

REPORT ON THE CHATHAM ISLANDS BY MR. HALSE.

SIR,— Native Secretary's Office, Wellington, 22nd May, 1867.

In obedience to the instructions contained in your letter No. 157-1, of the 22nd of March, I have the Honour to report to you, for the information of the Government, that I proceeded to the Chatham Islands in the s.s. 'St. Kilda' on the 23rd, and arrived at Waitangi on the 26th of March. This is a very fair bay, with good anchorage for small vessels off the bluff, in four fathoms of water, and affords good shelter in all winds except North-west. The settlement presents a pleasing appearance from the seaboard, and is not unlike the country at Taranaki, between the landing place and Moturoa. There are five houses on the beach, and one boat shed, a Custom House, a general store, a public house, the doctor's house, and another close by. On the table land behind the store is a redoubt, occupied by a mixed force of Europeans and Natives, about twenty in number. On the right of it are four detached houses, occupied by officers and other persons connected with the guard. On the left of it, snugly situated under a hill, is a long continuous row of houses occupied by the Native prisoners. Anxious to shake off the smoke of the steamer, I strolled about with one of the passengers, and soon discovered that however picturesque this place is from the seaboard, it is much more so when seen from the shore. The land is undulating, and in many parts covered by a low bush of luxuriant growth, with open spaces well adapted for agricultural purposes. The soil is a rich mould of peat, capable of growing all kinds of crops. The potatoes and cabbages are of the finest description. The Waitangi River, running as it does through peat, is necessarily discoloured, and though not used for drinking is well adapted for other purposes. Its mouth is accessible at high water with a small boat, but did not appear capable of admitting larger ones. On the right bank of the river stands the Paremata Pa, or rather open village, in the centre of which is a commodious church, and near to it a small Wesleyan chapel. The fencing in the churchyard has been suffered to get sadly out of repair, and the same remark applies to the fencing round the graves, nearly all of which is lying in a state of decay on the ground. Pomare is buried here. He was a man of high rank and influence, and yet his grave is in no better state than the rest. It bears on a board the inscription—

"KO TE TOHU MO
"WIREMU PITI POMARE,
"NO HANUERE I PAREMO AI, NO 29, 1851,
"O NA TAU O TO TATOU ARIKI O IHU KARAITI."
"IN MEMORY OF
"WILLIAM PITT POMARE,
"WHO DIED ON THE 29TH OF JANUARY, 1851,
"IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Captain Thomas, R.M., resides near the church, in a small wooden house belonging to Tangere, Native assessor. There are spots superior to this for a residence, but were not available when Captain Thomas first arrived. Wiremu Naira, one of the prominent chiefs here, and nephew of the late Pomare, has given a piece of land for a magisterial residence, estimated at about one hundred acres. The land is well situated, commands a fine view of the bay, is covered with the usual bush, and the soil is very good. I could see no better site for such a residence, and am satisfied that the situation will eventually become valuable. I therefore submit that it would be well for the Government to secure the land when Naira has taken his claim through the Court, and obtained a title for it. A rough sketch of Waitangi is attached. On the morning of the 27th the chiefs Tangere and Toenga came to see me. I told them the object of my visit, and the course I proposed to pursue—that of going round the Island in the 'St. Kilda,' and landing at the different settlements. They were of opinion that the Natives would like a meeting in Waitangi, and one discussion, in preference to many at the various villages, and offered to collect the prominent men, if I would agree. Wishing to meet their views, and believing them the best judges in a matter of this kind, I accepted their offer, and suggested that no delay should take place, as I was anxious to see the other side of the Island.

In conversation with several Natives, I was told that there were conflicting opinions on the subject of the ownership of these Islands.

1. The Morioris claimed as the original occupants.
2. The Maoris claimed by right of conquest.
3. The Maoris were divided amongst themselves—some fraternised with the Morioris, others ignored them,—some would consent to a survey, and a sitting of the Native Land Court; whilst others would oppose both, lest their title to the land already leased to Pakehas might prove to be defective.

On the 2nd of April, all the Natives who were expected having assembled at Paremata, I went there accompanied by Mr. Chudleigh, J.P. and Mr. Ford, surveyor, there were ninety-one Natives present, including twenty-two Morioris, and about the same number of women. I told the Natives that I had come to see them, to ascertain how they were getting on, and the terms on which they were living one with another. I told them that several claims to the land here had been received in New Zealand, and that it was my duty to give this meeting every information as to the working of the Native Lands Act which I would read (Act read) and to recommend them to consent to a joint survey of all their claims to be carried on under the direction of the Government. I represented to them the advantages which would accrue from such a course, by the obviating of any future dispute, and by at once obtaining a correct survey of the whole Island. I told them that if they agreed to this proposal the Government would see that the survey was correctly carried on, and that the charges were