

far from complete, leads them to the conclusion that these claims *have not hitherto had that consideration which they deserve.*"

Parliament was again petitioned by the Natives in 1874, 1875, 1876, and 1878; and in 1879 a Commission was appointed by the Governor. The Commissioners reported on the question, but no action was taken to give effect to the report.

The Middle Island claims were again reported on by the Native Affairs Committee in 1882, who recommended their report to the earnest attention of the Government.

In regard to the claim preferred in the petition of 1882, on the alleged non-fulfilment of the stipulation made at the date the land was ceded to the Crown that "ample reserves" should be set apart for the Natives, the Committee reported as follows: "It is in evidence that the reserves made at a sitting of the Native Land Court, held at Christchurch, on 7th May, 1868, were given in final settlement of all claims under this head."

It is submitted, however, that, although this may have been the view of the matter in 1868, subsequent inquiry tended to show that the claim preferred by the Natives had not received the consideration it deserved; in fact, that the question was not properly understood at the time owing to the fragmentary information obtainable, and that it was not until after the publication of a compendium of all the important documents on South Island Native affairs in 1871 that a clearer insight into the merits of the case could be had.

Consequent probably on more complete information being available on the subject of the Ngaitahu claims, Chief Judge Fenton, although he had expressed an opinion in 1868 that 14 acres per individual was a liberal allowance, afterwards changed his views on the subject, and remarked in his report on the petition of the Kaiapoi Natives in 1876 that he would have gladly sanctioned a larger quantity.

The Commissioners, in their report of 1879, also point out that the matter was imperfectly understood when before the Court in 1868, in the following terms: "Had the Maoris interested in the Ngaitahu Block realised the position in which they were placed by the reference to the Native Land Court of the document called Kemp's deed as *an agreement*, and that it was competent to them to bring before the Court all questions relating to the purchase which were then in dispute between themselves and the Crown; or had they been properly advised or represented on the occasion, we believe that important points which were not, but should have been, brought under notice would have received the attention of the Court."

The principles enunciated by the Imperial authorities for the acquisition of the wilderness land of the Maoris were that, while, on the one hand, the appropriation of tracts of land capable of supporting a large population was not to be stayed because an inconsiderable number of Natives had been accustomed to derive some portion of their subsistence from hunting and fishing on them; *on the other hand, the settlement of such lands would not have been allowed to deprive the Natives of these resources, without providing for them in some other way advantages fully equal to these they might lose*; and, furthermore, that all dealings with the Maoris for these lands must be conducted on the same principles of sincerity, justice, and good faith as must govern transactions with them for the recognition of Her Majesty's sovereignty of New Zealand, and that the Natives must not be *permitted to enter into any contracts in which they might be the ignorant and unintentional authors of injuries to themselves, or must they be required to cede any territory the retention of which by them would be essential or highly conducive to their comfort, safety, or subsistence.*

A great deal more could be said on this subject, but the foregoing quotations will probably suffice to show the views held by the Imperial Government as to the course that should be pursued in acquiring land from the Natives; but a perusal of the circumstances connected with the acquisition of territory from the Natives in the South Island will indisputably prove that none of these principles were observed.

The same statement was made everywhere that the land is insufficient to maintain the owners on it. Even those who owned comparatively large areas made the same complaint.

As regards the larger areas, the cause of this is attributable to several circumstances—namely, the inferior character of the soil, and the scattered manner in which the lands are situated. Only a few of the original reserves contain first-class land; nearly all the land comprised in the awards of the Court in 1868, including also the land given as compensation to the Kaiapoi Reserves for the acreage allotted out of their reserve to non-residents, is very inferior; consequently, although the acreage held by some of the Natives may appear to be large, the inferior character of the land more than counterbalances any seeming advantage they apparently possess.

It was stated at all the settlements that were visited that the Natives depended on the employment obtainable at shearing- and harvest-time for a livelihood, but that the labour-market was gradually getting closed against them, owing to the competition that existed amongst the Europeans to secure the work for themselves. Shearing and harvesting was the only work they were useful at. Skilled or ordinary work was not open to them, as no employer would engage their services, owing to their want of knowledge of labour of that kind. The market was, therefore, closed against them for labour of this class; and, should they be shut out of the kind of work they were accustomed to, it was impossible to predict what might be the result, as it would be a difficult task to maintain their families. Even under the present condition of affairs they were largely indebted to the tradesmen, and all their earnings went to assist to discharge their liabilities; but, should it be impossible to eke out their subsistence by obtaining work, the tradesmen would no longer give them credit, and pauperism would prevail.

Some eke out a living by the rents receivable from lands let to Europeans, but in most cases the money is anticipated by drawing two or three years' income in advance.

There are no cases of entire destitution; but that is attributable in a great measure to the compassionate disposition of the Natives towards each other under circumstances of this kind, and many persons who ought to be relieved by the Government, in conformity with the understanding