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and help repair damaged sailing ships. Some Maoris were pressed into service to replace crewmembers who had deserted, and gradually trade was established between the Europeans and the Maoris. The Maoris disdained trading items such as cloth, mirrors, beads, and trinkets, but took great interest in knives and guns, for which they traded potatoes, pork, and flax.

START

By 1810, European settlers began to arrive in New Zealand, and in 1814, three intrepid missionaries undertook to convert the savages. They faced a formidable obstacle in the Maori language, which was complex and ill-suited to the expression of Christian dogma. Maori warriors were skeptical when they were told that they should turn the other cheek and that the meek would inherit the earth.

One early missionary, Thomas Kendall,³ persuaded a converted chief named Hongi to go with him to England, where he labored with an Oxford professor of linguistics to write a bilingual dictionary and to translate the Bible into the Maori language. While in England, Hongi was presented to polite society, where his dignified bearing and his elegantly tattooed face excited great admiration. King George IV granted him an audience and presented him with a large trunk full of gifts as a reward for his efforts in spreading the gospel.

On his way back to New Zealand, Hongi stopped off in Sydney, where he exchanged King George's gifts for several hundred muskets and a large supply of ammunition. Dressed in a coat of mail that the King had given him, he made a triumphant return to New Zealand, where he promptly forgot his new found faith and used his muskets to launch a series of highly successful raids against his traditional tribal foes.⁴

For a time his enemies were unable to resist him. Muskets were expensive, and Hongi's enemies had little to trade for firearms. A ton of flax, which had to be laboriously scraped and dressed by hand, bought only one musket.

The Maoris soon discovered, however, that European traders would trade a musket for a tattooed head, and before long business was booming. Maori warriors made raids on neighboring tribes for the sole purpose of obtaining tattooed heads to trade for guns. The traders took these heads through Sydney, where they were acquired by dealers who sold them at outrageous prices to museums and private collectors in Europe. As more Maoris acquired muskets, more heads became available, and business prospered.

The supply of guns was inexhaustible, but the supply of heads was not, and before many years had passed the Maoris were forced to resort to desperate measures. Slaves and commoners captured in battle were tattooed and killed so that their heads could be sold. And even heads of poor quality, with mediocre or unfinished tattooing, were offered for sale.

At first the British were content to let the Maoris kill each other off, but, in 1830, sensational accounts of the horrors associated with tribal warfare, headhunting, and the sale of human heads began to appear in the popular press. The Foreign Office was embarrassed. The British were powerless to stop the sale of human heads in New Zealand, which did not become a British colony until 1840, but they did pass a law against importing heads into Australia. This put many of the Australian middlemen out of business, and after 1831 the traffic in heads went into decline.⁵

As more and more British settlers arrived in New Zealand, the Maoris, who were by then well armed, realized they had a common enemy and banded together to attack British farms and settlements. The New Zealand Premier then hit on an ingenious plan: he would punish the Maoris by confiscating their land. To do this he imported British troops, who joined forces with local militia, and forced the Maoris to give up their territory in a series of bloody wars that took place between 1860 and 1870.

The Maoris were superb warriors. They loved their land and defended it courageously, earning the respect of the British for their chivalry and "sporting spirit." On many occasions they agreed to temporary cease-fires and allowed food, ammunition, and prisoners to be exchanged so that the fighting could continue. The British military historian, J. W. Fortescue, wrote that the British soldier