

LECTURE II.

THERE is no point on which a New Zealander's indignation can be more effectually roused than by disputing his title to land. This love for his land is not, as many would suppose, the love of a child for his toys; the title of a New Zealander to his land is connected with many and powerful associations in his mind. He is not, of course, what we call a civilized man; but in dealing with him we deal with a man of powerful intellect, whose mind can think and reason as logically on any subject with which he is acquainted as his more favoured European brethren, and whose love for the homes of his fathers is associated with the deeds of their bravery, with the feats of his boyhood, and the long rest of his ancestors for generations. The New Zealander is not accustomed to law and parchment, or to wills and bequests, in gaining knowledge of or receiving a title to the land of his fathers; nor would he quietly allow any stranger to teach him what lands were his, or what lands were not, what were the names of the boundaries, the creeks, mountains, and rivers in his own district. The thousand names within the limits of his hereditary lands were his daily lesson from childhood. The son of a chief invariably attended his father or grandfather in all his fishing, trapping, or spearing excursions, and it was in these that he learnt by ocular demonstration the exact boundaries of his lands, and repeatedly heard their various names. It was a custom with the Maories in ancient times to eat the rat,—a rat indigenous to this country, and caught in traps set on the top of the mountain ranges. This was a source of part of their daily food, and it was, therefore, with them a point of great importance to occupy every available portion of their lands with these traps, and as most of the tribal boundaries are along the range of the highest hills or mountains, and as these were the common resort of the rat, every New Zealand chief soon naturally became acquainted with the exact boundary of his land claims. He did not, however, limit these claims to the dry land, they extended to the shellfish, and even out to sea where he could fish for cod or shark, or throw his net for mackerel; nor did he go inadvertently to these places, and trust to chance for finding his fishing grounds—he had landmarks, and each fishing ground or landmark had its own peculiar name; these to him were more than household words; his fathers had fished there, and he himself and his tribe alone knew those names and land marks. Where a creek was the dividing boundary of his lands, this was occupied by eel dams. These dams were not of wicker work that might be carried away by a flood; labour and art were bestowed on their construction, so that generations might pass, all of whom in turn might put their eel basket down by the carved and red ochred Totara post which their great grandfathers had placed there. Where the dividing boundaries between two tribes ran along a valley, land marks were put up; these consisted generally of a pile of stones or a hole dug in the ground, to which a name was given significant of the cause which gave rise to such boundary being agreed to; such, for instance, as Te Taupaki, the name given to the dividing boundary on the West Coast between the Ngatiwhatua and Tainui tribes, which means the year of peace or the peaceful way in which a dispute is adjusted. This boundary had its origin from a chief of the Ngatiwhatua, called Poutapuaka, going from Kaipara to take possession of land with his paraoa or bone spear; his intention was to go along the coast as far as the quantity of food which he carried would enable him to travel, and return from the point at which his food was expended; he had succeeded in taking possession of the whole of the sandy line of coast called Rangatira, and on arriving at the top of the hill now known as Te Taupiki, he met the Tainui chief Haowhenua. They both halted, sticking their spears in the ground, and enquiring of each other the object of their being there. They found that they were both on the same errand, and at once agreed that this meeting point should be the boundary dividing the lands of the tribes whereof each was the representative. The Ngatiwhatua chief at once dug a hole with his bone spear, and the boundary so established has remained to this day.

I may state, without fear of contradiction, that there is not one inch of land in the New Zealand Islands which is not claimed by the Maories, and I may also state that there is not a hill, or valley, stream, river, or forest, which has not a name, the index of some point of the Maori history. As has been stated above, the New Zealander knows with as much certainty the exact boundary of his own land as we could do from the distances and bearings given by a surveyor. But these boundaries are liable to be altered at times; for instance, when lands are taken by a conquering tribe, or are given by a chief for assistance rendered to him by another tribe in time of war, or when land given to the female branch of a family again becomes, after a certain time, the property of the male branch of the family. In certain cases, also, lands are ceded to a tribe for a specific purpose, with certain restrictions, and a tenure conditional on certain terms being complied with. In order to be better understood before I speak of the laws relating to these claims, I will give a hasty glance at the manner in which the first Maori emigrants took possession of and portioned out the newly-discovered country.

It is generally admitted among the Natives that the chief Kupe, who came in the canoe Matahourua, was the first who took possession of New Zealand. This he did by naming all the rivers and mountains from Whanganui to Patea. Turi is the chief mentioned as having next arrived in the canoe Aotea, and he gave names to all the rivers and mountains from Patea to Aotea. Next in point of time were the canoes Te