

Charles Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Oxford Gentleman

Mary Harriet Sparks

H. B. Moorhouse

TOWSEY TALES

NAME: Rev. John Egerton Ward OBE

BIRTH DETAILS: 31 July 1860, Sandhurst (Bendigo, Vic.)

DEATH DETAILS: 6 July 1940, Hillsborough, New Zealand

CHART REF: Towsey Chart B5

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 1893 Napier, New Zealand

SPOUSE: Barbara Ellen Smith

John Egerton Ward was the second of Edward Francis Ward and Lizzie Mackay's five surviving children. He was apparently always called Egerton.

At the same time that Reverend Egerton Ward was active in New Zealand, there was another Reverend Egerton John Ward (though 23 years younger), in Suffolk. One would assume that these two must be related in some way, but even going back four generations, there seems to be no connection at all. On the other hand, both of these Ward families were prominent amongst the gentry of the 18th century, so it is quite possible that there was some connection.

Egerton was born at Sandhurst (Bendigo), at the centre of the Victorian gold rush, in 1860, when his father was the first practicing lawyer there. The family then moved to Dunedin when Egerton was a couple of years old.

The first that we hear of Egerton, is in 1884, when we see that he has joined his elder brother, Edward's law firm in Gisborne, on the south east coast of the North Island.

We know that Egerton was both well educated and a gentleman of strong moral principles, but this did not stop him from being caught up in the slick but dangerous world of his brother, Edward, who was skirting along the edges of the law. For Egerton, being involved with his elder brother, who seems to have made his money through the often shady acquisition of Maori lands, would have been out of a sense of familial loyalty rather than any belief in what Edward was doing. You can read about Edward Francis Ward, junior, in his own Towsey Tale.

Egerton Ward had been educated in England and France and was considered something of a linguist. It was said that he could speak, and think, in four languages. These would be English, French and a Maori language. The other language is not mentioned.

Egerton had been a member of the Salvation Army for some time when, in November 1891, he was posted to work in Palmerston North.

Younger readers might not be familiar with the Salvation Army, which was established in the 19th century, primarily to fight against the abuses of alcohol and thereby to promote sober, Christian values. They were run like an army, with ranks and uniforms and, up to about the 1960s, they would regularly appear on the streets, standing in a circle, playing hymns on their brass instruments and tambourines.

"The Salvos" were widely respected for their work with derelict people and for their efforts to help soldiers wounded during the world wars.

At the time of his posting in 1891, Egerton was a Lieutenant.

In July 1893, he married Miss Captain Barbara Ellen Smith, of the Salvation Army, at Napier.

Then, in June 1898; "*Captain Egerton Ward, who has been in the Salvation Army for years, has resigned his commission and joined the Presbyterian Church as a Maori missionary. Mr. Ward is a splendid linguist and Maori scholar, an enthusiastic worker, and should be a decided acquisition to the missionary ranks.*"

A report in another paper, stated that "*Captain Egerton Ward, son of "fty" Ward, once a well known personality in Dunedin...*"

It is most annoying that they did not fully reveal Egerton's father's nickname. The gaps indicate that it might well have been "SHIFTY" WARD. You can also read about Edward Francis Ward, senior, in his own Towsey Tale.

Although some of the timings of the various events in Egerton's early life are unclear, he certainly studied in England, presumably where he picked up his considerable knowledge of both medicine and the law, and in France, where he attended a Protestant Seminary.

This would all have happened before he started working with his brother in the 1880s.

Before becoming a home missionary with the Presbyterian Church, Egerton had already done legal work in the government Native Department and gained some experience of banking and farming.

Starting work in 1898 at the new Presbyterian church in Huntley, which is downstream from Hamilton, on the Waikato River and south of Auckland, Egerton was gazetted as an officiating minister, entitled to conduct marriages, in June 1900.

As mentioned, Egerton could speak, and think in four languages. He was also possessed of a detailed knowledge of Maori customs and lore.

By 1898, Egerton and Barbara Ward, had had their two daughters. Jennie Violet was born in 1895 and Tui Frances in 1897.

The photo of Egerton outside his new church, is the best picture of him that I have thus far found. It is almost as if there was an aversion amongst the Ward family, to having their likenesses recorded.

In 1902, Rev. Egerton Ward was posted to the small settlement of Taumarunui, on the alluvial plain of the upper reaches of the Whanganui River, at the confluence of the Ongarue River in the middle of the mountainous King Country, where "he pioneered missionary work in a large and difficult field".

