

of Te Whiti's predictions did not appear to weaken the faith of his followers in him, nor did it lower in the least his own lofty pretensions. On one occasion, after repeated disappointments, Titokowaru, a chief of rank, at one of the monthly meetings ventured to ask him "Who was behind him?" meaning by that to inquire what power he had to carry out his promises. But when, in loud and ringing tones, the astounding reply came back, "There is no one behind me; I am the Father, I am the Son, I am the Holy Ghost," Titokowaru had to retire, expressing himself satisfied.

It is probable that Te Whiti, occasionally at least, believed in his own pretensions to supernatural powers. It may well be that the success of his efforts for the past eight or nine years to stay the advancing wave of settlement and colonization has produced that effect upon his mind. In 1872-73, when a great effort was made to push a road through that part of the country over which he claimed authority, he suffered it to go on to a certain point, but stopped it at that point absolutely. Similarly, when it was desired to complete the telegraph line along the West Coast, so as to connect Taranaki with the rest of the colony, Te Whiti, by the mere exertion of his authority prevented its construction. Again, for many years past, he has succeeded in preventing the erection of a lighthouse on Cape Egmont, although the light has been most urgently required in the interests of navigation and even of humanity, and was so anxiously desired by the Government of the colony that it is now in course of erection under cover of a strong force of Armed Constabulary.

When it is considered that on this coast the most vigorous warlike efforts of the tribes had resulted to them in disaster and defeat, together with the dispossession of their land, it is scarcely to be wondered at that the Maoris were inclined to accept the estimation of himself which Te Whiti persistently placed before them. In 1878, however, an event occurred which probably set the seal on Te Whiti's self-deception, and certainly had the effect of convincing the West Coast Natives that their faith in him as a great prophet or god was a matter no longer subject to doubt or question.

For several years the question of the settlement of the West Coast difficulty had been a source of anxiety to successive Governments. It was felt by all parties that it was necessary to deal with the problem in such a way as to secure its final solution, not merely because it was desirable to promote the settlement of the Waimate Plains as a good thing in itself, but because, in the interests of the colony at large, it had become essential to assert and maintain the authority of the law in that district. In 1878 it was thought that the time had come when surveyors might begin their work north of the Waingongoro River, with a view to the sale and settlement of the land. The survey was accordingly commenced, and much progress was made between August, 1878, and February, 1879.

But signs were not wanting to indicate that trouble of an unusual kind was to be apprehended. A murder had been committed of a man named McLean, cook to a survey party on another part of the West Coast, and the Maori murderer received, and still receives, refuge and protection at Parihaka from Te Whiti. This murder, which was probably the result of a private quarrel or of personal animosity on the part of the murderer, was asserted by the culprit to have been done on account of "darkness" about land, and this appeared to be sufficient to make him a kind of hero in the eyes of many of Te Whiti's followers, and insured his welcome at Parihaka as an honored guest. When, in March, 1879, the then Native Minister, Mr. Sheehan, visited Parihaka, it became sufficiently evident that the infatuated belief of the Natives in Te Whiti's supernatural powers was too great to allow of any compromise being effected, and he himself showed no disposition either to conciliate or permit himself to be conciliated. On the day after this meeting the crowning event happened which completely justified in the mind of the Maoris their trust in Te Whiti's supernatural powers, and probably made him a convert to the belief in the potency of his own spells. At this time there were on the Waimate Plains, as already stated, a considerable number of surveyors preparing the land for sale and settlement, and the whole of these, on the very day after the visit of the Native Minister, were summarily removed by Te Whiti's orders to the settled lands south of the Waingongoro River. No unnecessary force was used; but bullock-drays were provided, and the instruments, baggage, and supplies were carted off along with the surveyors and their men. The Government, to all appearance, quietly submitted to the ejection, and patiently accepted the position. Probably the Government had no intention of final abandonment, but it is not surprising that the Maoris regarded the whole operation as a miraculous exhibition of Te Whiti's powers, and felt that his gods or spirits were pressing on and subduing the heart of the white man. It is true, indeed, that the Waimate lands were subsequently advertised for sale, but the immediate withdrawal of the advertisement could only have been regarded as another miracle.

Up to that time the mental epidemic among the Maoris of the West Coast, though strong, was not overwhelming, but it then attained an intensity and force which is not yet lost, and which has enabled the faith of the Maoris in their prophet and lord to withstand the effect of all the falsified predictions, and all the sufferings he has brought upon them. Clearly at that time his own dreams of power became unbounded. He was to recover the Waimate Plains for the Maori. He was to recover the whole of the confiscated lands in New Zealand. The white man was to be dispossessed of even the lands he had acquired by purchase. Te Whiti was to become the supreme ruler of the West Coast, of the whole of New Zealand, indeed of the whole world: nay not only a ruler, but a prophet, a king, a god.

A few weeks passed, and the first step was taken for the fulfilment of his visions of supremacy. Te Whiti began, to use his own expression, "to plough the belly of the Government." Men from various of the tribes and hapus attending his ministrations were selected, and sent in different directions to plough the paddocks and lands of the settlers. It must not be understood that the lands ordered to be ploughed were within the debateable territory north of the Waingongoro and south of the Stoney River, for only in one instance was it so. The paddocks to be ploughed were situated within the settled districts, and were not confined to confiscated land. Land was to be ploughed which had been fairly purchased, and the ownership of which had never been disputed. Fair enclosures were entered upon, and in one instance the ploughmen and their teams tore up the lawn in front of a settler's house. The "heart of the pakeha was indeed to be tried." These demonstrations were made by men carefully selected by Te Whiti, but not from his own hapu. They were made by men who not long before had been engaged in driving the settlers from their homes, and against settlers whose pro-