribe in New Zealand has its representatives here; some in hundreds, others in smaller parties. There must be close on four thousand people in the encampment, besides the numerous hapus of the Arawa tribe, whose quarters are at Ohinemutu and Whakarewarewa, and who, as the "tangata-whenua," the people of the place, share with the Government the responsibility of entertaining the visitors. From the North Cape to Otago the tribes all have their delegates here to join in welcoming the heir to the throne; and the food supplies they have brought with them are as varied as the localities of the tribes. Tons of potatoes, kumaras, shell-fish, droves of cattle and pigs, flocks of sheep, are requisitioned to feed the hungry multitude. Then there are various delicacies peculiar to particular districts, potted pigeons and wild duck from the Taupo district and the forests of Tuboo Land; taro from the semi-tropical Far North; and preserved mutton birds from the South Island. A great pile of a couple of hundred tons of firewood is stacked on the far side of the "marae," close to the store-sheds, where the Permanent Forestry men are busily engaged serving out the Government's share of the provisions to the tribes; and at the rear of each tribe's lines are the out-of-doors cooking quarters, where scores of boilers and native "hangis" (the primitive earth ovens) are going continuously.

### The Types of the People.

In this great marae are a deeply interesting study. Every tribe, from the Apouiri in the Far North to the Ngaitahu who dwell in the cold "wai-pouamu," are here, and the differences in the facial and physical types would give much food for speculation to an ethnologist. The wiry, alert-looking Ngaitiporou from the East Cape stand up to haka side by side with the big, jolly-faced, but somewhat soft-looking Ngatikahungunu sheep-owners from Hawke's

Bay and the Wairarapa, and the quick-eyed, small-built men of the Whanganui River exchange laughing salutations with their old Hauhau enemies from Opotiki and Whakataane, the active dancers of Whakatohea and Ngatiawa. One of these Whanganui has an almost Mongolian cast of countenance—here and there one catches a glimpse of a true Jewish type of nose; that tall, curly-haired man with the Semitic cast of countenance is a Ngaiterangi from down Tauranga way. A curious type is the "urukehu," or fair-haired, pure-blooded Maori; the reddish tinge in the luxuriant tresses of the "urukehu" women is a relic of a very ancient aboriginal strain, whose source is lost in mystery. When it comes to "action front," and the men strip for the dances of rehearsal for the Duke, or for the daily welcomes to visitors, one sees what fine physique the Maori race can show. The Whanganui and Ngatiapa men are on the small side, but exceedingly well-developed, and as active as deer; the Ngatikahungunu on the other hand are more dignified and slow in their movements, but show magnificent torsos. Maori women do not display so much of their charms as do their cousins, the belles of the South Sea Islands; so we must confine ourselves to the faces, which are even more varied in their local distinctiveness than the men's. Some faces (especially those of the young half-caste girls) are as finely moulded as those of the high-born "taupos" of Samoa; others have the flat nose and thick lips inclining to the Papuan. Some real beauties there are amongst the younger girls; large-eyed, oval-faced creatures, with their shawls draped round their heads like pictures of Spanish ladies in their mantillas, but all, young and old, swinging along with that peculiar swaggering roll of the hips which is characteristic of generations of training in the movements of the haka. The ladies of rank bear themselves like duchesses, conscious of their long ancestral lines, and they sail majestically along with something like haughty scorn expressed in the curl of their liberal lips and the tilt of their blue tattooed chins.

Many of the highest chiefs in the land are here. There is the young Te Heuheu, high-chieftain of the Lake Taupo people, a handsome, well-built man of thirty-five, whose flashing eye and proud bearing proclaim him a "tino rangatira," a chief indeed. Te Heuheu is an excellent type of the best men of the modern Maori; intelligent, educated, and combining with his European knowledge a deep pride in his noble pedigree and the records of his illustrious ancestors. For the Heuheu can rehearse his genealogical table back forty generations—a thousand years—away into the hazy mists of the past, when his "tupunas" dwelt in the warm summer isles of the Great Ocean of Kiwa. He has demi-gods on his family tree; he has even a family guardian-ata, or god, by name Rongomai, whose outward form is that of a shooting star. The proverb of his tribe, the Ngaitiwharetoa, has it: "Rongomai is the God; Te Heuheu is the Man." And again, in the symbolical phraseology of the Lake men: "Tongariro is the Mountain; Taupo is the Sea; Te Heuheu is the Man." These high-sounding sayings were applied to Heuheu's famous grandfather, Te Heuheu the Great, who was a man-eating warrior of dread renown, who figures in Angus' rare sketches secured nearly sixty years ago, and who perished with fifty of his tribe in the landslip at Te Rapa, Taupo, in 1846. Amongst the other prominent chiefs one sees here in the broad camp-square are A. T. Ngata, Rev. Mohi Turel, R. Kohere, and Te Houkamaou, of the East Cape district; Taonui and Eketone, from the Rohetopae, once the "King Country"; Ru Reweti, a descendant of the famous Northern chief Pomare (with his distinguished-looking wife, Victoria Kemp); old Topia Turou, from Whanganui; Pene Taul, from Kaitiaki, in the Far North; the veteran Ruatara, a son of the celebrated and benevolent man of that name, under whose

