

1876.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT ON THE PETITION OF NGAITAHU.

BY F. D. FENTON, ESQUIRE, CHIEF JUDGE, NATIVE LANDS COURT.

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

No. 1.

To the Speakers and Honorable Members of the Houses of Parliament of the Colony of New Zealand, assembled in Wellington.

A PETITION FROM THE NATIVES ASSEMBLED AT KAIAPOI (MIDDLE ISLAND), ON THE 25TH MARCH, 1874, AND OTHERS,—

Friends,—Salutations! May God extend his mercies to you. We are here spreading before you the causes of that thorough discontent agitating the Natives of the Middle Island.

1. The Land Purchase Transactions of Wakefield in 1844.—We insisted that a fair return be made us for our land. Amongst the returns granted by Wakefield, he said, “You shall also receive, you Natives, returned to you, one acre out of every ten acres; out of all the towns springing up on the land you are ceding to me, one section out of every ten sections, one block out of every ten blocks.” All the land that was ceded to Wakefield, and his friends Kemp and Mantell, exceeds twenty millions of acres.

2. The Land Purchase Transactions of Kemp in 1848.—When Kemp landed at Akaroa, and demanded the cession of the land from Kaiapoi to Otago, the Natives held out for a fair return for that vast extent of territory. When Kemp got tired of the delay, he said, “If you do not consent to this £2,000, I shall hand over the money to Ngatitōa (Rauparaha’s tribe); and if you still delay to consent, then soldiers will be sent to clear the land for the pakehas.”

3. Intimidated by this threat, the Native chiefs entered with Kemp to define the boundaries—namely, the seaboard, breadth limited by a chain of hills, ceded to Kemp; the inland to remain ours. This was the then settlement of boundaries. Recently, when we got a copy of the deed drawn out by Kemp of that transaction, we find that what he put down in that paper differed from what we said above; our impression was that when the land is surveyed our reserve will be handed to us.

4. The promises made by the Hon. Mr. Mantell to Matiaha Tiramorehu, our chief.—After Kemp, Mr. Mantell came. He said to Matiaha, “I shall include the inland also in the purchase money agreed by Kemp” (that large tract not ceded to Kemp). Matiaha put the question to Mantell, “What are we to get for this vast tract that it may be yours?” Mantell answered, “I shall ask the Governor to pay you Natives for it. I shall ask Her Majesty’s Minister also. In future, you will receive the large out-standing balance.”

We still hold in our hands Mantell’s letter (*panui*) to Matiaha Tiramorehu, saying—“London, 8th August, 1856. Listen: I am continuously exerting myself to obtain Her Majesty’s Chief Minister’s consent to rectify my say to you formerly, when you consented to cede your land to me.” After this the letter passes to speak about schools and hospitals; but when were schools and hospitals ever made an equivalent for land purchases? It is coin that Mantell promised to Matiaha as the out-standing balance for us, that he exerted himself about in London, but exerted himself fruitlessly about.

It is not our wish to enlarge upon all the promises which were made to us by the Land Purchase Commissioners, such as—The Governor will apportion you land for your children, besides your abodes and your cultivations; your eel-pas shall remain yours also; the large rivers shall remain yours also; your fishing-ground on the coast shall remain yours also, &c., &c. Little of all this has been fulfilled to us by the Government—much of it is wholly forgotten. If your mind is at all doubtful about the reasons which are painfully agitating our breasts, there are still twelve of the old land-sellers alive, ready each of them to confirm what came under his thorough knowledge—now extended in this our petition.