Time and Tide

For the Record

an extract from

MAORI PAINTINGS: Pictures from the Partridge Collection of Paintings by Gottfried Lindauer.

Edited by J. C. Graham, A.H & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1956. Gottfried Lindauer [1839-1926], Henry Partridge [1848-1931]

PREFACE

In due time and in due pursuit of understanding the works of others inevitably leave their impressions on the soul, if not the spirit. Here one may include the superb photographic record of original North American peoples compiled by Edward S. Curtis. Likewise the written record of the Pacific Northwest Tlingit Indians by George T. Emmons, so ably matched, edited and enhanced by Frederica de Laguna. What follows here is a further example from a different hemisphere among different peoples, yet the humanity and the dedication remains constant, as does the deed itself. JNH.

EXTRACT:

"Henry Partridge was born in London in 1848. After seven years of high adventure at sea he landed at Hokitika at the age of 20. There followed a year of heavy pioneering during which he tramped over much of the South Island, crossing from Westland to Canterbury by the newly-opened Arthur's Pass and then through Otago and Southland, getting what work he could find on the way. At the age of 21 he set up his own ore crushing plant at Thames. Here he met James Mackay, magistrate and civil commissioner for the Thames-Ohinemuri district and a man deeply versed in Maori lore. Often Partridge would go with his friend Mackay to remote Maori villages and there he learned to know and admire the old-time Maori. Their dignity of bearing and their kindly hospitality to those whom they trusted appealed to him strongly.

Like many people at the time he saw that a whole way of life was passing, but he was determined to do something to preserve it. The opportunity came when in 1874 he met Lindauer. The artist showed him his sketch book and the partnership began. At that time Partridge was 26. He had been in business in Auckland for only a year and was married with two young children, and his funds were limited. Nevertheless he launched on his far-sighted enterprise. In the first year he commissioned Lindauer to paint a portrait of the Thames chieftain, Hori Ngakapa. Thereafter, whenever funds permitted, he commissioned another picture or two. In the case of a few chiefs notable in the early days of European settlement, Lindauer was obliged to work from photographs, sketches, and the guidance of relatives. But the great majority of the portraits were painted from life. That was one of the features of the Lindauer - Partridge partnership. They were able to enlist the trust and co-operation of the Maori people. It should be remembered that when the collection was started the Maori wars had only just ended. The last clash with Te Kooti had been in 1871. There was still much bitterness and hostility. In addition, many Maoris believed that the making of a likeness took something from the living person, and viewed an artist or a camera with superstition and mistrust. But Lindauer's simplicity, gentleness, and sense of fun broke down such doubts and likewise the rigid antagonism that many an old chief still nourished toward all Europeans. Few artists have been so successful in gaining the cooperation of their sitters. Often he

and Partridge went off into the wilds together to paint some magnicently-tattooed old rangatira of whom they had heard. The Maoris called the two friends "Pakeha" impartially, and they called each other by the same name. Much of the value of Lindauer's work for the historian lies in the fact that his paintings are not of some anonymous Maori, but of men and women whose stories and part in the life of New Zealand are known. In the course of time Lindauer painted many of the Maoris who played leading roles in New Zealand's formative years. In some cases the Lindauer portrait is the only surviving record of their appearance, and most of them are by far the most valuable likenesses available. For Lindauer painted his sitters with meticulous accuracy. He recorded in exact detail not only the features and bearing of the old chiefs, but also their insignia of rank, their weapons, their feathered cloaks, their ear ornaments, and the intricate tattoos which were as personal to them as a signature today. As studies in moko (tattoo) alone the portraits are of great ethnological value. So are they for the light they throw on Maori customs, housing construction, implements, weaving, and other arts and crafts, all reproduced with the utmost attention to accuracy.

Over the years hundreds of old-time Maoris have studied these pictures intently, from a background of intimate personal knowledge. Often they have communed so closely with the subjects that they have burst into impassioned speeches as if they were speaking to live people. Never once has a flaw in the Maori detail been detected. For a good many years the paintings commissioned were exclusively portraits of notable Maoris, and these were ordered only when the young merchant could spare funds from the needs of his family and business. As he prospered he was able to commission pictures more frequently, including occasional larger canvases depicting aspects of Maori life. Lindauer did not paint only for Partridge by any means, nor did he paint only Maori subjects. He secured commissions for portraits of numerous public men in New Zealand, including Sir Walter Buller, lawyer, land court judge, magistrate, Maori authority, and author of noted books on New Zealand birds. Sir Walter commissioned portraits of some of his Maori friends. Sometimes Lindauer sat alongside Buller when he was hearing Maori Land Court cases and made sketches of the participants. Some of the pictures were exhibited at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of 1885 in London. The Prince of Wales, later Edward VII showed particular admiration for a picture of a Maori girl with clematis wreathed round her head and later accepted it as a gift. Indeed, Lindauer's work attracted attention in many places abroad. About a dozen of the pictures he had painted for Partridge were lent to the New Zealand Government for the New Zealand court at the 1904 world fair in St Louis ("Meet me in St Louis, Louis, Meet me at the fair," as the song said). The painting of Ana Rupene and child (page 105) was awarded the grand prize by the committee of the Palace of Art. The exhibit brought offers of purchase from several European and American museums. Tributes came from Vienna and Berlin. But Partridge refused all such proposals because his whole purpose of making the collection was as an historic and ethnic record of the Maori race for New Zealanders.

