

to all, and of realizing their estates to the best advantage, by leasing or otherwise, as circumstances may point out.

The Wanganui River, from its source to the mouth—some three hundred miles—flows through an immense extent of country, which comprises a vast quantity of heavily timbered land, both level and broken, and extensive plains of open country, clothed with fern, grass, and rushes. The climate is unexceptionable, such parts of the interior being well protected from the gales experienced on the West Coast of this Island, and, on being opened up by roads, would be capable of affording ample room for a population of millions. On the river itself there are many delightful spots that might well be let, or even sold, to the advantage of the Natives; and there is nothing to prevent, in the course of time, the whole of the river settlements being connected with the town of Wanganui by a road on either bank of the river, which could be made to follow its tortuous windings to the source. The scenery in parts is romantic in the extreme; and many a highland home, surrounded by nature's choicest beauties, might be formed amidst the mountains and valleys of this almost unknown part of the country.

During the past month much excitement has been caused amongst the Whanganui and Ngatiapa Tribes, by the long-looked-for arrival of the Hawke's Bay chiefs, Henare Matua, Tikawenga, and other celebrities, with their wives and attendants, making up a cavalcade of one hundred or more. The principal meeting took place at Kaiwhaiki, Te Oti Takarangi's pa, about twelve miles up the Whanganui River, and on the other side of the boundary of the Whanganui Block. Natives from most of the *kaingas* on the river, from Kai Iwi and Waitotara, and from Turakina and Rangitikei, mustered on the occasion, to the number of some 800 souls. Major Kemp, Mete Kingi, Aperahama Tipae, Te Mawae, Kawana Hunia, and other leading Government chiefs, were in attendance, and every effort was made to give the strangers a hearty welcome to Whanganui. No expense was spared in providing food of all kinds and suitable accommodation for the guests, and money (£100) was given to them to help to defray their travelling expenses up the coast. The meeting lasted from the 9th to the 16th May, and was no doubt an important one, and will have its effect amongst the Natives—whether for evil or for good remains to be seen, although, in my humble opinion, of the two, evil is more likely to result out of this movement and combination of the Maoris, which will require watching. Disaffection, bordering on rebellion, is at the root of this agitation, and the effect has already been to unsettle the Natives, and influence them with the belief that our rule over them is an unjust and oppressive one. Should this combination gain the support of any more of the tribes, and its adherents increase in number (of which there is some likelihood), the result of this organization is likely to prove dangerous to the peace of the country, for it can be looked upon as nothing more nor less than a fresh development of the Land League and King movement, only under another phase or garb; and if their demands are not acceded to, there will be a danger of their openly casting off their allegiance to the Queen and setting up an authority of their own, utterly antagonistic to good government and the extension of peace and quietness throughout the country. This agitator, Henare Matua, seemed particularly anxious to convince the people that he wished them to look to the law alone for redress for their many imaginary grievances, and thereby has induced several here to promise him their countenance and support. Such assertions on his part are, I consider, to be looked upon with suspicion, being merely used as a means of securing further support and increasing his own importance, as he evidently is trying to gain a name for himself amongst his people.

It strikes me that this movement is a final effort of the Maoris in these parts to stem the tide of advancement on the part of their European neighbours, as they are becoming alarmed at the inroads made upon them and their domains by the continued acquisition of large tracts of country by the Government in the interior, and they do not like the idea of losing the authority and power formerly held by them over the inland districts of this Island, one of the propositions of Henare Matua being that all land selling should cease, and also leasing, till they become wiser and better able to look after their own interests—which advice of Matua's seems to have had its effect upon the minds of the multitude, for he has evidently succeeded in impressing them with the idea that they (the Maoris) have and are being victimized through their ignorance of our laws, and that it is high time for them "to consider the position," and adopt some measures whereby a stop may be put to the advances made upon them and their territories by the dominant race, the Pakeha.

The grievances complained of by Matua were—1st. The heavy loans, which he said amounted to fifteen millions, and to secure the payment of which he alleged that the whole of the country, including Maori and European lands, was mortgaged to the English creditors. 2nd. The Native Land Court, which he said should be abolished. 3rd. The Road Board Act, and levying of rates on Maori lands. 4th. The unequal representation of the Maori race in Parliament, his notion being that every large tribe (in some cases including smaller tribes connected by family ties and like interests) should each have a member in the Assembly, making some twenty or more members, who should not accept any office of emolument under Government. 5th. Crown grants. 6th. Railways and the telegraph wire, which he said should not be allowed to traverse Maori lands, as the Government, in the case of railways, would take an area of land one mile in width all along the line as a railway reserve, and five chains on either side of the telegraph poles for a like purpose. That eventually all the lands would be surveyed, and the Europeans and Maoris placed on alternate sections, when all would be taxed alike. 7th. The Birds Protection Act, and the restrictions therein enacted. That he and his lawyers intended petitioning the Assembly for redress in these and other matters, which operated oppressively upon the Maoris. After which, they intended going in for an inquiry into all old land purchases, with the view of trying to recover some of their lands or getting a further payment for the same. He expressed his approval of both European and Maori Courts of justice—the one to have authority over the land of the Queen, and the other over that of the Maori. Matua spoke favourably of Maori schools, of which he said every advantage should be taken, as a means of adding to their stores of knowledge; and he further gave himself out as a staunch upholder of religious doctrines and teaching, he having been a teacher himself, and advised the Natives to return to their Christianity, and to give up Maori customs and practices, particularly their obscene dances and songs, which were largely indulged in at Kaiwhaiki, as customary at large meetings, by way of affording amusement and relaxation from the more serious business of the meeting.