

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE ON THE PETITION OF WI TAKO AND OTHERS.

THE Petitioners are the well-known Wi Tako Ngatata, and eighteen others, aboriginal natives of Waikanae. They state that the laws are not fairly administered; that if a Maori commits an offence against an European, he is punished; that if a Maori commits any offence against a Maori, no notice is taken of it; that the laws are, in consequence, of no benefit to the Maoris; that there are Europeans who desire a continuance of the war, in order that they may continue to draw the emoluments of office; and they pray that the evils complained of may be made over to the Maoris, in order that they may settle them themselves.

The Committee, deeming the matters mooted in the Petition of great consequence, called upon Wi Tako Ngatata to appear and state fully anything that he wished to make known. He appeared before the Committee, and as his statement contained serious imputations against Mr. Booth, the Resident Magistrate of the Upper Wanganui District, and as that officer was present in Wellington, the Committee directed him to attend. The Committee have taken advantage of the powers which they possess, and they have ordered the statements made by Wi Tako Ngatata and Mr. Booth to be printed for the information of the House.

I am directed to report that the Committee are of opinion that the allegations contained in the Petition have broken down; that those contained in Wi Tako Ngatata's deposition have been completely refuted by the statement of Mr. Booth; and that they cannot recommend the prayer of the Petition to the favourable consideration of the House.

EVIDENCE TAKEN BEFORE THE COMMITTEE, FRIDAY, 15th JULY, 1870, ON THE PETITION OF WI TAKO NGATATA AND OTHERS.

Wi Tako Ngatata in attendance, and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Is this the Petition which you gave to the Member for the Southern Maori Electoral District, and are these signatures genuine?—Yes. The signatures which have no cross affixed to them are the signatures of the petitioners indicated. The names of those who cannot write were written by other parties, but the crosses were affixed by the petitioners indicated.

Wi Tako.
15th July, 1870

2. What are "the important matters which are discarded by the law," and what are "the great evils which call for inquiry?"—There were three cases of murder perpetrated by Maoris, and the murderers were arrested and given up to the law by the Maoris themselves—Maketu, the murderers of the Gilfillans, and Maroro were hanged. A case in point in which the law was not carried out is that of Katatore,* who was murdered by Isaiah. No inquiry was made. I presume that because Katatore was only a Moari, the murderer being also a Maori, the law was held in abeyance. That was a treacherous murder, for Isaiah made Katatore drunk before he murdered him. The Committee know Titokowaru. He came to Wanganui with Booth and McDonnell, after General Chute's campaign on the West Coast of the Northern Island. He remained there a fortnight, and then went away home to Ngutu-o-te-Manu. There he built a large house. He was then tied with a chain [he was bound by promises to maintain peace]. The Europeans who were settled on the confiscated lands on the banks of the Waihi River, took some horses belonging to the people of Titokowaru's hapu. Those people retaliated by stealing horses from the Europeans. McDonnell went up to Ngutu-o-te-Manu with 100 armed men. Titokowaru said, I will give up the stolen horses and the thieves, that the latter may be tried by the law. The horses were given up to McDonnell, and he returned to Waihi with them. When Booth saw that McDonnell returned without the thieves, he was angry. McDonnell said, Never mind; but Booth said the thieves must be brought in, and he (Booth) went with 100 armed men to Ngutu-o-te-Manu that same night, and brought away four Maoris of Titokowaru's hapu; but they were not the parties who had stolen the horses. When Booth's party was at Ngutu-o-te-Manu, one of the party pointed a gun at Titokowaru's sound eye. [N.B.—Titokowaru is blind of an eye, having been wounded in an engagement at the Waitara.] After this the trouble commenced. Titokowaru then reflected, that if these people come up again I shall be killed. So he broke his chain [considered himself absolved from his promises to maintain the peace], and then he commenced murdering and eating [cannibalism]. He became like a savage dog who has broken his chain.

* NOTE.—This crime was perpetrated in Taranaki, 1858.