

In reply to the allegations contained in the petition, I beg to offer the following remarks:—

1. "That we are and have been from time immemorial the owners of the Wairarapa Lakes and the surrounding lands." There is no question about the right of the Natives to the lakes, but their ownership of the surrounding lands since the sales of 1853 is a moot point.

2. "That the following sales of the adjoining land to Her Majesty's Government took place: (a) The Turakirae Block, (b) the Turanganui Block, (c) the Tauherenikau Block, (d) the Kahutara Block."

#### THE TURAKIRAE BLOCK.

This block was purchased on the 1st September, 1853, for £2,000, and 5 per cent. was secured to the vendors on the resale of the land to the Europeans, after deducting moneys and other expenses connected with laying off the said land.

The money accruing from this source was to be expended for schools, hospitals, and for medical attendance, and also for the payment of annuities to certain of the chiefs. This stipulation was inserted in the deed as an inducement to the Natives to consent to alienate their land to the Government, which at that time they were very averse to.

The boundaries of the land ceded commenced at Turakirae (the western point of Palliser Bay) and from there it followed the coast to the mouth of the Orongorongo River; thence up that river to its source; and from thence to the Toko-a-houmea, beyond the Summit Railway-station; thence into the Otauirā Stream, and on to the Taukete, and from there down the Otauirā Stream to its junction with the Otauirā Lake; thence by the margin of the lake to Kiriwai, on the coast; and thence along the coast to Turakirae, the starting-point.

The Natives contend that the highest flood-line formed the eastern boundary of this purchase, and not the margin of the lake, as described in the deed; but this boundary, although it is rather vaguely described in the deed, is further alluded to in Mr. Commissioner McLean's letter to the Civil Secretary, under date the 2nd September, 1853, reporting on the aforesaid purchase, in which he describes the boundaries of the block as follows: "Bounded on the north-east side by the *Wairarapa River and Lake*, and on the south-west by the lands acquired from the Ngatiawa Tribes of Wellington."

The contention that the flood-line along the lake was the north-east boundary of the Turakirae Block is not tenable, as, independent of the boundaries described in the deed and Mr. Commissioner McLean's letter, the stipulation contained in the deed relative to the right to fish for eels in such places as are or may not be drained by the Europeans is evidence that the Natives did not retain the low-lying lands adjacent to the lake, otherwise there would have been no need to make a condition about eel-fishing, as all the principal places suitable for this purpose were situated on the low-lying ground they now claim.

The following reservations were made for the Natives, viz.: (1) At the Patunga-a-matangi, (2) at the Waiorongomai Bush, (3) at Oahanga, (4) at Hinakitaka for the Ngatitama residing there, (5) the right of eel-fishing in such places as are or may not be drained by the Europeans.

The first three reserves were not defined on the ground for the following reasons: No. 1 was sold to the Government on the 14th of December, 1853; No. 2 on the 22nd of December, 1853; and No. 3 on the 23rd of December, 1853. No. 4 was the only one retained. In this case 200 acres have been set apart in satisfaction of it, at a place called Te Mukamuka.

A claim for compensation was preferred during the inquiry at Greytown by certain Natives claiming to be owners of the Turakirae Block, on the plea that the aforesaid reserves were set apart according to the terms of the deed for the benefit of the whole of the persons interested in the aforesaid block; but, be that as it may, it was well known to the parties who are now preferring this claim that these lands had been sold to the Government by members of the Native community, who were at that time considered to have had the authority to do so, without any objection being raised against it.

Attention was drawn to the sale of the Patunga-a-Matangi reserve in 1881, at an inquiry held before Major Heaphy, and the sale of the Waiorongomai Reserve was publicly alluded to in the Native Land Court, on the application of Paratene Matenga coming before it. The applicant admitted in evidence, on the 29th April last, that he was aware that the reserve had been sold at the time he made the application. Both Hemi te Miha and Piripi te Maari also testified that they were aware of the sale of some of these reserves.

The sale of the reserve at Owhanga, near Featherston, appears to have been the deliberate act of Mauihera Rangitakaiwaho, and other leading men of his party, and two deeds affecting the land were executed on the same date by the vendors—one for the Owhanga Block, which includes the reserve, and one for the reserve, which includes the Owhanga Block.

All these sales took place in 1853. The parties, therefore, who are now preferring a claim to the land comprised therein have slept upon their supposed rights for thirty-eight years.

#### THE TURANGANUI BLOCK.

This block was purchased on the 5th September, 1853, for £1,100, and 5 per cent. was secured to the vendors on the resale of the land to the Europeans, on the same conditions as are contained in the deed of the Turakirae Block. The original deed of purchase of this block has been mislaid for some time past. The boundaries of the land ceded, according to a receipt for the last instalment of the purchase-money paid to the Natives on the 13th September, 1855, commence at the mouth of the Hurupi; thence following that stream, and from there on to the summit of the Aorangi Range; thence along that range to a point opposite a hill called Pukehināu; thence to Pukehināu; and thence to the Mangaroa Stream, and down that stream to its junction with the Paharakeke Stream; thence along that stream to the Ruamahanga River, and down that river to the lake; thence along the margin of the lake to the sea; thence by the sea-coast to Te Hurupi, the starting-point.