

**The Maori Chiefs in Birmingham**  
Birmingham Daily Post 07 October 1863

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It is a great pity we know so little about these New Zealanders – that they have not been more interwoven in our literature. We rarely read of them, excepting in books of travel and in tracts; and, while in the former they must perforce be drawn fierce and cruelly inhospitable to show the traveller's courage, they in the latter must be rendered dreadfully deprived of necessity, because brought into contrast with the purest moral and religious code it has ever been the hap of this world to see. They never become the subject of popular reading unless they get into the newspapers, and they never get into the newspapers unless they go to war, and that with us, who, in such a case, are neither the most impartial judges nor the most unprejudiced readers. So that into whatsoever hands the unfortunate New Zealander chances to fall, he is always turned the worst side out.

The Red Indian of North America, on the contrary, has been "written up" to beatification. Though to captives cruel and brutish to a degree disintitling him to any pleasant remembrance whatever, he lives in the pages of Cooper, a noble though a revengeful being; while his legends and traditions form the subject of a poem replete with all that pleasurable dreaminess, wedded to aptness of diction and metre, for which Longfellow has made himself famous in America and well known here. We do sometimes read in these veracious works, it is true, of Indian atrocity, of scalping, and rapine, and murder; true we occasionally get a glimpse of a backwoodsman's burning homestead with a hell-dance of Indians in the foreground. But the general tendency of such books is to awaken compassion for the interesting savage, by showing, in an artfully constructed plot and a sophistical dialogue, that the scalping, and rapine, and murder, formed part of an acknowledged law of reprisals; while the burning was a righteous act of warning, which, keeping other settlers away, was also part of a broad philanthropic scheme, greatly redounding to the credit of the Indian.

But for the aborigines of New Zealand, although they better deserved it, romance and poetry have done almost nothing, and the pen, when it has been employed upon them at all, has been chiefly employed in writing them down. Mention a Red Indian, and straightway there arises in the mind a delightful confusion of Great Spirits, Hiawathas, wild hunting frolics, singing pine forests, peace pipes, and sylvan pleasantness; mention a New Zealander, and there instantly obtrudes itself upon the imagination an uncomfortable notion of being tomahawked, cooked, and eaten. And yet the latter is by far the more tractable and intelligent being. The results of the white man's in-road upon both races show it. The process of colonisation amongst the Indians was a process of extermination; there is still hope that in the case of New Zealand it may be a process of amalgamation.

Open in their dealings, but anxious to bargain well; not predisposed to war, but daringly brave when believing their cause just; open to persuasion, but not unable to reason for themselves; keenly sensible of injury, but grateful for kindness – the Maoris, at all events, have shown themselves not only capable of government, but anxious to submit to the rule of a superior race, and to live in amity with the stranger who seeks a home amongst them. That they are capable of entertaining a spirit of deepest loyalty, too, is abundantly shown by those strangely beautiful outbursts addressed to the Queen on the proposed removal of Sir George Grey, and on the more solemn occasion of the death of the Prince Consort – letters which, while breathing the warmest attachment to British rule, also show a breadth of thought and vigour of intellect that place the Maoris on the high road, not to civilisation merely, but to refinement. A nearer acquaintance only improves them. "The First Gentleman in Europe" could not have turned a more courtier-like compliment than that turned by the old Chief now in Birmingham when, in taking his leave of the Prince of Wales, a short time since, he said,

“We came to England to see great things merely; but it has been our hap to see great people, too – both great and good.” Nor was that reflection of his altogether unwitty when, after being taken to hear a debate in the House of Lords, he remarked to the Duke of Newcastle that he had heard better speeches, though “the Great Mother of the earth” had not given the speakers such a grand house. In their whole demeanour, too, their tastes and pursuits, they display the predilections of a superior race, and by their personal presence recommend themselves to us in a way that could never have been compensated by the most glowing accounts either of travellers or of white residents in their country.

It was a happy inspiration, therefore, that brought a party of Maori chiefs to this country. They have long desired to come, it seems, for one Hong, a great warrior in his day, visited England in the time of George the Fourth, in company with a fellow chieftain, and carried home such a glowing account of the country that hundreds of his fellows wished to verify his report, and see for themselves what he had seen. At length an opportunity offered itself, and Mr Jenkins, a Government interpreter, who has been in the colony more than twenty years, invited certain of the chiefs to take advantage of it. Ten were selected, and four ladies were thrown in, the whole convoy being under the paternal charge of an old warrior, appropriately named Wharepapa, and under the immediate direction of Mr Jenkins. The chiefs are for the most part men of renown and substance, all descendants of great warriors, and some possessing land to the value of nearly a hundred thousand pounds; the ladies are some married, and travelling with their husbands, and some single, and travelling with their friends. They have all embraced Christianity, thirteen of them being members of the Church of England, and one, Wharepapa himself, being a Wesleyan Methodist. Unfortunately one of the ladies became deranged soon after embarkation, and is therefore unable to travel, or be presented. Having completed the passage in a hundred days, the chiefs landed at London on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. Since then they have visited the Queen, at Osborne, the Prince and Princess of Wales, at Marlborough House, the Duke of Cambridge, at the Horse Guards, the Duke of Newcastle, at the Colonial Office, the Earl and Countess of Shaftesbury, the Lord Mayor, and other noble personages; and having seen all the sights in London some of the party have set out on a tour through the principal towns in the kingdom.

Bristol was taken first and then Birmingham; and while their fellow countrymen were calmly sleeping out the night eight thousand miles beneath them – if, indeed the Antipodes can properly be said to be beneath – the Maori chiefs were being heartily welcomed here in the broad daylight of yesterday.