In 1902, there were no more than a couple of dozen Europeans in the settlement, which was the last stop for the steam boat service coming up from the town of Wanganui, at the mouth of the river. A railway line to Taumarunui was opened in the following year.

Due to the lack of roads and bridges in the area, Egerton put in a request for a horse which must be a strong swimmer, in order to cross the often swollen rivers during his visits to the various Maori settlements.

These newspaper reports are from a regular meeting of the Presbyterian missionaries, held in November 1904



The Rev. J. Egerton Ward (Taumarunui) reports that services have been held at 17 kaingas during the year, and also at several small places and camps where Maoris have been working. He reports that tohungaism is one of the great evils which hurt the Maori. Some of these tohungas are to be classed with those who believe in faith-healing; others again, are most sensual and malignant in their operations. The beneficial element of tohungaism consists of herb doctors or native herbalists, who do some good. The worst class of tohunga comprises an epitome of the most possible harm to the Maori. A drastic remedy is required to restrain the malificence of this class of tohunga. Missionary endeavour has hard work to cope with the ebb and flow of Maori population and their wandering propensities. Without any rule or order the tribesmen are only apt to break all their previously-arranged engagements to set off for some distant kainga to attend these tangis. Everything is left at home to be neglected, or probably spoilt. Owing to the now easy methods of journeying by rail and steamer numbers of Natives are able to foregather. Generally they devour all the food which the locality can provide only returning home when the supply of good things fails. Formerly, when the difficulties of travel were manifold the tangi problem was not so acute as it now is. He states that the Maoris anticipate the opening of the Turakina School for girls with great pleasure. When able, the Maoris in the past have subscribed fairly well, as the following quotation shows:—"It will be a matter of surprise to most people to learn the amount given by the Maoris in aid of their Church work, and the following figures, supplied by Rev. H. Hawkins, show that they have given liberally. Over 40 churches have been built by them, and since the year 1850, £100,000 has been given in land and money, £10,000 being subscribed by one diocese alone." The Ngatihauroa, the resident tribe, have recognised the Rev. Mr Ward as their "minita," and it has been decided to set about the building of a church.

16th Nov.1904

The Rev. J. Egerton Ward, of Taumarunui, had held services during the present year at 14 kaingas and also two at Pipiriki as well as other places. Most of the resident natives took a great interest in the services. There had not been many Mormons through the district, due, it was written, to an inclement winter. "Undoubtedly," wrote the missionary, "Mormon teaching opposed the cardinal principles of Christianity, and more especially the doctrine of the Trinity, which they repudiated." He stated that since 1850 the Maoris had built over 40 churches and given £100,000 in land and money, £10,000 being subscribed in one diocese alone.

The committee recommended that the missionaries should be given a bonus of £10 each, and that the salaries for the next year be, for Mr. Fletcher £185 and for Mr. Ward £160.

10th November 1904



A 'pataka' or Maori food storehouse in the old settlement of Taumarunui

An interesting note on land confiscation, containing a complaint from Maoris, was included by the Rev. J. Egerton Ward in his report to the Presbyterian Assembly. Mr. Ward is the Assembly's Missionary to the Maoris in the Taumarunui district, at the terminus of the North Island Main Trunk line from the Auckland side. Mr. Ward wrote:—"We are sometimes visited by Waikato Natives, who complain that some of them are landless owing to the great confiscation. After the rebellion, they say that no Land Court adjudicated upon the area confiscated, so that many innocent Maoris who resided amongst the Ngati-maru, Thames tribes, and others, and who took no part in the fighting, nevertheless have had their property taken from them. This is a sore point with the Waikatos. Much of the complaining spirit is becoming healed by the curtain of time dropping gradually upon the stage of these old-time memories, and the Maoris are becoming more interested in spiritual matters. In the King Country it has been difficult to turn the Native mind from their inbred notions of race antagonism, which have been nursed too thoroughly throughout the last two generations."

10th November 1904

For many years, Egerton travelled the roadless district on his trusty horse, Dobbin, where, before the arrival of a doctor, he dealt with not just the spiritual requirements of the local Maoris, but with their medical ailments as well.

The King Country is a large mountainous area covering the south west of the North Island. It is named not after any British monarch, but refers to the local Maori chiefs.

