

The Maori Chiefs in England

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Some of our readers may remember a party of New Zealanders who appeared publicly in London on several occasions last year. They were originally 14 in number, all natives of the province of Auckland, and were either chiefs of subdivisions of tribes or allied to chiefs. They were of the Ngapuhi, which is one of the highest caste, and has always been faithful to the British crown.

Soon after their arrival here, in May last, they were presented to the Queen, who became sponsor to the child of one of them. They were also received by the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke of Cambridge, and others.

Circumstances have made it necessary that the facts relating to their visit to this country should be laid before the public, and this has been done by Mr T. C. Sneyd Kynnersley, police magistrate of Birmingham, in a letter to the *Daily Post*. Mr Kynnersley writes:

In February, 1863, they, with five others (one of whom has permanently left the party), were induced by Mr Jenkins to accompany him to England, "to see the wonderful things of England, which are past description, and to tell the English people all about New Zealand." Mr Jenkins was an utter stranger to them, being a tradesman at Nelson, in the southern island, at least four hundred miles distant from Auckland. He speaks the Maori language, and has been employed as interpreter by the local government of Nelson in their transactions with the very few natives who inhabit that province. I am afraid his assumed title of "Interpreter to the Government of New Zealand" must be reduced to these modest limits. The number of natives in the whole southern island does not exceed two thousand, and I am assured that there are not more than 300 or 400 in the neighbourhood of Nelson. He has brought with him absolutely no credentials, or letters of introduction, or evidence of any description, that he is even what he represents himself to be, or that his project was sanctioned by the Governor (Sir George Grey), or Bishop Selwyn, or any one of the clergy, English or native, or, in fact, by any individual whatever, in or out of authority.

The party, consisting of the above fourteen natives, Mr Jenkins, and Messrs Brent, Lightband, and Lloyd (his associates in the adventure), sailed from Auckland in February, 1863. Before starting an agreement was drawn up, by which the natives bound themselves to Messrs Jenkins and Co. (in the deed called "The Company") for twelve months from their arrival in England, which period might be shortened or prolonged at the pleasure of "the Company." All their expenses were to be paid. They were to travel about from place to place in England, and attend public meetings, at which lectures would be delivered, and money was to be received at the doors. This was to be placed in a bank, and on their return divided between the parties, five-sixths to be paid to the company (to reimburse them for expenses incurred), and one-sixth to the natives.

(I may mention here that this was afterwards one cause of quarrel; the natives having understood that the gross profits were to be divided, whereas the deed, which they say they did not understand, speaks of net profits only).

They arrived in London in May. Every one knows that in the summer they were presented to her Majesty, who became sponsor to the child of Pomare and his wife, two of the party. They attended public meetings, and for some time fared sumptuously at the Grosvenor Hotel. A very strong feeling was at this time entertained by the Duke of Newcastle, the Earl of Shaftesbury, and others that the undertaking must result in failure, and that a prolonged stay

in England would be both morally and physically injurious to the people, and measures were taken to send them back with credit and comfort to their own country. According to the statement of the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Shaftesbury, both of whose letters I have before me, this offer was refused by Mr Jenkins. The public meetings were therefore continued. They went to Bristol, Exeter, Gloucester, &c., and arrived in Birmingham in October.

We need not go over the whole story of the failure of the scheme. Mr Kynnersley says that dissatisfaction and discontent prevailed among the Maoris. The public meetings at which they were expected to appear in mats once worn by the natives, but long since disused, became intolerably distasteful to many of them. Disputes arose about money matters. Three of the party left Mr Jenkins, and joined a troupe of performers at the Alhambra. The lectures, moreover, became less and less productive. The funds of the adventurers were exhausted, and as the cold weather came on they suffered severely; they became dispirited, gloomy, and miserable. Some of them were suffering from illness, and all sensibly felt the extreme cold of the winter about the time of Christmas. Under these circumstances the intervention of friends became necessary. Mr Kynnersley writes:

“The men and women had considerable pecuniary claims upon Mr Jenkins under the agreement made in London, and he was under contract to convey them back to their own country: but they were willing to give up these claims to purchase their emancipation, and after some delay a formal deed was prepared and executed, whereby all agreements were cancelled and mutual releases given from all engagements. This deed was executed by the nine individuals above mentioned, viz. Reihana, Wharepapa, Paratene, Hirini and his wife Tere, Horomona, Hariata, Kihiringhi, and Julia. Pomare and his wife were sent home by her Majesty at her own private expense. Takerei and Hapimana remain with Mr Jenkins. Four of the nine have left Birmingham for London this morning; four others will follow very shortly. One is, as I have said, in St. Bartholomew’s Hospital. I trust they will all sail for New Zealand in less than a month.”

The realisation of this hope will depend, we believe, on the extent to which the public is ready to co-operate in the work. It is pretty clear now that these Maoris never ought to have been brought to England, but a regard for our credit requires that they should now be sent back as soon as possible. Lord Shaftesbury has signified his readiness to re-organise the committee which has formed in the last summer, and promote a subscription for sending them out in comfort. A committee has been formed also in Birmingham for the same purpose, of which James Lloyd, Esq., has kindly consented to be the treasurer. Whatever is contributed will expedite the return and promote the comfort of these nine Maories. It is not necessary to say more, we may hope.