

threatened the safety of the town and the outsettlers. Under these circumstances Mr. McLean, the Agent of the General Government at Napier, and Superintendent of the Province of Hawke's Bay, promptly took steps to disarm and remove from the settled district these armed fanatics, and he was most patriotically supported by the inhabitants who (for the most part unaccustomed to arms, and for the first time unexpectedly called from their various places of business to engage in active hostilities,) paraded at a few hours' notice at midnight, marched all night and successfully attacked the enemy in the early morning. In order to show that this engagement was not undertaken without the concert of the Imperial Military Officer in Command at Napier, Ministers enclose a copy of a letter dated 30th October, 1866, from Mr. McLean to the Colonial Secretary, from which it will be seen that the officer referred to offered to co-operate with the men under his command, and that in consideration of their having had on the day preceding the engagement a long march, Mr. McLean undertook operations without their aid. It will be seen from Mr. McLean's Despatch published in the *Gazette*, that the rebel Natives had, in addition to former repeated warnings, a special written summons previous to the engagement to disarm and surrender. It will also be seen by a letter enclosed in Mr. McLean's Despatch, from the Reverend Samuel Williams, written after the engagement, that the suspicion of the hostile intention of the Natives was confirmed by the confession of a Native prisoner that their object was an immediate and sudden attack on the town. This confession has since been fully corroborated by subsequent statements of others of these prisoners. The Reverend S. Williams, the writer of this letter, is not a person who would be likely to be led to hasty or unfavourable conclusions on such a subject. He is a clergyman of the Church of England, conversant for the last thirty years with Natives and with their customs, and is the son of Archdeacon Henry Williams, one of the first missionaries in New Zealand. Mr. McLean, on whom any imputation if true, of "unwarranted and merciless attack on "unoffending persons" would properly rest, has been for more than twenty years in the Public Service, and has during all that time held some, and during a great part of it, the highest offices in the Native Department. He is specially distinguished for his knowledge of Natives, and for his devotion to their welfare. To suppose that such a man would suddenly belie every characteristic of his life, and be guilty of the wanton cruelty to Natives imputed to him, is incredible. A character like that of Mr. McLean, so well-deserved and so labouriously earned throughout many years of faithful service,—a character to the merits of which Despatches from successive Governors to the Secretary of State abundantly testify,—should have shielded him from the grave imputations resting on no known foundation, and made with such precipitate haste.

With respect to the engagement in the village on the West Coast, Ministers cannot conceive how it is consistent with bare fact to apply to it the epithet of an "unwarranted and merciless attack "on unoffending persons." The West Coast, in the neighbourhood of Patea, has long been the scene of Native insurrections and of atrocious murders. Major McDonnell, commanding the Colonial Forces in that district, states in his Despatch in the *Gazette*, that the rebels had become so bold as to render it unsafe to move outside of the redoubt. In this state of affairs, Major McDonnell made, in spite of the smallness of his force and the inclemency of the weather, a night attack with 127 men, on a village in which the rebels were congregated, and at daybreak attacked its fortified huts. When he had captured the village, his force, including seven wounded men, were in a most critical position, as the forest path by which he had come was occupied by reinforcements of the enemy. Isolated in an unknown bush, fatigued by an arduous night march, and by the subsequent severe engagement, their return intercepted by an unseen enemy, charged with several prisoners and seven wounded men, Major McDonnell and his gallant force were still equal to the emergency. They repulsed and killed many of the enemy, and brought the wounded and the prisoners back to camp.

The description given by Lord Carnarvon of this engagement is, that "a Native village on the "West Coast, after being summoned to surrender, was attacked by a Colonial Force, and escape being "cut off, about thirty or forty persons were killed." This description is inaccurate, as the "escape cut "off" was that of the assailants and not of the assailed. No doubt the real question at issue is, whether an "unwarranted and merciless attack on unoffending persons" was made. That question is sufficiently answered in the negative by even a slight reference to events during the last six years on the West Coast. The country in the neighbourhood of Patea has been for that time the centre of sedition and fanaticism, and the scene of cold-blooded murders. The Natives have been constantly in arms against the Queen, and have never until quite recently made submission. General Cameron, with two or three thousand men, was engaged for many months in trying to reduce these Natives to submission. He entirely failed in that object. General Chute gallantly effected much, but did not complete his work. For the last twelve months the Colonial Forces (including, as is always meant by the term, Native Troops) have indefatigably laboured to stamp out the remaining embers of insurrection (ready as they are at any time to burst into flame), and to restore tranquillity. This had to be done from time to time, as opportunity offered. The Colonial Forces are not numerous enough, nor sufficiently equipped to hold a chain of out-posts, and to invest pas with two thousand men and Armstrong Artillery. Their warfare may not accord with War Regulations, but it is one necessary for and suited to local circumstances, and also one which on the East and West Coasts has already resulted in brilliant successes which have elicited the warmest commendation both from the Imperial Government and the English press, and have materially tended to the practical suppression of disturbances and to the security of life and property.

Ministers think this is a fitting occasion to remark upon the peculiar action of the Imperial Government towards the Colony:

It is true that the Colony has requested the removal of the Imperial Troops owing to the imposition of conditions antagonistic to the existence of responsible Government, to efficiency and economy, and for no other reasons. But, while acquiescing in their withdrawal, Ministers have to complain of the manner in which it has been effected. Even if it be conceded (a large concession) that, as Lord Carnarvon terms it, all the regiments other than the one Battalion proposed to be left in New Zealand, may be regarded as *in transitu*, and therefore not within the jurisdiction of the Governor of the Colony, the same reasoning cannot be applied to that one Regiment, and Ministers protest against the unconstitutional manner in which the