

December 2009

Welcome to the third edition of **art**

New series.

As we head into the season of giving, it seems ironic to be beginning my historical series of works on stories from the New Zealand Land Wars! But as in all times of adversity, out of all the ugliness and hatred, some amazing stories of compassion and beauty can shine through. When individuals put their lives on the line to tend to the needs of another, regardless of whether that person is friend or enemy. One such character is Heeni Te Kiri-Karamu (or Jane Foley). At the Battle of Gate Pa in April of 1864, she risked her life, dodging bullets from enemy fire to give water to Lieutenant-Colonel Booth who lay badly injured with a smashed spine... here are her words.



Heeni Te Kiri-Karamu giving Lieutenant-Colonel Booth Water
pencil on paper 20 x 20 cm.

"I was in the firing-trench when I heard the wounded officer lying in our lines calling for water. There were other wounded soldiers distressed for want of water. When I heard these cries I could not resist them. The sight of the foe with their life-blood flowing from them seemed to elate some of our warriors, but I felt a great pity for them, and I remembered also a rule that had been made amongst us that if any person asked for any service to be performed the request must not be refused; it would be an *aitua* to ignore it—that is, neglect to comply would bring misfortune. So I rose up from the trench, slung my gun, and was about to run back to the cooking-place where we kept our water when my brother asked me where I was going. I told him that I heard the dying men crying for water and I could not disobey the call. He said not a word, but stood with his gun-butt planted on the ground and his hands gripping the muzzle, and watched me earnestly while I ran to fetch the water. I had to go about 10 yards to the rear of the trench, and as our fence

was almost demolished I was in view of the troops. I found that a small tin in which I had some water had been capsized, but that there was still the iron nail-can full. It was so heavy that I had to spill about half of it before I could conveniently carry it to the soldiers. I carried it in my arms to where the Colonel was lying. I did not know then that he was a colonel, but I could tell by his uniform that he was a senior officer. He was the nearest of the soldiers to me. I went down by his side, took his head on my knees, and said 'Here's water' in English. I poured some of the water in one hand which I held close to his lips so that he could drink. He said 'God bless you,' and drank again from my hand. I went to the three other soldiers and gave them water one by one in the same way. Then, placing the nail-can so that it would not spill, I ran back to the trench."

Heeni had only just arrived at the scene the night before. She was unaware of the recently made code of conduct under which the local Maori did battle, vowing not only to leave the dead and wounded unmolested, but to actually tend to their needs. She simply obeyed her own womanly dictates of humanity.

She had already made a name for herself in the war through an earlier campaign; she had carried a baby on her back and also carried a single-barrel gun and wore a belt of cartridges about her waist. She fought gallantly on the Government side in the years following the Gate Pa episode. If ever a fighter in the New Zealand wars deserved a decoration for bravery under fire, it was she. But neither medal nor mention in despatches came to heroic Heeni Te Kiri-Karamu.

So as far as giving goes, I feel that I couldn't really pick a more perfect piece to begin this series, especially at this time of the year. I am exploring a lot of different stories that have come out of these campaigns, developing ideas for new works as I go. In a sense, they are in keeping with my 'restoration' theme, this was indeed a time of undoing a lot of good that had been done by both Maori and Pakeha over previous decades. There were many who just wanted peace, to avoid the conflict... as there are in all wars. A lot of damage was done in this time, and a lot of healing is still to be done...

I will be applying for a grant for this project, aiming to complete a full body of work, probably 12 pieces, by spring 2010 to tie in with some local events . If I receive funding (Creative NZ or other) I will produce a very limited edition of hand embellished investment reproductions of these works which will be for sale, and hope to donate the works as a body. If you or someone you know (or a corporate body) is interested in funding this, please get in touch with me ASAP.

Studio hours and available works.

My studio is in Oak Lane, Judea, Tauranga, situated behind Resene paints at the bottom of Eleventh Ave/Waihi Road.

I'm usually open weekdays from 9.30AM - 2.30PM and during the summer months I'll also be open most evenings from 8.00PM - 9.00PM.

You're welcome to drop me an email or phone me before you visit to check that I'll be open, I'll also open the studio for you just about any other time if you'd like to have a look.

I currently have all of my available works in my studio space over summer. Some of my older and smaller works are at special pre Christmas prices till December 24th. If you don't have the catalogue for these, you'll find it on the website, or email me and I'll send it to you.

Bryce
Brown.

Merry Christmas!

Bryce.

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