

"FELLOW MEMBERS OF A BRAVE FAMILY."

Maori clergyman's letter, Chaplain Wepiha's speech before the charge.

Chaplain Wepiha **Wainohu** writes to his wife thus Dearest Ellen, — I send you and all the people at home my love. Please tender my sympathy and sorrow to the relatives of those who have died. I have just received your letters and photo. It made my heart ache to see you looking up at me from in between my hands. I was looking at the photo just at the moment the Turks were charging one end of our line of trenches. I took no notice of the bullets and shells flying about, though my ears were deafened with the sound of them. The Turks abandoned their attack, on our trenches just at the time I had finished reading your letters. We were then occupying one of the trenches captured from the Turks. We are quite well and comfortable here. We have no news to give other than what is already known to you. I am filled with aroha (love) for you all. The handkerchiefs and necktie you kindly sent me have arrived safely. My dear, I am sure that I shall never forget the marvellous things I have seen in this war.

Just before charging the enemy we received orders to prepare for it. This order, of course, included our Pākehā friends. I then asked our Colonel to allow me fifteen minutes to address my men. He very kindly consented. When our boys were ready and lined up before men, I stood on a little rise and spoke to them as follows:

"Fellow members of a brave family. Listen unto me, your elder and adviser in things spiritual and corporeal. My words to you are Be brave, be valiant. Be firm and determined in your hearts and in your minds, to win success. Remember you are the descendants of brave and warlike ancestors. You are only a handful of warriors amongst the many thousands of men here. These people are watching you; they are asking within themselves, "What manner of men are these who have come from the ends of the earth? Will they justify their presence? So therefore, my brothers, do not forget that the name and honor of the Maori people lies in your hands to-day— to make or to mar, when you charge the enemy, never turn back, but go on, and on, and on to victory. I know that some of us now here will never again stand together with us. But it would be better for us all to be dead in these hollows and on the tops of these mountains than for a whisper of dishonour to go back to the old people at Home. Therefore, my brothers be of good courage. Be fearless in the face of the enemy and keep up the prestige and high name of the Maori race. You will by your noble deeds light such a fire on the mountains that it can never be quenched. Remember that old and ancient proverb of our Ancestors "small and insignificant as is the Kopara (native Bird), yet swings he to & fro no on the highest branch of the tallest Kaitika tree. Accordingly, I desire you to reach the top of those mountains this morning.

About this time tears were filling my eyes. And as I saw the splendid condition of those gallant men standing before me, armed to the teeth and alert to attack, speechless, with never a word nor a murmur from them, I could not help feeling for them because I could see in their eyes and in their grim demeanour that my words had gone home to everyone like unto a Knife thrust into their heart. I concluded my address with the words of Saul unto David when David went to meet the giant Philistine Goliath, "as related in the first Book of Samuel, 17th chapter and 37<sup>th</sup> verse 'Go and the Lord be with Thee' 1 gave out hymn. No. 94, and it was a pleasure to

hear those boys singing a Maori hymn in a strange and foreign, land. The Pakehas looked on and wondered, and I am sure that the Turks also heard us and wondered, as the Turks were not very far away, in some places they were only one hundred yards away, and in others barely fifty. At the conclusion of the hymn I lifted up my hands and asked for God's protection and blessing upon them in the coming conflict. We then attacked the enemy.

I afterwards heard some of the Pakehas saying that they had never entered a fight in such a fashion. That we ought to be able to knock them out of the Turks with the aid which we were asking from above. They also said it made them sad to see and hear us praying for Divine assistance. I told them that this was a very old and ancient custom of the Maoris from time immemorial. Before the advent of Christianity into New Zealand the Maoris always entered into battle, with services of this kind, and in the Maori wars and other battles after the introduction of Christianity amongst them they always carried on the old custom of asking for Divine assistance in war. This was because "we believed in a Higher Power than man." There was a Pākehā Minister there who was looking at us, a major. He died soon afterwards in that same charge. A good many ministers were wounded and killed in that charge. I escaped only by good fortune which it is, my earnest conviction was more in answer to your prayers than mine that I am still unharmed. My children here are continually in my thoughts, no matter where they come from, and what denomination they belong to, they are the same to me. When there are no priests to bury the Roman Catholics, I bury them myself. We are very good to one another. The members of other denominations tell me that I must be their father while they are here, and that they can return to their different sects when they go back to New Zealand. We have, you see, many children both here and at home. They are all ours to care for. Do not worry for us. We are quite well.

Your brother Tupara is well; so are Paora Rerepu te Uruu and Hemi te **Wainohu**. Your other brothers, Charlie and Kipa, are at the hospital, Kipa was wounded in the hip. The most painful part he had was when they tried to extract the bullet from his hip. Rata Namana and Tamihana Kaianga were wounded afterwards. Poa Rewiri left for the hospital only this morning. Hamana Kingi is all right. Some of the Wairoa Maori boys are at the convalescent hospitals, but not here, you know some are in Egypt, Malta, or England, Some of us almost hope that we may get wounded in order that we may see dear old England. Some of our wounded are there now.

I have no more to tell you. Give my love to all at dear old Wairoa and especially to the old people.

Your loving husband, H. **Wainohu**.