

were concerned. The result of this negotiation was a decided split in the opposition camp, who now reduced their demand for a bonus to £500. This also was denied them, and as it was now apparent that the bold but necessary stroke of opening the field, whether some of the Natives were willing or not, could be carried out without any real danger, it was decided to do so; and, acting under instructions from the Hon. Mr. Whitaker, arrangements were made for the opening, which took place by Proclamation, read by Mr. Warden Kenrick from the prospectors' claim, on the 25th November last, much to the surprise and chagrin of some of the dissenting Natives; who, seeing that this was the first time, for a number of years, that any policy (however necessary for the public good) at which they chose to express disapproval, should be forced upon them, seemed quite taken aback, and unable at first to realize the position. When, however, they found that the opening was accomplished, and their opposition fruitless, they accepted the position, and the following day most of them came in and signed the agreement; and, in a great many cases, at once took out miners' rights, and went to work pegging out claims with as much zeal as their European brethren. With regard to this Te Aroha Gold Field I am sorry to say that, up to the present time, although a great deal of work has been done by diggers, it has not yet realized the expectations that were entertained of it.

The next notable event that occurred took place at Te Aroha on the 10th February last, and was the foul and brutal murder of a young Native named Himiona Haira, belonging partly to the Ngatikoi and partly to the Ngatihako Tribes. The murder was committed on the night of the day succeeding the races at Te Aroha, at the distance of less than a quarter of a mile from the township, and close by the side of the main road leading to Paeroa. Suspicion pointed to a Russian Finn, named Prokoffi, who was last seen in the deceased's company only a short time before the murder was committed, and who accompanied him along the road in the vicinity of the place where the body was afterwards found. What was supposed by the doctors to be blood, was also found upon the clothes and knife belonging to the Russian, notwithstanding the fact that he had taken the precaution to wash his clothes directly after arriving at his hut, at 12 o'clock at night. Accused was first tried at the Thames, and committed to the Supreme Court at Auckland, where he was acquitted by a jury.

This crime caused great excitement amongst the Maoris, some of whom were engaged in mining operations at Te Aroha. They deserted their claims and massed themselves together, partly through fear, but principally for the purpose of mourning over the calamity. I visited the ground at once, on receipt of the intelligence of the murder, and found the Natives very unsettled on account of the brutal and ferocious character of the murder; the murdered man's head having been first beaten in with a stone, and the throat afterwards cut from ear to ear. Notwithstanding, however, the greatness of their *pouri*, or sadness, I was pleased to find that they were likely to be amenable to reason, and after condoling with them, I impressed upon them the advisability of leaving the matter for the law to decide. As a man had already been arrested on suspicion of the crime, and as an inquest was at that time being held on the body, I had strong arguments in my favour to show that we were anxious to deal with this matter in the same way as if the victim had been one of our own people, and to impress upon them that this was the most advisable course for them to pursue, assuring them that everything that was possible would be done to discover the murderer and bring him to justice. This, through the influence of their chiefs Pineha te Wharekowhai and Hoera te Mimiha (already referred to), they agreed to do, and also undertook not to do anything in the meantime that might be looked upon as retaliation for the crime committed. After the inquest they took possession of the body, and conveyed it by boat to the Ngatihako settlement at Okahukura, where, after the usual *tangi*, it was buried. Having given the matter over to the law to decide, the fact of the acquittal of the accused Prokoffi is not likely to exercise any bad influence upon them, or to cause much anxiety for future consequences, in so far as their seeking revenge is concerned. But I cannot help thinking that should it not be found possible to bring to justice the person who committed this crime, the Natives, and more especially the Ngatihako and Ngatikoi, should any similar injury be inflicted upon them—whether deliberately, as in the present case, or accidentally, as might occur at any street or publichouse row—will no longer consider the advisability (especially should blood be accidentally shed) of referring the matter for a Law Court to decide; but are likely, in the heat of passion and with the remembrance of Himiona's death still in their minds, to take revenge, (and that on the spot,) in order to redress what they may consider their wrongs.

The last, though not the least important event that has taken place in this district during the past twelve months, was the visit of the Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Native Minister, to the chief Tukukino, at Te Komata, relative to getting his consent to the making of the road from Hikutaia—where the county road at present ends—to Ohinemuri, passing over the Komata Block. This subject has been so often written about that I need not go into it here, more than to say that at last Tukukino was plainly told that his opposition to what was now an actual necessity must come to an end. It was thought by some that the old man, seeing that he had had an uninterrupted innings of ten years, would now gracefully retire in favour of a new policy, but those who knew him more intimately were not so sanguine, and their idea proved to be the correct one, for, although he was personally waited upon at his own settlement by a Minister of the Crown, he still refused to give his consent to the road being made, asking (as he has often done before), when he has been fairly beaten in argument and cornered for a reply, that he be allowed time to consult his master, king Tawhiao, on the matter. The difference, however, between the ending of this particular meeting and that of previous ones held for the same object, was that Tukukino was plainly told by the Hon. Native Minister that he would give him one week to consider the matter, but that the road would have to be made whether he agreed to it or not; and, as no reply was received from him during that time, the survey of the road was accordingly commenced by Mr. Kenny, acting under instructions from Mr. Percy Smith, Chief Surveyor, and has been finished without any opposition; the levels of the same are now being taken preparatory to the commencement of the work of formation. At present Tukukino has shown no sign, though by that it must not be understood that he acquiesces in what is going on. It will shortly be seen whether he intends to bring any, and what, opposition to bear against what is about to be done. It is useless to speculate here as to what this opposition (if any) will be. Suffice it to say that I have every reason to believe that the arrangements that are being made in connection with this matter will be found capable of carrying it out to a successful issue, whatever may be the opposition offered.