

redress at all. Europeans are very seldom summoned either by me or by the Runangas; any Native who fancies he has sustained injury from them helps himself to a horse or a cow, and leaves the European to seek his remedy by the slow process of Maori law.

The laws which guide the Runangas in their judgments are those which may approve themselves to the individual conscience of each member. Some quote the Ten Commandments; some, the Levitical law; some, Maori custom; some, English law; some, their own laws. Even a private person may make a law. At a trial before the Runanga of Peria, it was given in evidence that Kepa had made a law that no one should go to his house when he was not himself at home; and "Kepa's law" was accepted throughout the trial as perfectly valid, the only question entertained being whether the defendant was aware of it. There have been some attempts to make a code of laws; I have only seen one—the Ngatihaua code. It had been begun when I came into the district in November last, was completed in April, received the royal assent when the King visited Tamahere, and was to be printed. The laws, which are for the Ngatihaua tribe only, were entirely on the subject of adultery, and consisted of a catalogue of offences, and a declaration of the money-payment to be made for each.

The Runangas do not generally succeed in administering substantial justice. Their equity is disturbed by a great many powerful influences. There is the ignorance and wrong-headedness of individual members, which follows from the Runanga not being a body of men selected for age or wisdom, but a popular tumultuous gathering where the young and ignorant can talk down their elders and betters. There is the natural bias, consequent upon the Runanga as a body, or some of its most influential members, being a party to the cause that is being tried: the principle that no man can be judge in his own cause is not always admitted in either theory or practice; I have heard of William Thompson himself arguing that a man is himself the best judge in his own cause, because he knows most about it. There is a strong prejudice of race where one party is a European; and a still stronger one, or passion, where the King's "mana" or any appearance of yielding to the English Government is involved in the matter at issue: the Runanga of Kihikihi refused to let the school sheep of Otawhao graze upon the school land, because the names of the Queen and Governor are in the deed of grant. Then, if the Runanga succeeds in coming to a just decision, it is by no means certain that it will be carried into effect. There is no police; the Runanga has to execute its decisions with its own hand. When it is known that the losing party will rather fight than yield, this is a dangerous job. A notorious thief, Whakapaukai, has long set even the Runanga of Ngaruawahia at defiance, because it is known that he will shoot any one who molests him. Lastly, the constant vagabondising of all the Maori authorities make even the Runanga's justice at times inaccessible. The fountain of justice is absent at a "tangi" in the Thames, or has transmogrified itself into a war-party and is gone to fight for the Coromandel gold: the plaintiff is put off by the everlasting answer "taihoa," which ends all those cases in which a judgment to be of any use must be speedy. Mr. Chittam had 500 sheep unlawfully seized by the Natives of Taupaki, near Arowhenua; the case was referred to the Runanga of Kihikihi; justice was promised; but the trial was put off till Rewi returns from the Piako, whither he has gone to settle the Coromandel affair, so that in all probability the sheep will be divided and dispersed before the enquiry comes on.

It must not be supposed that the anarchy of one tribe is exactly similar to that of another. In some cases this "Lynch law" is administered with greater justice, or with greater vigour, than in others. Amongst the Ngatihaua tribe, the administration of justice is on the whole very creditable. This is to be attributed to the character and personal influence of William Thompson, and other chiefs by whom he is surrounded and supported. These men are anxious for instruction and information on the subject of law; they study the books of Moses and the code of English laws drawn up by Mr. Fenton; and they delight in discussing the principles of law and arguing cases real and imaginary. I have never heard a complaint of injustice from the Europeans resident in this tribe. The Runanga at Kihikihi is very powerful, but I have not so much faith in its justice. Rewi does not pay as much attention as Thompson to the internal affairs of his own tribe, and the young men are in the Runanga supreme. They are demoralized by the possession of Taranaki plunder, and are violently hostile both to Europeans and to the Government. There is a remarkable system at work at Whataroa far up the Waipa, which I know only by hearsay: it is unique in the appearance of a well-organized military police-force as an instrument of government: Reihana and his Runanga keep a body of 80 drilled soldiers, by whom their decrees are executed. From all the information I have been able to gather, his administration of justice is fair as well as vigorous.

(2.) *Their Social State.*

It will readily be believed that people with such a government as is above described, are in a very low social state: the equality which exists among them is an equality of poverty and barbarism. Where the whole population consists of law-makers, magistrates, and soldiers, none are left to be farmers or stock-keepers, or to practise any other sort of productive industry. Persons long resident in this district inform me that the Natives have steadily grown poorer since the "King movement" commenced. However this may be, the fact and the cause of their present poverty are plain enough. A great many of the European traders have either left the district, or ceased to trade; those who remain are unanimous in declaring that for £100 they took formerly they do not take £10 now. The Natives in this neighbourhood, once the greatest wheat-growing district in the Waikato, are now planting scarcely any wheat; they have sold nearly all their horses and