

# A SOLDIER'S STORY.

*The Life and Adventures of "Rowley" Hill.*

BY JAMES COWAN.

"My name is O'Kelly,  
I've heard the *revelly*  
From Birr to Bareilly,  
From Leeds to Lahore."  
—*Barrack-Room Ballads.*

IN these stirring days, when martial talk is the fashion, and when some hundreds of our New Zealand boys are off to do battle for the Old Flag, this true and unvarnished narrative of one of our old soldiers should be worth listening to. It is the tale of a warrior whose fighting days are done, though he is still alert and hearty—the life-story of a man who has served the guns before Sebastopol, who has fought hordes of Sepoy mutineers at Lucknow and Cawnpore—whom the shrill *reveille* has awakened on the plains of India, and amidst the fern and damp dark forests of Maoriland—who has faced death a hundred times in many climes, and who can tell of "trekking" over the desolate plains of South Africa, as well as campaigning amongst the remotest wilds of our own colony. Such a man—and a New Zealand Cross man withal—should surely have a story worth the telling.

George Hill, better known amongst his old comrades as "Rowley," is a short, keen-eyed, wiry, firmly-framed old soldier, who is now employed in the Volunteer Brigade Office in Auckland. As for his age, it would be a puzzle to tell it from a glance at the man. He is not very grey, and does not look more than fifty at the most. Yet he has had over forty years' naval and military service—twelve years active service in the British Navy, and over thirty of a military career in New Zealand—served in the Baltic, the Crimea, the Indian Mutiny, Garibaldi's

Campaign, and the Maori wars; and has a whole chestful of medals, as may be seen from our photo. Hill reckons that he is about sixty-six years of age, and he is the best authority on the subject.

The life of Rowley Hill is that of a typical, devil-may-care British sailor or soldier. A born fighter, careless of life; now singled out for commendation for "distinguished conduct in the field;" risking his life to save a comrade; deserting his ship for fresh scenes of warfare; and ever on the *qui vive* for active service—Hill saw more than the usual share of slaughter in Queen Victoria's wars. Including his naval services and his New Zealand career, he took part in upwards of thirty engagements; and—like "our boys" now in South Africa—he well knows the sound of the ugly bullets when they "come peekin' through the dust."

## "SOLDIER AND SAILOR TOO."

Like many another good soldier, Hill began his fighting career in the Navy. First of all, by way of getting our "subject" into this world, it must be explained that he was born in Devonshire, about two years before Victoria became Queen. He was not allowed to waste his time on shore very long, for at the age of fourteen he was packed off to sea, and served an arduous apprenticeship in the hardest of maritime callings—the "North Country" coal trade. He was two years in this trade, much of the time in a collier-brig trading between Shields and Newcastle, and Littlehampton, in Sussex. In the old brig he learned to "reef, hand, and steer," and got accustomed to short commons and plenty of coal-dust. Then he was persuaded that