

No. 18.

The Hon. D. McLEAN to Dr. FEATHERSTON.

(Telegram.)

Auckland, 15th February, 1871.

To effect any arrangement of the Manawatu question, which would lead to the peaceable occupation of this district by Europeans, it was absolutely necessary that additional reserves should be made for the Natives. With the exception of 1,800 acres adjoining the award of the Native Land Court at Oraua, the greater portion of the reserve made by me is composed of sand hills, swamp, and broken bush. I have written to Mr. Kemp for an explanation of his reasons for increasing the extent of land which was deemed sufficient for the tribes living opposite to Mr. Fox's, and I hope soon to get his report. His absence at the Bay of Islands occasions some delay. I had no conception when I undertook the duty that the question was surrounded by so many difficulties—not the least among them being an attempt on the part of a considerable section of the sellers to repudiate the sale altogether. The non-sellers whose claims were reconsidered by the Court, computed the area to which they were entitled at 19,000 acres, besides which, they sought compensation for losses and for expenditure of time in vindicating their titles. These claims were all reduced to the lowest extent which the Natives would accept. Under these and many other adverse circumstances, and taking into consideration how troublesome and expensive the delay in settling these disputes had been to the interests of Wellington, I did my utmost on behalf of the Province and Colony to bring about as reasonable an adjustment of these interminable questions as could possibly be effected, consistently with a peaceable occupation of the district by European settlers. The question might have been left in abeyance, but then it would have proved a source of lingering irritation and annoyance, which at any moment might eventuate in a rupture with the Natives. I feel certain that were you on the spot, and cognizant of the increasing obstacles in the way of a settlement, you would support the only adjustment by which the evil consequences mentioned above could have been averted. I therefore feel surprised and disappointed that you propose to protest against the action taken in the matter, as interfering with the Provincial estates, especially as the Government did not move till subjected to considerable pressure from the people of the Province. It was quite obvious that the Provincial interest in the Manawatu-Rangitikei Block was valueless until the Native difficulty was removed. Previous expenses connected with this duty were defrayed by the Province, and I do not now see the justice of charging differently the surveys and subsequent expenditure connected with the settlement of the question.

I have, &c.,

His Honor Dr. Featherston, Wellington.

DONALD McLEAN.

No. 19.

His Honor W. FITZHERBERT to Mr. HALCOMBE.

MY DEAR SIR,—

Superintendent's Office, Wellington, 13th May, 1871.

Will you oblige me by furnishing me with a written statement, setting forth the various steps taken by yourself and your late colleagues with reference to the interference of the General Government in the Manawatu, particularly in elucidation of the point how far you authorized the General Government to settle the dispute by granting away Provincial Lands.

I have, &c.,

A. F. Halcombe, Esq.,
Provincial Treasurer, Wellington.WILLIAM FITZHERBERT,
Superintendent.

No. 20.

Mr. A. F. HALCOMBE to the SUPERINTENDENT, Wellington.

SIR,—

Provincial Treasury, Wellington, May 15, 1871.

In reply to your letter of the 13th instant, requesting me to state the various steps taken by the Provincial Government during the absence of Dr. Featherston, "in reference to the interference of the General Government in the Manawatu, particularly in elucidation of the point how far they authorized the General Government to settle the dispute by granting away Provincial lands," I have the honor to inform you that the mode of settlement of the Manawatu difficulty adopted by the Hon. Mr. McLean was never contemplated by the Provincial Government, and that therefore they cannot be held to have authorized the action of Mr. McLean as far as the granting away the lands of the Province is concerned.

I may also state that we object to the term "settlement of the dispute" when referring to the obstructions offered by the Natives to the Surveyors on this block, and the removal of those obstructions. The interference of the General Government was asked, not to decide any dispute as to the ownership of the land in the Manawatu (as Mr. McLean's action would imply), but to place the Provincial Government in peaceable possession of the land formally declared, after reference to the highest tribunals, to be the property of the Province. The Provincial Government always recognized that, after the proclamation by His Excellency's Government of the extinguishment of the Native title, all interference with the survey parties could only be held as being entirely illegal, provocative of a breach of the peace, and punishable with fine or imprisonment.

This being the case, the Provincial Government, in the month of December, 1869, when opposition to the survey was renewed by the Natives (being aware of the serious consequences which would result to the Colony from any open rupture, and aware of their inability as a Government to put down any determined opposition involving a resort to force), had repeated personal interviews with members of the General Government upon the subject, which resulted in the placing of the whole of their survey staff under the general directions of Mr. Buller, who, in his turn, acted under instructions from the