

WEST COAST COMMISSION.

SECOND REPORT.

To His Excellency Sir HERCULES GEORGE ROBERT ROBINSON, G.C.M.G.,
&c., &c., &c., Governor of New Zealand.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :

In presenting this Second Report to Your Excellency, our first word must be one of regret at having to ask so much from your patience. But the further we went into the task which Your Excellency had commanded us to undertake, the more clearly we saw two things : First, that the disaffection of the Natives on the West Coast was but the natural outcome of a feeble and vacillating policy towards them during more than fifteen years ; secondly, that the troubles which during that period beset every successive Government might have been mastered at any time, if only scrupulous good faith had waited on steadfast counsels and a consistent purpose. It was not possible for us to say this, without bringing before Your Excellency in detail the testimony on which we say it.

In order to understand the actual character of the problem to be solved, it is necessary to trace very briefly from the history of our relations to the Native race, the circumstances under which we became involved in the hostilities with the tribes on the West Coast, out of which have grown the present embarrassments. It is also necessary, in order to understand the apparently inconsistent action of successive Ministries, to know the motives by which from time to time they were actuated. The first of these examinations was easily made by reference to well-known historical facts ; but the latter has only been accomplished by a close and protracted scrutiny of a vast mass of official documents, a great part of which had never been published, or had been lost to sight in the recesses of the Native Office and in volumes of Parliamentary Papers from which they had to be exhumed.

As regards the first branch of the subject, our relations with the Native race for a short period after the regular colonization of the Islands in 1839-40, were entirely pacific. Their acquaintance with the outside world, through the occasional visits of whalers, the residence of European traders, and the teaching of missionaries, had familiarized them with the *pakeha* (stranger), and our advent was greeted with unreserved kindness and hospitality. The first rupture of these relations occurred in 1844, in the term of office of Governor Fitzroy, when the outbreak at the Bay of Islands took place. That harbour had been for years the resort of a large fleet of South Sea whalers, to the number of hundreds every year, with whom the Natives of the Ngapuhi tribe carried on a very profitable but demoralizing trade. The imposition of Customs duties on the establishment of a regular Government drove most of these ships away. Apprehending the cause of their departure, the chief Hone Heke, as an act of defiance, cut down the flag-