

I have heard that Hoera has ceased to be a member; and there may be a few other names.

Of the acuteness and wisdom of these men, I feel bound to speak in the very highest terms. In all questions which I have heard discussed by them, they have argued with calmness and good temper, kept steadily to the point at issue, looked at the question from every side and faced all its difficulties, and have usually come to a just decision. In their strongest opposition, they have never behaved with anything approaching to rudeness. It would be impossible to find a body of men with whom the Government could more advantageously consult upon the subject of laws and regulations for the Natives.

It is true that their wise resolutions are not often carried into practical effect; but this weakness appears to be naturally inherent in all public bodies at the antipodes.

As a legislative body, the Runanga of Ngaruawahia is ready to assent to any laws which may be proposed by the various tribes; it is a mere formal assent in imitation of that given by the Queen to our own laws. As a judicial body, it has no defined jurisdiction; it appears to be resorted to, to settle cases which no one else can.

On the 16th of April last, I made application to William Thompson and the King at Tamahere about certain cases in which wrongs had been done to Europeans, which the local authorities had confessed themselves unable to redress. The matter was by Thompson's advice referred to the King's Council, and I went down according to appointment to Ngaruawahia, gave the Runanga a written account of the several cases, and demanded that restitution should be made. A written answer was given to the following effect:—

"We have come to a resolution as regards the Natives who commit wrongs against the Europeans, 'who steal their property, their horses, and their other property: we have quite made up our minds 'that we will ourselves judge them; it is for us to fix the day and the month for their judgment.'"

Up to the present date, no further steps have been taken. Subsequently application was made to the Runanga in the matter of Chittam's sheep, but Rewi had in the mean time expressed displeasure at their assumption of jurisdiction in such cases, and this case was therefore remanded to Wharehini and the Runanga of Kihikihi, as before mentioned.

The fact is, that any conflict between the local and central authorities is at once settled by the latter quietly giving way. The King's Council has no real power. There is no force at its command by which it can compel obedience, which is only rendered voluntarily when the opinions of the subject happen to coincide with those of the King. The last time I saw Thompson he told me that nobody would gainsay the word of the King's Runanga, and that all the "mana" was with them; but it is not so in practice; even Thompson himself can turn a deaf ear to the King when it suits him to do so; and from the members of the council themselves we have heard complaints of disobedience, of distant tribes turning away their ministers, or letting their lands in spite of all remonstrances. The council is cautious, and wisely reluctant to issue commands, avowing that it has no power to compel obedience.

As an instrument for enforcing law the Council is less effective than even the local runangas. It is of little use that it surpasses others in the wisdom of its decisions, for it is totally powerless to carry them into effect. The authority of the Council is not even universally acknowledged. Patene told me that he had never acknowledged any others than Nehemia, Rewi, and Wetini Taiporutu, and that the men who at present call themselves the Runanga of Ngaruawahia are usurpers. They are as much afraid of resolute malefactors as the local runangas. Whakapaukai, who lives almost within sight of Ngaruawahia, sets the King and Council completely at defiance. Besides this, they have the fear of local magnates before their eyes. Rewi will not like this—Patene will let land if he may not drive the European Magistrate away—Tapihana will go over to the Queen if they take away his second wife. Lastly, they are more addicted to vagabondising over the country than even the local authorities. Since last Christmas they have visited (in the following order) Hangatikei, Kihikihi, Rangiriri, Waipa, Tamahere, Whakatiwai in the Hauraki Gulf, Whaingaroa, and are shortly expected at Rangiaowhia. Anyone who knows where these places are, will understand how very little of their time can be spent at home. In consequence of this it is impossible to get the Council to attend to anything except by continual personal application; everything that is not disagreeably importunate is put off till "tomorrow." I have never received an answer to any letter, though it has often been promised, except when Mr. Clarke or I have staid in the neighbourhood till the answer was written.

(2.) *The King's Dominions.*

The government of the Maori King extends nominally over a very wide extent of country. The northern boundary is fixed at Mangatawhiri, but the southern is indefinite. The tribes of Taupo, Tauranga, Turanga, Ahuriri, Mokau, Taranaki, Wanganui, and Cook's Straits are supposed to have given in their adhesion to the alliance; whether this supposition is true, or whether they have since repudiated the connexion, I have of course no means of judging. The influence of the King in remote districts can scarcely I should suppose be felt. The only communication that takes place during the year is a letter or visit of some of the head men to the King, or from some Waikato chief to the remote districts—no more than would go on if there were no King at all. Since I have been in the district, visits have been paid by Ngatiawas and Ngatiruanuis from Taranaki, by the Taupo chiefs who met the King at Kihikihi, and by a few Ngapuhis from the Bay of Islands; nearly all the Waikatos have been at Hauraki; some went to Ahuriri; and William Thompson, with a large party, was to have visited Turanga, but the Turanga people put him off, saying that their crops had failed.

The fact is, that even at Ngaruawahia itself they know very little in general of passing events. I used to think their ignorance affected, but I believe it is real. Hone Tere, one of the King's chief