

1889.

NEW ZEALAND.

MR. S. LOCKE'S TRIP TO THE UREWERA COUNTRY

(REPORT OF).

*Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 20th August, 1889.**Ordered, "That Mr. S. Locke's report of his trip to the Urewera country be laid before this House, and be printed."*—(MR. KELLY.)

Mr. S. LOCKE to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Auckland, 27th April, 1889.

I have the honour, in accordance with your request, to forward the following report of my late visit to the district in the Bay of Plenty known as the Urewera country, for the purpose of endeavouring to make such arrangements as would lead to the opening-up of that part of this Island for prospecting for gold and other minerals, and for utilising the forests, &c., which are said to contain a large quantity of totara.

Accordingly on the 5th instant I proceeded to Whakatane, the outlet of that district, by the s.s. "Douglas," and arrived on Sunday the 7th. I at once opened communication by special messengers with the leading chiefs of the Tuhoe (Urewera) Tribe, sending letters to the Whenuanui, Kereru te Pukenui te Ahikaiata, and others at Ruatahuna; to Tamaikoha, Te Rakuraku, and others at Waimana; to Hetaraka, Te Makarini, and others, Ruatoki; to Hemi Raritu and others at Ohiwa; to Tutekanahau and others at Maungapohatu; and to Waikaremoana and other places, informing the chiefs of my arrival as an agent for the Government, and that I was anxious to meet them on important matters referring to their part of the country, and of my desire that they should appoint a time and place for our meeting.

On Thursday the 11th instant I received a reply stating the tribe would be glad to meet me at Ruatoki, about fifteen miles inland from Whakatane, that being the nearest settlement they had to where I then was, and asking me to proceed to that place on the following Saturday; accordingly, on that day I went to Ruatoki.

On my reaching the village I was met in the most friendly manner by those of the tribe that had arrived, but was informed that, as the people had not all collected, the distance being for some to travel from forty to fifty miles over a most mountainous forest-covered country, the meeting must be put off for a few days, to which I, of course, assented, and placed myself at their disposal as to the time; and it was not until the 17th that all had collected.

Accordingly on that day the meeting formally commenced. I would say, in passing, that I was accompanied at these meetings by Major Swindley, the only European present, who I have to thank for his great assistance throughout. The meeting lasted for two days.

I was met in the most cordial manner, in accordance with the old Maori custom. Many of the chiefs not having seen me for sixteen or eighteen years, and several having died in the interval, a great deal of speechifying, &c., was gone through. I was then asked by Kereru te Pukenui to state exactly what my object was. It was then explained that I had come by request of the Government to meet the Tuhoe Tribe on friendly terms, as some troubles had of late sprung up from various causes, and more difficulties might arise unless carefully met at the outset by a proper understanding between the Government and themselves. Amongst others was that for exploring for gold and other minerals, for timber, &c., in their part of the country; and that I, as an old friend, would suggest that they should forward a letter to the Government to the effect that they would select a certain number of chiefs and people in whom they could trust who should be empowered to receive letters from the Government authorising any person or persons to explore and make arrangements for any required object. I was met by the reply that they were a very secluded people, not accustomed to Europeans' ways, and that they were very much annoyed by the manner in which the surveyors around them had been carrying on for some time past without their knowledge or consent. As they put the point: They might be quietly cultivating at their kaingas, and suddenly receive a notice to attend a Native Land Court for the adjudication of lands within their boundaries, the surveys of which they had never heard, and such conduct would probably lead to some one being knocked on the head. As to the gold, they knew nothing and cared nothing about; but they would not have people, without their consent and knowledge, wandering about their country. To this I replied that the proposals now suggested would put them in direct communication with the Government on such a footing that these troubles could be cleared up.