Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum

Leaflet No. 2

Life in Hawke's Bay 75 Years ago.

"Farrow and I squared our accounts and agreed on the sum he was to receive for Kakariki. At 2 a.m. Guiness and Campbell got up and relieved us of our sentry go."

THIS is an extract from the journal of D. P. Balfour at the time of the Mohaka raid in April, 1869. Fearing the loss of the half finished homestead, he had returned with his partner and two companions. Kakariki on the Mohaka stood on the borders of the Hauhau country some fifteen miles upriver from the ravaged pa. His relief at finding his home unscathed was soon offset by the knowledge that he would have to exchange his partnership with Farrow for the cold company of a loaded rifle. Despite his size and capacity for work George Farrow had not the hardihood to risk living under the constant threat of Te Kooti's fanatics. Then followed a trip to Napier to finalise their affairs, Balfour returning alone to Kakariki at the months end to take up a Crusoe existence.

This was his first venture in sheep farming on his own account following a fourteen years apprenticeship served in Scotland, Australia and Otago. In accounting for the resolution displayed in maintaining this dangerous outlier, it must be remembered that this was his first opportunity in life and he had incurred a debt in its establishment. This he regarded with a Victorian horror, using every means to reduce it, though it meant spending the next three years in a state bordering on desperation.

For the first three months he was satisfied merely to inspect his sheep and prevent them from straying, nothing in the way of improvements was attempted. The homestead seemed too likely a target so he built a small hut in the bush, and then, fearful it was not securely concealed, built yet another in a more remote part. In this he slept by day, emerging at night to saw and reap, a loaded rifle always to his hand. At first, feeling a fire was much too reckless, he lived for three days on green corn, raw

onions and peach jam. That first winter was miserable enough, the thatched whare leaked, the bush dripped, and it rained interminably. The flowering of the Kowhai saw no lessening of the local tension, but it became necessary to start the season's planting. The garden was near the deserted house and here in the frosty moonlight were sown the wheat, corn and vegetables. Loneliness drove him occasionally to Mataua and Mohaka, where with the few white men of the district he fed his fears on rumour and himself on a change of diet.

By Christmas Te Kooti was reported in the Urewera country and Balfour, singlehanded, was able to shear 772 sheep and press his wool in a month's effort. His return from spending the New Year at Mataua was marked by a narrow escape from drowning followed by a sixty mile walk to recover the saddle from his drowned mare.

Autumn saw some slight return of confidence though everything he undertook was still planned in view of a Hauhau raid. The moonlight sown potatoes were pitted in widely separated pits so that should one pit be found the others might escape. His tools were stored at Mohaka and any accumulation of wool was kept down by frequent packing out from Kakariki.

This entry from his journal on the 10th of April, 1870, tells of the year following the raid. "This is the anniversary of the Mohaka Massacre, and what a year I have spent to be sure. Had anyone told me I could have done it I would not have believed him. I have lived alone the greater part of the year with my life in danger, not only every day, but every hour of the day, and no appearance of things mending."

Two days later he was to have an unconscious revenge on Kakariki; he planted blackberry bushes along with his clingstone peaches.

This fact is recorded together with accounts of wheat grinding, baking, jam and wine making, droving, pig hunting, basket weaving, shirt making and collossal bachelor wash days. The first improvements to be made to the station were commenced in May. At that time, emboldened by company, he essayed to sleep in the big house in spite of the rumour that Te Kooti, fifteen miles away at Waikaremoana, had the white forces jammed against the lake. Discretion returned with the departure of his friends, driving him to seek the safety of his bush whare. Colonel Herricks' cumbersome, expensive expedition was recalled from the lake after achieving little, leaving no soul between Balfour and the Hauhaus.

The next winter was a repetition of the first. From April to August he saw but three white men; a fine winter merged into a dismal spring, so that of seventy two days over forty were wet. When he commenced mustering and shearing in October, so independent of help was he, that he wished for assistance only at mustering. Two Hauhau

scouts at Putorino provided the season's main worry, though the presence of Kereopa at Mohaka was not thought particularly significant.

Though as a result of Hamlin's winter expedition an Armed Constabulary outpost was established at the lake, it was with little peace of mind that Balfour returned again to the house to live. This note in his diary breathes the atmosphere of Kakariki. "I remember one day washing out a large tin dish and I looked at the bottom of it and said 'I wish I could play the tambourine on you' but I didn't. I was afraid some Hauhau might perhaps hear me. I never made any unnecessary noise."

In the Urewera the mana of the guerilla Te Kooti was dwindling. Lack of cohesion among the tribes, incessant pursuit and the trying winter campaigns had reduced his effectiveness. Confidence was all but restored in the larger settlements, so that at the end of 1871, Balfour cheerfully remarks on a twofold increase in population at Mohaka. All this seeming security served but to amplify the shock, when his neighbour, Philip Dolbel, burst in on him after dark on the 13th of January, 1872, to tell him Maungaharuru was destroyed. This was the last major sabotage of the Hauhaus and its moral effects were out of all proportion to the scale of the attack.

Balfour gave thanks that he had been spared again, and determined not to tempt Providence further, packed his gear and left. On his way out he noticed signs of recent Maori activity on the station. Notifying his remaining neighbour he passed on, certain he would not see Kakariki until the next shearing. However, May saw his return, and on opening up his house he found a note confirming that his visitors were Hauhaus. Alarmed once more, his imagination pictured them hiding in the scrub drawing a tentative bead whenever he passed within range. He stood still and pondered the position, to return to Mohaka, retreat into the bush or defend the house. The bush had it.

"I went into the bush and with my back against a large Matai stood there at bay until it was dark, then laid myself down by a log and stayed there all night. In the morning when the daylight came the whole flat was covered by a thick mist—a thing I never saw before—so thick I could hardly see twenty feet. Bad luck upon bad luck,—he might be standing within twenty feet, and I not know it. However, the fog cleared in half an hour and I could see the horse. I went and caught him, loaded him with provisions, and started for Mohaka, not caring whether I saw the place again or not."

The Hauhaus later proved to be deserters seeking to give themselves up. They had followed him around for days, fearing to approach an armed man. This was his last fright. Hauhauism was finished. Balfour finally evacuated Kakariki with honours after leasing it to George Bee.

J. H. C.

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