

Some 230 men and boys from the lower Whanganui settlements and Kai Iwi, and 91 Ngatiapas, about 323 in all, including some dozen chiefs, have given in their adherence as active supporters of Henare Koura, alias Matua, and a list was taken of their names, it being understood that a council of twelve or more should be chosen by them to attend the sitting of the Assembly next July, with Henare Matua and party, to urge their grievances before Parliament.

The effect of Matua's visit to Whanganui may be summarized thus: The majority are favourably impressed with his views, upon his assurance that he looked to the law alone for redress. Some (those mentioned) have promised him active support, having given in their names as avowed adherents to his cause. Some are waiting to see the result of his plans and purposes when carried out, being somewhat afraid of what they may lead to, and from a vague suspicion as to his integrity. Others have held entirely aloof, prognosticating nothing but evil from his proceedings, and a like issue to that of the Land League and King movement and Hauhauism. One chief, Paora Poutini, when speaking for himself and tribe, the Ngatihau, said most significantly, "I am not going to be so foolish as to imitate the blind beetle that flies unconsciously into the flame and gets its wings scorched. We all know what Kingism and Hauhauism led to, and I shall have nothing to do with this movement." The Native Minister will be surprised to learn that one of Mete Kingi's sons, Henare Takarangi, and Pehira Turei, of Aramoho, have joined Matua's party as active supporters of his, which proceeding is winked at by Mete, Kemp, and other leading Government chiefs, who are abettors in his cause.

With regard to the Whanganui and Ngatiapa Tribes, who have for so many years been staunch supporters of the Government, I am not at all apprehensive that they will lend themselves to any movement which may prove subversive of order and good government; and that should such be its results, they will withdraw their support; for it cannot be supposed that they are at this period of time going to cast off their allegiance to the Queen, for the old and tried feeling of loyalty shown by them in times gone by is still in existence, and would again assert itself if occasion offered. But what I am apprehensive of is this, that by these and other tribes lending their support to this movement, good and bad will join it, and when it has gained sufficient strength and hold upon the Maori mind, the disaffected ones may succeed in carrying the day, and through their efforts (which will have derived strength by combination of the party), this movement may cause trouble to the Government.

In conversation with the chiefs here on the subject, they seem concerned themselves on this point, and say that they still maintain their hold upon such of their people as have joined Matua, with the view of recalling their support should Henare's proceedings prove illegal, and likely to cause discord and trouble. But they lose sight of the fact that when once the thing is set a-going, and it gains strength and hold upon the minds of the people, it will be a matter of great difficulty to withdraw at once their countenance to the movement, which I am much afraid will exercise a baneful influence amongst the Natives.

With regard to their moral and physical condition, I cannot say that any marked advancement has been made, although I am not without hopes that shortly we shall see an improvement amongst our Maori friends in these respects, for whenever we can succeed in getting them to abandon many of their ancient customs and practices, which are on the wane, we may look for a decided change for the better in this matter. I look with great hopes towards the rising generation, who are now receiving education at the Government schools, and I believe we shall see them cast off many of the evil practices of their forefathers; that they will cut out a path for themselves, and, by adopting many of our good habits and customs, raise themselves in the scale of civilization, and attain to a higher standard, both morally and physically, which would cause delight to all well-wishers of the Maori race.

In matters of agriculture there is no lack of industry in these respects amongst the river Natives, who annually raise large crops of wheat, maize, and potatoes, and the plough and harrow are in universal use. A high price has been obtained this year for Indian corn (5s. a bushel), which pays the Maori producer well, and owing to the late dry season being most favourable to the growth of that cereal, much profit has been derived by the Natives by the sale thereof. And they are likely to benefit by the prices got for this commodity in another way, namely, the want of a supply of said grain for home consumption, in the shape of stinking, putrid, rotten corn, which has hitherto been a favourite dish with the Maoris, to the great detriment of their physical forms.

Owing to the bountiful supplies of hop plants and mulberry trees presented by the Native Minister, the attention of the Natives has been turned towards the development of these industries. They both flourish most luxuriantly in the sequestered parts of the river, and soon we may make a trial of the silkworm, as shortly there will be abundant food for that insect, in the shape of extra fine mulberry leaves. With regard to the hop, information as to the proper time of picking, and the mode of drying by kiln, is required. I am hopeful of securing, next season, the services of an experienced European hop-grower, one who has expressed an inclination to settle amongst the Natives, and who will be prepared to give them every information on the subject, and assist in putting up an oast-house at one of the principal settlements.

In the matter of public works and undertakings, the Iruharama and Ranana Natives have during the past year constructed about thirty miles of a horse road, connecting said settlements with the Murimotu Plains and the Government road in course of construction, between Whanganui and Taupo. I am given to understand by the Natives that this road, besides affording an outlet from the Whanganui River to the plains, open up much forest land, tracts of which consist of level bush country, with very little undergrowth, and soil of the richest kind, which is demonstrated by the remarkably fine potatoes and kumeras raised from the land in those quarters. There can be no doubt that much valuable country lies in the region between Whanganui and the plains, to the north, east, and south, far up into the interior, which only requires occupation and culture to render it one of the most thriving districts in the Colony, the climate being unsurpassed in salubrity, owing to these localities being situated in the widest part of the North Island, where the devastating blasts experienced on the shores of Cook Strait are unknown. A little has been done by the Natives in making a road to connect their various pas, a work on their part which should be encouraged, and a helping hand afforded, as a work of that kind, besides assisting in opening up the river communication, would, in a strategical point of view, prove of immense service in case of disturbance.