

19. *Cost of Establishment.*

The cost of the establishment, purchase of hulk, rations, clothing, guard, removal to Kawau, &c., for the period of ten months during which the prisoners were detained in custody, was £8267, or, as several items, such as salaries, are still outstanding, at the rate of over £10,000 for the year.

20. *Of the Removal of the Prisoners to Kawau.*

For several months great difference of opinion on the subject of the prisoners had existed between the Governor and his Ministers, and had become the subject of reference on more than one occasion to the Home Government. It is unnecessary here to enter into the particulars of these differences, most of which have been reduced to writing, and form the substance of memoranda, which have already been forwarded to the Secretary of State. It is sufficient to say, that so constant and irritating was the conflict between His Excellency and his Ministers on the subject, that they felt that they would be glad to adopt any reasonable compromise which might be offered. In this state of affairs an overture was made on behalf of His Excellency to the Colonial Secretary, the particulars of which are given in notes appended,* that the prisoners should be removed to the Island of Kawau, about 30 miles from Auckland, the private property of His Excellency, and where he has a country residence. This island contains 3 or 4,000 acres of land, and lies about two miles from the main land, at a point where it is occupied by friendly natives, chiefly of the Ngapuhi tribe. His Excellency proposed to allot land to them on his island for the purpose of cultivation, and to manage them something after the manner of a Moravian settlement, under the guidance of the Rev. B. Y. Ashwell, a Church of England missionary, who had been driven out of Waikato when the Rebellion broke out. The Government acquiesced in His Excellency's proposal, and His Excellency, accompanied by Mr. White and a few of the prisoners, made a preliminary visit to the island to arrange for their removal. Finally, the hulk with its freight of prisoners was towed down to Kawau on the 2nd of August. Here the prisoners were released, allowed to go ashore, and then placed under the same European officers as had had charge of them in Auckland, except the military guard, whose presence it was supposed would be inconsistent with that confidence in the gratitude and honour of the Maoris, on which His Excellency so strongly relied, and the disbelief in which, on the part of his Ministers, had led to so much difference of opinion when he had wished to release a number of them on parole. And Ministers still think that if any attempt was to be made to reconcile the Maoris to captivity, by approximating it as far as possible to liberty, it lay at the bottom of all prospect of success that the control and restraint of a military guard should be dispensed with. Mr. White was directed by Ministers to take a formal parole in writing from each of them. He did not, however, do this, but twice obtained a general promise from them, as a body, that they would not leave Kawau without permission—a proceeding which he considered was more binding on Maori honour than a written document.† For a few weeks the plan appeared to progress satisfactorily. His Excellency visited the island several times, and remained there for a week at a time, directing, through Mr. White, the operations of the infant settlement; fixing sites for houses, for a church, and farming operations. He appeared perfectly satisfied with all that was going on; and when the Attorney-General and Colonial Secretary visited the island on their return from Tauranga, he accompanied them to the Maori settlement, and did not, either then or at any time afterwards, express the least disapprobation of the arrangements, but seemed to entertain every expectation of the success of his plans.

On the night of the 11th of September news was brought to Auckland that the whole of the prisoners had quitted Kawau in a body. They had taken boats belonging to the establishment, and with the aid of others from the friendly natives on the main, they had crossed over on the nights of Friday and Saturday the 9th and 10th, carrying with them all their "impedimenta," including the tools and utensils belonging to the Government.

What the immediate cause of this exodus was has not yet been satisfactorily ascertained. Tapihana, a chief who accompanied His Excellency to Kawau on his preliminary visit, says that he planned the escape at that time. Another tale in which a number of them concur is, that they had been told by an officer of high rank in Her Majesty's Service who was on a visit to the island, that they were going to be put on board the hulk again and taken back to Auckland.‡ They say also that Europeans in His Excellency's employment on the island, told them that fighting was about to begin again in Waikato, and that when it did, they would be put on board the hulk, towed out to sea, and sunk. The day before their escape Her Majesty's Ship "Falcon" had arrived at the island, and (not very discreetly perhaps) engaged in ball practice in the neighbourhood of the island; and this they say alarmed them, causing them to believe that it was the beginning of the end. These stories may or may not be true: Ministers do not endorse them; but they beg to refer to the interesting account by Mr. White [appendix§] who pursued the prisoners and overtook them, when they made these statements to him. Rumours having been circulated that they had been ill-used by some of the Europeans in charge, or been short of food, the Colonial Secretary questioned Te Ori Ori, the Chief who had accompanied Mr. White. His replies are appended, and it will be seen that he indignantly denies these statements.|| Te Hemara, of Mahurangi, also a friendly chief who lived near the place at which the refugees landed, expresses his belief that they were seduced away by a small party of Ngapuhis, some of whom are connected by marriage with Waikato.¶ It is not improbable that the fact that they had no vested interest in the land they were cultivating, and that their labour was expended in improving a property not their own, may have disinclined them to continue their operations where they were.** His Excellency will no doubt report to Her Majesty's Government subsequent events on this subject. He has not sought the advice of his Ministers upon it, but personally taken such steps as he thought

* See Appendix E.—Memorandum of Colonial Secretary; Mr. Ashwell's letter, and Mr. White's Memorandum.

† See Mr. White's report on this, Appendix F.

‡ It is probable that this officer does not speak Maori, but many of the natives understand and some could speak English.

§ See his report of events subsequent to escape, Appendix G.

|| See Statement appended, H.

¶ See Statement appended, H.

** They are reported to have stated this as their reason for objecting to stay at Kawau.