

No. 2.

REPORT FROM LIEUTENANT-COLONEL RUSSELL, CIVIL COMMISSIONER.

Civil Commissioner's Office,
Napier, 9th June, 1862.

SIR,—

I have the honor to report my proceedings as Civil Commissioner up to this date.

I left Auckland on the 18th March, and arrived at Napier on the 1st April.

The gunboat having taken shelter under Table Cape, I landed and visited the Native settlements of Wangawai and Nukutaurua. I explained to the Natives the proposed institutions, but met with small encouragement. I believe this arose in some measure from the fear which had been impressed on them that debts which are brought against them to the extent of £400 by one European, of £500 by another, and of £700 by a third—would have to be paid up, now that law and order were to be established. I believe that such claims extend all over the Province, and that Ten thousand pounds would not cover them. My present Interpreter, Mr. Edward Hamlyn, estimates his claims alone at £ 000.

On my arrival at Napier, I met the Chief Renata, of Pawhakaairo, and told him that in accordance with the promise which Mr. Crosbie Ward and Mr. Fox had made him, that a Civil Commissioner should be appointed, I had been named for that purpose; and, having been to Auckland to consult with His Excellency the Governor and his Ministers, had now returned to introduce the new institutions.

He evinced no pleasure at the information, but rather a wish to avoid the subject, in which line of conduct he has subsequently persevered.

I addressed letters to all the principal Chiefs, stating the order in which I would visit them; and also sent the Interpreter to Pa Whakaairo to let them know on what day I would be there.

I proceeded accordingly, accompanied by Mr. Locke, to Pa Karamu (Karaitiana's Pa), and found him, to my surprise, about to start for the Manawatu to hold a Runanga about a land dispute amongst themselves. I urged him to delay his departure for one day, and to accompany me to Pa Whakaairo, to discuss the Governor's plans with Tareha and Renata. He declined doing so, but remained about half an hour, during which I explained the proposed system; to which he gave no assent, but said by the time I had visited the other portions of the Province he should have returned from Manawatu, and we could then have a meeting to discuss the matter.

I went on to Pa Whakaairo, where I passed the night, and talked at great length with Tareha, Paura, Kaiwata, Karaire, and others. Renata was present, but said little. Their tone was unsatisfactory; they declined proceeding further in the matter at present,—urged the unsettled state of the Waitara question,—their own disputed land purchases,—their desire to talk with the Governor "face to face," &c., &c., &c.

Finding I could make no progress with the new institutions, I tried to engage them in friendly conversation about their schools, medical men, &c.; but found them on all subjects captious, and determined to see no good in anything that had been done, or was purposed to be done, for them.

The next day, Mr. Locke was taken aside by Renata, who explained to him that he was not unfavourable to the Governor's views, but that, after I had returned from the Wairoa, and Karaitiana from the Manawatu, they would hold a meeting for the further discussion of the question.

I left them with the strong impression that they were watching events, and had no immediate intention of adopting the new institutions, though they were content to deal in generalities concerning them as long as they were at a distance. I see nothing yet of a contrary tendency, though every disposition has been shewn to settle their disputed land sales, and they have since seen the Governor face to face.

I proceeded to visit every part of the Province south of Napier, and was able to settle some disputes; but, with the grand subject I made no progress, the Natives asking generally what the Pa Whakaairo people said, and being apparently resolved to follow their lead.

At Havelock I met the Chief Hapuka, much incensed about a sum of money which had been paid to Renata on account of a sheep run occupied by a Mr. Mason, and which he stated to be in opposition to a promise made by Mr. Crosbie Ward that no future payment should be made to either party until it was decided who were the proper owners.

On my visiting Mr. Chambers who was acting for Mr. Mason, he said he had so paid the money to Renata, but that it was to be held "in trust," and that Renata was an honorable man who would produce it whenever the dispute was settled.

Renata subsequently denied having received the money "in trust" (though it seems he signed a paper both in Maori and English to that effect), but stated that, though he signed the paper, he distinctly said that he did not receive the money in trust but would hand it over to whomsoever it should be decided to belong by a Runanga of their own people. He had accordingly paid it to the man on whose account Hapuka claimed it, and I am told he thereby detached an adherent from Hapuka and secured him to himself.

Hapuka now insisted upon a similar payment being made to him, but I could only promise that I would not recognize what had been done, but would still hold to the promise made him that the money should be paid to whomsoever the General Runanga pronounced it to be due. He was