

the Urewera country. If so, the waylaying of parties travelling to Taupo *via* Matata would just suit the tastes of both leader and followers.

Auckland, 8th October, 1869.

J. H. H. ST. JOHN, Lieut.-Colonel, N.Z.M.,
Inspector, A.C.

No. 27.

COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor Sir G. F. BOWEN, G.C.M.G., to the
Right Hon. Earl GRANVILLE, K.G.

(No. 148).
MY LORD,—

Government House, Auckland,
New Zealand, 17th November, 1869.

I have the honor to enclose herewith, for your Lordship's information, a copy of the final judgment of the Native Lands Court, recently delivered at Wellington, in the case of the Rangitikei-Manawatu land claims, which (as will be remembered at the Colonial Office) have caused much angry discussion during several years past in the southern part of this Island, and have sometimes threatened to lead to open warfare. *Vide Appendix,*
1870, A. No. 25.

2. About seven years ago, the fertile block of land lying between the Rangitikei and Manawatu Rivers, on the West Coast of the Province of Wellington, and containing nearly a quarter of a million of acres, was purchased for the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds sterling (£25,000), from the Ngatiapa Tribe, by Dr. Featherston, the Superintendent of the Province, acting on behalf of the Crown. The scene presented at the payment of this money was witnessed by Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, and is very graphically described in his recently published book

"Greater Britain." The sale was, however, objected to by certain members of the Ngatiraukawa Tribe, who grounded their title chiefly on conquest, alleging that the land in question was, about fifty years ago, conquered from the Ngatiapas, the original possessors, by the Ngatitooa Tribe, under their celebrated chief Te Rauperaha, who subsequently granted much of it to his allies, the Ngatiraukawas. Considering the very serious consequences which have followed the attempt, made in 1860, to carry out, in spite of the protest of a dissentient minority of the Native claimants, the provisions of the sale of the small block of land (only eight hundred (800) acres in all) on the River Waitara, near Taranaki, the Colonial Government wisely abstained from pushing matters to an extremity in this new case. Unfortunately, however (as it now seems to be generally agreed), the Manawatu-Rangitikei claims were, in the first instance, excepted from the jurisdiction of the Natives Lands Court, instituted for the purpose of investigating and determining Maori titles, and composed of English Judges with Native Assessors. This error was, however, afterwards repaired by an Act of the New Zealand Legislature; and the petitions and protests of the conflicting parties, presented to me soon after my arrival in this Colony in 1868, were referred, in due course of law, to the Native Lands Court, sitting at Wellington under the presidency of the Chief Judge, the Honorable F. D. Fenton. The trial occupied no less than forty-five (45) days, during which eighty-four (84) Maori witnesses were examined. The Attorney-General appeared for the Crown, and Mr. Travers (one of the leading Counsel at the New Zealand Bar) for the dissentients. The able and experienced Chief Judge has informed me "that the case was very well got up; that the assiduity and intelligence of Counsel on both sides were very remarkable; that the evidence was conclusive; and that there remained no doubt in the mind of any of the members of the Court as to the judgment."

3. Mr. Maning, the Judge who delivered the final decision, is the well-known author of "Old New Zealand," a book which is generally held by all competent critics to contain a very graphic and correct picture of the customs and character of the Maoris in the times preceding British colonization. The judgment delivered by him will in itself be found an interesting page of Maori history. The evidence taken was chiefly respecting the inter-tribal wars of the last generation, and the territorial rights acquired and lost by the hostile clans, according to Maori usage, by victory and defeat. One of the principal witnesses on the part of the Crown was Tamihana Te Rauperaha, the only son of the conquering chief, and the last survivor of his name and race.