Through most of the 19th century, the majority of the white settlers in New Zealand, were in the South Island. This was partly because the South was closer in appearance and climate to the Highlands of Scotland, from whence many of them came, but also because the majority of the Maori population lived on the warmer North Island. The north therefore, was the site of most conflicts as the white settlers encroached ever further onto Maori lands.

Although Egerton believed wholeheartedly in his religious mission to bring Christianity to the natives, he was also motivated by a belief that he should help the Maoris to adapt to the inevitable changes that white settlement would have on their lives. Whatever sympathies he might have towards traditional Maori culture, he knew that for them to survive and prosper in the future, they would have no choice but to become settled farmers, rather than following the old ways, which included regular inter-tribal territorial battles and which had, up to about fifty years earlier, also included the eating of defeated leaders.

As a Presbyterian, these sympathies would also have had a strong historical resonance for the Scottish missionaries.



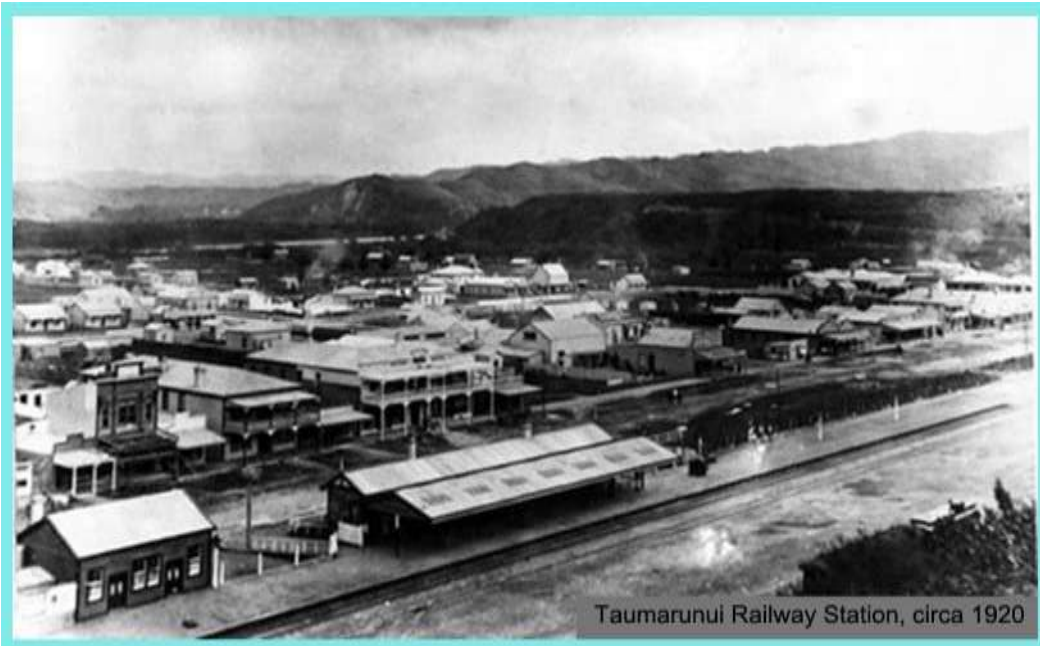
FUTURE OF THE MAORI.

FARMING PURSUITS
(Special to Herald.)
CHRISTCHURCH, this day

The Rev. Egerton Ward, who lives at Taumarunui, in the King Country, and who is attending the Presbyterian Assembly in Christchurch, states that the Maori farmer in some parts of the North Island is a success, and that, if he can be induced to be thrifty, careful, and industrious, his prospects should be bright and attractive. Mr Ward has lived for many years in Maori districts. He knows the modern Maoris' strong points and weaknesses, and he says that if the present efforts to improve the Maoris' condition and instil into his mind the necessity for personal effort, is continued, the Maori farmer of the future ought to be a valuable settler. When he was speaking to a Lyttelton Times reporter Mr Ward said that he had often heard Europeans refer disparagingly to the Maori as a selfish and mercenary individual. To show the groundlessness of this charge he said that in Taumarunui, which is owned by Maoris, the native landlords have promised to advance the sum of £3000 at 2½ per cent. interest for the purpose of municipal improvements, and well-fed and well-clothed Maori workmen, Mr Ward believes, will compare very favorably with any other workmen in New Zealand. The Maori workman is a strong healthy man, but the Maori drone, who is usually found hanging about the towns and settlements, suffered from ill-health. Large numbers of Maoris in the country districts have cultivated potatoes this year in sunny places on the hillsides, but the blight has caused them a good deal of trouble. The authorities of the Presbyterian Church at Taumarunui have in hand at the present time an interesting scheme to help

