

TOPICS OF THE DAY.

A TELEGRAM in another column announces the death of perhaps the most remarkable Maori warrior who raised up arms against the Pakeha; certainly there has been none whose proceedings have aroused more thorough detestation in the minds of the European inhabitants of this country. We refer of course to Te Kooti, the author of the historical Poverty Bay massacre. We have no desire to excuse the infamous deeds of this bloodthirsty savage, who has now gone to his account. Still it behoves us, the more especially now that he is dead, to consider what there is to be said for him from his own point of view. We must remember that his deeds of bloodshed were committed in time of war, when he believed himself to have suffered wrong and injury at the hands of the Europeans, and above all that Maori views of what is right and proper in war are not as our views.

There are some people who Te Kooti's say that Te Kooti would have ended his days in a Rebel. peaceful and harmless obscurity but for a misunderstanding on the part of the Europeans which drove him into rebellion. Te Kooti was first heard of in the war against the Hau Hais, on the East Coast of the North Island, in 1865. He was then among the supposed friendly Natives who were co-operating with us against the Hau Hais. Rightly or wrongly, Major Fraser, the officer in command of the British forces, suspected Te Kooti of disloyalty, and placed him under arrest. Undoubtedly he had a relative in the enemy's camp whom he was suspected of communicating with, but it is a point which is still debated as to whether there was any evidence of treasonable conduct on Te Kooti's part. However, the Government acted on what was considered the more prudent policy, and Te Kooti and a number of other suspected or openly turbulent Natives were deported to the Chatham Islands.

On the Chatham Islands the Maoris remained for two years, at the end of which time the colony was suddenly startled by the news of their escape. On the 4th June, 1868, they seized a small vessel called the Rifleman, and under the command of Te Kooti made their way across to Poverty Bay. The rebel chief had with him, besides women and children, 163 men, who were armed with rifles and ammunition taken from the Chathams. Te Kooti used subsequently to assert that if he had been allowed to go to his home in peace he would have remained there quietly. Clearly, however, the Government having once decided that Te Kooti was a dangerous and turbulent rebel, could not quietly connive at his escape and allow him to remain at large without any effort at his capture. They first despatched Captain Biggs after him, and when that officer was forced to retreat, sent Colonel Whitmore in pursuit. Te Kooti soon gave them a taste of his quality as a tactician. He retreated inland, led Colonel Whitmore a pretty dance among the mountainous defiles of the interior, and finally, as Titokowaru was making things very lively for the Government forces on the West Coast, the chase after Te Kooti was dropped. After a brief period of quiescence the chief turned the tables, and made his presence felt in a manner that thrilled the colony with horror. Issuing from his mountain retreat, he fell upon the settlement of Poverty Bay, and massacred every living being, man, woman and child, Maori as well as European, who fell into his power. In all, thirty-two white persons were murdered.

There was a terrible cry for vengeance throughout the colony. A large number of Maoris, whose friends had been slaughtered, now

took the field against Te Kooti, and a series of remarkable operations ensued. The chief figure in the avenging expedition was Major Ropata, now a member of the Legislative Council—a brilliant general, fully capable of coping with Te Kooti on his own lines. From this point Te Kooti was fairly over-matched, but no matter how desperate the straits to which he was reduced, he always managed to elude capture. The story of his innumerable escapes from positions of the utmost difficulty and apparent hopelessness is indeed one of the most romantic and exciting narratives in the history of the Maori War. Especially striking is the Ngatapa episode. Te Kooti, driven out of one pah, had taken refuge in Ngatapa, an apparently impregnable position, surrounded by precipices. Ropata's men refused to make the attack, and the Ngatihungunu, another friendly tribe, went home in a huff. Nothing daunted, Ropata, together with a European named Reese and sixteen men scaled the precipices and actually attempted to storm the pah, but of course found their force unequal to such an attempt, and had to retire. Being subsequently joined by the European contingent under Colonel Whitmore the attack on the pah was renewed, and this time the position was carried after a heavy loss of life. Te Kooti and the bulk of his men escaped into the Uriwera Country. We have no space to tell of the frequency with which he managed to elude his pursuers just as they seemed on the point of securing him, and how he tried in vain first to enlist Tawhiao and the King Natives on his side, and subsequently to negotiate peace with the Government through the agency of Mr Firth. In Jan., 1870, 390 friendly Natives under Topia, and 300 under Major Keopa (Kemp), also known as Rangihwini, started up the Wanganui River in pursuit of Te Kooti, who once more retreated into the Uriwera country. He sustained successive defeats at the hands of Lieut.-Col. McDonnell and our Native allies, but always managed by some brilliant stroke of strategy to convey himself away when the troops were upon him. A reward of £5000 was placed upon his head. Kemp, by a brilliant piece of diplomacy, detached the Uriweras from him, and at one time Te Kooti led the life of a wild beast, attended only by about forty faithful followers in as evil a plight as himself. Still he retained his liberty, and finally made his escape into the King Country, which was then regarded as a sort of city of refuge, and at length it was tacitly agreed to drop the pursuit, which had proved so unprofitable.

