

No. 26.

EXTRACTS FROM PETITION OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF NEW PLYMOUTH TO THE HON.
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DATED MAY 19, 1858:

The Native feud, which has for the last four years been raging in Taranaki, originated in the attempt of Rawiri Waiaua, a native assessor and the principal chief of his tribe, to sell a piece of land to the Government, which had been a cause of quarrel between himself and one of his relatives. Katatore, an inferior chief of the same tribe and a minor claimant, was unwilling that the land should be sold, and on Rawiri proceeding to mark out the boundary for the Government he and several of his followers were shot down by Katatore and his adherents. It was the first blood that had been shed among the Natives since the arrival of the settlers. The local authorities were paralysed, for they were too feeble to apprehend the murderers; but the surviving relatives and friends of Rawiri assembled in arms, and would have proceeded to immediate hostilities had they not been dissuaded from taking such a step by the Resident Wesleyan Missionary, who assured them that British law would be enforced. Unhappily at this crisis His Excellency Colonel Wynyard, the officer administering the Government of the Colony, was daily awaiting the arrival of a permanent Governor. The first General Assembly under the Constitution Act was in session, and the whole machinery of Government was in a state of transition. The Government of the day decided not to act, and despatched Mr. Commissioner McLean to inform the Natives, that the murder was the result of a Native quarrel in which the Government could not interfere. The friends of Rawiri, burning for revenge and finding that the law was not to be enforced, expressed great indignation, because the interval which had elapsed had enabled Katatore to secure himself in a strong pa, and to assemble around him a number of men hostile to the sale of land. The friendly Natives justly urged that they were friendly to the settlers, that they had conformed to our law in not taking revenge for their slain relatives, and that now they must either submit to the dictation of Katatore, or contest with him, unassisted by the Government, a cause in which the colonists and themselves were equally concerned. They urged, moreover, that such had been their reliance on the justice and power of the Government, that they had ceased to reckon on their own strength, they had allowed their guns to rust, and possessed but a scanty store of powder and ball, while their opponents who had always been hostile to British occupation, were well armed and munitioned, and their ultimate and least demand was, that they should be supplied with the means of opposing their enemies.

While your Memorialists admit that the critical position of the Settlement in 1854 demanded the utmost circumspection on the part of the Government, they are nevertheless of opinion that the enforcement of the law against Katatore and his followers would have been as wise and prudent as it would have been a just act.

The history of the past four years has shewn forcibly the lamentable results of a contrary policy. Relieved from all dread of the interference of Government, the wild passions of the Natives at once found vent. Three months after the murder of Rawiri, some of the relatives of Ihaia te Kiri Kumara executed summary justice on a Ngatiruanui native who had been guilty of adultery with Ihaia's wife, and this act was speedily followed by the invasion of Ihaia's land by 300 men of that tribe. Ihaia's pa was stormed and taken after a stout resistance, and Ihaia and his surviving followers were only saved by a friendly diversion effected by the adherents of Rawiri. The Ngatiruanui, after their victory, visited Katatore, and remained in the vicinity of his pa for some days, but, happily for the peace of the settlement, they decided on returning to their homes by the way they had come, instead of marching through the town as they had at one time contemplated. In the meantime, the feud between the friendly Natives and Katatore hourly gathered strength. Arama Karaka, the brother of Rawiri, arrived from the South, and assembled in the Ninia pa all the Natives in the vicinity who advocated the sale of land, while Katatore was joined by Wiremu Kingi, and subsequently by the Ngatiruanui. It was at this time that the danger of the Settlement became imminent, for the mass of the settlers were known to sympathise with the friendly Natives besieged in the Ninia pa, and many of them were supplying the besieged with munitions of war. It was also at this time that, at the pressing instance of the settlers and the Provincial Government, a garrison was first stationed in Taranaki. By the arrival of the Ngatiruanui the friendly Natives besieged in the Ninia were reduced to severe straits, and Arama Karaka besought the aid of Ihaia, which was given on the condition that the latter should receive the land at Ikamoana as the reward of his services. Shortly after a battle took place between the Ngatiruanui on the one side, and the Ninia Natives and Ihaia on the other, which terminated in the defeat and retirement of the former.

After the departure of the Ngatiruanui, the belligerents, exhausted by a long continuance of hostilities, were anxious to terminate the feud, and in a short time peace was apparently established, but the elements of discord still existed to burst forth again with renewed vigour. Ihaia held the land at Ikamoana (the price of his assistance to the Ninia people), but his claim was not assented to by Katatore: for the land in question was the common property of the tribe, and Katatore, himself a claimant, was at war with the majority when the cession was made. After the establishment of this hollow peace, Katatore, who for many years had maintained his influence by opposing the sale of land, suddenly changed his policy and became a most enthusiastic advocate on the other side. He at once took the foremost place in the consideration of the Government, while the men who had only remained consistent were thrust aside for the new man, and the negotiations for the purchase of land which ensued immediately on the establishment of peace, depended mainly on the influence of Katatore. Ihaia still held the land at Ikamoana. His position had not been considered in the