

sort when committed by Europeans. The case under notice was a genuine Maori way of asserting ownership to land. Two Natives, named respectively Tukorehu and Heperea, had lived on good terms together for a number of years at the same settlement, neither apparently being desirous during that time of disputing the ownership by his companion of the land occupied jointly by them; neither does there appear to have been any one to interest himself in disturbing the harmony of feeling that existed between the two until a few months ago, when a half-caste named John Gage (whose father and mother lived many years ago upon the land in question) appeared upon the scene, and he in some way or other seems to have estranged the two Natives, Tukorehu and Heperea, who had so long lived amicably together; the result of which estrangement was that, during a quarrel which took place on the Kikihiki Racecourse, and which commenced between Gage and Tukorehu, and in which Heperea afterwards joined, some very strong language was used. Tukorehu, who is a man of violent temper, threatened to burn down the houses of his opponent Heperea, which were standing on the land. But, the mere threat not producing the desired effect, he proceeded at once to carry it out by riding across the Punia River close by and setting fire to the houses, which were on the opposite bank. One was a small two-roomed wooden house, and the other a Maori whare, and they were both burnt down, with what property was in them. This being purely a Maori quarrel, and one in which the title to land was concerned, it was not considered a matter in which the police need interfere. I went to see Tukorehu, and remonstrated with him regarding his action. He expressed regret for having acted so hastily, but blamed Gage for what had taken place. He subsequently paid Heperea for the loss of his houses and their contents, and they are now good friends again. I took advantage of the opportunity to try and get Tukorehu to have the title to the disputed land settled by the Native Land Court or the Kawhia Native Committee. He would not agree to the former tribunal, but was not averse to the matter being taken in hand by the latter, provided that Tawhiao (whose supporter he is) and the King Committee would agree to his doing so. He has since put an adjacent block before the Kawhia Native Committee for the investigation of title.

*Census.*—During the month of January I was appointed chief enumerator for the purpose of taking the Maori census within the Counties of Eden, Manukau, Raglan, Kawhia, Waikato, Waipa, Piako, Ohinemuri, Thames, and Coromandel, including Great and Little Barrier and the adjacent islands. As I furnished a report upon this matter when I sent in my returns, I need not now refer to it more than to say that I am of opinion that the Native population within the counties above mentioned has decreased considerably since the census was taken in 1881, especially in the district known as the "King country." As the census in 1881 was not taken in accordance with county boundaries, but was divided into Native districts, it is not very easy to make a comparison between the returns of then and now in particular districts. The difference will, however, be seen from the totals.

Tawhiao's annual meeting was held as usual at Whatiwhatihoe during the month of March, but, compared with the meetings of former years, was a very poor one indeed, very few Natives attending from out-districts. The ordinary speechmaking took place; but, notwithstanding the usual perversion of facts, rash statements, and straining of the imagination on the part of the few leading supporters of the King movement who spoke at the meeting, it was patent to all that the movement itself is about on its last legs. The separation of the Ngatimaniapoto and Ngatihikairo Tribes from the King party some four years ago, their subsequent friendly attitude towards Government in allowing public works in the shape of roads, railways, and surveys to be carried out over their lands, all of which the King party have found themselves helpless to oppose, has proved to them that not only has their glory, but so has their power departed. The putting of the Taupo lands through the Court has also been a severe blow to them, because so long as the Native title to the land was not extinguished Tawhiao and his people looked upon and spoke of it as territory under their mana and jurisdiction. But the investigation of title by the Native Land Court removes that pillar from the now-tumbling edifice of the King movement; for it is a well-known fact that of all the Natives who have declared themselves willing to give over their land to Tawhiao and the King party *before* it had passed the Native Land Court, not one has yet been found who, *after* he has put his land through the Court, and can then legally give it to Tawhiao, has done so. There is an amount of inconsistency about action of this sort that ought to have long ago opened the eyes of Tawhiao and Major Te Wheoro to the fact that the documents they took so much trouble to get signed by Natives who professed to give up their land to Tawhiao were not worth the paper they were written upon, and were never considered binding by the Natives who signed them. Another blow is about to be dealt to the King movement which will perhaps be the severest that it has ever received since its defeat at arms by British troops twenty-three years ago. I allude to the application that has lately been sent to the Native Land Court by the representatives of the four tribes—viz., Ngatimaniapoto, Ngatiraukawa, Whanganui, and Ngatihikairo—who claim to own the balance of the King country that has not yet passed the Court. Should the title to this large area of land be settled by the Court, I think that the King movement, looked at in the light of a menace or obstruction to the Government, will be at an end.

It was also during the month of March that the survey was commenced of a block of land at Aotea called Manuaitu, which some of the friendly Natives in that locality wished to put through the Native Land Court, but which proceeding, as also the survey, was strenuously opposed by the King party. A considerable period elapsed between the application for and