

FURTHER PAPERS

RELATIVE TO ESCAPE OF CHATHAM ISLAND PRISONERS.

No. 1.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. RITCHIE to the Hon. E. W. STAFFORD.

SIR,—

Lake House, Kaingaroa, 2nd April, 1868.

I have the honor to report for your information that another lot of Natives are determined to leave the Chathams for New Zealand, and that I have been obliged by the force of circumstances to entertain and conclude a charter to convey a number of them to New Plymouth.

With all due deference to the real worth and admitted cleverness of your Commissioner, Mr. Rolleston, it would nevertheless appear, since the period of his visit to inaugurate a new line of policy in Native affairs here, there has been a gradual but steadily growing restlessness and increasing desire amongst the Natives to quit the island; and strangely enough, but too truly, from the same period there has been a great change for the worse in the character of the Hauhau. Whereas before the time named all were most peaceably inclined, and gave cheerful obedience to every reasonable restraint, now the Hauhau is markedly changed: impatient of restraint and insolent in manner, and in a word will be beyond control directly the present guard is withdrawn, although it is a mere shadow as at present constituted, and has lost much of the controlling power it possessed, and this chiefly owing to recent concessions and regulations.

I trust I shall be excused this seeming comment but real relation of facts, in outspoken language, feeling well assured you will sympathize with the uneasy feeling in this, although a small community of British subjects, and will lend your all-powerful advice and efficient aid to change present uncertainty to future good.

I now return to the Native exodus. Immediately on learning that the Native ferment was about to result in a strong desire to follow their friends to Taranaki, I caused Captain Thomas to be informed of it, and he has exerted all his influence to check the movement, but without effect; and at length after repeated koreros and my distinct deprecation of their haste in the matter of the charter alluded to, still I did not bind myself or allow them to make the charter, till they declared at the last korero on Monday, that unless their hands were tied with cords behind their backs, and they were consequently made dogs by the Governor, nothing less would prevent them from joining their relatives in New Zealand. I considered it useless to resist further, well knowing another vessel would be forthcoming if mine was not; and I then and therefore acceded to the charter.

The Hon. E. W. Stafford,

Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

P.S.—I send a copy of the foregoing to Captain Thomas, Resident Magistrate.

I have, &c.,

THOS. RITCHIE.

THOS. RITCHIE.

NOTE.—This letter was not received until after the reply dated 2nd April, 1868, to the letter of the 9th April was sent from the Colonial Secretary's Office.—W. GISBORNE.—31st August, 1868.

No. 2.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. RITCHIE to the Hon. E. W. STAFFORD.

SIR,—

Lake House, Kaingaroa, 9th April, 1868.

I have the honor to enclose herewith copy of letter I considered it my duty to send you per "Despatch," touching the exodus of the Natives, &c. Since that letter was written, another Maori meeting has been held by Captain Thomas. I attended by invitation, and thinking it might strengthen the arguments in support of the Government position at the proper moment, I offered before the whole assembly to destroy the charter party, and thus release the Natives at once from all obligations in this behalf; but notwithstanding all this, and the advice of Captain Thomas, they refused to be released. I then offered them more time to consider till the day the "Despatch" would leave; but they were to understand, if they still persisted after that time, on them would be all the responsibility, for I would strictly exact and adhere to every clause of the agreement.

I have since learned, to my extreme regret, that Captain Thomas has thought it his duty to threaten that under no circumstances will he allow the Natives to leave the island. This has confirmed their idea that the Government wish to make them all prisoners. I also learn that Captain Thomas has written a letter to the Natives stating that the Pakehas who made the agreement about their passage are fools and cranky, and any money paid them will be lost. (I am glad to find the weight of evidence is against the fact that Captain Thomas used the Maori word that signifies "fools and cranky," but that the Maoris have treated the letter in an undignified manner is substantiated. T. Ritchie, 10th April, 1868.) I feel sincere regret about this matter, the more so as I am told by the same informant that the letter alluded to has been treated in the most undignified manner, and eventually disowned and returned to the writer. I do trust, however, I am misinformed on this latter head, it appears so contrary to the usual good feeling and courtesy of Captain Thomas.

I have now to treat upon what I consider the worst phase of affairs.

The Hauhaus are secretly delighted, and silently working and consulting with each other. It is worthy of note that hardly one, if indeed there is a single Hauhau working, or will remain to work