

No. 14.

Inspector PARDY, New Plymouth, to the COMMISSIONER, Armed Constabulary, Wellington.

SIR,—

Police Office, New Plymouth, 12th June, 1885.

In referring to the late larceny committed on Albert Plummer at Parapara, near Pungarehu, I have the honour, after making careful inquiry, to make the following report:—

In the first place, I may say that this larceny, of which so much has been made, was of a very trivial nature, the value of the property taken not being more, at its outside value, than £2; and had it occurred in any other part of the colony nothing would have been heard of it outside the police records.

The particulars of the robbery are these: Albert Plummer took up a small section, some ten acres, at Parapara, on deferred payment, on which he built a small house, in which he for a short time resided; but, finding he was unable to make a living there, shut the house up, asking a man named William May to have an eye to it for him, and left for Feilding. Before leaving, however, he purchased a horse from a Maori named Rangī, without paying him for it, and quietly rode it away. Plummer left Parapara about the 7th April last, and on the 22nd it was found that his house had been broken into and the doors and windows, together with a few articles of bush-made furniture, taken away.

Now, as to who committed the offence, no doubt at the present time suspicion points strongly to the Maoris as the perpetrators. In the first place, the articles taken away had been taken from Parihaka, and may have been viewed by them as their property, and that they had a right to take it whenever they saw it; and, acting on this principle, they have watched their opportunity to take the property and plant it, for the present, in the dense bush which abounds in that locality. But I am not inclined, however, altogether to indorse this theory. In the second place, the man Hill has made statements to the effect that he knew it was the Maoris, as he had seen one of them named Rangī looking about Plummer's the day after the robbery; and, further, that he could identify one of the tracks seen about the place as that of Rangī by the heel, he (Hill) having repaired a boot for him.

Anything that Mr. Hill may say in reference to this matter, however, must be taken with great caution, as I am strongly inclined to think he has not told all he knows of this robbery. He had two objects in ascribing this robbery to the Maoris: first, to get back the constabulary, from whom he reaped considerable profit as their shoemaker; and, secondly, to avenge himself on the Maoris, who had some short time previously successfully prosecuted him for stealing their pigs.

If the missing property had been taken into Parihaka, or any of the Maori villages, I should have found traces of it, it being of a bulky nature, and consequently not easily concealed.

I may mention one circumstance in connection with Mr. Hill, by which he tried to get up another depredation, in which he was frustrated by the opportune arrival on the spot of Constable Ryan. A Maori was quietly driving a cart, containing pigs, along the road past Parapara, where Hill resides, going in the direction of Rahotu. No sooner had the Maori passed Hill's place than the latter gets on his horse and rides off to Pungarehu to report another Maori outrage by accusing this Maori of stealing his (Hill's) pigs, and taking them away in a cart. Fortunately Constable Ryan was there from New Plymouth, and, on hearing Hill's complaint, galloped off after the Maori, overtook and detained him until Hill arrived, when the pigs were examined, and found to belong to the Maori, and not to Hill. Of course, Mr. Hill never reckoned, when making his complaint, on Constable Ryan taking such prompt action.

In conclusion, I would beg to state that it is not from the Maoris I apprehend difficulties in the future, but from evil-disposed European persons, who prey on both Maori and European, and, to hide their dishonest acts, at once endeavour to throw suspicion on the Maori. Of course, there are a few dishonest Maoris about Parihaka, as well as at other places, but the police are quite competent to deal with them.

I have, &c.,

WM. S. PARDY,
Inspector.

The Commissioner, Armed Constabulary, Wellington.