

1875.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT OF COMMISSIONER OF NATIVE RESERVES.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

PROVINCE OF AUCKLAND.

Wellington, 30th June, 1875.

Waiuku Reserves.

ON the confiscation, in 1865, of the West Waiuku block, the loyal Natives there resident were promised that their villages, cultivations, and burial-places should be returned to them, surveyed and under Crown grant. The block taken consisted of 47,030 acres, of which, in fulfilment of the promise, 6,614 acres 3 roods and 35 perches were subsequently granted to them in thirty-six Crown grants. An Act, entitled "The Friendly Natives' Contracts Confirmation Act, 1866," was passed to legalize the arrangement. The grants were generally made out to six or seven of the chiefs, in trust for their tribes. Some of the grants conveyed the land absolutely, whilst others had varying restrictions on the power to sell, mortgage, and let. It soon, however, appeared that the original rights and holdings had been of a much more complex nature than was estimated. The trusts specified in the grants were in some cases inappropriate, and in others the Natives interested beneficially would not recognize the Maori trustees as the fitting persons to have control over their lands. Further, the trustees in several instances misapprehended their position, assumed the rights of absolute owners, and misused their trust. It was asserted by the inferior people that the chiefs let the grazing on the tribal estate, and gave no account of the rents. They sold to the neighbouring settlers the valuable Puriri timber that was necessary for fencing the native cultivations, and yielded no account of the proceeds. Emissaries from the King country from time to time fostered the discontent that resulted from these irregularities.

Various and earnest attempts were made to remedy these evils, but without success. At one time the trustees would not, from jealousy, agree to a re-arrangement; at another, having found that they could not profitably manage the properties, they consented to hand them over to European trustees, but quarrelled over the scheme of partition of the prospective rents. They would consent to get rid of the responsibility of the trusts, but not to surrender the undue advantages which their hold of the land gave them.

This bad state of things reacted on the condition of the people generally; the young men would not, with any heart, clear or cultivate land that was not secured at least to the head of the family, nor defined from that of the tribe by an intelligible boundary: they grew listless, idle, and intemperate.

I received, Sir, your instructions, in February last, to endeavour to arrange a plan by which the lands so involved might be allocated, and secured to the proper owners, and the dissatisfaction terminated. The way was cleared for my work by your having, while at the Waikato, succeeded in inducing the chiefs Aihepene Kaihau (who had married the King's sister) and Hori Tauroa to leave the King country and return to their people at Waiuku.

I met the chiefs and people at Waiuku on the 10th of March and three following days, and, after a careful inquiry into their respective claims and rights, induced them to consent, unani- mously, to a plan of allocation which appeared equitable and capable of being carried into effect. They had, from the first, been promised a survey of their several pieces, but a survey was useless whilst the chiefs monopolized the choicest land and the best timber. I, however, aided by Mr. Marshall and Mr. King, induced the chiefs to abandon their unreasonable claims, and agree to surrender their trusts, upon a scheme (carefully drawn out by Mr. Marshall) that specified the exact area to be given to each member of the tribe, chief or slave, adult or infant, and the locality, generally, where it should be laid out. Where individuals were alone, they were by this scheme to have separate grants; where a family desired to remain together, the aggregate area for its several members could be surveyed in one piece. Crown grants were to follow, with varying