ONCE or twice in recent years Closing Te Kooti's name has raised a Days. flicker of excitement in the colony. There was an outcry on the part of a section of the community when Mr Bryce, in pursuance of the policy he had laid down, decided not to exclude Te Kooti from the general amnesty extended to Maori offenders. Still more excitement was aroused in 1884, when Te Kooti, presuming on the latitude which had been extended to him, announced his intention of visiting Poverty Bay. At this time, he was a broken-down drunkensavage, barely responsible for his actions, and it is difficult to say what would have happened if he had persisted in his expressed intentions. There were still living in Poverty Bay many relatives of those who had perished at his hands, and they openly swore to have their revenge if he ventured in their midst. He was induced to abandon the scheme, but returned to it in 1889, when, refusing to turn back at the demand of the Government, he was placed under temporary arrest, and so forced to abandon his journey. Recently he made his appearance in the Hot Lakes district, and assumed some show of state and parade, but attracted comparatively little attention. He has not long survived his famous associate in the war of 1869—Titokowaru—who, it may be remembered, died on the West Coast a year or so ago.

Or all the points of interest in the Hot Lakes district, Wairakei is probably the place on which the memory dwells most affectionately in after days. It has plenty of natural wonders to interest the tourist, but they are none of them of the appalling and nerve-shaking nature to be witnessed elsewhere. After the dreary desolation of Tarawera, and the uncanny horrors of Tikitere, the traveller finds Wairakei a veritable haven of rest, soothing to the nerves, and affording sights which appeal to the sense of beauty as well as impressing the imagination. One of the most commendable features about the Hot Lakes district is the excellence of the coaching, and tourists will find the drive from Rotorua to Wairakei or Taupo under Mr. Robertson's auspices a pleasant experience in itself. The road lies through bold mountain scenery, with occasional dives through picturesque bits of bush, and good speed is made, Wairakei being reached in ample time for dinner. One of the chief charms about Wairakei is its homelike appearance. Instead of a big staring hotel the visitor finds tastefully laid out grounds and a collection of picturesque cottages, thatched with tussock, and the interior lined with raupo and characteristically decorated with Maori mats, cloaks, and weapons. The arrangements of the hostess, Mrs Graham, for the comfort of her guests are perfect, and the general verdict is that while other places are interesting to look at, Wairakei is the one for a lengthened stay. The bathing arrangements are unique. A stream of hot water runs through the grounds. At one part of the garden a spacious swimming pool has been made. Through this the stream of hot water flows continually, and a plungebath alongside, fed by a conduit of cold water, makes the whole arrangement perfect from the bather's point of view. The pool is overarched with trees, and a more luxurious or picturesque looking bathing place could scarcely be imagined. At another part of the garden is "the douche," a small cascade of warm water. The bather sits in the bed of the stream and allows the mimic cataract of warm water to play upon his shoulders. The situation may not appear dignified or impressive to onlookers, but those who have tried it can vouch for the fact that it is far from unpleasant.

