

I visited the prisoners on the 1st April; they received me with the usual Maori welcome. I inspected their whares, which were remarkably clean and neat, and were decorated with flowers and ferns. In each house some carved sticks and meres, the work of the prisoners, were presented (forwarded to the Native Office). From the whares I proceeded to the flagstaff, where the whole of the prisoners assembled. Various speeches were made, a report of which is enclosed. I addressed the prisoners, informing them that I should report to the Government their good behaviour, and the orderly state of their whares, &c. In answer to their statement, "That they had been promised they should be sent back to New Zealand a few at a time, probably, after they had been one year at the Chathams, if they behaved well, and that the whole were to be sent back as soon as the war was over," I told them I felt sure the promise, if made, would be carried out, and that their good conduct would have its due weight with the Government. I would respectfully suggest, if five were allowed to return by next trip of the steamer, it would be productive of good results, and would tend to encourage the remainder to continue their orderly conduct. I enclose the names of five who were recommended by the Resident Magistrate as those who should be allowed to return.

A short time since one of the prisoners was fired at and wounded by one of the guard named Clibborne, who was suffering at the time from the effects of excessive drinking. The officer commanding the guard handed him over to the Resident Magistrate for punishment. He was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. This, as compared with the punishment inflicted on some of the Maoris who attempted to escape from the hut they were lodged in, appears a very slight sentence, and has had rather a bad effect on the prisoners, giving them some cause for saying that a white man was not punished with the same severity that would be shown to a Maori; besides, the crime was beyond the jurisdiction of the Resident Magistrate, who should, I think, be instructed in future to send such cases for trial before the proper tribunal, viz., the Supreme Court.

The prisoners have cultivated potatoes enough to last them, seed included, until next season; and if they were supplied with seed wheat, a few ploughs, and two or three steel mills, and a dressing apparatus, they could, after harvest, support themselves—a small grocery ration being all they would require. Land for them to cultivate could be obtained from the Natives of the Island if the Government would give some nominal sum—say 1s. per acre—as payment for its use to the owners. This the Natives ask for more as showing the Government recognise their title, than for the sake of the money. If the prisoners are to support themselves by cultivating, the guard should be strengthened to at least the number I have suggested, as the Natives would be more scattered than at present.

The prisoners have been allowed to work for a few Europeans, but there are not more than about ten people who can employ them. This will furnish occasional work for about sixteen men at 1s. 6d. per diem. The money so earned they are now allowed to retain for their own use. Prior to my arrival Captain Thomas had retained all moneys earned by the prisoners, with a view to forming a fund to be handed over to them on their return to New Zealand. They did not like this arrangement, and it made them unwilling to work. Captain Thomas and I consulted on the matter, and determined it would be better for the future that all moneys earned should be handed over to the men themselves. When not working for private individuals, the prisoners are employed on works of public utility, such as road-making and cutting tracks through the bush. They have also built a bridge over the river near Waitangi.

Captain Thomas and the officer commanding the guard should, I think, be most clearly informed as to their exact position with regard to each other. At present Captain Thomas does not appear to understand whether he is the military head of the guard or not.

Should the Government determine to construct a stockade, I shall be most happy to forward plans and elevations of what would, from what I know of the position, be the best kind to erect.

I have, &c.,

J. T. EDWARDS,

Resident Magistrate.

The Hon. the Defence Minister, Wellington.

### Enclosure in No. 30.

SPEECHES made by NATIVE PRISONERS at the Chatham Islands.

*Paora Kate*.—Welcome, welcome. Come to see your prisoners undergoing the punishment of their crime. They boasted in New Zealand that they would exterminate us; but they were defeated there, and afterwards sent down here as a further punishment. They were told on leaving New Zealand that if they behaved themselves well they would be released in nine months. This is now the thirteenth month. Come, that you may not only hear, but see how they conduct themselves, and that they may also see you and rejoice. Our spirits are far away in New Zealand. Come and release our bodies, that they may be united.

*Tamiti Kuhukuhu*.—Welcome, welcome. Come to see us, and let us see you, that our hearts may be glad, and that you hear and see our behaviour while we have been here at Chatham Islands.

*Harawira* (Ngatiporou) next rose and spoke in nearly the same words.

*Horomana Tukaki*.—Welcome, welcome. Come to see your prisoners. My heart rejoices now that I see you. You have spared our lives once: let this be the second time. This is the land you sent us to, to punish us for our crime, and to repent of our deeds. Come, speak, and thy servant shall be saved.

The prisoners were then addressed by Major Edwards.

*Pehimana*.—Your words are good. You mentioned that there was a small black spot in what would otherwise all have been bright; but the fault is not ours. We are told by our officers to go to various places to work, therefore we have to go, and if anything wrong arises they are to blame. It is true those six men have done wrong, and are now undergoing suffering for their work.

*Wi Mahuika*.—Let me also speak. I have heard your words. They are good. This is my word. My desire is great that I (speaking for all) be taken in, and called your children. I was led astray and acted wrong, but I have long repented of my misdeeds. My greatest wish is to be allowed to