protection the first New Zealand missionary, the Rev. Mr Marsden, planted his mission station at the Bay of Islands in 1814; burly and prosperous-looking Aporo te Kumeroa, Tamahau Mahupuku, and other big men of the Wairarapa; old Hori Ngatai, from the Tauranga side, and many another man of rank with pedigrees which go back into the dark ages.

### Sons Warriors Bold.

A remarkable feature of the "hui" is the large number of men (and women too) present who have seen service in the old war days. To them the "tuta-wae-wae," as they leap up in the war dance and slap their bare sides and chests and yell out the barking chorus of an ancient battle chant, is no mere child's play; they have time and again danced it, rifle and tomahawk in hand, before or after a fight in the New Zealand bush. Some of these middle-aged men here last saw each other over the sights of a gleaming gun barrel. But they rub noses here and tangi over each other as if they were the dearest friends. They bear no ill will; unless perhaps that some faced Whanganui pensioner there who limps around on crutches retains a lingering grudge against the pig of a Hauhau who gave him a bullet in the leg on Moutou Island 'way back in '64.

Chief of all these fighting men of yore is the venerable white-bearded Major Fox (Pokiahi Tarauui), of Maketu, who is the head man of the Ngaitipikiao tribe. The old major's face, circled with the sharply cut blue lines of the tattoo, is of the past generation of Maorihood. He is a typical rangitira, and he is a brave man. In 1805 he distinguished himself by his disregard of danger when he led his section of the Arawa under Major Mair to the attack on the rebels at Te Teko, and later on in the Urewera campaign he pluckily rushed a pa (Te Harema, at Te Whaiti) and afterwards did the best work of any of his tribe against the wild forest-dwelling Urewera. When, after the war a repeating rifle had to be presented by Major Jackson to the bravest man in the force it was by common consent handed to good old Pokiahi.

Many other Arawas present here served in the campaigns against Te Kooti, under Captain Mair (who is appropriately enough the quartermaster-general of the camp) and other officers. The old soldiers of Ngaitahu (along the Whanganui River), or Te Atihau, as they call themselves, are well represented here. They are the Goorkhas of New Zealand, these Atihau. Small built, spare men, with singularly white skins, they share with Ngaitiporou the honours of being the best fighters in the friendly contingents which fought in the campaigns of the Queen against the rebel Hauhau from 1864 up to 1870. Highest in rank and oldest amongst them, trembling on the verge of the grave, is the high chief Topia Turou, who bears a name almost sacred amongst the Whanganui. Old Major Topia, as he is called, is a white-headed veteran bearing the moko (face-tattoo) marks of a past generation. He was a Hauhau originally, it is said, but afterwards turned to the side of the Government and helped to hunt Te Kooti over the face of the land in 1869-70.

Here too is Topia's brother, the tall, fine looking, well "moko'd" old Hauhau warrior Pehi Hitau, who has come from his lone kainga on the dreary plains of Waimarino, near where the head waters of the Whanganui rush down from the snowy slopes of Tongariro, so that he may see with his own eyes the grandson of the Queen, at whose dark soldiers he often took pot-shots in the old war days. For Pehi was a dashing warlock in his prime. Always inimical to the white man, he and his people were amongst the first converts to Hauhauism, and he was one of the rebel chiefs who led their fanatical followers, "barking like dogs," say the friendlies, into battle on Moutou Island, on the Whanganui River, in 1864. This Homeric fight was the last real old Maori scrimmage that occurred in the land, for when the rival forces had fired off their guns they took to their tomahawks and mere, and the skull of many a reckless Hauhau was smashed that day. The friendly natives gave the wild Hauhau "the father of a batin," clubbed their pet prophet and saved Whanganui town. Pehi Hitau saved his life by swimming from the sandspit to the river bank and