

had to manage with my fingers, the natives, as usual, sitting round a big camp oven and helping themselves. A native's idea of wealth is not fine living. Give him a horse, a handkerchief, a pipe, and a pair of dungarees and he's a king.

MAORI CHARACTERISTICS.

Maoris with all their peculiarities are very good people to deal with if treated the right way, but it is necessary to treat them differently to white people. Those that are better bred are very polite, and there is as much or more difference between a well born and an inferior native as there is between like classes of our own nationality. A *rangatira* would feel hurt if you offered to reward



TWO RANGATIRAS.

him for hospitality, and they never interrupt you in a conversation, or flatly contradict or refuse you. They make funny mistakes in English sometimes. I once saw one of them milking a cow, and noticing that the bucket was rather empty, I remarked that the animal was not blessed with a superabundance of lacteal fluid. He replied, 'Oh, he's got plenty milk inside, but she won't let them down.' (!) They are, of course, very superstitious—to such an extent, in fact, that they will not steal anything on a Sunday, or go pig-hunting, or lend a boat on a Sunday. Wild pigs, no doubt, wish every day was Sunday. They will never swear while in a boat for fear of accidents, and if the wind dies will use chants to recover it. Of ghosts they are very frightened,



BULLOCK TRAM AND STATION BOYS AT TE PAKI.

and if there has been a death they will not go outside at night. There is some sense in this, as they really do see ghosts. One evening at Taputaputa, when Mr L. Yates was sitting in a room with some of the native boys who were there mustering, one of them jumped up, and rushing to the window, exclaimed that he saw the spirit of a certain woman on its way to the Reinga. He was very agitated, as none of them knew she was ill, but sure enough the next day a messenger came down to say that the woman in question had died at the time he saw her spirit!

As an example of the fear Maoris still entertain for *tapu*, I may repeat the following story told to me at a romantic spot on the north coast:—About three years ago there died at Spirits' Bay a chief of the Ngatekouri (i.e., 'The Dogs,' from their habit of eating dog's flesh). A relation of his took a cloth from his box to carry kumeras in, and as a consequence she and her daughter were immediately seized of the devil for touching anything belonging to the dead. They together rushed to the creek, in which they kept jumping about all night, as all Maoris in a similar condition will. In the morning two friends found them almost dead, and after kindling a fire sent for the *tohunga*. The latter said seawater might save their lives, and sent the others off to the coast a couple of miles away. They took four bottles, but succeeded in filling only three, the other refusing to fill despite their best efforts, and to make matters worse, two of the full bottles bumped themselves together and broke. They returned to the beach for more water, but finding a flat fish high and dry flopping about the sand they ran away frightened. The priest said this was the fatal sign and the sufferers must die, and that soon, as the tide had been going out for some time. He then read them a chapter of the Bible—strange idea!—and at the last word, 'Amen,' the elder woman died. The girl temporarily recovered and related how when she got to

Wairata at Te Reinga the old man would not let her across; so she started back, and on the hill behind Taputaputa met the spirit of her brother on its way to the Reinga, and induced it to return with her. The man had been ill from *tapu* also, but after a fit of lunacy recovered. The girl, however, died in a fortnight, a victim to this remarkable form of superstitious dread.

SPORT.

When they get a chance the natives charter the 'Staffs' and go whapuka fishing. The whapuka is a huge fish weighing fifty or more pounds, and is very plentiful round some sunken rocks off the North Cape. Some of the old Maoris know how to find these rocks by means of marks on the mainland, but they will not take white men with them, as they are afraid they would fry the fish and then no more could be caught, as the whapuka, being a fastidious creature, likes to be boiled, or cooked in a Kapa Maori, and feels insulted if it is fried! Every year a day is set apart for shark-fishing, and they catch and dry hundreds of them. A day is likewise appointed for the opening of the kawaka or godwit season. Those of a sporting disposition then go out with guns, preferably on a stormy day, and lying on a mud bank where they know the birds will settle, kill dozens of them by discharging both barrels of the gun simultaneously. The birds are extremely fat, and make a very tasty dish, which must, however, be taken in moderation.

Concerning their flight to Siberia, as far as I could judge, it is a mere fairy tale. They certainly disappear, but does the presence of similar birds on the Chinese coast prove that they came from Parengarenga? and if they seek a colder climate, why should they fly 3,000 miles across the tropics to get it instead of going south? Perhaps they have never heard of the South Pole! As to their starting all together from the sand hills in Spirits' Bay on a certain day in April, it is quite absurd. In the first place there are no sand hills at all in Spirits' Bay, and although I was there all through the time they are supposed to leave, I did not see a single kawaka. They apparently migrate from Parengarenga harbour, as flocks of them of perhaps a couple of thousand may be seen rising into the air and then darting off, but it is many weeks from the time that they begin to disappear until the last have taken their flight. I have seen hundreds of black swans and large flocks of wild ducks in Parengarenga harbour. These also migrate at certain seasons. Pheasants are also plentiful in the district.

THE BIG BEACH.

The eighty-mile beach is a remarkable part of the far north. One may stand on Scott's Point and see Ahipara, eighty miles south, nothing but an unbroken stretch of level sand intervening, with a long line of breakers on one side and sand hills from one to four miles deep on the other. It is a peculiar trip down on to this great beach. You ride down a broad gully, or rather creek, in water a few inches deep and full of quicksands, with sand hills hundreds of feet high on both sides of you. Suddenly you emerge on to the beach and become aware that the sun is dimmer, and that you are in a kind of haze caused by the spray. Inquisitive mutton birds come to shriek in your ears, and you are nearly deafened by the roar of breakers stretching far out to sea. The sudden and complete change from the first part of the journey strikes the horses also, for they generally want to gallop along the firm level sand. It is an awe-inspir-



AUSTRIAN GUMDIGGERS.