

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

MONDAY, 9TH JULY, 1888.

JOHN SHORE, having been sworn, gave evidence as follows:—

I was formerly a brickmaker. I came to the colony in 1854, and up to 1859 I resided in New Plymouth. About November, 1859, I was working on a road contract at Parininihi, near the White Cliffs, about thirteen miles from Mokau Heads, and had occasion to go to the Mokau Heads to get supplies. It was then that I became acquainted with the Natives there. I noticed that there was good clay for brickmaking, and shortly afterwards, having terminated my contract, and having nothing else in view, I went to Mokau to arrange with the Natives to work the clay and establish a brickyard on the Mokau River. Two of the principal Natives, Tati and Takirau, went up with me to New Plymouth to get an agreement drawn up by the Rev. Mr. Whitely, and there was an agreement drawn up under which I worked for a time and made bricks. I made from twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand, some of which I brought up to New Plymouth.

In 1860 the war broke out, and the Natives would no longer work the schooner to New Plymouth, so that I had to give up the brickmaking. I remained at Mokau Heads for a few months, until the beginning of 1862, when I told the Natives I would have to go back to New Plymouth, as there was nothing to be done there. I did return to New Plymouth, and remained there for some time.

About 1874 I took a hotel at the place now known as Lepperton. About May, 1875, Mr. Joshua Jones and another man named McMillan were staying at my hotel for the night. While they were there I received a letter from Wetere, saying that the Natives wished me to come down to Mokau to have a talk about some land they wished me to lease. Jones got to know of this, and began to question me about it, and, having found out that I was going to see the Natives, he wished to go with me. Finally it was arranged that Jones and McMillan should go with me, and we went to Mokau accordingly, where we were met by Wetere and other Natives.

On the day we arrived I was in a tent which the Maoris had put up for me, and overheard a conversation between Jones and Wetere. Wetere could speak and understand English pretty well. Jones had told me that he had only been two or three months in the country. I heard Jones ask Wetere what land he was going to let me have. Wetere said he did not know yet. Jones said what was the good of letting me have land at all because I had got no money. Wetere said, "Have you got plenty?" Jones said, "Yes; about £16,000." Wetere said, "Has your mate got any?" Jones said, "Yes, about £8,000." Wetere asked Jones how much I had got. Jones said that I had got nothing. This conversation took place close to the tent. I heard it distinctly. We remained at Mokau two days. I never spoke to Jones about this conversation I had overheard. There was a good deal of talk with the Maoris, but nothing settled. We all returned together to Lepperton.

Perhaps about two months after that Epiha and Takirau came to my place at Lepperton. Jones, I believe, was at the time in New Plymouth. The Natives said they had come to finish the arrangement about the land, as to where the boundary should be. At that time I could speak Maori pretty well, but my son was able to speak it better, and most of the conversation was carried on through him. My son has since been drowned in the Mokau River. The Natives remained perhaps nearly a week, and I sent word to Jones in New Plymouth that the Natives were at my place. Both he and McMillan came out to Lepperton; the result was that we all went together to New Plymouth and had an agreement drawn up, of which the document I now produce is a copy. [Exhibit No. 26]. The copy produced is in Mr. Stockman's handwriting. It was drawn up by Mr. G. Hammerton. It was for some time in my possession. It was signed by Epiha and Takirau. No other Natives signed it. That was the first agreement made about the lease of land at Mokau on my account.

Mr. Jones subsequently got possession of the original agreement, and I have never since seen it, except once on the table in Mr. Standish's office. I gave it to Jones, as he represented that he would be able to get some influence that would assist us. I remained at Lepperton for about a year after the agreement was signed, during which time the Natives more than once came to ask me to go to live at Mokau. I was keeping a store at Lepperton in connection with the public-house, and they wanted me to keep a store at Mokau.

About the beginning of 1876 I gave up my business at Lepperton, and removed with my family to Mokau, and put up a house on ground which was given me by the Natives for the purpose. I opened a store and carried on dealings with the Natives, buying cattle and pigs from them. During that time Jones visited me at Mokau frequently. Mr. McMillan came sometimes, and subsequently came to live at Mokau, and the Natives put up a whare for him near my house. Owing to some disagreement between Jones and McMillan about money matters, McMillan left Mokau. I had become aware of the existence of coal and lime on the banks of the Mokau River. I knew that there was coal there before Jones had anything to do with the matter, and mentioned it to him.

About three or four years after I went to live at Mokau. I went up to Auckland to see Messrs. Holmes, of the North Shore, about getting a steamer for the Mokau. I went by agreement with