

1881.
NEW ZEALAND

TAWHIAO'S VISIT TO THE WAIKATO SETTLEMENTS

(PAPERS RELATING TO).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

Major MAIR, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR.—

Native Office, Auckland, 14th June, 1881.

I have the honor to report upon Native affairs in Waikato.

On the 2nd instant I left Auckland for the purpose of meeting the Chief Rewi at Kihikihi, he having asked me to do so. At Mercer, however, I received a message from Tawhiao that he was coming down from Hikurangi, and would like to see me. I therefore went on to Alexandra, where I found Te Tawhiao, who informed me that his father proposed going to Harapipi—within the confiscated district—to shoot wild pigeons, and that he would come into Alexandra on his return if I would meet him there. The next morning I sent Tawhiao a present of food and a note informing him that I was glad to hear that he proposed to visit the pakeha, and that I would be in the neighbourhood for a few days. I then went to Puniu, and found Rewi rather put out at the reports in circulation that he was about to return to Government the deed of the property at Kihikihi, and then retire to Te Kuiti. I pointed out to him that the best way to silence such rumours would be to occupy the house, and invite his friends to meet him there and hear what he had to say. To this he agreed; and on the next day (4th June) gave a dinner, at which a number of other chiefs and all the leading settlers who could be got together on so short a notice were present. Rewi then stated that he had no intention of giving up his house, and that, though he was going up country to arrange with his people about the erection of a mill and to discuss other matters for the general welfare, he would consider Kihikihi his head-quarters, and continue to exercise his influence in suppressing larceny and other offences on the part of Natives. He also explained why some cattle belonging to Mr. Ross had been driven in from the Native land beyond the Puniu. It appears that Rewi was under some obligation to Ross, and permitted him to run his cattle free, but, in consequence of the recession by the chiefs of the land to Tawhiao, and of a charge brought against him (Rewi) that he had been disposing of the land, the cattle could not be permitted to run there for the present.

Leaving Rewi living in his house at Kihikihi, I returned to Alexandra on the 5th instant to receive a present of about 150 head of Native game (shot at Harapipi) from Tawhiao. On the 7th he came in with about seventy followers. The townspeople having placed the public hall at my disposal for the accommodation of the Natives, I put up most of them there; but Tawhiao, his sons and immediate followers, I took to an hotel, where they resided during their stay. Tawhiao visited most of the settlers, and seemed very anxious to have their good opinion; he also went to the telegraph office, and watched the transmission of messages to several of his friends, Mr. Gentil, the officer in charge, having kindly established telephonic communication with Kihikihi. Rewi came to the telegraph office at that place, and he and Tawhiao held some conversation and exchanged congratulations. I need hardly add that the Natives were very much impressed by this performance. From conversations which I had with Tawhiao, I am of opinion that he is anxious to come to a clear understanding with the Government; and I look upon his visit to Alexandra as being the first step towards that end. Maoris are seldom in a hurry about the settlement of important questions, as it does not accord with their notions of dignity and etiquette; but I believe that, ere long, Tawhiao will make further advances, for, upon leaving Alexandra, he told me that he would soon meet me again, and that there would never be any more trouble between him and the Europeans. During Tawhiao's stay of three days in Alexandra his followers continued to come in until there were nearly one hundred and fifty of them. The most cordial feeling existed between them and the settlers and townspeople, and they got up entertainments of various kinds for each other's amusement, but there was not an instance of drunkenness or unseemly behaviour.

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The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

W G MAIR.