

Te Heuheu's Death Song.

By J. COWAN.

THE following *waiata* is an example of the poetic funeral dirges and tangi-songs of the Maoris. It was composed and chanted some seventy years ago by the great chief, Te Heuheu Tukino, of the Ngutituharetoa tribe (who was afterwards killed by a landslip at Te Rapa, Lake Taupo, in 1846), on the occasion of the death of his father, Te Heuheu the First, a renowned cannibal chieftain of great rank and priestly sacredness. The mourner likens the dead chief to a *Kokomako* or *Korimako* (bell-bird), which in the ancient heathen ritual was on certain occasions killed and placed on the *ahurewa*, a sacred post or altar of sacrifice, as an offering to the gods.

The original Maori poem begins :

*"Tataka kau ano—
Nga manu o te ata—
Ka riro ko koe ra!
Hare ra, e Pa!—e!
I te hahatanga o Pipiri"*

The Maori version was communicated to me by the composer's descendant, the present chief Te Heuheu Tukino, of Lake Taupo, who observes of it: "*He mea tapu tenei, mo nga whunga o nga rangatira anake*" ("a sacred thing this, for the wailing-parties of chiefs only"). The last occasion of note on which it was sung was at the *tangi* over the celebrated old warrior-priest, Te Rangitahau, at Taupo, last April.

Te Tangi Mo Te Heuheu.

Drooping and lone are the
Birds of the morning,
For thou, O sire, are gone!
Depart, O mighty one,
On winter's icy breath.
My sad lament is this,
My sighing tale of woe—
For thou art gone,
A sacred offering to the gods.
Vanished art thou
In the dim day dawning—
A nestling on the altar high,
Fed to the cruel gods.
While I, like snowy-breasted shag,
Bird of the stream and lake,
Swoop swiftly o'er the plains, and view
Thy battlefields again.
But now below we sadly mourn,
For thou art gathered up by Tu,
The all-consuming god of war.

Depart thou by thy sacred way,
The pathway of the fleeting soul
To the great dwelling of the gods
While shades of evening fall.

O, sweet-voiced bird!
My cherished *Kokomako*—e!
That once in dawning gaily sang—
Bell-bird from Pungarehu's tangled brake,
Alas, thou'rt gone!

A sacrifice thou art,
Where frosty breezes blow,
On sacred *ahurewa* high,
Impaled by the wizard-priest
Of visage dark.
By Uenuku, vengeful of the gods,
Devoured art thou!

Alas, alas!