

Even the casual traveller through the portions of the country more particularly inhabited by Natives can scarcely fail to observe the many Maori children growing up, healthy-looking, well fed, and well clad. This condition of things follows a peaceful and industrious mode of living. But is it not a somewhat melancholy reflection that, during all the years the New Zealand Parliament has been legislating upon Native-land matters, no single *bond fide* attempt has been made to induce the Natives to become thoroughly useful settlers in the true sense of the word? No attempt has been made to educate them in acquiring industrial knowledge or to direct their attention to industrial pursuits. Whatever progress they have achieved in that direction is owing entirely to their own innate wisdom and energy. In that respect they are essentially self-taught, and have had to rely entirely upon their own powers of observation. Parliament will add one more to its many blunders in administering Native affairs if, in its shortsightedness, it omits to devise means for encouraging and assisting the Natives to become useful settlers. This can be done if they are afforded facilities for rendering productive the lands they already possess. The Natives need no great incentive. Why not encourage them to take up land under special-settlement conditions? They are quick to learn, and at the present time surrounding circumstances are very favourable. In former times many opportunities presented themselves that were allowed to pass unheeded, unregarded. If similar Parliamentary neglect again asserts itself, the day may be nearer at hand than many expect when the Legislature will find itself face to face with the difficulty embodied in the question, "What shall we do with our Maoris?"

FUTURE LEGISLATION.

It should be borne in mind, when legislating for the future, that the antipathy that existed in the Native mind in many parts of the colony in the early days against the occupation of Maori lands by Europeans has wholly disappeared. The Commissioners, in their recent travelling through the North Island, had ample testimony afforded them of this fact. While difference of opinion prevails among the Natives as to the relative merits of leasing or selling, there is a consensus of opinion amongst them upon the advisability of throwing their lands open, at all events, for leasing. They have openly and publicly enunciated their views upon this point, the sole difficulty, apparently, being as to the legislative machinery to be employed to attain this end. The Natives, in unmistakeable terms and with singular unanimity, have made known to the Commissioners the *modus operandi* to be adopted in the furtherance of their views. It cannot therefore be alleged that by Parliament conforming to the expressed views of the Natives any obstacle is raised to the settlement of the country.

It is not as if the Natives were taking up a sullen attitude against what might be regarded as the general welfare of the colony. No; on the contrary, they earnestly entreat Parliament to afford them substantial legislative aid to deal with their lands in a manner best understood by themselves, at the same time compatible with justice, and in no way inimical to the best interests of the colony. Imbued with such desires, they naturally look to Parliament to aid them. I feel assured that Parliament will be acting wisely in acceding to their request, and affording them the co-operation they so earnestly hope for. Certainly, without the thorough co-operation of the general body of the Natives, no scheme that any Government may propound, no legislation that it may pass, can be expected to succeed. An exceptional opportunity now presents itself for introducing judicious legislation for enabling the Natives to deal intelligently and justly with the large areas of land now held by them in an unproductive or only partially-productive state. They themselves are willing to assist in carrying out the laws they ask to be passed, and thus, while promoting their own racial interests, feel that they are being dealt with as intelligent beings, willing to bear their proper share of the obligations of the State.

By Parliament meeting the Natives now in the same spirit of frankness that the Natives have come before the Commissioners, much may be done to redeem the bitter recollection of the past, and a harmonious system be brought about whereby true settlement and genuine progress of the North Island, as well as the colony as a whole, may be largely promoted, to the advantage and lasting prosperity alike of the European and Maori races.

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