

**COLONEL THOMAS WILLIAM PORTER, C.B., 1844-1920.**

COLONEL PORTER came of a soldiering family. His father, Lieut.-Colonel Porter, 7th Bengal Native Infantry, died in India during the Mutiny. On his mother's side he was Highland in descent, of the aristocratic and ancient Roses of Kilravock Castle, Geddes, Nairnshire, a family whose records go back for over a thousand years. He was a nephew of Lord Strathnairn, a prominent figure in military history. He went to sea at the age of thirteen as a midshipman in the Royal Navy, and served in H.M.S. "Hercules" in raids against pirates on the China Station, 1857-58. Leaving the Navy in 1859, he came to Australia and New Zealand, and entered upon the military life in the Maori War. He joined the Colonial Defence Force Cavalry, and after spending some time in charge of a blockhouse at Mohaka (H.B.) he served in his first engagement with the Hauhau natives at Waerenga-a-Hika Pa, near the present town of Gisborne, at the end of 1865. There he distinguished himself by assisting a wounded comrade under fire, receiving a slight wound. After the disbandment of the Cavalry, Porter joined the New Zealand Armed Constabulary, and during the campaigns against Te Kooti on the east coast, and against Titokowaru on the west coast, he served in command of Maori contingents. He was continuously on active service from 1868 to the beginning of 1872, and during that period fought in scores of engagements and skirmishes. His courage and skill were conspicuous at the siege of Ngatapa, in the Gisborne district, where he commanded a portion of Major Ropata Wahawaha's Ngati-Porou contingent. After sharing in the final defeat and pursuit of Titokowaru and the west-coast Hauhaus, in the interior of Taranaki in 1869, he returned to the east coast with his No. 8 Division, Armed Constabulary, and then took a very prominent and useful share in the campaigns against Te Kooti in the Urewera Country. In this most arduous chase, lasting for three years, Porter (then Captain) was a marvel of energy and physical endurance. The Ngati-Porou contingents under Ropata and Porter sometimes remained months in the formidable forest ranges, far from their base of supplies, often without any food but what the bush afforded, rigorously searching the almost unknown Urewera terrain for the rebel bands. Numerous skirmishes were fought and fortified positions captured, and in September, 1871, Porter and his Ngati-Porou decisively defeated Te Kooti at Te Hapua. (The final shots in this forest war were fired by Captain Preece's force in February, 1872.) The infamous Kereopa, the fanatic murderer of the Rev. C. Volkner at Opotiki in 1865, was captured by a detachment detailed by Captain Porter in the Upper Whakatane, November, 1871.

After the close of the Maori wars Colonel Porter, who during his prolonged and incessant activities was four times wounded, filled many important military and Civil Service appointments on the East Coast. In 1889 he was once more called upon to take the field against Te Kooti, who with a large body of followers insisted on a visit from Waikato to the east coast. The old rebel was arrested by the Colonel at Waiotahi, Bay of Plenty, and sent back to Auckland. When the South African War began Colonel Porter once more sought active service. He commanded the

Seventh New Zealand Contingent of Mounted Rifles in the Transvaal, Orange Free State, Zululand, and later the Ninth Contingent. For his services on the veldt (1900-2) he was awarded the Queen's Medal (four clasps) and created Commander of the Bath. For some time before retiring from the service of the State, in 1908, Colonel Porter was Acting Under-Secretary for Defence.

He was the author of *The Life and Times of Major Ropata Wahawaha*, and had also completed a history of the war with Te Kooti (published in several forms) and a book of East Coast Maori legends.

Colonel Porter was actively interested in the Historical Section of the Wellington Philosophical Society, formed in September, 1918. He held the office of vice-chairman from the beginning, and his picturesque figure, his manly and military bearing, and his conversation, based on a long, varied, and active experience, were always of interest.

His contributions on Maori subjects were highly valuable, and had his life been prolonged he would no doubt have added considerably to the store of New Zealand historical data. He died on the 12th November, 1920, at the age of seventy-six years.

JAMES COWAN.