

Ihakara at once fully entered into the subject. He referred to the aspect which the dispute assumed in 1863, when the tribes first took up a hostile attitude towards each other, and to the steps taken at that time by Mr. Fox and Mr. Buller, R.M., to prevent the threatened collision; and he admitted that, but for Dr. Featherston's timely intervention, there would have been actual fighting. Although not afraid to fight, he preferred peace, and had always been anxious to arrange matters amicably with the Ngatiapa. He was therefore glad when Mr. Buller proposed an arbitration, and he waited a long time for the Governor to appoint a Commissioner. But the arbitrators never came, and he had at length resolved on asserting his claims by force of arms, and without any reference to the Government. He was prepared to acknowledge that it was Dr. Featherston's interference that had prevented this. His feeling towards His Honor at that time was one of affection and esteem; but it had since become one of distrust and suspicion. When he determined on selling the land, he was influenced only by a desire to prevent further trouble. He supposed that in selling the land, he would sell as a chief and not as a slave. He induced all the leading chiefs of his tribe to unite with him, and on the 12th October, 1864, the land was formally offered to and accepted by His Honor, subject to terms. It was not for some time after this, that he discovered the real nature of the transaction in which he had been engaged. He then heard from the Pakehas, that a new law had been passed (the Native Lands Act), throwing open all the Native lands of New Zealand for direct traffic, but "fencing in the land between the Ohau and Rangitikei Rivers." He could not see why he, who had never been in rebellion against the Government, should be treated with less consideration than other Natives. He regarded the exclusion as an oppression of his tribe, and he wrote to Mr. Mantell a letter of complaint. He was told to petition the Assembly; his eyes were now opened. He found that Dr. Featherston and Mr. Buller, whom he had always regarded as his best friends, were dealing treacherously with him, and that he was selling his land "blindfolded." He at once resolved on rescinding his agreement with Dr. Featherston. He told the tribe of this and they consented. A petition was forthwith prepared, signed by a great number and forwarded to Mr. Mantell. It was then that Mr. Buller came again to the district. He came on a visit, bringing a message from the Government. If Mr. Buller had remained at Manawatu, it might have been all well; but "his heart was now saddened and perplexed," and on hearing of Mr. Buller's arrival, he resolved on not seeing him. He was starting for Rangitikei, when Mr. Buller met him near the Awahou settlement. He intended to avoid a discussion with him, but ultimately he consented to meet Mr. Buller at Wharangi, to state the grounds of his dissatisfaction. They met there on the evening of the same day, and, for many hours, they talked over the Rangitikei question, viewing it in all its bearings. Mr. Buller's explanations were satisfactory to him; he saw the whole matter in a new light, consented to abide by his agreement, and wrote a letter to that effect to the Superintendent. Mr. Buller had succeeded in removing his feelings of discontent, and in "making his heart light." But it was not long before another cloud came over his mind—a darker one than before; he was now sore at heart, and full of a dark foreboding. He could see no end to this Rangitikei difficulty, and he began to regret that he had ever listened to the voice of the peace-maker, instead of taking forcible possession of the land. He would explain the cause of this change in his feelings. When the petition of the tribe was sent to Mr. Mantell, the latter sent it back, saying that the signatures were informal. This annoyed him, for he now felt that the Pakehas were conspiring to "humbug" him (hamapaka). Another petition was prepared and sent to Mr. Mantell. It was afterwards laid before the Assembly. The great Runanga refused to listen to their prayer; and, from a letter which he had received from some Pakeha in Wellington, under the fictitious name of "Kaionge," he learnt that this was owing to the opposition of Dr. Featherston, and to the letters which Mr. Buller had sent in. He replied to "Kaionge's" letter, and in return, received a caricature (which he produced) representing the three tribes as pigs with Maori heads, being led or driven by Dr. Featherston and Mr. Buller. This had determined him against a sale of the land, so long as a restrictive clause of the Native Lands Act continued in force. He claimed to be put on a level, in this respect, with other Native tribes, and would resist to the last any attempt to coerce him to terms, or to force him into a sale of the land.

Dr. Featherston replied to the following effect. He said that he was glad Ihakara had spoken so freely, because the first step towards the removal of a supposed grievance was that it should be clearly stated and explained. He was hardly surprised that the caricature and the letter signed "Kaionge" had annoyed him; nor was he surprised that the constant talk of the Pakehas about the land being in prison had made his "heart sad." He would not ask him to name the Pakehas to whom he referred, but it was pretty generally known who they were. It was also very well known that these Pakehas had a selfish and interested motive in the dishonorable course they were adopting. They had, however, now done all they could do, and said all they could say on the subject. If, therefore, he should succeed in removing from Ihakara's mind the unfavorable impression that had been produced, he felt sure that he would not again allow his mind to be poisoned by any representations of the kind, however plausible or apparently well intentioned. He would speak first of the alleged injustice of the restrictive clause in "The Native Lands Act." Ihakara had complained that all New Zealand was now thrown open for direct sale to Pakehas, except the Manawatu Block, which has been "fenced in." This was in some measure true; but Ihakara was perhaps not aware that before any land could be sold by the Natives, the ownership would require to be investigated by a duly constructed Land Court, and a certificate of title issued; nor was he perhaps aware that the Native Lands Act expressly exempts from its operation all lands on which purchase deposits have been made by the Government. Now although no deposit had yet been paid on the Rangitikei-Manawatu Block, Ihakara could not deny that virtually it was already in the hands of the Commissioner. Ihakara would remember the meeting at Manawatu, when a formal offer of sale was made by himself and other representative chiefs, and accepted by the Commissioner on behalf of the Crown. He would remember on that occasion giving up to the Commissioner a carved club, in token of the absolute surrender of the land, subject to terms. It was only fair therefore to deal with the Rangitikei-Manawatu block as land under sale to the Government, although the final terms had not yet been arranged. But apart from all this, he felt sure that Ihakara would agree with him that to attempt to get the ownership to this particular block investigated and settled in any Land Court would be a mere farce. Every effort