

CHARGES BY J. CRAIG AND C. WARD AGAINST THE MANGAIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

From the BRITISH RESIDENT to the PARLIAMENT of the Cook Islands.

SALUTATIONS! In the *Torea* newspaper of the 17th July a letter appeared from Messrs. J. Craig and C. Ward, two traders in Mangaia, who made therein serious charges of robbery, oppression, and wrong-doing against the local Government of Mangaia. The letter attracted much attention, and was much commented upon. It also contained special charges with reference to a bag of coffee, of which the theft was stated to have been condoned under disgraceful circumstances by the Government, although the thief had been discovered and was well known. Into this latter charge the Rev. J. Cullen, on behalf of natives specially interested, applied to me for official inquiry. I referred the inquiry to the Ariki John, sending to assist him Mr. F. George Moss, who left Rarotonga accordingly on the 4th August, but had no opportunity to return till yesterday, the 24th September.

The charges made by Messrs. J. Craig and C. Ward prove to have been a tissue of distorted statements and absurd exaggerations. In justice to the Government of Mangaia, the refutation should have the same publicity as the charges so wantonly made, and I send this message to the Parliament in order that the report and evidence may be published in the *Torea* with the parliamentary papers. They will also be thus placed on record as a permanent warning against too ready a credence in similar cases in which the smallest evils, even when actually existing, are made to appear very big by a tropical luxuriance of language and imagination.

The papers enclosed are—(1) The letter of Craig and Ward to the *Torea*; (2) report on the general charges, with evidence taken; (3) report on alleged theft of a bag of coffee and gross condonation thereof by the local Government, with evidence taken.

Mr. F. George Moss, at my request, while in Mangaia, investigated the questions of *raui* and the police generally. On both these subjects he has reported in the attached papers.

In justice to the Ariki John, I should point out that on the irregularity in appointing the Au being shown to him he has at once complied with the law, and reappointed Aus in accordance therewith.

Rarotonga, 25th September, 1897.

FREDERICK J. MOSS, British Resident.

Report No. 1 on the General Charges.

SIR,—

Mangaia, 13th August, 1897.

In accordance with instructions received from you, I arrived here on the 7th instant, and at once presented your letters to Rev. J. Cullen and John, Ariki.

On the 9th instant John, Ariki, by my advice, addressed to Messrs. Craig and Ward a letter, copy of which is enclosed.

On the 11th instant inquiry was held. The record and evidence is also enclosed.

After going carefully into the circumstances I have to report that the tea-shop referred to is a species of co-operative store, owned by a company of sixty-eight members or shareholders, of whom three (Ngatama, Kakerua, and Davie) are members of the Mangaia Government. The two last (Kakerua and Davie) are also Judges. Ngatama, who acts as manager, defines the company and its objects in his evidence. The company buys coffee in spite of the *raui* and has been fined \$10, and has paid the fine for so doing. It has also branches at Ivirua and Tamarua. I cannot find out exactly how much coffee the tea-shop has purchased, but estimate it at less than 1 ton. The business done appears to be in the sale of bread, tea, matches, soap, and fish-hooks. Only small articles of this description are dealt in by the shop company. The price paid by the company for coffee is 15 cents per pound, which (as the manager reports the coffee purchased to be not nearly dry) seems to me a fair price. But I must point out that little cash is paid, trade of the nature before referred to being the usual mode of payment. No evidence was produced either that the tea-shop proprietors "tyrannised over people" or that they have "forbidden any one under a penalty from selling any coffee at any store."

The *raui* I find, has been illegally imposed on the people. In the law of Mangaia, No. 2, 1891, for electing the Au, section 7 provides for *raui* being put on produce by the Au. Section 6 provides for the annual election of such Au.

No Au has ever been elected, nor is there any properly-constituted Au so far as I can ascertain.

The *raui* was not imposed by any Au (legally constituted or otherwise), but apparently by a hole-and-corner meeting of a few people in each district, and the rest of the people, whether consenting parties or not, are fined for breaking it. The object of the *raui* was to keep the price of coffee as high as possible. The Judges in fining these people have acted illegally in their official capacity. In support of this view I would refer to the evidence. By this you will perceive that Meringitangi, Judge of Veitatei, fined the tea-shop and certain people of Taavainga (a district over which Kakerua presides). Meringitangi admits fining people in his own district of Veitatei, but says he did so there as chief of the *raui*, not as Judge. He could certainly not be chief of both *rauis*. Hence he must have acted in his official capacity as Judge in one instance at least. The Judge, Kakerua, you will observe, also says he will continue to punish people for breaking the *raui*, whether legal or not. Such *rauis* are damaging. Not only have they been imposed for the purpose of obtaining an impossible price (30 cents per pound), but they are indefinitely prolonged. No care to publish a *raui* has been taken, and non-consenting parties have been forced to join. I consider such a state of things very discouraging to the people. It prevents them picking freely and making the most of their crops. I would suggest that Law No. 2, 1891, be so amended as to provide that *rauis*, when legally imposed, must be for a certain stated time, be properly published, and the produce be offered for sale by public tender. *Raui*s should not be allowed for indefinite periods, nor for any stated price per pound.

I would suggest that the Au for the future be properly elected, in accordance with provisions of Law No. 2, 1891.

No evidence of tyranny or oppression has been brought under my notice by Messrs. Craig and Ward, or by any other persons, nor do I see any reason outside of the *raui* to believe that the Government has either tyrannised over or oppressed any one in the slightest way.

I should wish to call your attention to the fact that unauthorised persons are employed by the Judges as police for detection of offences against morality under the old Maori laws. Although it is stated that they receive no pay, I consider such a practice open to much abuse, and consequently bring it under your notice.

I have the honour to refer you to the evidence for further information.

I should add, after making the fullest inquiry, that I do not believe the debts owing by the Mangaia people to the traders there exceed at the utmost £50.

F. J. Moss, Esq., British Resident, Rarotonga.

I have, &c.

F. G. Moss.

Enclosure.

[Extract from *Te Torea*, 17th July, 1896.]

SIR,—

We beg to send you a statement of a few facts concerning the present misgovernment of Mangaia, trusting that you will give vent to them in *Te Torea* :—

1. We, the general public of Oneroa, are at present tyrannised over by a tea-shop owned by the members of the Government, who have forbidden any one, under a money penalty of \$5, from selling any coffee to any store under 30 cents per pound, while they themselves are buying it on the quiet (and on a big scale at that) at prices ranging from 10 to 15 cents per pound. As the coffee is taken in in secret, the poor native who sells it to them must take what they give him, without asking any questions as to price or weight, for fear of being fined.

Then, again, there has been one case brought to light and proven in which a native stole a bag of coffee. But as it was sold to them no notice has been taken of the affair, and no punishment been meted out to the criminal.

Again, in cases of fining all fines have to be paid in cash, and in many cases the poor creatures have not got the cash to pay, and after the police have sold their goods and their body clothes, and the lot not realising enough to pay the fine in full, they have begged enough cash from the whites to make up the balance, and in some cases enough clothes to re-cover them again in decency, and the whites, out of pity, have given what they required; and in some