

1874.

NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE MEETING OF UREWERA TRIBES,

HELD AT RUATAHUNA, 23RD AND 24TH MARCH, 1874.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

REPORT by H. W. BRABANT, Esq., R.M., Opotiki.

SIR,—

Opotiki, 1st April, 1874.

I have the honor to inform you that I have just returned from Ruatahuna, where I proceeded to attend the Urewera meeting, in accordance with your instructions contained in your letter No. 398-2, of the 4th October last.

There has been considerable uncertainty as to the date when this meeting would take place, the Urewera themselves disagreeing on this point. It was first fixed for February, afterwards put off until the 4th of March, and then again to March the 17th. As it appeared pretty certain, from letters I had received, and from statements of Tamaikowha and others who had come down to ask me to attend, that the meeting would actually come off on this date, I started on March the 9th, so as to allow for delays on the road, which were likely, on account of the weather being bad. The following is a report of my journey, and of the proceedings at the meeting. The Urewera had invited all the Bay of Plenty tribes, as far down as Cape Runaway, to attend their *hui*, but none of them accepted the invitation with the exception of a few chiefs who accompanied me, and who most of them went at my request. I stayed on the 9th at Whakatane, employed in getting my party together, and on the 10th proceeded as far as Pukiekie, at the entrance of the Whakatane Gorge, with the following party:—Wiremu Kingi, and two others of the Ngaitai; Hoani Ngamu, Taupo Te Hura, and two others of the Arawa; Wepiha Apanui, and three others of the Ngatiawa; Kaperiere, and three others of the Ngatipukeko; Piahana Tiwai, of the Whakatohea; Kepa Te Ahuru, and four others of the Urewera; and two native police; making in all a party of twenty-two. Pukiekie is settled by Te Turi and five other men, with their women and children, who hospitably entertained my Native fellow-travellers.

On the following day (11th) we started up the gorge, though it was pouring with rain, and in about three hours reached Te Ahikaiata's settlement of Ngamahanga. We were here met by a messenger who had been sent to Te Ahikaiata, the Secretary of the *Whitu Tekau* (seventy), with a letter which had reached Ruatahuna from Tareha Te Moananui. This letter, which was shown me, requested the Urewera to put off their meeting until the end of the month, as, if they did not, neither Mr. Locke, R.M., nor the Ngatikahungunu would attend it. I decided to wait at Ngamahanga until I heard further news, although Te Ahikaiata urged me to pay no attention to the letter. I therefore despatched one of the Urewera orderlies who was with my party, with a letter to the chiefs at Ruatahuna, asking them to let me know whether I should go on or go back, as, if I went on at once, I should not be able to wait at Ruatahuna until the end of the month; whereas, if the meeting had been put off, I should be able to return home and make a fresh start.

On the 12th, the rain continuing, the river commenced to rise, and continued to do so for two days. On the evening of the 15th I received an answer to my letter from Kereru and Te Whenuanui, urging me to go on at once. This was brought down by a messenger who came on foot over some mountain pass, and, according to his own account, nearly lost his life in swimming the river. On the evening of the 16th the river appeared to have fallen sufficiently to attempt the journey, and before daylight on the 17th we started up the river, and notwithstanding that the water was still high, and some of the fords very deep, we reached Tauwharematai, the first inland settlement, at dusk. We were here hospitably entertained by Aperahama and the Natives of the place, and received with the usual speeches, songs, &c. A letter was handed to me from Kereru, asking me to remain one day where I was, and to go on to Ruatahuna on the morning of the 19th. Accordingly, on that day I proceeded to Ruatahuna, about eight miles.