

dealing of the Native Land Court, or any other Court that may be established, simple and economical. For instance, we shall ask the Natives whether they believe that a great portion of the expense connected with determining tribal and hapu boundaries could be settled by the Natives themselves in their own runangas without going to the Court, and whether only those cases should be brought to the Court in which the Natives themselves cannot and do not agree—that is to say, only the disputed cases. In the same way with the lists of owners, we shall ask the Natives if they consider that the tribes and the hapus, when they define the boundaries of their lands, can also define the names of the owners, and only bring those cases to the Court for decision in respect to which they themselves cannot agree. Then, supposing the Committee and the runanga agreed upon the boundaries of the hapus and tribe, and the names of the owners, they would bring their lists to the Court and hand them in. Now, we have been told by many wise people that a great deal of this work can be done by the people themselves, and that therefore a great deal of expense and loss of time could be saved to the Maoris by this being done. We do not, however, ask any other Maoris to be bound by those who have already spoken before us. He want the minds of the people here in Cambridge. Advice is only of value to us when it comes from the man himself—not as an imitation of other people's ideas, but as the feelings of his own heart and the thoughts of his own mind. Then, there are cases in which the law has produced great confusion between the Europeans and the Natives in the matters of sales and leases of lands. The law-courts of the colony are full of such cases. It is a perfect disgrace that they should exist. Now, although there are not so many of those cases in this district as there are in other districts, yet the Commissioners will, of course, have to ask the Maori chiefs here their views about what should be done in such cases. We shall ask the Maoris whether they think some Court could sit to decide upon these cases of dispute between the Europeans and Maoris, and to examine the Maoris and Europeans publicly, deciding then as best they can in the interests of justice, and making public decisions in such cases. Then there comes the question of subdivisions of the land. That is a very important thing. Now, in the old times, amongst the Maoris there was no subdivision except between the tribes and hapus; each man, woman, and child did not have a piece of land to himself or herself. And we shall take evidence from the Maoris as to whether, in poor land where there are large numbers of owners, the land can be subdivided without the whole value going in law-costs, Court-fees, and survey-expenses. That will bring us at once to the most important question of all—of the proper method of dealing with the Maori lands in the future. In the olden times, before the Native-land laws were passed, when the Government or any private person wished to deal with the Maoris, the tribe or the hapu was called together. Then, if the Government or any private individual wished to buy land or to lease land, it was talked over among all the people, a price was offered, and everybody consulted as to whether this was a proper bargain for the sale or lease or not. Then, if the people consented to sell or to lease their land at a fixed price or rent, a few of the chiefs signed the deed in the presence of the people, and the money was paid and distributed among the people publicly. Then there were no disputes, because everybody knew what was done. The evidence which we have taken, both from Europeans and Natives as regards the old system of purchase and lease, shows to us that the bargains made in public in that way were never gone back upon. Nobody denied them afterwards. Now, the first law passed by Parliament for the Maoris made provision for putting only ten men in a grant. There might be one or two hundred owners behind the ten, but only the ten names appeared in the grant. Then the ten took the land themselves, and very often sold it and pocketed the money, and the owners behind them got nothing. That was in 1865. Then came the first petitions to Parliament. The Natives said, "Oh! your law puts all our land into the hands of the chiefs, and then they sell our lands and we can get none of the money." Then the Parliament said, "Yes, this seems very bad." So, in 1867, two years afterwards, they passed a law which, while it left ten people on the face of the certificate, put all the other owners on the back of it. Then the ten could not sell; they could only lease. But it was found that when the ten leased the money still did not go to the people. The ten pocketed the money and spent it too often. Then came numbers of more petitions to Parliament. They said, "You have not done any good now." So in 1873 a new law was made, and then everybody's name went on the face of the certificate—men, women, and children. Now, after these Acts were passed all public dealing for the land ceased, and interpreters and agents went about the country and got each one to sign, here and there, giving a few pounds to one and a few pounds to another. Then more petitions came, and the law-courts began to be resorted to by the Maoris. Some said their names had been signed by other people; some said they had never been paid the money they were promised. So these petitions went on coming to Parliament, and Parliament went on passing laws, until the whole thing is in the swamp. Now, it is the duty of this Commission to try and find out a way by which future dealings of the Maoris with their land may be made fair and just between both Europeans and the Natives. That is our duty. And we shall take the opinion of the Maoris in Cambridge as well as in other places as to what would be a good plan. We shall ask them, for instance, if they think this would be a good plan which I will now sketch out: First of all, stop all Native dealings with the land at all. Let no one man sign at all for anything; let there be no private dealing between either the Government or any individual Native; let all the dealings be public. Supposing the Maoris of a block, after the tribal boundaries are defined and the names settled—when the title is once settled, and the certificate issued so that the title is certainly in those Natives—then, would it be wise for the Natives who are the owners of the block to choose a Committee for it, and then for the people to choose all the lands they will want for their own cultivations, their pas, and burying-grounds, and other reserves? If, beyond their own cultivations, the owners think they can utilise other portions of the land for sheep-farms or anything else, to make further reserves for those purposes. Then, that the balance of the land—that is to say, the land they do not want to use themselves—let the whole of the owners say how much shall be sold and how much leased, or, if they choose, they may have