

PAPERS RELATIVE TO NATIVE DISTURBANCES AT PATEA.

No. 1.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. J. BOOTH to the Hon. J. C. RICHMOND.

(No. 31-2.)

Resident Magistrate's Office,

Carlyle, 11th April, 1868.

SIR,—

I have the honor to report, that yesterday (10th instant), complaint was made to me by a man named Henderson, who lives at Mokoia, to the effect that he and another man named Luxford have bought land from military settlers near the bush inland from Mokoia, and not far from a Native village called Whakamara, and that they had been turned back three times by Hauhaus from Whakamara, when going to their land for the purpose of preparing it for cultivation. On that day (10th instant), the Natives had waylaid them close to the village of Mokoia, had taken from them a bag of grass seed, and, after pulling them about for some time, had forcibly turned them back.

When this statement was made to me, I requested the Officer Commanding Volunteer Militia to send fifteen men of the Volunteer Militia, who had previously been placed on pay, together with two mounted men of the Armed Constabulary, to the blockhouse at Mokoia.

I decided on this course of action as the Natives were aware of the departure of the Armed Constabulary from this district; and I was afraid that if their opposition to settlers occupying their land was allowed to pass unnoticed in this instance, we should soon probably have further trouble.

This morning early I went to Mokoia, and proceeded thence, in company with the two men, Henderson and Luxford, across the Hingahape River, and towards their land. We found that a bridge at the usual crossing place had been broken down. After crossing the river, a young chief named Rangihacata, from Mokoia, rode on to give information to the Whakamara Natives.

On arriving at the boundary line of Henderson's land, three men and one woman (Hauhau from Whakamara) met us. They sat down on each side of the pathway, and requested us to stay where we were. I immediately passed through the line they had formed, and sat beyond or inland of the Hauhau, thus placing myself and the two men in the position of owners of the land, and the Hauhau (who were seated seaward) as our guests. The Natives appeared very surly, and a young man named Tumoana asked me what I had come there for. I answered I had come there for the purpose of accompanying the men who were with me to their land. He (Tumoana) replied with the usual arguments of the Hauhau, that we (the Government) had first made peace with them (the Maoris), and after lulling them into security, were now, in time of peace, trying to steal their land from them. He requested me to return and locate European settlers seaward of the Hingahape Stream, but that the Maoris would never consent to settlers occupying land near the bush; that the Hauhaus would continue to oppose settlers in the occupation of that land, and that they should burn down any fences or whares the settlers might erect,—arguing, at the same time, that they should be destroying their own property only, the timber, &c., having grown on their land.

I told the Natives that they were well aware that the land had been confiscated, and that ample reserves (the boundaries of which they knew) had been made for the Pakakohi hapu; that these men were intending to live quietly and peaceably on land which had been given by Government for service done; that I was there as a servant of the Government, and that I was determined that these men should occupy their land and build their houses upon it.

Tumoana said, "We never gave you our consent to the confiscation of this land. We protested against the survey, and sent back the surveyors several times; and we only allowed the surveyors to finish their work, when you wrote a letter to us, because the word had gone forth that there should be peace in this district, but we will not allow Pakehas to come here. If, as you say, you are determined to bring these men on their land, if you bring with you the force you have brought to Mokoia to carry out this determination of yours, let us know when you intend to come, that I may collect some men here to meet you."

I said, "Peace has been established in the district for a considerable time, and it will not be broken by me; say the word and I will take the Militia back to Patea to-night, at the same time understand, that these men are to work unmolested."

Tumoana said, "Take back the Militia to Patea." I replied, "They shall go back to-night if you give your consent that the men shall occupy their land unmolested." He said, "Take away the Militia and these men also." I said, "If you send these men with the Militia, I shall on the other hand have to bring the Militia here with the men."

By this time they had talked themselves into good humour; I therefore left them sitting, and went on some distance further. On my return, I shook hands with the Natives and told them the white men would return to their work, and I hoped they (the Natives) would make friends with them.

After we had returned to the blockhouse, Rangihacata, who in the morning had been violently opposed to the occupation of the land inland of the Hingahape Stream, told me that if the white men insisted on going to their place the opposition would cease, and pressed me to take back the Militia. I thought it best, however, to leave them for a day or two, in case the Natives should show any further opposition.

The Natives with whom I held the conversation have not yet had any communication with Europeans.

I have, &c.,

JAMES BOOTH,

Resident Magistrate,

Carlyle, Patea.

To the Hon. the Native Minister,
Wellington.