

At a placé called Te Maro, I attended a Runanga, which lasted till daybreak, and which was called by one of my attendants (Aperahama, a returned chief from Taupo), on such of the residents as were charged with encroaching on a portion of his patrimony. The argument, both *pro* and *con*, was conducted with good temper and great research: the genealogy of many generations being placed under contribution for the supply of facts with which either side opposed or defended the present occupancy of the land in question. It is but a small piece, but were it only a square yard, a Maori would fight for it all the same: and an Englishman would go to law in a case equally insignificant. The battle, however, was drawn: the defendants maintaining their right to the land, on the ground of some subdivision which one of their ancestors had made in their favour, and of their subsequent occupancy; the complainant, on the other hand, disputing the truth of the statement made, and objecting to their further occupation of the piece. The others replied, that they were in possession, and would so continue until they were removed by a stronger power: that they had cleared the ground and should plough it up for wheat next week: on which Aperahama quietly declared that, in that case, he should come and sow the seed and claim the crop. He was told to act as he pleased, and the Runanga broke up.

And this is but a slight specimen of the endless controversies, personal quarrels, and bitter hatred with which near relatives frequently indulge themselves, when the mere *occupancy* of their common property is the point in question. What then, it might be asked, would be the general state of family feeling, if the right to alienate were included in the disposition of the estate? To individualize Native property has always been considered desirable by the friends of the Natives, and so the subject has been discussed for the last thirty years at least, and constantly urged on Maori attention: but the more cautious and thoughtful of the Natives cannot be brought to try the experiment, looking on it as replete with difficulty and danger, and therefore impracticable by themselves. A few of the younger or more impoverished branches of the tribes might easily be brought to accept of Government assistance, in acquiring for them possessory rights which they could not otherwise obtain. But as a general rule, if extensively carried out, I think the danger to their present peaceful state (as amongst themselves) would far outweigh any real advantage which any of them would derive from the system. On a subject like this, we cannot safely argue from the European to the Maori; and the less we interfere, for some time to come, with Native lands, except by wholesale purchase, I believe, on the whole, the better.

I have noticed, where such sales have been made, and individual or family properties re-purchased or reserved, that the general satisfaction of the Natives has been great; and if the Maori Reserves, now in common occupancy, could in the first place be subdivided, it would be a great step to that more extended individualization of property which seems so desirable. In the Taranaki and Wellington Provinces, the young men cry out most bitterly against the monopolisation and leasing of their Reserves by the more elderly chiefs, who endeavour to keep the rents to themselves. Maori Kingism, (which does not allow of leasing at all) they say, would put a stop to this; and so, in disgust, they patronise the Native Runanga, as if that were the panacea for all existing evils.

At Matamata I did not meet with Tamehana Tarapipipi and his Runanga, as they were away at Maungatautari. I found that a Maori Boarding School was here, established and taught by Te Ropiha, and not by Tamehana, as somewhere represented. There were 20 boys and girls at that time, fed and clothed by their parents, who nevertheless provide no support for the Teacher. The food was substantial and in abundance, but the clothes were very ragged, and the bedding deficient. I therefore expended a small sum at Tauranga in supplying these wants, and making them warm for the winter. Four or five little fatherless things were described to me as having no blanket or coverlid, and obliged to crouch together in a corner all night, to obtain warmth and sleep. I afterwards spoke largely on this subject (the proper treatment of widows and orphans) to most of the Runangas, but met with very little support, for in matters of natural affection the Maori is a hard-hearted race. No one who has not resided amongst them, and become intimate with their ways, can have the least idea of the neglect, and want, and visible wretchedness, which are attached to such a condition, when occurring amongst the slaves or lower order of freemen. And yet no relief has ever been systematically afforded by the Government in such cases, nor am I aware that they have ever been made sufficiently acquainted with the fact. And as to the Runangas in general, who ought to look after these cases and provide for them, they care more for feasting themselves, and punishing others, and dividing the fines, than for supporting life and making it comfortable where no equal return can be expected. Of all the tribes of the earth, I think the Maori is the last that should profess to have any practical sympathy with the "orphan and the widow," whose days are shortened and rendered miserable either by work or want.

At Tauranga, I found some half-dozen Runangas in very lively operation, and giving offence on all hands. They had established what they called a "*tire kati*," or prohibitory law, whereby all Natives were forbidden to sell their wheat for less than 6s. a bushel; and in case of disobedience, the grain was seized and a fine inflicted. In a recent case, the Runanga had extorted a sum of £3 10s., which they were going to spend in tobacco for the use of the members; but I persuaded them to give it up, and then returned it to its former owner. He, on the other hand, no sooner received the money, than he determined to make reprisal, by summoning the Runanga for having taken it away, nor was he at all satisfied when he found that I would not assist him in his revenge. Many other seizures had been made, and, in one case, a large quantity of wheat belonging to a trader was taken away by force, as having been sold under the regulation price. They contended that the real benefit of the Maori Runanga was seen in the formation and working of such combinations, as well as in the adjustment of offences; but they eventually agreed to discontinue such operations until a Resident Magistrate was appointed, with whom they would consult.