

NATIVE AFFAIRS.

COPY OF A DESPATCH FROM GOVERNOR GORE BROWNE TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF
NEWCASTLE.

Government House,
Auckland, New Zealand,
20th Sept., 1859.

MY LORD DUKE,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Lord Carnarvon's Despatch No. 34 of 18th May last, and beg to express my gratitude for the clear exposition of the views of H.M.'s Government on the subject of Native Affairs generally.

No. 80.

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2. At the risk of wearying you, I will now enter at length on the subject of Waste Lands belonging to the Aboriginal Natives, as the time has arrived when it appears to me that some change must be adopted in the mode of acquiring them. The right of pre-emption over Native lands having been reserved to Her Majesty by the Treaty of Waitangi, it was reasonably assumed that the right would always be exercised when the Natives desired to sell on equitable terms. At that time and for some years after, however, the Governors had not at their disposal funds sufficient for the purpose.

3. It is true that the Middle Island was acquired for an almost nominal sum, and large tracts in the Northern Island have been purchased at prices varying between a farthing and sixpence an acre; but there still remain many millions of acres, which we now vainly desire to acquire, which might in those days have been bought at a cost too insignificant to be calculated by the acre.

4. With the increase of the European population, land has necessarily acquired additional value; the Natives have seen the lands they alienated for farthings resold for pounds; they feel that dominion and power or, as they term it, "substance" went from them with the territories they alienated, and they look with apprehension to the annihilation of their nationality as a race.

5. The consequence of this feeling has been the formation of a league to prevent the alienation of land, commenced by the tribes on the Waikato before my arrival in the Colony, and which has since been combined with the so-called King movement.

6. Assuming the whole of the Northern Island to contain twenty-six millions of acres, and that the Native title has been extinguished over seven millions, there remain nineteen millions of acres owned or occupied by about fifty-seven thousand Maories. A large portion of this consists of mountain and dense forest, but the remainder, which includes some valuable land, is greatly in excess of all their possible wants. The Europeans covet these lands and are determined to enter in and possess them—"recte si possint, si non, quocunque modo." This determination becomes daily more apparent. A member of the Auckland Provincial Council stated in the Council that the fault lay in the "present system of acquiring land from the Natives. We were called upon to leave them the best land, and sacrifice ourselves to sympathy for the Natives, and all that kind of humbug," &c., &c. "The settlers had no room for their stock, and would be obliged to set Government at defiance. Hitherto the settlers here had been a law-obeying community, but when once the Rubicon was passed, it was impossible to say how far they might go. There was something higher than the law, viz., the framers of the law, and the source of all law, the people. They had new arrivals landing here every day, and they might say, 'What right (for instance) had a parcel of Natives at Coromandel—like dogs in a manger—to keep everybody out of that rich district? People would soon begin to act on the old principle of letting land belong to those who can keep it. It was impossible to prevent the Anglo-Saxon overcoming the Natives; and the Europeans, if they could not get land with the consent, must get it without the consent of the Government.'"

This speech was highly applauded in one of the local journals, while another (the *Southern Cross*) keeps up a continual agitation on the subject of enfranchising Native lands; reminding its readers that "one well-written Address placarded at every *hauinga* in the country would raise a fever of excitement" (among the Natives) "which all the anodynes and opiates of the Native Department, would be incompetent to allay" (*Southern Cross*, 16th August, 1859).

Another journal (23rd July, 1859) says, "General Assembly vote for what are called 'Native purposes,' was a gigantic fraud."

The Tamaki settlers, after using arguments refuted by my Despatch No. 52, of 14th July last, and by the returns from the Superintendent published with their own letter, state that they must "lease lands from the Natives, leave the Province, or be ruined."

7. I have shown in the Despatch above referred to, that it is not want of land, but the want of artificial grass, or, in plain terms, want of capital to replace the indigenous fern with grass (an exotic in nearly the whole of this Province) which is the real want of the complainants. The desire to possess lands which can be made remunerative at once without expense, will not however, be diminished by an exposition of the real state of the case, and there are lands in the South of this Province which the Natives are unwilling to alienate, where grass grows naturally, and these are the lands so eagerly coveted. But even there the natural grass is so sparse and inferior that 4 or 5 acres would be required to feed a sheep, instead of one acre being sufficient for 4 or 5 sheep, as is the case when artificial grass is cultivated. I will not stop to point out how few would be satisfied if I were to consent to the leasing of these lands, how completely they would be withdrawn from the market, and for how long they would necessarily continue unimproved.