WITHIN easy distance of this comfortable retreat there is a veritable enchanted valley. It is a kind of pocket edition of volcanic wonders, all comfortably arranged close together, so that they can be inspected at leisure in a morning's ramble. There is the "Great Champagne Cauldron," a boiling pool of greenish blue, briskly effervescing and throwing off clouds of steam. The guide always forgets to bring glasses, so that visitors are unable to sample the "champagne," but as the pool keeps up a steady temperature of 214 deg. Fahrenheit there would probably be grave risk of "hot coppers" following a debauch. Opposite the pool are red cliffs of hematite from the clefts in which hiss innumerable jets of steam. The valley is rich in geysers. There is the Great Wairakei which obligingly plays every eight minutes, whether it has an audience to witness its exertions or not. There is the Packhorse Geyser of boiling mud. The legend goes that it was harmless and quiescent until one day an unlucky packhorse fell into its maw, since which time it has been engaged in fruitless efforts to expel the intruder, hitherto it would seem without success. There is the Dragon's Mouth Geyser, so called from the shape of the outlet, and there is the Black Geyser which gets its name from the dark-coloured rocks stained with manganese, by which it is surrounded. There are the Twin Geysers, the Eagle's Nest Geyser (on the fashion of the Crow's Nest at Taupo), and many others too numerous to particularise. Mention must however be made of the beautiful "Prince of Wales's Feathers" produced by two geyser streams crossing each other, and imitating the shape of the emblem after which the geyser is named. There are many other attractions in the valley—the Lightning Pool, the Coral

Terrace, the Blue Lake (lately marred by a landslide), the Green Pool, and many other sights. The botanist will be interested in the hot water fern growing in the warm, moist atmosphere close to the hot streams and springs. The truth is, that a man who has seen Wairakei has seen an epitome of most of the characteristic features of the thermal district.

THE visitor, however, even if he Taupo. intends to return to Auckland instead of proceeding overland to the East Coast, will not omit to extend his journey to Taupo, which lies a few miles beyond Wairakei. On the way he will pass the beautiful Huka Falls, where the Waikato river is suddenly confined in a rocky chasm about 30ft wide. There is a rather dramatic Maori legend connected with the place. A party of Wanganui Natives, it is said, visited the district above the falls, and were challenged by the Waikato Natives to give a display of their powers of managing a canoe. In particular they taunted the Wanganui Natives with not knowing how to shoot a rapid. Now this was a branch of canoeing in which the Wanganui visitors imagined themselves especially proficient, and they promptly undertook to navigate their canoe through any rapids if only the Waikato chief would take his stand on the prow. The challenge was accepted, the canoe was headed for the Huka Falls, with the Waikato warrior erect and impassive in the vessel's bows. Nearer and nearer draw the canoe with ever increasing velocity, and as it approached the fatal causeway, through which the current swept with irresistible velocity, a sardonic smile flitted over the face of the Waikato brave. With one bound he gained a little projecting ledge of the rocks, and the next moment saw the canoe and the too-confiding Wanganuis swept away to instant destruction. The ledge remains even until this day, and thus the most incredulous traveller, asking for proofs of the story, is silenced if not convinced. Another wonderful sight, lying a little off the road between Wairakei and Taupo, is Kerapiti, or the Devil's Trumpet. This consists of an opening in the ground, about a foot in diameter, from which super-heated steam is escaping at an enormous pressure. The temperature is so high that the steam column attains a height of fully 15 feet from the ground before it becomes visible as vapour, and the pillar of vapour soars aloft another fifteen or twenty feet before it becomes diffused in the atmosphere. Thrust your stick into the steam-blast and it is forced upward as if by a powerful jet of water. One scientific man is credited with the statement that "The Devil's Trumpet" is really the safety valve of New Zealand. Whether this is true or not the inquisitive tourist, with an experimental turn of mind, tries his best to close it up by throwing clods of earth, lumps of wood and stone and the like into the opening. All these objects, however, are at once ejected, and these ill-advised attempts to blow up New Zealand have so far been frustrated, and in all probability if the colony ever is "skied" it will be from some totally different cause. Taupo possesses its full share of "porridge pots" and fumaroles, but the "lion" of the district is the Crow's Nest Geyser on the banks of the Waikato river. Lake Taupo in itself is worth going to see. It is a fine sheet of water flanked by picturesque hills. The dominating features in this scene, however, are the fine ice-clad peak of Ruapehu and the volcanic cones of Ngauruhoe and Tongariro, both exhibiting signs of eruptive activity. Ngauruhoe is a particularly fine peak, and latterly has been ejecting large quantities of steam from its crater.