They arrived at New Street Station from Bristol by the train which reached here shortly after eleven o'clock in the morning, and were received by some private friends of Mr Jenkins, who was many years ago a resident in Birmingham. The hour of their arrival for obvious reasons was not made public; and as the chiefs were dressed in ordinary English costume, their presence attracted but little attention. In the afternoon a *conversazione* was held in the Temperance Hall, Upper Temple Street, at which the chiefs attended in their native costume, and over which, in the absence of the Mayor, who was detained at a Council meeting, the Rev. J. F. Cattle presided. A catalogue of the names of the New Zealanders, in honour of whom this *conversazione* was given, may not be very attractive reading, but such as it is our readers are welcome to it. Here it is:

1, Kameriara Hautakiri Wharepapa; 2, Horomona te Atua, and 3, Reihana Taukawau, all generals of the celebrated Chieftain Hongi; 4, Taherei Ngawaka, grandson of the great Heuheu, of Taupo, who with his family and part of his tribe was buried in a land-slip a few years ago; 5, Paratene te Manu, son of Kau te Awha, a descendant of that powerful chieftain Rangitukiwaha; 6, Hapimana Ngapiko, son of Mokoera, and grandson of Rangitawanga; 7, Julia Ngahinia, grand-daughter of the celebrated chief Hereta Taniwah (commonly called

“Hooknose”) of the coromandel district Howraki Gulph, contemporary with Captain Cook; and 8, Hariata Haumu, daughter of Paratene te Ru, a near relative of Arama. The first five chiefs belong to the Hapu of Ngatirangi tribe of Ngapuhi, and are descendants of the far-famed Pene Tau, who took so prominent a part in the wars of the rebel chiefs, Heke and Kawiti. The sixth is of the Taranaki tribe. One of the ladies is a spinster, the other a widow. Both the chiefs and the ladies were in the first place dressed as English people, but over this costume were thrown the large grass and fur mats of their native country, giving them a strangely characteristic appearance. Five of the chiefs and one of the ladies were tattooed; the sixth chief, being born in a mission station, had not been thus ornamented, nor had the widow lady. Both the men and women, the latter especially, are anything but ill-looking, even through their tattoo. One young chief is a fine, tall, athletic fellow, with a piercing dark eye, a high forehead, dark moustache, imperial, and beard – a man that, but for a few tattoo marks, might pass for a Spaniard all the world over. None of the rest are so tall as he, but most of them have an agreeable and dignified bearing, which, together with not at all repulsive countenances, render them at least people that one would not object to make friends with. The faces of the ladies have an expression altogether pleasing – the finest form, we should suppose, of the type of countenance pertaining to the natives of the Australian Continent.

Around them upon the platform were displayed specimens of their manufacture and their war gear, so that, what with the chiefs and their surroundings, the audience at the Temperance Hall were enabled to form a pretty correct idea of the outward appearance of our fellow subject at the Antipodes.

After Mr Jenkins had briefly introduced himself and the Chiefs, explaining that they did not come here for the purpose of exhibiting themselves, but to see the “evil of the land and the good of the land,” he called upon his New Zealand friends to sing a chant of welcome. Whereupon Horomana Te Atua rose and expressed a wish to address the audience.

He did so, and his words were interpreted by Mr Jenkins. He desired it to be distinctly understood that the Chiefs were not there for exhibition purposes, and from what we could make out from his and subsequent explanations, it seems that the charge for admission to these meetings is simply made to help to pay the expenses which have otherwise to be borne by private individuals, the Government contributing nothing. Having thus cleared the way, Horomana went on to speak rightly loyally of her Majesty, and reverently of the Christian religion, to which he attributed all the improvements that had taken place in New Zealand.

At the close of the speech, as their custom is, the speaker chanted a pae..n, in which he was joined by Wharepapa and one or two other chiefs, who sang a sort of drone bass to the melody, if it can be called a melody. It was a wild, weird song, smacking strongly of the desolate dwelling places of the savage.

This over, Paratene te Manu, apparently a far more vigorous and humourous speaker, addressed the meeting to similar effect, also concluding with a stirring war chant. Wharepapa, a kindly looking old chief, also addressed the meeting, but did not chant.

Questions were then invited, and some of the strangest were asked – as to cannibalism and the taste of human flesh sometimes – but of course these were not put to the chiefs by the interpreter. Such as could be put with any decency were repeated and duly answered.

One gentleman, who seemed particularly desirous to know whether either of the ladies were married, and what were their ages, was courteously informed that they were of the respective ages of thirty-two and thirty-eight, and both open to an engagement. On being told that one of the ladies spoke English very well, another gentleman politely requested that she

would address a few words to the meeting, but the lady being bashful, old Wharepapa cut the knot by offering that his charge should speak English if any of the ladies present would first address a few words to the chiefs in Maori. The result was that no lady spoke.

At the close of the meeting Mr J. Richards begged that Mr Jenkins would convey to the chiefs the sentiments of the meeting, which he believed were entirely reciprocal of those expressed by the chiefs. [Applause.] He was sure, he said, that he might take upon himself to say that every one present fully understood the position taken by the chiefs; they fully understood that they did not come here for the purpose of being exhibited, but for the purpose of making themselves more familiar with the mother country. [Applause.] After expressing further his feelings in the matter, and in the name of the meeting heartily welcoming the chiefs to Birmingham, Mr Richards resumed his seat, and Mr Jenkins translated his remarks to the New Zealanders. Whereupon all maintained the strictest silence while Wharepapa briefly announced that in the quietude of meditation the chiefs thanked the meeting most heartily.

At the *soirée* held in the Temperance Hall in the evening, the Mayor presided, and, in a brief address, introduced the chieftains, who again addressed the audience, and again sang some of their war chants. The attendance was larger in the evening than in the afternoon. The chieftains will remain in the town some days.