

" Rich in alluvial soil, open and attractive to the eye, and near the sea, it wanted only greater extent to be one of the finest districts in the Islands. The Company claimed to have bought it from Rauparaha and Rangihacata, whose ownership—for they did not live in it—was based on recent conquest and on occupation by some members of their tribe. The chiefs denied the sale, and when the Company's surveyors came into the valley warned them off, and burned down the huts they had put up. Commissioner Spain was coming almost at once to try the dispute as to the title. But the delays and vexations of the previous year had infuriated Captain Wakefield. He looked upon the chiefs as a pair of 'travelling bullies' who wanted but firmness to cow them. With hasty hardihood he obtained a warrant for the arrest of Rauparaha on a charge of arson, and set out to arrest him, accompanied by the Nelson Police Magistrate, at the head of a posse of some fifty Nelson settlers very badly equipped."⁽¹⁾

The details of the Wairau massacre are well known: how the Magistrate, Mr. Thompson—always an excitable man—held up the handcuffs and attempted to arrest Rauparaha; how Te Puaha, another chief, stood between the parties with an open Bible in his hand endeavouring to keep the peace; how Mr. Thompson lost his head and ordered the men forward; the scuffle, the firing of the first shot (said to be by accident), the return fire of the Maoris, the retreat that became a rout, the surrender of Captain Wakefield, Mr. Thompson, and some of their followers, and their massacre in cold blood by the gigantic Te Rangihacata. All this has been related in detail in every book dealing with the early history of New Zealand, and the story is even told to-day in our schools.

On the 1st July, 1843, the *Nelson Examiner*, under the heading "Horrible Massacre at the Wairau," said,—

"The tragic and altogether unanticipated event which has deprived Nelson of so many of its most valuable residents has so overwhelmed us that we find ourselves unable to do more than briefly narrate the principal facts."

The victims, twenty-one in all, were found the next day by the Rev. Samuel Ironside, the Wesleyan missionary, and he earned the lasting respect of the settlers of Nelson by burying the dead according to the last rites of the Church of England. When the news reached Nelson ten days later "the grief and horror of the inhabitants was excessive."⁽²⁾ The Church Hill, where the beautiful new cathedral is now being erected, was fortified, and the citizens enrolled themselves as militiamen. The tragedy cast a gloom over the colony and created a sensation in the Old Country; even in Paris the affair was discussed.

In his narrative of the Wairau massacre, Alfred Domett, poet and statesman, gives a brief note of the late Magistrate's work in connection with the selection and management of the Native reserves which is of interest. He says,—

"At Nelson, where the Protector of Aborigines was not a missionary, nor anxious to recommend himself to Government by consulting and gratifying any of its little jealousies or lurking antipathies, but an English gentleman of energy and honesty, something more has been done for the Natives. That gentleman was Mr. Thompson, and the Bishop placed the management of the Native reserve in his hands. The Company advanced £200 on the security of the Native town reserves, and a Maori schoolhouse and two Native hostleries, constantly used by Maori visitors, have been built; they are of brick, and among the best houses in the town. The reserves have been chosen with the same regard for the habits of the Natives as was shown at Wellington. At Motueka the whole of their cultivated lands and pas have been included in them; and at Wakapuaka, where the amount of cultivated land is but limited, the surveys were not carried within six miles of it."⁽³⁾

After the murder of Captain Wakefield, Mr. P. Tuckett, the chief surveyor for Nelson, acted as the Company's agent for that district until the 4th September, 1843, when Colonel Wakefield appointed Mr. William Fox⁽⁴⁾ (afterwards Sir William and several times Premier of New Zealand) to the position. The Bishop appointed Mr. Alexander McDonald, of the Union Bank of Australia, to fill the vacancy of agent for the reserves, caused by the untimely death of Mr. Thompson, the Magistrate.

4. MR. COMMISSIONER SPAIN'S INVESTIGATIONS.

Mr. William Spain, the officer appointed by Lord John Russell as Commissioner of Land Claims in New Zealand, sailed from England on the 23rd April, 1841, but did not reach the colony until December of the same year, having been shipwrecked near the Cape of Good Hope. He received his commission from Governor Hobson on the 22nd February, and commenced his sittings at Wellington in March, 1842. Associated with him as interpreter was Mr. George Clark, jun., son of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, a youth of eighteen years, who had been appointed Sub-protector for the southern district through the influence of his father. It was said that he acted in the dual capacity of interpreter in Court and counsel for the Natives out of Court.

From the very outset it was evident that the Commissioner's ideas of what constituted his duty were in direct conflict with those of the Company's Principal Agent. Colonel Wakefield, relying on the agreement of 1840 and the Pennington awards, thought that the inquiry would be merely a formal one, and protested when the Commissioner insisted on the Company proving the validity of its purchases from the Natives. Spain considered that a consent on the part of the Government to grant to the Company the land, which according to Mr. Pennington's award they

(1) "The Long White Cloud," by W. P. Reeves.

(2) *Nelson Examiner*, 1st July, 1843.

(3) App. 14th Rep., p. 191.

(4) App. 12th Rep., p. 93n.