

Farewell Presents to the Maori Chiefs – A Little “Hitch”
Birmingham Daily Post 11 March 1864

For some time past, as our readers are aware, a committee of gentlemen have been engaged in obtaining from the manufacturers of Birmingham articles of use and ornament to present to the Maori Chiefs, who have been so long sojourning amongst us, on the occasion of their taking farewell of our town. Last night was fixed for the presentation, and a *conversazione* was held in the Town Hall for that purpose.

The proceedings commenced at six o'clock, with a kind of promenade concert – Mr Synyer's excellent quadrille band supplying the music – accompanied with tea and coffee. The interior of the building was decorated with flags and banners, and a large number of the articles to be presented were set out on a stand beneath the orchestra. Many of the contributions were so bulky that it was not deemed expedient to send them.

The following is a list of the contributors:- Messrs Francis Parkes & Co., Sutton Works, Sutton Coldfield, an assortment of axes, forks, &c.; Messrs Mapplebeck and Lowe, an improved corn-dressing machine; Messrs Satchwell and Ashford, large quantity of glass beads; Mr A. W. Wells, Park Mills, Nechells, an assortment of steel spades and shovels; Mr John Cornforth, Berkley Street, case of wire nails; Messrs Josiah Mason and Co., large assortment of steel pens and rings; Messrs Pettitt Brothers, Paradise Street, selection of photographs; Mr William Bach, Erdington, six travelling rugs; Messrs J. and A. Pumphrey, Paradise Street, a Paxton garden engine; Messrs Newey's executors, an assortment of hooks and eyes; Mr Pratt, Summer Lane, an assortment of thimbles; Mr Edmonds, Paradise Street, a large quantity of iron buckles; Mr Joseph Warden, Granville street, one of Hornaby's prize ploughs; Messrs Thomas, Ickfield Works, an assortment of American pattern axes, highly finished; Mr Cartwright, Edgbaston Street, ladies' work-box; Mr Clark, Edgbaston Street, one dozen writing slates; Messrs Birtles and Gottwaltz, New Street, ladies' and gentlemen's silver mounted riding whips; Messrs Tangye Brothers and Price, Cornwall Works, Weston's patent pulley block and chain, and an assortment of toys; Mr J. H. Cottrell, Bull Ring, a large assortment of garden and agricultural seeds; Messrs Reynolds and Sons, one case of assorted out nails; Mr Searl, Worcester Street, a selection of cutlery; Messrs Moulton and Co., Bradford (per Messrs J. and A. Pumphrey), one large waterproof sheet; Mr Councillor Tonks, coffee and tea pots, and spittoons; Messrs Pitt and Davies, Caroline Street, an assortment of nails, &c., Mr J. Gillott, an assortment of steel pens; Messrs Onions and Co., Bradford Street, a portable forge; Messrs W. Blews and Son, Bartholomew Street, bullock bells; Messrs William Edwards and Son, Griffin Works, Wolverhampton, large assortment of horse shoes, wedges, hammers, axes, adzes, &c.; Messrs Harris, Thornton and Sons, large assortment of forks, spades, shovels, axes, &c.; Messrs Sutton and Co., Reading (per Rev. J. F. Green, Erdington, a number of dolls; Messrs Padmore and Sons, Church Street, draught boards, &c.; Mr Mountford, New Street, handsome lady's work box, with pearl fittings; Messrs Yates and Sons, Pritchett Street, an assortment of spades, shovels and pickaxes; Messrs Vaughton Brothers, Dartmouth Street, an assortment of forks, tools, &c., Mr John Mitchell, Newhall Street, large assortment of pens.

At half-past seven o'clock the *conversazione* resolved itself into a formal public meeting, over which the Mayor (Mr W. Holliday) presided. On the platform with him were the chieftainesses and all the chiefs, with the exception of one who was too ill to come. There were also present Mr T. C. S. Kynnersley, the Revds G. Pettitt, S. W. Winter, W. James, F. W. Greaves, and E. Roberts; Messrs W. Horton, E. Heeley, A. F. Morgan, Tangye, Jenkins, Maunsell, Riley, Brame, Barwell, Holdsworth, &c.

The Mayor, in opening the proceedings, briefly referred to the object which had brought the meeting together, and pointing out that the Chiefs had come to England, first to learn more than they hitherto knew about us, and secondly to tell us more than we hitherto knew about them, said he hoped and believed their object was now attained, for he did not believe it was possible in the present day for foreigners to visit England without going away with a better opinion of us than they had when they came here. He trusted it would be so in this case, and that the Chiefs would take home with them a better impression of England than they had ever had before, and one that would tend much to create a better feeling towards us on the part of a certain section of their countrymen at home. [Applause.]

