

order to acquire Native lands is for Parliament to vote the money necessary for the purchase, and for the land-purchase agents to receive instructions to buy; when, by some process of legerdemain or supernatural agency, the Native owners of such land at once hand the same over to Government. If those people only knew the number of obstacles that have to be surmounted before a block of Native land is acquired, how surprised they would be. And to those who are sufficiently acquainted with dealings in Native land in other districts to know how difficult it is to get a number of Natives to dispose of their interests within a reasonable time, and at a reasonable price, it would surprise even them to be told that the difficulties that emanate solely from ourselves—that is, that are of our making, and for the existence of which the Natives cannot be charged or blamed at all—are more numerous and almost as formidable as those that emanate from the Natives themselves. I refer to the non-defining of interests of owners by the Court that investigates the original title to the block; the numerous errors that have been allowed to creep into the titles, which in some cases are of such a nature as to necessitate those blocks either being brought before the Court again to have the errors put right, or else a short Act of Parliament passed to validate them; also, the delay caused by the area of many of the blocks not being known, because they have not been surveyed yet.

Notwithstanding all the obstacles and drawbacks that the Government has had to contend with, I am able to report that the Crown has acquired by purchase, up to the 31st of last month (May), a gross area of 52,772 acres within the King-country. Of this area 24,719 acres are contained in six blocks, the purchase of which is complete, and 27,708 acres is contained within eighteen blocks at present under purchase. The acreage acquired within a number of the last-mentioned blocks is subject to a reduction of 10 per cent. for reserves that are to be returned to those Natives who have sold their interests, and in the case of four of those blocks the area acquired is estimated only, because the interests of the owners have not yet been defined by Court.

Since the last meeting that the Hon. Mr. Cadman had with the Natives here there has been a decided impetus given to land-purchase proceedings in the King-country, and I have every reason to believe that it will increase; and that, although it may be, for a time, of an intermittent nature, I am of opinion that we have now “turned the corner,” and that, so far as the Natives are concerned, the worst of our difficulties have been overcome.

*The Acceptance of a Government Pension by King Tawhiao.*

Though last in chronological order, but perhaps of greater importance than anything else that has taken place in Waikato during the past year, has been the acceptance of a Government pension by King Tawhiao. It is only those who are acquainted with Native matters that will understand what this really means; and even some of them may have erroneous ideas on the subject. It does not mean that the King movement is defunct, or has collapsed entirely, neither does it mean that we shall have no more trouble with Natives calling themselves the “King party;” but it means that the head of that party, the successor to Potatau, the first Maori king, and on behalf of whom the King movement, with all its subsequent shedding of Maori and pakeha blood, was originally inaugurated, has shown that he is dissatisfied with his present position of isolation and apparent antagonism to the Government and the law, and is desirous of more friendly relations. It does not mean that he has abdicated, or deserted his people and gone over to the other side, but merely that he is dissatisfied with things as they are at present, possibly because of the way in which some of his principal supporters have counselled or allowed acts that were in defiance of European law, and which might have brought about a conflict between the two races. (It is an open secret that many of the high-handed things that have lately been done with the connivance of Tawhiao’s runanga, or committee, were done without his knowledge or sanction.) Under these circumstances, and coupled with the fact that his recent visit to Auckland and meeting with the Hon. Mr. Cadman, to whom he took a personal liking, was exceedingly opportune, it can easily be understood that, after a lengthy conference with a Minister with whom, for the time being, he seemed to be completely in accord, he should accept the offer that was kindly and delicately put to him of a pension. It may be that he sees how, year by year, he and his people have been losing both numbers and power until, from being sought after and almost pressed to come to terms by Ministers in the past, they are now simply ignored altogether, unless any of them break the law, when they are promptly arrested and punished, he being powerless to help them. If it is true that thoughts of that kind influenced him in accepting a pension they were entirely spontaneous, for nothing of that nature was referred to during the meeting between himself and the Hon. the Native Minister; and the accepting by him of the pension was not made a condition that he would be required to do anything derogatory to his great rank as a chief and head of his people.

The King party, however—that is, the chiefs who conduct the affairs of the King movement—are greatly incensed at Tawhiao having accepted a pension from the Government. In fact, some of them stoutly deny that he has done so, and for the sake of the cause they will, I have no doubt, do their utmost to bring about a misunderstanding between him and the Government, in order that he may be induced by them to give up his pension. It remains to be seen whether they will be successful. If they are not, then the real meaning of the accepting of a pension by Tawhiao will be seen.

I have, &c.,

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