the Maori to realise the possibilities in front of him. They have spent about £1000 in obtaining 250 acres of land at Matapuna, on the Wanganui river, about two miles from Taumarunui. It is intended to use the land as an agricultural farm, on which young Maori men will receive a practical training. Dairying is the principal subject that will be dealt with, but the young men will also be taught general farming, and how to keep accounts and books, so that they may go on to their lands in the possession of useful knowledge. The Rev. J. I. Monfries, a farmer of experience and ability, will take charge of the institution. Committees of the Assembly are now dealing with the whole question of farming instruction for Maoris, and it is believed that in a short time a workable scheme will be in operation. Mr Ward states that he and other missionaries are deeply grateful to the Government, to the officers of the Maoris' departments of the State, and to the Young Maori Party for the efforts now being made to improve the position of the Maori race. Those who know the Maoris will believe that their material salvation lies in the settlement of the Maoris on the land and the abandonment of the old communal system of society. The cultivation of large areas of Maori land is retarded at present owing to the want of roads and bridges. Many Maoris hope that during the present session of Parliament the great Maori question will be settled with some degree of finality. The recent attempts to consolidate the Maori land laws is appreciated, but there is a feeling, which Mr Ward shares, that instead of trying to unravel the extraordinary tangle it will be better if the difficulties connected with vested interests could be overcome, to start afresh and have a law which could be easily understood by ordinary mortals.

1st November 1909



Taumarunui Railway Station, circa 1920

The great injustice of Highland Scots being forced off their lands by ruthless landlords, who saw more profit in using their lands for sheep grazing, was still fresh in Scottish minds. On top of this, there had been centuries of struggle between the fundamentalist Presbyterians and what they saw as the Satanic incursion of the English church into Scotland.

The radical Presbyterians of the 17th century were, in fact, remarkably similar to the Taliban of the early 21st

century, not just in their extreme beliefs, but also in their terrorist actions.

By the start of the 20th century, the Presbyterian church had long since given up terrorism, but was then regarded by enlightened Scots, and everybody else, as being populated by humourless, fundamentalist Christians, still grumbling about the corrupting influence of English ideas and whose ethos was stuck somewhere in the past.

We see in the newspaper article from 1909, that in their ongoing quest to help the Maoris to adapt to a Western lifestyle, the Presbyterian missionaries have set up a school in which young Maoris will be taught farming.

The farm was just along the river valley from Taumarunui, where Egerton Ward had his base and we see the arrival of the Reverend James Inch Monfries to take control of the farm.

James Monfries, who married Egerton's cousin, Mary Myllicent Towsey, has his own Towsey Tale.

Egerton retired from his missionary work in 1934. He was awarded the Order of The British Empire (OBE), for his lifetime's work.

Both of Egerton's daughters married. The elder, Jessie, married Malcolm McCallum and had two sons, both of whom have descendants.

Egerton and Barbara's younger daughter, Tui, married twice but had no children. Tui Gifford remained a lifelong friend of the Towsey family until her death in 1990.

The death occurred in Auckland on Saturday morning of the Rev. J. Egerton Ward, aged 79, a pioneer Maori missionary of the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Ward was born in Bendigo, Australia, where his father, the late Mr. E. Ward, of Honolulu, was the first practising solicitor.

Coming to New Zealand as a boy, Mr. Ward later spent some time in France and England. It was said of him in later life that he could read, speak, and think in four languages. As a young man he acquired a considerable knowledge of medicine and also of the law, and on his return to New Zealand he was associated with legal work in the Native Department. He had also gained some experience of banking and of farming. Before, in 1898, he entered the service of the Presbyterian Church as a home missionary at Huntly. His knowledge of Maori enabled him to establish the most friendly relations with the Maori people of the district, which was then the headquarters of the King movement.

In 1902 Mr. Ward was ordained and transferred to Taumarunui, where he was the pioneer of missionary work in a large and difficult field. He was Deputy-Mayor of Taumarunui for many years, served on the Hospital Board, and was actively engaged in all public movements for the good of the district. Six years ago Mr. Ward retired from active service, and resided at Waikowhai. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Rev. J. Egerton Ward
Died 6th July 1940