

APPENDIX J.

TAPUINIKAU PA.

(Contributed by C. M. HILL, New Plymouth.)

SOME three years ago the historical Maori pa named Tapuinikau was in great danger of being ruined by the depredations of goats and cattle. Built probably three or four hundred years ago, and situated in an almost impregnable position on the Ika-Parua Stream, two miles south-east of Warea, the pa was one of the greatest sanctuaries of the Taranaki Maoris in centuries gone by. The district for many miles around held many pas, but it was to Tapuinikau that the people retired and found sanctuary when threatened by invasion from warlike tribes from the Waikato and other northern districts. Little wonder that the ancient Maoris held the sanctuary in great veneration. From time to time Native trustees have been appointed, but these have died out, with the exception of one old rangatira, named Inia te Ngongohau, still living at Pungarehu. This old trustee is burdened with some eighty-six or eighty-seven years, and has not been able for years past to actively engage himself in looking after Tapuinikau. At a meeting of settlers held at Warea, and presided over by Mr. Harry Chapman, a resolution was passed protesting against the destruction of forest on the pa, and urging that steps be taken to have it preserved. A copy of this resolution was subsequently taken to Wellington by Mr. Chapman. The Forestry League in Wellington was approached and its assistance asked for. Mr. W. H. Skinner, who was going to Wellington on other business, was asked to prosecute the matter. At a meeting of the Council of the Polynesian Society in Wellington a resolution, moved by Mr. Skinner, and supported by Sir Maui Pomare, whose ancestors were intimately associated with the pa, was passed urging the Government to have the locality declared a reserve. Mr. Skinner also interviewed the Native Trustee, the Chief Judge of the Native Land Court, and the secretary of the Forestry League, and had the whole matter laid before the Native Department and Department of Lands and Survey. The latter immediately called for a report from the Commissioner of Crown Lands at New Plymouth, and a report was subsequently made to be laid before the Scenery Preservation Board. Ultimately it was decided by the Government to have the pa reserved under the Scenery Preservation Act and placed under the care of a special Board of three Maoris and three pakehas, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, New Plymouth, to be Chairman.

For some time the old trustee, Inia te Ngongohau, was troubled about giving up his trusteeship, but eventually, after several visits the old rangatira promised Mr. C. M. Hill, New Plymouth, that he was prepared to relinquish his trust provided his people were represented on the Board controlling the future of the ancient stronghold of his tribe. Subsequently the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Mr. W. D. Armit, accompanied by Messrs. W. H. Skinner (New Plymouth), the late Willie Gray (Okato), H. N. Chapman (Warea), and C. M. Hill (New Plymouth), met the Maoris of Pungarehu to discuss the matter. Those mentioned have all interested themselves in the proposed saving and preservation of Tapuinikau. They were very kindly received by Inia te Ngongohau and other members of the hapu, and were most hospitably entertained at dinner, when a sumptuous repast, cooked in the old-time Maori ovens, was partaken of. Inia te Ngongohau, a splendid specimen of an old-time Maori rangitira, gave the visitors the proper Maori welcome. The late Mr. Gray acted as interpreter, his eloquent command of both languages giving a lucid translation that enabled all present to understand the proceedings. The old Native rose from his chair, and, leaning heavily on his *taiaha* (staff), stated how pleased he was that representatives of the two races had met. He was the sole remaining trustee of Tapuinikau, but his years made him feel that he would like to relinquish his responsibilities.

Mr. Armit thanked the old rangitira for his remarks, and stated that the Government took an interest in Tapuinikau, and would be happy to make it a reserve which would be cared for for all time. Care would be taken to prevent trees and shrubs being cut from the pa, which would be fenced securely so as to prevent wandering cattle from destroying the shrubs, ramparts, kumara-pits, &c.

Mr. Skinner said how pleased he was to meet Inia and other old Maori friends. The pakehas had come to express their good-will to the Maoris. He had always been anxious for the ancient stronghold to be preserved for future generations of both Maori and pakeha. Other old pas, including Koru, Urenui, and Whakarewa, besides others, were protected and preserved, and Tapuinikau would now, he trusted, be added to the number. The pakehas were present to assist the Maori in bringing this about.

Mr. Chapman, speaking on behalf of the Warea settlers, stated that very friendly relations existed between the people of both races in the district. They were very pleased that Tapuinikau was likely to be reserved. "It is a delightful spot," proceeded the speaker, "and with the native bush on its slopes and the river-bank adjoining, is one of the choice spots of the district." Tired people from towns would find it a real sanctuary from the turmoil of business, while settlers would welcome it as a resort to which they could take their families for parties. It was a spot sacred to the old and present-day Natives; it would therefore become a venerated spot to the pakehas.

The late Mr. Gray gave greetings to Inia and the Native people of the hapu. It was very essential from a Maori point of view that the pa should be placed in the hands of a board of trustees consisting of Natives and Europeans, who would be appointed. Tapuinikau was a famous sanctuary stronghold built by the ancestors of the Taranaki people for protection against the raids of the Ngapuhi and Waikato Tribes. In some of these raids prisoners had been taken from Taranaki. When these war-parties returned to their homes in the north the missionaries, under Samuel Marsden, taught that it was against the teachings of Christianity to hold prisoners. Many of the Taranaki prisoners had returned home and had brought with them the teachings of Christianity. He felt very pleased that the Natives present were anxious for Tapuinikau to be vested in the Crown as a reserve.