

179. Is it not a fact that they cannot have liquor at any of their *maraes*, or any of them?—In some particular districts.

*The Chairman*: I understood Mr. Ngata to say that it was not admitted to any of their *maraes*.

180. *Mr. Lawry*.] Are you aware what Mr. Ngata's opinions are on this question?—I do not know. I judge from his speeches that he takes the same side of the question as I do myself.

181. Would you attach any value to his opinions?—Yes.

182. He is a gentleman of high erudition?—Yes.

183. Up beyond Te Awamutu he virtually denounced the people who are giving the Natives the right to vote. You are aware that Mr. Ngata spoke very strongly against the liquor in the King-country?—Yes.

184. You attach a considerable importance to his opinion: was he in the King-country before?—Yes, I think he was.

185. You attach a great deal of importance to Mr. Ngata's opinions on the question?—I do not know that I have expressed that. I am not capable of valuing them from personal knowledge.

Rev. F. W. ISITT examined.

*Mr. Isitt*: My knowledge of the King-country dates only from 1896. In September, 1896, I accompanied the Rev. Mr. Gittos to Otorohanga and Te Kuiti, under these circumstances: Wahanui had written to him giving the motives which had induced him to ask for a license after so long opposing it, and he begged Mr. Gittos to come and see him and help him undo the mischief he had done. Mr. Gittos offered me an opportunity to accompany him, and I went. We met Wahanui, Hare Wanonga, Patupatukepa, Hami Kingi, and other Natives. I do not understand Maori. The whole conversation was in Maori, but Mr. Gittos interpreted it as we went along. Wahanui understood more English than he could speak. Hare Wanonga and Patupatukepa each spoke a little English, and Hami Kingi spoke it perfectly. Wahanui listened to Mr. Gittos, and occasionally gave grunts of satisfaction. He told the whole story of the King-country, and went back to the petition of 1883, which, he said, contained signatures of 1,400 Natives, and asked that liquor should not be allowed to enter the King-country when it was opened by Europeans. He spoke of his own opposition to it, and said he had changed his position because of having lent money upon an accommodation-house at Otorohanga, and having been told that he would lose his money unless the house were licensed, but that if it were licensed he would be paid immediately. He expressed very great regret that he had ever deviated from his position, and urged Mr. Gittos to help him undo the mischief he had thus done. The conversation lasted for two hours, and we stayed there for several days, and asked particulars as to the sly-grog selling, &c., from every one whom we could interview, European and Maori. I have been chiefly responsible for the statements made by the Prohibitionists concerning the King-country, and my knowledge was obtained from that visit, from the evidence of many witnesses before the Police Commissions of 1898, at which I led evidence on behalf of the New Zealand Alliance, and from continuous correspondence with residents in the district. At the time of our visit Mr. Gittos addressed public meetings in Otorohanga and Te Kuiti, at which he spoke plainly as to the condition of things resulting from liquor. He made one statement which greatly impressed and shocked me inexpressibly. At each place he said deliberately, both in Maori and in English, that those present knew that there was scarcely a young Maori girl in the district who had not lost her innocence, or a married Maori woman who had not been unspeakably degraded as the result of drink. Though hostile interjections had been repeatedly made during the progress of his addresses, this statement, which evidently made a deep impression, was received in absolute silence. No European or Maori challenged the statement, and I understood that they accepted it as fact. Then, in 1893, when I was asked to conduct the inquiry before the Police Commission in Auckland on behalf of the New Zealand Alliance, I examined probably twenty-five or thirty witnesses, most of whose evidence bore more or less on the King-country. All the policemen available who were or had previously been in the King-country were examined, as well as others who had served in Maori districts where there were licenses, and Messrs. Ellis, Macdonnell, and Wilkinson, Justices of the Peace, all conversant with the King-country. Some of the constables were from the Waikato and other places. The whole evidence went to show that the measure of failure which had existed in the King-country had not been a failure of prohibition, but a grievous failure to prohibit. From the first, when the no-license Proclamation was made, nothing further was compassed than the prohibition of the licensed retail sale within the district. Any Auckland brewer or spirit merchant could at any time have sent liquor in any quantity to residents within the King-country, provided only that the quantity was not less than 2 gallons of any one kind. Any Native could import beer by the hogshead or spirits by the case, the only restriction being that he must not bring himself under the vague and doubtful clause which rendered him liable to the confiscation of his liquor if he gave ground for reasonable suspicion that he used it for illicit sales. When land adjacent to the King-country was thrown open, and publichouses crept to the border of the King-country at Te Awamutu, Kihikihi, and Alexandra, a publican could legally sell a half-pint or a hogshead, a bottle or a case, for a purchaser resident in the King-country to carry it across the border. There was no stipulation made, as in Clutha, that the package containing liquor should bear an outside label stating the fact, and so make it easier for the police to trace it. A liquor merchant or brewer could send canvassers through the district, and appoint agents residing there to receive orders. Neither of these actions would be legal within the Clutha. While wishing to avoid any expression that would sound offensive, I can only say of this defective legislation that it was wilfully persisted in by the Government. Constable Stanyer and others, when giving evidence before the Police Commission, replied to questions on this point by Mr. Poynton, who was evidently impressed with the defects in the legislation. They said that if clause 33 of the Act