The Rev. S. W. Winter then addressed the meeting, and in doing so spoke of the advantages that must result from a visit of the New Zealanders to England. He also referred to the happy circumstance that such a meeting should be held on a day that was at once the anniversary of the marriage of the Prince of Wales, the baptismal day of the infant Prince, and, what was more delightful than all, the very day on which we had received the news of a cessation of hostilities in New Zealand. He then referred to the appropriateness of the presents. They were implements of industry both for the field and the home, he said, and coming from a town famous for its manufacture of the weapons of war, they tended to show that we made implements of destruction only to preserve the peace of the nations. [Hear, hear.]

Mr Jenkins then explained the circumstances under which he undertook his journey to England with the chiefs, and pointed out certain difficulties with which he had had to contend since. £1,600 was subscribed in New Zealand, it would seem, to cover the expenses of the journey, and the chiefs were to stay in England twelve months, Mr Jenkins making himself responsible for their maintenance here, and the chiefs being bound to follow his directions. Articles of agreement as to what course was to be pursued were drawn up and signed on both sides.

The plan here laid down was approved by Governor Grey in New Zealand, and was also approved here by the Duke of Newcastle, the Prince of Wales, and other persons of rank and eminence. Shortly after their arrival, however, money ran short, and it became necessary that an appeal should be made to certain gentlemen, with the Earl of Shaftesbury at their head. These gentlemen were prepared to subscribe to send the chiefs home at once, but the latter insisted upon the fulfilment of their agreement, and no money was raised. The chiefs under the charge of Mr Jenkins then went to Bristol, where Mr Jenkins put into operation his plan of holding public meetings, with a charge for admission to cover the expenses. Then the plan was prosperous.

But when the chiefs came to Birmingham a hitch took place, certain influential persons withdrew their countenance, and the funds once more became low. Still, Mr Jenkins said, he had arranged to fulfil his contract, by taking the chiefs back in May; but in the meantime they grew tired of their present life, and a benevolent lady living near Birmingham had taken measures to give as many as chose to go a passage out. The majority were going under these terms next Monday, and two or three would stay and go with him in May.

Mr Kynnersley said that if he had consulted his own feelings, he should have said nothing about the matter, but as Mr Jenkins had referred to the subject, he might just state how it was that he came to interest himself in the Maori Chiefs. Some short time ago, Mr Bach and Mr Pumphrey, the secretaries of the committee called his attention to the state in which the chiefs were, and asked him what could be done for their relief, and on enquiry he found that probably tired of the alternate excitement and dulness of the present mode of life, and probably inconvenienced to some extent by the inclemency of the winter weather, the chiefs wanted to go home.

Under these circumstances, a benevolent lady living near Birmingham, connected by family with Bishop Selwyn, of New Zealand, had taken measures to carry out their wishes, and the majority would leave England, doubtless, next week.

The Mayor then made the presentation, through Mr Maunsell, a Government interpreter, who seemed to be in attendance on the chiefs who were about to go home, all of whom, with their interpreter, sat on the opposite side of the platform to that on which sat Mr Jenkins and the chiefs who intend accompanying him.

The presentation having been made, Reihani rose to reply and began by saying that he had not at all desired to hear Mr Jenkins speak that night, because there was another side to the question. He was then about to give the "other side," when the Mayor, Mr Kynnersley, and other gentlemen, pointed out to him the impropriety of his doing so at that time, and he desisted. Reihani then abandoned that subject, but instead of returning thanks to the meeting for their present, flatly announced that he and those chiefs who were returning with him would not accept their share of it. They desired, in fact, that it should be handed over to Mr Lloyd, Mr Lightband and Mr Brent, who had accompanied them and Mr Jenkins over and had lost money by it.

Then arose Hapimana (who continues with Mr Jenkins), and rejoicingly announced that whatever his brethren might do he should not give up his share, for which he begged to thank the meeting most heartily.

The Rev. W. S. Winter, without going into the circumstances, expressed the fullest confidence in Mr Jenkins, and suggested that the presents of Birmingham should be divided amongst as many chiefs as would accept them; but Mr Kynnersley objected to any such course. The chiefs who had refused the presents, he said, did so, not because they were insensible to the kindness of the people of Birmingham, but out of a high feeling of honour and honesty. They were desirous that the gentlemen whose names had been mentioned should not be losers by them if they could help it. He suggested that the chiefs should be allowed to sleep on it and reconsider their decision.

After existing difficulties had been thus temporarily adjusted, votes of thanks to the committee and the Mayor brought the proceedings to a close, though not until the subject had been again incidentally referred to by different speakers. As no clear statement of the case was made, however, our readers would scarcely understand allusions to a difficulty of which the main points were concealed.