

leader, some four years ago, of the party who robbed Messrs. Ilbury and Higgins' store at Aotea. From all accounts he appears to be an evil-disposed man. Many of the influential chiefs, both resident here and at Kawhia, state that they attribute the late visit of Tawhiao, his son, Te Tapihana, and other leading chiefs to our settlements, in a great measure to the steamer "Luna's" appearance in Kawhia last year, and to the fact of Tu Tawhiao's having gone on board and dined there.

None of the friendly chiefs responded to the invitations sent to them by the King party (although they were signed by Tawhiao himself), to attend the late Kuiti meeting.

Crops.

Had it not been for the long drought that occurred this summer, the whole of the resident tribe would have been abundantly supplied with food, as they cultivated much more extensively this year than they were wont to do, in anticipation of His Excellency the Governor accepting their invitation. As it is, all living in and about the neighborhood of Raglan complain of the total failure of their potato crops; the maize likewise is stunted with small cobs, bearing grain only half-way up. The wheat was remarkably good, but I regret to say it was not extensively cultivated. Fortunately, the kumera crop is a prolific one; it will be their chief article of food this winter, together with what they purchase from the Europeans.

With the Aotea tribes it is quite the reverse, their potato crop being an exceedingly good one. Their wheat cultivations are much more extensive than those of their Raglan relatives. I regret to say that a very pernicious system prevails amongst the majority of the Natives here, of selling the greater quantity of their produce as soon as it is ready for market, instead of storing it for the winter: consequently they almost reduce themselves to the verge of starvation.

Many Natives prefer cutting green flax for the mill-owners at ten shillings a ton, and firewood for the settlers at six shillings, than working at their plantations.

It appears that the tribes residing in the vicinity of Raglan Harbour have from time immemorial been celebrated for a scarcity of provisions, so much so that their ancestors had a proverb respecting it, viz.:—"Ngatimahanga pare rae," meaning, Ngatimahanga sitting with their hands over their foreheads (shading their eyes) watching other persons at work. I regret to say many of them still deserve the name.

Public Works.

At the time Mr. Mackay visited here last January, the Natives, both friendly and Hauhaus, the latter being represented by Kereopa te Apa, an influential Tainui chief of Aotea South, expressed their willingness for employment on the roads in the district, Kereopa stating that he would come with two hundred Hauhau followers. To the best of my belief, they are still desirous of engaging in road making. Several Natives under Hone te One are at present at work improving the Aotea Road; they appear to be working with a good will.

The employment of Natives on public works, where they are desirous of undertaking road works, cannot but prove beneficial to them, inasmuch as it will keep both their minds and hands engaged, thus diverting their thoughts to other and better channels.

The Ngatihaua.

I have not visited Wharepapa or Aratitaha since poor Sullivan's death, in consequence of the Natives residing there having abandoned those settlements, and betaken themselves to Kuiti, where the majority of the Hauhau portion of this tribe now reside. Another reason for my not visiting them as frequently as I had been in the habit of doing, was in consequence of the residence of Mr. Mackay in Waikato, which circumstance almost made it unnecessary for me to go amongst them during the past year. I did, however, visit the friendly portion of this tribe residing at Tamahere, Maungakawa, Matamata, and adjacent settlements, upon all of which occasions I found them well disposed, and living in an exceedingly peaceable manner. I regret to say I cannot speak in their favour as regards sobriety: many of them never lose a chance of getting tipsy when drink is procurable.

In conclusion, I consider I am justified in assuming that the Natives generally have shown a greater desire, during the past twelve months, to renew that intercourse with the European race which existed prior to the rebellion in Waikato; if not in all districts it certainly has been the case here.

With respect to the aukati, the principal chiefs here are of opinion that the promoters of it will not be able to enforce it for any length of time in this or any other district. The object of the aukati is not stated (further than that it is an aukati). Some chiefs who consider themselves authorities, —amongst them Wetini Mahikai, one of the assessors lately returned from Kawhia—say it is a temporary one, to enable Tawhiao to erect his new house, prior to his being conducted to Waikato (I presume Ngaruawahia), by all the friendly tribes of Waikato, who, it is reported, intend to proceed to Kuiti shortly for this purpose. After this ceremony is concluded, rumour says Tawhiao will meet His Excellency the Governor and members of the Ministry at Waitara, that being the place where the evil (war) first commenced. A short time will show whether there is any credence to be given to the above report.

I have, &c.,

R. S. BUSH,

Clerk of the Court.

The Hon. the Native Minister, Wellington.