

## No. 25.

## WELLINGTON PROVINCE.

*Wereta's Pahua Block.*

This block is estimated to contain 110,000 acres of land and comprises Hale's run on the Coast, part of Cameron's run, A. Sutherland's run, extending inland to the Wainuioru river, including Smith's run.

The chief Wereta when he offered this block for sale asked a sum of £3,500 for it; I objected to this sum as being too high, and proposed that the price should be determined after the extent of the block was ascertained by survey and the external boundaries and reserves for the Natives marked off. A first instalment of £700 was paid to the Natives in October 1853; 157 claimants signed the Deed of Sale. In December, 1854, £100 was also paid, and subsequently in January 1855, at the urgent request of the Natives, I paid a further sum of £450, on the understanding that the transaction should be final without reference to survey, the reserves for Te Wereta having been in the mean time defined.

For several years the Natives offered no objections to these arrangements, and it was not until a change had taken place in their sentiments occasioned by the king movement that a large portion of the claimants began to repudiate Wereta's sale.

The old chief who would not ally himself to the king party was constantly assailed by them; until he was at length impelled for the sake of the peace and safety of the settlers to join with them in an endeavour to obtain a further payment.

The Natives were much encouraged in this opposition in consequence of one of their chiefs, Hoera, having been offended by a settler (Mr. Smith) who resides on a portion of the block.

It appears that this chief, who had been travelling all day, was very much exhausted; he wanted food and requested some from the European, who, instead of giving him any, ordered him off the place; the chief related this circumstance to the first tribe he visited, the Ngaitahu at Hurunuiorangi, also claimants to the land in question, when it was resolved that the European should be driven off, as they all had experienced similar treatment when they visited his place.

This feeling has been gaining ground to such an extent, that the Natives now desire to resume about 30,000 acres of the block, including all that portion of it occupied by Smith, and offer to give up the residue, 80,000 acres, for the money received by them unless they obtain the full amount demanded by Wereta in the first instance of £3,500; less what has been already paid to them, amounting to £1,250.

I informed the Natives at several meetings held at Greytown, that land once alienated, could not again be resumed by them, that the Deeds of Cession containing their own full concurrence in the sale, had been forwarded to the Governor, and that any material deviation from the terms of those Deeds must be referred to His Excellency, as I had no power to alter arrangements once concluded without the Governor's sanction.

The Natives after full deliberation, openly allowed, that they had no fault to find with the manner in which the negotiations were conducted on the part of the Government, that the blame rested with their own chiefs, whose acts in terminating the payment for the block, they would not ratify, excepting to such portions as they, the chiefs, had the exclusive right to alienate.

The acts of the chiefs, were, at the time when the payment was concluded, considered fully binding upon all parties interested in the land, and they generally recognise Wereta's power to conclude this sale.

The changes, however, that have taken place, have greatly diminished this influence, and attempts are constantly made to upset the acts of the chiefs by the more turbulent and discontented members of their own and other tribes who are countenanced in any opposition to the Government by the numerous delegates that visit them from disaffected districts.

To assert their independence of Te Wereta, the Ngatikoura, Ngatihikawera, Ngatiparera, and Ngaitahu who have no chiefs among them of influence, and who formerly recognised Te Wereta's power, declared that they would repossess themselves of their own portion of the block, and expel Messrs. Smith and Sutherland.

The Natives afterwards became more moderate, but not less decided, in their tone, and agreed among themselves, that each hapu should dispose separately of their interest in the block.

Considering the large extent of the block, and that its cost even at the amount demanded, would not exceed 8d. per acre, I deemed it judicious to make them an offer of £500, together with the five per cent. accruing on the purchase up to that time; this offer was declined.

The Natives fully expected that His Excellency Sir George Grey would visit the Wairarapa, when this case would be brought under his notice. As His Excellency cannot now carry out his expressed intention of going there for some time, I apprehend the Natives may carry out their threats of expelling the Europeans.

I may state that this is the only question of real importance that has to be settled in the Wairarapa District. From the extent of the purchase, I do not think that an additional payment for it would be regarded as a precedent, more especially as the Natives consider all other sales made by them as conclusive, excepting where, some small differences arise about boundaries of reserves, although individual attempts are made to raise money on fictitious grounds.

The further action to be taken in reference to this case is herewith submitted for the consideration and decision of His Excellency's Government.

DONALD McLEAN.

March 10th, 1862.