

## A MAORI DINNER-PARTY DISTURBED.

Yesterday morning as W. Richards, jun., was looking for a horse in Mangorei he saw five or six of the rebel natives on Rossiter's farm. When they saw they were discovered they called out *haere mai, haere mai*, as if friendly, but he prudently declined the invitation and rode back to Town as fast as he could and reported what he had seen. At 2 o'clock, therefore, the two companies of Bush-rangers started to explore the country—No. 1 going round by Ratanui and the junction, and No. 2 by the direct road. When the latter arrived at Rossiter's they could see a large column of smoke about three quarters of a mile away in the bush, but on which side of the Waiwakaiho it was difficult to say, but it was thought to be from an old Maori clearing on this side. The tracks of a good many natives were also discovered, who had been driving sheep before them; on the Mangorei bridge there were the marks where some of the sheep had been dragged across. As soon as Capt. Webster's company came up, which was not till past 5, Capt. Atkinson ordered an advance, but by this time the smoke had ceased, and the tracks were, therefore, the only guide. These were followed till they came out into Batten's clearing, where they diverged; most, however, led down through the bush, by different ways, towards the Waiwakaiho. When the advanced guard came to the edge of the river, they saw a single native just in the water on the other side, but some little distance higher up. They saluted him with a volley, but we suppose thought it would do to let him off with a caution, as he does not appear to have had any difficulty in getting away, but the bush was not three yards off. As this man was thought to be at the river for the purpose of fishing,

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it was resolved to go on and examine the old clearing just mentioned before crossing, but no traces were found there, and Captain Atkinson, therefore, returned and sent one section across the river to explore—the others remaining on the bank to cover their advance. The men were no sooner across than they came upon tracks in all directions, and a few chains in the bush the camp itself, just abandoned—in which preparations had been made for great, if not an elegant, feast. There were eight large Maori ovens, from some of which the meat had been taken and put upon stages made of branches—some were still unopened and contained a barrowload or more of mutton each, cut up in a primitive way and steaming hot; the kidneys had been very civilly put aside uncooked in two or three small heaps and some of these were brought into town and found to be excellent. There were potatoes (which they must have brought with them) strewed about on the ground, with a small supply of delicacies in the shape of dried kumara and rotted maize; there was also a small kit of Mr. Rossiter's excellent apples by way of dessert. Some drinking vessels made of totara bark were borrowed by our men, as also a large hook for raking up eels, a woollen gun cover, and other trifles. The natives generally appreciate a good dinner, but they do seem to have thought this not worth a single shot, though there must have been a good number of them, as was evident from the tracks and from their cooking twenty sheep at once, the skins of which were found in Allen's clearing. (By the brands it appeared that twelve belonged to Messrs. Batten and Smith, seven to Mr. Rossiter, and one to Mr. S. Joll.) These natives were no doubt from Mataitawa, coming in accordance with their threat to get payment for the death of

Hone; it appears however they will now have to call again. But though this attempt of theirs has ended in something like a practical joke, there is no doubt it would have ended very differently if they had not been discovered and 'routed' out, and it is to be hoped it will make people more cautious than they have been lately in going about the country.

The camp was pitched about three-quarters of a mile inland of the "Meeting of the Waters," and about 300 yards beyond the site of an old pa called Papamoa, but the other side of the Waiwakaiho. The rebels had probably intended a stay of some time, as they had just begun building whares.

Major Butler and a party of the 57th have gone out this morning to see if they are still hanging about.