

1888.

NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE DISTURBANCE AT POROTI, WHANGAREI

(REPORT BY J. S. CLENDON, ESQ., R.M., ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The RESIDENT MAGISTRATE, Whangarei, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Whangarei, 21st July, 1888.

In accordance with the request contained in your telegram of this morning in relation to the Poroti disturbance I beg to report as follows:—

That somewhere about the 14th or 16th January last these Natives agreed to sell the royalty for digging gum on the Raraponga Block, adjoining the Waitomotomo, to Mr. Rawnsley, of Poroti, for the sum of £300, all parties, I am informed, agreeing thereto. A meeting of the Uriroroi hapu was called, and the money was paid, in the presence of them all, to eight persons elected by the meeting to represent them, and to sign a receipt for the sum paid (£300), which they did. According to Maori custom the principal owners of the land sat round, the money being, at the request of all, handed to Taurau Kukupa, as the chief and head of the hapu. Taurau handed it to the person next in rank—Matu Arama (now dangerously wounded); and he to Rotohiko Rako, who, instead of passing it to the others for final return to Taurau and division, kept the bag of money, got up, and walked away, leaving Taurau and the others to their cogitations. I was informed that the next day Matu Arama offered Taurau and three out of five subdivisions of the tribe with him interested in the matter £100. This sum was refused, as the party required £180, as they represented three-fifths of the tribe. The consequence was that Matu Arama took the money away and divided it amongst the people with him at Tokitoki, their pa. It appears that at this time Pomare Kingi was present, and, enraged at being dealt with in such a manner, said, "Very well, keep the money, and we will fight for it." The emanation of this was the arming of the two parties. A few days afterwards, on the night of the 19th January, I was called upon to prevent a collision between these people and Taurau's men, headed by Tito Papa. I succeeded in preventing this, and obtained the consent of both parties to the arbitration of the dispute by a Native Committee—not the legal Committee. Accordingly, a few days after, Hone Mohi Tawhai, Rimi te Tai, Eru Nehua, Wiki Pirihi, and Hoterene te Rangaihi met at the Poroti, and, after a two days' sitting and taking evidence, they decided that Eru Hiri's party refund the sum of £200 to the subdivisions of the hapu under Taurau. This they at once refused to do; said they had spent the money and would refund nothing, as Hira te Tuko, the Poroti chief, and his people had leased some gum land a year or two previously, and kept all the money to pay their debts. These people then strengthened their pa, and surreptitiously purchased some ten or twelve Snider rifles, with ammunition, in Auckland, as I had stopped all such supply from the dealers in my district.

About a fortnight subsequently I received a message from Hone Mohi Tawhai asking me to meet him at the Tokitoki on a certain day, when he and the Mahurehure chiefs would be there to remove Eru Hiri and his family to Waima. I accordingly visited Tokitoki on the appointed day. Found that Hone Mohi Tawhai had not come, but the Kakaho chief Riwhi Tete Pokai, and Wiraha Arama Karaka and Te Mokaraka, the son and brother of the late Waima chief Arama Karaka Pi, had arrived. I then held a long consultation with these chiefs, and Manuera, the prophet, Eru Hiri, and the other principal parties on that side. They all agreed in the presence of the stranger chiefs that the land in respect of which the money was in dispute should be surveyed and put through the Native Land Court. At the same time the civil summonses from the four principals on Taurau's side for the sum awarded by the Arbitration Committee, £50 each, in all £200, were served upon them. Considering the matter thus far settled, I left them, understanding that the visitors would leave for their homes next morning. I heard they did so afterwards. During the next day I received a letter from Eru Hiri and the others revoking their consent of the previous day to the survey and adjudication of the land by the Native Land Court.

The date for hearing the cases came on, but the defendants did not appear, and judgment in default was recorded against the defendants for the sums claimed, with the costs, by myself and the Assessors Hone te Horo and Riwi Taikawa. I informed the plaintiffs that they could remove these judgments into the Supreme Court under the Enforcement of Judgment Act, and get orders against the shares of the defendants in the Maunu and Waitomotomo blocks of land.

Matters remained quiet for some time, when the pa erected by Manuera and Eru Hiri was burned down. Taurau and his people about this time went to dig on the Wiroa gum-field, above Wharekohi, and erected a store there. A great amount of bickering and ill-will has been exhibited by both parties during the past two months, which culminated when Taurau last Thursday put up a survey flag as a starting-point for the surveyor on the following day (Friday). Manuera pulled this flag down and refused to allow any survey to proceed, and said they would prevent it by force of arms. Taurau at once said, "We will fight to-morrow" (yesterday), and prevented one of his people from shooting Manuera on the spot, saying it would be murder, and they would fight fairly. About 7 a.m. yesterday they commenced firing at each other, and continued skirmishing all day, with the result, as wired, that on Taurau's side Hemi Hoera and Hemi Panapa were killed, Wereta Pou had his right arm shattered from the wrist to nearly the shoulder by a Snider bullet; whilst the casualties on Manuera's side were, Naha killed by a bullet through the brain, Matu Arama shot through the left side of the chest and not likely to survive, Hauraki shot in groin severely, and Nahi flesh-wound in the arm (slight).

I proceeded yesterday, as wired, to Taurau's camp, reaching there about eight p.m., accompanied by the police and Dr. Clarke, who dressed Wereta's arm, whilst I conversed with Taurau and pointed out to him the danger of his conduct in breaking the law, and reminding him of the constant advice I had given him to refrain from using arms upon any pretext whatever. He said he was willing to make peace with the other party if they allowed the survey to proceed at once unmolested. I told him he must remain quiet whether or no, or that probably sufficient force would be called in to enforce peace. To this he made no reply. I then proceeded to the camp of the other party at Tokitoki, and found them very dejected, but still obstinately refusing a survey of the land to proceed. Manuera, however, promised to remain quietly at his settlement unless attacked by Taurau, and stated he should now be willing to have the matter talked over and settled. The doctor dressed the wounds of the two men, and gave them directions as to their attendance on the wounded men, and informed them he would again visit on Monday. I proceeded back to Poroti, and wrote to Taurau, desiring him to remain perfectly quiet, and refrain from any aggression, and that I would visit them again on Monday. Inspector McGovern has visited them to-day, and I have no doubt his presence will have a beneficial effect. He will accompany me on Monday.

From the aspect of Taurau's actions I feel certain that the northern chiefs are in accord with him, and sympathize in his movements. The real cause of this dispute has arisen from the ambitious projects and desire for aggrandisement of Eru Hiri (whose mother is acknowledged by the Uriroroi people to have a small claim on all these lands), whose counsels have had great weight with Manuera, and assist his own views. All through this matter Manuera and Eru Hiri have exhibited a vacillating and repudiative policy: one day consenting and the next refusing. I may add that Taurau has caused me the greatest anxiety since the commencement of this dispute. I have endeavoured in every possible way to prevent his exercising force; but his dignity as a chief has been set at nought, and so much disturbed by the rebellion of some of his immediate relatives and friends, that he has lately become more obstinate and unmanageable than usual. Any further intelligence will have reached you by wire before this report can arrive at Wellington.

I have, &c.,

JAMES S. CLENDON,
Resident Magistrate.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

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