

least, the voracity of the half-starved pigs with which the country abounds, and which are said to follow the sheep about for the purpose of devouring the lambs as soon as they are dropped.

I think I see in this sheep-speculation an element of dispute and quarelling amongst the Natives themselves, which is sure to cause dissension. Of course, all the owners of the land are not also owners of sheep, and those who are not fortunate enough to own any sheep are already complaining of the sheep-owners running their sheep over the whole of the block, and not considering them at all. This will lead to dissension, and it is very likely that, if those who have no sheep find that they cannot stop those who have from running them over the whole block, or get them to pay for such a privilege, they will sell their interests out of pique, in order to annoy the others.

Negotiations are said to have been in progress by Europeans during the past few weeks for the purchase of the kahikatea timber-bushes near Otorohanga and Hangatiki. Several European names have been mentioned in connection therewith, but nothing definite is known yet. There is also a rumour of one European being about to erect a saw-mill at Otorohanga, which, if he does, will, I think, clearly constitute "occupation," which is prohibited by "The Native Lands Frauds Prevention Act 1881 Amendment Act, 1888." Possibly, he considers that as no action was taken by Government against those who, a few months ago, erected flax-mills on Native land at Otorohanga, his saw-mill, if erected, will not be interfered with.

To a close observer the owners of Rohepotae or King-country Block have shown some peculiarly-marked features since they separated themselves from the King party in 1882; not the least of which is that almost every step they have taken since then has, until lately, always been of a unanimous nature and in concert, and there has been a clearly-defined interval between each step or stage, so much so that it may not inaptly be compared to the distinct markings, or strata, by which the geologist determines the period of our earth's existence, and can tell the forms of life that existed during each. Starting from the time when the Waikato war ended up to, say, 1880-81, they were in a disorganized, or what, perhaps, may be called a chaotic, state. Their first step in the new order of things was to separate themselves from the Waikatos and the King party, which they did by laying down the external boundaries of the land claimed by them, which they called "Rohepotae," surveying the same and proclaiming it to be owned by the five tribes—Ngatimaniapoto, Ngatiraukawa, Ngatiwhakarete, Ngatihikairo, and Whanganui. Having done this, they thought, at that time, that that was all that was necessary, and that they would thereafter be acknowledged as the owners by European law and the Government. This, however, they found could not be done until they had proved their title to the land in the Native Land Court, which they had to do, though much against their wish at first, as, although they wanted to be recognised as owners by us, they did not want to give themselves so much, as they thought, into our hands as to allow their land to be dealt with by a tribunal of our instituting, called the Native Land Court. This was the second stage. The third stage—and it was almost contemporary with the second—was allowing the railway-line to run through their country. This was agreed to by them after due consideration and deliberation as a body; and most likely what helped them considerably to come to such a decision was the fact that they could see that Government were determined to put it through. Having put their land through the Court in one large block, in accordance with the survey of the external boundaries, it became necessary for them to send in the name of each individual who had ownership to it. This they objected to for a long time, and wanted it awarded to tribes and hapus only, and not to individuals. This was for the purpose of preventing sales, &c., and to keep the power in the hands of the chiefs. But as the Court had no power to do this they had to send in the names of individuals, and here commenced the jealousy, ill-feeling, bickerings, and quarrelling that finally resulted in their subdividing the original large block, with over four thousand five hundred owners, into numerous small blocks, with separate lists of owners for each. This subdividing of the large block, and deciding the ownership of the minor blocks, may be called the fifth stage, and there they hoped and tried hard to stop, as the next or sixth stage meant surveying the boundaries of each block as defined by the Court, and this they objected in many cases to do, as they saw plainly that, as soon as that was done and the area known, there was nothing to prevent those of the owners from selling who wanted to do so, a proceeding that it was almost unanimously considered should not be allowed if it could possibly be avoided. A strong effort was also made at the time to keep the Government from getting a hold upon the land by survey lien or otherwise, and when they found that it was absolutely necessary that the surveys should be made—if not, all the previous work of the Native Land Court would be of no avail—they at first endeavoured to make arrangements with private surveyors to do the work and wait until the Natives could subscribe amongst themselves, or by other means get together the money to pay them. Eventually, however, they allowed the work to be done by the Government, as it was pointed out to them that it would be done with greater accuracy and quite as cheap that way. This is now being done, and the seventh or last stage is now being entered upon—namely, parting with their land by sale. As I have shown, they have, from the commencement, entered upon each successive stage with reluctance and with as much delay as possible, and it is only in keeping with all their previous action that they should show as much reluctance and cause as much delay in bringing about this seventh and last stage as they have done in all the others. But this delay is only temporary, and this reluctance will gradually wear off and pass away. Numerous elements, the greatest of which is jealousy, are now at work amongst them, and which ere long will bring about a complete disintegration of their policy of anti-land-selling. What is wanted is to be prepared to act promptly, and take advantage of the disintegration as soon as it takes place.

Tawhiao and his few remaining supporters still reside at Pukekawa, near Mercer. He had his usual annual meeting this year, and there were some 1,500 Natives present, including representatives from different parts of the North Island. Nothing, however, of importance was done, and most of the visitors admit that they attended the meeting more out of curiosity than anything else. With the exception of an occasional outburst of zeal on the part of some enthusiastic supporter, the King movement and party seem to be getting yearly less and less.