For many years the pictures were housed in the Partridge family home, where they became a tourist attraction for visitors to New Zealand. Maoris came also in large numbers, asked permission to see the paintings and sat gravely hour after hour in front of portraits of departed friends, relatives or ancestors. Aue ! Aue ! the lament sounded, quietly through the house as the pictures brought back memories of older times. Groups of Maoris from many parts of the country made pilgrimage to study the collection. Chiefs would come and gaze long and earnestly at their own likenesses, an incredulous smile playing across their features from time to time. Tribal groups would sit in front of pictures of departed ancestors, point out details and exchange recollections.

It seems only right that the Maoris themselves should be given the last word. The visitors' book in the old Partridge home is rich in comments by Maori and Pakeha alike, bearing witness to the mood called up by communing a while with Lindauer's paintings. The Maori entries reflect not only the racial pride of ancestry, but equally the gift of oratorical address.

Wrote one Maori visitor:

I greatly wondered and felt delight on seeing the faces of the fathers and chiefs of the Maori people, who have passed away to the night. This is why I am thankful to the men who made these beautiful pictures. The faces of this company of the dead are as if they are living now.

Said another:

Certain of these old chiefs I have seen face to face. Their names and their greatness were famous. Great of hand and great of thought is our European friend who has seen and brought to life these spirit faces. Some of these were the great totara trees of Aotearoa in their days, even up to the present time. Great is my praise for these pictures and also for the work of our European friend. O friend, may you continue to live and prosper.

And from some of the leaders of the race, these tributes: Mahuta Potatau te Wherowhero (the third Maori King):

Love and grief from the heart at the sight of the faces of these ancestors of ours -- our fathers and mothers in the days when they were alive. Oh friends, salutations to you all! Remain there in your last resting place. This ends my lament of love and sorrow. Greetings to the artist who made these pictures, the owner of them and the person who has them in charge. May God protect you all !

Tureiti Te Heu Heu Tukino:

I have come to see these great chiefs of our past generation. It is a work which brings forth love at the sight of these lifelike presentments of the chieftains of the Maori race. Towering like the kauri above the other trees, the pictures bring the praise and admiration of the present generation, when they look upon the faces of old. The heart rejoices, too, at the thoughtfulness our friend Mr Partridge in obtaining and possessing these pictures to be preserved for ever onwards.

Sir Maui Poreare:

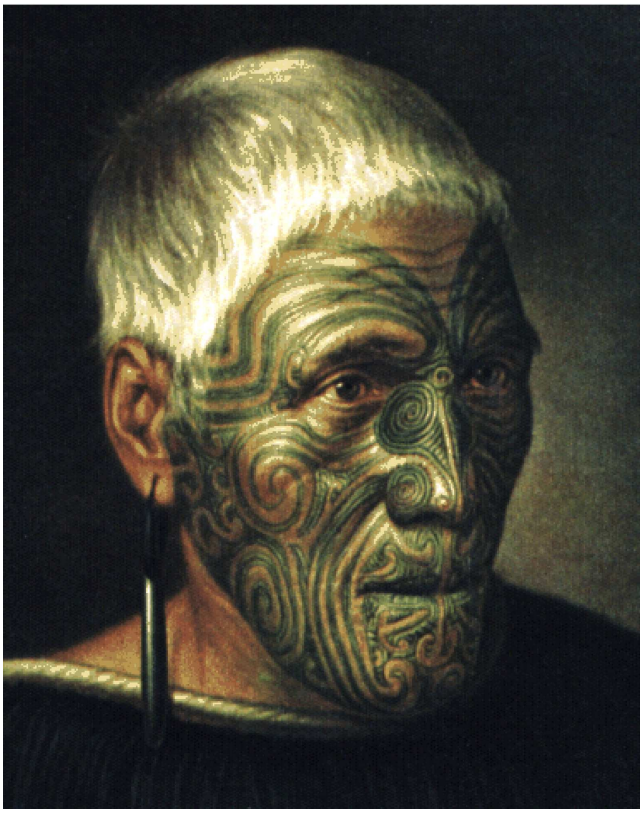
This man of shadow-making stands alone in his art. He is a tohunga in his profession. May he live long and follow his art, which gives birth to praise and to memories of the countenance of our predecessors whom we behold no more.

Sir Apirana Ngata:

I have come here to lament over the great of other days, the people brought before us coloured as if they are living. Pleasing to the eye is the shadow-carving of the Euro artist -- it is as if they had all arisen from the dead. Thankful are we to the man who has preserved these pictures of our elders, our chiefs as a treasure for the years that are to come.

. . . Death finally dissolved the partnership which produced them in 1926, when Lindauer died at Woodville aged 88. Partridge also lived to an advanced age and died in 1931 in Auckland, aged 83. Their bequest to New Zealand lives on. The vision my grandfather showed in forming this collection will be still more greatly appreciated by generations to come."

"J. C. GRAHAM "



Portrait of WI TE MANEWHA by Gottfried Lindauer

"A chief of the Ngati-Raukawa, of Otaki, Wellington Province. He was born in the Maungatautari district, Waikato. Wi and most of his tribe, under the celebrated Te Whatanui, migrated to Otaki about 1834 in order to join Te Rauparaha who some years earlier had conquered a large part of the west coast north of Wellington..... A spendid cast of the deeply carved face of Wi te Manewha was taken by Lindauer and Sir Walter Buller. His moko was perfect, the lines cut exceptionally deeply, even to the eyelids. It was said that the tattooing was done twice to make deeper markings. The cast was made during the lifetime of the chief. It is of considerable ethnological value because it is the only known instance of an old-time Maori permitting such a thing, since the head was considered sacred." [J. C. GRAHAM]

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