

siderable number who are ready at once to sell their interests in one or more blocks. I think, therefore, that the time is now opportune for commencing the purchase of such blocks as are suitable for settlement, and the occupation of which by Europeans would act as a feeder to the railway. With land-purchase once started on a satisfactory basis, I do not think it will be long before the Crown will have acquired a considerable area of land in the King-country which could be thrown open for settlement.

Matters relating to the Natives within the Rohepotae, or King-country, Block, and their lands, have so far, I think, progressed as satisfactorily as could be desired. The very large area of country is quietly but surely being brought within the grasp of settlement and civilisation, and this has fortunately been brought about so far without our coming into collision, or being involved in any serious dispute, with the Native owners. The time, however, is now approaching when extra care will have to be taken to avoid as much as possible the difficulties and disputes that are always occasioned when Native lands are undergoing the process of passing from the Native owners to Europeans, and when the former, who have been accustomed to live in sole possession and with no one to disturb them, will have to admit into their midst a neighbour who is of a different race, and who is also of a more industrious, pushing, and aggressive nature than they are. History has shown us that the mingling of these two races, with their different qualities and peculiarities, is not always accomplished without considerable trouble and clashing of interests—brought about principally by the attempted amalgamation of elements that are of a rather incongruous nature—until time, and the preponderance of the good over the bad of each, has caused them to mix harmoniously together.

Previous to the Natives of the King-country turning their attention to cutting flax for the mills, a number of them—especially those living between the confiscation-line and Otorohanga—used to get a living by destroying rabbits, which were getting to be rather numerous at the northern end of the King-country. The price given by Government until lately was 3d. per skin, and whilst that price was maintained, the Natives, young and old, went to work with a will, sometimes shooting, sometimes trapping, but more frequently digging the rabbits out of their holes, with the result that Bunny has very much decreased—in fact, bade fair to be exterminated altogether; but, just as the nuisance had been got well in hand, and there was a prospect of its being kept within bounds, if not removed entirely, the department has suddenly reduced the price to 2d. per skin, which has caused the Maoris to discontinue their efforts. For they say—and the truth of the statement cannot be denied—that, if it was worth 3d. per skin to kill the rabbits when they were plentiful, the price, instead of being reduced, should have been increased as the rabbits got scarcer, because the chance of earning a living by their destruction is thereby lessened. If the flax industry increases in this district, in all probability the Maoris will take to flax-cutting instead of rabbit-killing, in which case the rabbits will be left to increase again until such time as the nuisance has assumed considerable magnitude, when, perhaps, it may then be thought advisable to again give 3d. per skin to bring about its reduction.

The dissatisfaction and complaint of the Ngatimaniapoto Tribe regarding the dispute between them and the Taupo (Ngatituwharetoa) Natives regarding the Maraeroa-Hurakia Block, which was—the Ngatimaniapoto say wrongfully—awarded by the Native Land Court to the Ngatituwharetoa Tribe, has been to a great extent removed by the Hon. the Native Minister promising the Ngatimaniapoto that a Commission shall be appointed to inquire into the matter. I was fearful at one time that this dispute would lead to serious results, as the Ngatimaniapoto were very determined, and appeared to be smarting under a sense of having been wronged—more especially the section of them under the chief Taonui. I need not here refer to the nature of the dispute, as you have already been made acquainted with it. Since, however, the promise of the Hon. the Native Minister has been given that a Commission shall sit to inquire into the alleged injustice, the Natives of this district have expressed themselves as satisfied, and are now awaiting the appointment of the Commissioners.

It is not necessary for me to refer at large to the recent attempted visit of Te Kooti to Gisborne, and what that attempt resulted in, as the whole circumstances were fully reported at the time in the daily papers. It had for some years been Te Kooti's great desire to visit his relatives and friends at Gisborne, and he has on several occasions received invitations from some of them to do so. It was, however, thought advisable that he should not visit that locality, which was the scene of his atrocities in 1869, lest the peace of the district should be disturbed. For two successive years previous to this I was successful in getting him to give up his intended visit there, but this year it seems he was determined not to postpone it any more, and would not, therefore, listen to those who tried to dissuade him from going. I am not able to give any more particulars about this matter than what appeared in the newspapers, as I was engaged at the Native Land Court at Kawhia at the time negotiations were in progress to get him to desist from going. I did not, therefore, have an opportunity of seeing and reasoning with him, although he and his people live in my district.

It is with sorrow that I have to record the death of Mr. John Aubin, medical officer for the Natives in this district. He was one of the earliest and most respected settlers in this locality and was looked upon with great affection by the Natives for his uniform kindness and attention to them. He died in February last of liver-complaint.

THAMES-HAURAKI.

There is not much to report in connection with the Natives of the Thames-Hauraki District, as, with the exception of the settlement of the long-outstanding Piako purchase, nothing of importance has occurred there during the past year. The Piako Block purchase, within that district, upon which Government had made such large advances during the last fifteen years, and for which it has been found so difficult in past years to get an equivalent in land, has at last been brought into the Native Land Court, and negotiations with the Native owners, in which the Hon. Mr. Stevens, M.L.C., and yourself took the leading part (assisted by Mr. James Mackay and myself), have resulted in the