

*Hon. Mr. Bryce.*] That is quite reasonable: that would be about seven miles an hour—not very fast riding.

410. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Seven miles an hour is very fast travelling for one horse over such a distance?—No; not more than six miles.

411. *Mr. Stewart.*] Had the Maoris horses?—Yes; they had an abundance of horses.

412. *The Chairman.*] I see it says here somewhere that they travelled day and night for three days. Yes; here it is, on page 3, in the letter from Heperi Pikirangi to Judge Fenton: "To Mr. Fenton. Greeting. This is a request to you to hold a sitting of the Native Land Court to adjudicate upon our lands which were brought before the Court held at Napier. The names of the lands are Ohaoko, Mataipuku, Papakai, Ruamatua, Whangaipotiki, Ohinewairua, Oarenga, and Kaimanawa. We were too late for the first Court, the reason being that we only received the notices on the 13th, and on the 16th the Court sat. We travelled night and day, but did not arrive in time for it; and therefore we send in this application. Friend, Mr. Fenton, do you accede to this request; and if the letter reaches you answer it, so that we may be aware of your decision on the subject. This is all—From HEPERI PIKIRANGI TE HAU and twenty-five others—rather, from all of us." Heperi Pikirangi and twenty-five others are said to have signed that?—I do not think twenty-five others did sign it. It says "twenty-five others," but it does not give their names. Their names would be given if signed.

413. Heperi is one that lives there, is he not?—Yes. I know him. I think he signed it.

414. Did he come in on horseback?—Yes, I saw him when he arrived in Napier on that occasion which he mentioned.

415. What time of day did he arrive? Do you know when he came?—I rather think it was Monday morning or Tuesday morning when he first appeared.

416. What day was the Court sitting?—Well, it must have been Friday or Saturday of the previous week. I cannot speak accurately, but I think that was the day.

417. *Mr. Montgomery.*] It was after the Court sat that you saw him?—Yes.

418. *The Chairman.*] But did he make any complaint to you?—Not at that time. He said what the purpose of his arrival was, but made no complaint, and appeared to be satisfied.

419. *Mr. Stewart.*] There is about a hundred and fifteen thousand acres in this block?—Yes.

420. Under what tenure is it held, or under what occupancy? Is it under lease?—Yes—under lease.

421. Granted by whom?—By the five grantees on the memorial—Renata Kawepo, Karaitiana te Rango, Ihakara te Raro, Te Retimana te Rango, Horima te Ahunga. I obtained the lease from them after the case was passed through the Court.

422. And the lease was approved of?—Yes.

423. And what rent do you pay?—I agreed to pay the sum of £800 a year.

424. What term have you yet to run?—I obtained a renewal of my lease three years ago for a period of twenty-one years.

425. So that under that lease you have only nineteen years to run?—Yes.

426. Was that lease also passed through the Court?—Yes. I may explain that when I took up the country it presented great natural difficulties to occupy it, and for sixteen years, I think, after I first occupied it, I had to pack my own wool, and everything I took into the country, for over forty miles.

427. What is the value of the improvements you have made, do you think?—Well, I have not put down any estimate, but they have cost me a very considerable sum—more than like improvements would to other people. I should think I have spent at least £10,000 in improvements since I went there first.

428. *The Chairman.*] Were you in the Court when the Natives were examined on the 16th September?—Yes.

429. Did you hear Noa Huke examined?—Yes, I did.

430. Noa Huke does not appear to have any claim himself. He did not make any claim for the land for himself?—No; he gave the genealogy.

431. He is made to say here that "there are Natives who are not present who have a claim. The people now living on the land have a claim. About twenty people—men, women, and children—are living on the land." Do you remember him saying that?—Yes. With regard to their "living on the land," they were not living absolutely on the land—their kaingas were not there—but they had huts there for use when they were passing over from one kainga to another. Their cultivations were some miles off.

432. I observe that Renata gives the names of those five persons as the owners who were afterwards certified as owners. He says, "These are all of whose claim I am aware. I claim from my ancestors. Noa Huke will trace the genealogy." And so he referred to Noa Huke as an authority?—Yes, that is so.

433. Did you know at that time that there were others who claimed an interest in the land?—No, I was not aware of anything except the decision of the Court. I accepted that as being definitive on the point. I may mention that in 1877 I went to England, and I started from Wellington. I came down here, and Sir Donald McLean had an interview with me. He desired to see me, and asked if I had any application from any Natives for rent other than those mentioned in the grant; to which I replied—as was the case—that I had had no application from any others.

434. *Mr. Stewart.*] Do you know whether any others than those mentioned in the grant obtained any portion of the rent which you had been paying?—No, I cannot say how it was divided. There were disputes amongst them; but it was because the person who had been appointed to receive the rent kept it chiefly for himself, and did not divide it amongst the others.

435. To whom did you pay the rent?—These disputes were all amongst the five persons mentioned in the grant. I was authorized, in the first instance, to pay it to Renata Kawepo, the principal man.