

Mr. McLean was then introduced by the Serjeant-at-Arms.
The Witness proceeded to make the following general statement.

STATEMENT.

With reference to the question I have been called here to explain—the purchase of the block of land at Waitara—I have to state that, several years previous to the purchase, I travelled over the district in company with some Natives, King's own brother being one of the party, and they pointed out to me the respective claims of the different *hapus* or subdivisions of the Waitara tribes. This was in the year 1847, when the Natives were willing to dispose of their interest in the land at Waitara. The Government did not at that time go on with the purchase; Wm. King was expected to come back from Kapiti. His own claims and those of his immediate followers were represented by the best possible evidence (that of his own brother) to be almost exclusively on the north bank of the Waitara River. It was stated to me by old men well acquainted with the circumstances (that speaking as Natives do of these matters, when referring to the several generations of owners), that King's own ancestors were but comparatively recent occupants even there. In 1848 Wm. King and his party returned to Waitara. It was their intention to occupy the north bank of the Waitara. But in consequence of some difference which one of his brothers had with a Native chief at the south—Ropoama—he designed to possess himself of a portion of the land at Waitara belonging to Ropoama. About three years before Teira's block was offered to the Government, Wm. King, who was permitted to reside on part of it, had been extending his encroachments so far that one of the actual or rightful owners of the soil becoming alarmed, determined to dispose of his land altogether by sale to the Government. He was not able to carry out his resolution at that time, being laid up with illness. He made up his mind, however, that he would at the first favourable opportunity dispose of his right to the Government. He afterwards attended a meeting at which about 80 persons were present—amongst them Wm. King, who was well aware of his intention, and he there stated distinctly that he had determined to sell his land. Wm. King objected, and counter meetings were held. The resolution of this Native was not to be changed. Conscious of his right he attended every public meeting which was called to discuss the question. He went to one which was held 15 miles north of Waitara, and there insisted on his right to dispose of his own property. As far as I can learn from the reports I have received of this meeting, no one stood forward to oppose this man's claim with the exception of King himself. Many endeavoured to persuade him not to alienate his land, but no one disputed his right to do so. Teira is the name of the Native to whom I have been referring. Several of his friends and relatives in remote parts of the country had been in constant correspondence with him on the subject previously to the offer of the land to the Government. The majority agreed to the sale—some few opposed it. He made the offer of his land to the Governor in the most public and open manner, having first given full notice to all the opponents of the sale of his intention to dispose of the land. At the meeting held on that occasion Teira asserted his right to the land, and no one seemed able to deny it. He afterwards offered it to the Governor, giving the usual warning:—"My friends, all of you know that I am about to part with this land. There is a great portion of the territory which we own conjointly which I shall not interfere with. That I have excluded." He then, in the presence of the whole assembly, proceeded to name the boundaries of the offered block, and continued—This, which is the property of these two tribes, the Ngatituaho and the Ngatihinga, I here make over to the Governor. The Waikato title to Taranaki was universally admitted by the natives at the time of the conquest, many acts of ownership over the soil had been exercised by them. The land was divided among the conquering chiefs, the usual custom of putting up flags, and posts to mark the boundaries of the portions claimed by each chief had been gone through. Any occupation of the land by the Ngatiawa at that period was entirely out of the question, but those natives who were released from slavery from time to time were permitted by Waikato to occupy, but those who had fled to the South were not allowed to return, and they were distinctly warned that if a return were attempted it would be the cause for fresh war against Ngatiawa. The Waikato right was thus established as a right of conquest, and was fully admitted by the Ngatiawa themselves. Who, on each occasion when they sold a portion of land at Taranaki sent a part of the payment to Waikato as an acknowledgment of conquest or of the right of *Mana* possessed by the Waikato chiefs as their conquerors. In this view of the question it is quite evident that the Ngatiawa title had been superseded by the right of the conquerors. And though, in course of time, the parties who fled to the shores of Kapiti, and those who were taken captive were gradually permitted by Waikato to return, it was generally on the understanding that they were to recognize the superior rights of the Waikatoes over the territory. The natives who first returned were from the Ngatimaniapoto country. They were permitted to return and did so, with this injunction from the Waikato chiefs, who released them, to go and occupy the land but to take care and send them some of the fruits of it, which was accordingly done. In several cases, returned slaves were afterwards invested with a right to the soil. About this period the New Zealand Company was making its purchases of land for carrying out its scheme of colonization. The Taranaki question thus became mixed up with the various claims adduced by the natives who had been driven off it. The agents of the Company who came out to establish settlements in New Zealand first attempted to purchase from the fugitives, who fled to the South and who were glad of an opportunity to dispose of land to which their title was at best but precarious, and accordingly they readily took such compensation as was agreed upon between themselves and the New Zealand Company's Agents for the surrender of all their rights. I think it necessary to state here that although for the most part these purchases were not fully comprehended by the Natives at the time, yet that William King, whose name is now so frequently