

The Natives of this district, with the exception of a very small minority, are as much as ever under the influence of Te Whiti, and that influence is not confined to this district only, but has taken root and is producing effects in many other parts of this the North Island, and of the South Island also, as shown by the large presents of fruit, fish, and preserved birds which are frequently sent to him from the South Island, besides large presents raised by subscriptions from the Natives of this district, which enable him to entertain his visitors with hospitality on a very different system to that which prevailed before he and Tohu were taken away from Parihaka, when nothing but food the produce of the Natives was allowed, that then being his rule of demarcation.

The absence of Te Whiti and Tohu from Parihaka, and their experience whilst away, have wrought a wonderful change upon them as regards the mode of entertaining visitors. At a recent gathering of Natives and Europeans at Parihaka last March the food was supplied in a most elaborate manner, a professional cook having been employed for the purpose at a high rate of pay, and from a person who was present I am informed the following articles were put before the assembled visitors for their entertainment: Beef, mutton, pork, sucking-pig, geese, pies (meat and fruit), abundance of each. For dessert, all sorts of fancy biscuits, almonds, raisins and figs, jellies, &c., champagne, and several other sorts of wines, ale, and porter. About one hundred Europeans were present; Te Whiti civil and polite to all. During the present month another subscription was set on foot, and I have reason to believe that over £500 was raised and taken to Parihaka about a week ago: a fanatical imposition, for no other object than to foster the vanity of an ambitious pretender. This entertainment in March was spoken very highly of by those who were present, without considering how the cost of it was met, not knowing that it was by subscriptions forced, by a superstitious fanaticism, from poor indigent Natives, whose homes are rendered painfully comfortless and neglected by the demands made upon them to maintain the folly and waste of expenditure at Parihaka.

For the last twelve months the general behaviour of the Natives has been satisfactory. They have shown a willingness to submit to the settlement of the land question by the West Coast Royal Commission, and to settle down upon the land allotted and Crown-granted to them; but, if this constant drain upon their meagre resources is kept up, their future is hopeless as regards their improving their land or their own condition; and, although the social relations of the races is much improved, and things are going on satisfactorily, it must not be forgotten that this has been in a great measure brought about by the presence of the Armed Constabulary in the district, ready to check any unlawful movements. The fact of large numbers of Natives attempting to get to Parihaka every month raises the question of what would be the effect of removing the restriction and allowing them the rights of free subjects, which, strange to say, is now advocated by the public, who, no doubt mean well, but possibly have not duly considered probable results. Te Whiti always advocated peace and quietness when the district from Stony River to Waingonoro may be said to have been entirely subject to his control, but with all his influence he was not able to restrain the Natives from lawless acts of robbery and insolence, and allowed Parihaka to become a place of refuge for criminal offenders, professing at the same time to condemn their conduct, without deeming it necessary to hand them over to be tried in our Courts, arrogating to himself Divine authority to condone offences of the worst degree. This state of things might never occur again, but when Parihaka becomes free of restrictions I incline to the belief that large numbers of Natives, not only of this district but from distant parts, will again settle there. The circumscribed limits of the land allotted to the Parihaka Natives render it very undesirable that a large body of Natives who have no interest in the land, and only a fanatical attachment to Te Whiti, should again settle down there; for, as was the case before the dispersion in November, 1881, so in all probability Te Whiti would again lose control of them, and he himself relapse into his old enigmatical state of mind, the climax of which I will not presume to foretell. Any prospect of the Natives being improved by schools being established is out of the question so long as Te Whiti repudiates the idea that any good can be derived from them, arrogating to himself and Tohu only the necessary qualification to instruct in matters human and Divine. These two individuals are a mystery, their wide-spread influence is a mystery, and how so many devoted followers can be induced to disregard their own true interest to serve them is a mystery. The current opinion obtained amongst the Natives at present is that periodical attempts to get to Parihaka will be continued, both from south and north, the southern Natives to come to the bridge at Opunake, and the northern Natives to come to Pukearuhe, in the belief that sooner or later there will be supernatural interposition, which will remove every obstacle.

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The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

R. PARRIS.