

Being in daily communication with Chiefs from all parts of New Zealand, Mr. McLean has greater opportunities of forming a correct opinion than any other person in the Colony. It would, therefore, be unwise to neglect any preparation or precaution which can be made; but I am personally inclined to take a more sanguine view of the state of affairs than he does.

I have, &c.,

His Grace the Duke of Newcastle,
&c., &c., &c.

T. GORE BROWNE.

Enclosure No. 1.

[NOTE.—*The Minute by Mr. Weld does not appear to be recorded.*]

Enclosure No. 2.

MEMORANDUM BY THE NATIVE SECRETARY.

The great mass of the Native population of the northern island of New Zealand may be considered to be in a state of disaffection. The Native tribes inhabiting the Waikato district, which, lying between Auckland and Mokau, extends inland as far as the borders of the Taupo lake, are with few exceptions determined to uphold the Maori King movement.

Their ruling idea is the preservation of a distinct nationality, and the prevention of the growth of English settlement. Notwithstanding that they have recently received reverses in their conflicts with the British troops at Taranaki, they continue to reinforce the insurgents there, and are exerting themselves to the utmost to keep them supplied with stores and ammunition.

While openly expressing their desire that the war should be confined to the Taranaki Province, as being the locality in which it originated, some of the leading chiefs of the Waikato have recently and undisguisedly urged an attack upon Auckland. They have also a design, in conjunction with other tribes whose sympathies they have enlisted, to make a simultaneous attack upon all the English settlements: but I am not prepared to say how far they are likely to act in concert in carrying out this project. They are inspired with the belief that, by attacking the British settlements, they can commit such havoc as to render the country untenable by Europeans for the purposes of peaceful occupation. They admit their inability to cope with the British troops in the open country, but feel confident that, by predatory incursions from their mountain fastnesses and naturally fortified strongholds, they can carry on a long and harassing warfare, which will eventuate in the expulsion of all those English settlers who will not acknowledge their rule.

They rely to a certain degree upon receiving the sympathy and aid of the French nation: this delusion being kept up by the assurances to that effect of a few reckless persons from that country, by Portuguese and other foreigners, and even by some English subjects, including deserters from the army, who excite the Natives by tales of imaginary and unheard of cruelties practised upon all the dark races who have yielded submission to British authority. The Natives—naturally a jealous, proud, and suspicious people—are sufficiently credulous to believe such reports, notwithstanding the efforts of the Government to assure them of their falsity. The threats, curses, and opprobrious epithets used by Europeans towards them confirm their worst suspicions. The offensive terms “bloody Maori,” “black nigger,” “treacherous savage,” are frequently applied to them; and, though uniformly kind and hospitable to all strangers, they are themselves often treated with cold indifference, and sometimes with contempt, when they visit the English towns.

The present outbreak in New Zealand is assuming wider dimensions, from the fact of there being an accumulation of small grievances which the Natives have never forgotten. War having broken out, they avail themselves of the opportunity to gratify their revengeful passions, by seeking redress according to their old customs, which I regret to find are being resuscitated.

A few of the tribes incorporated with the English, and residing within the limits of Crown territory, have so far conformed to European usages that, though not lacking grievances to resent, they prefer to observe a neutral course—neither taking an active part with nor against the Europeans. Others there are who, living remote from English settlements, and having no immediate connection with the insurgent tribes, take a more calm and impartial view of existing differences, and abstain from any interference. Even these, however, feel elated when they hear of any reverse on the part of the troops engaged against their countrymen; of which the most exaggerated statements are industriously circulated by the insurgents, in order to excite the national pride of the neutral tribes, and thus to gain more adherents to their cause.

The skill and sagacity with which the Natives select their points of attack, and the advantages afforded them by a broken and irregular country, interspersed with dense forests and luxuriant fern, and destitute of available roads, are considered by them to be fully equivalent to our larger resources and better equipment.

With a people very much guided by the influences of superstition, it is difficult to predict what phase the war may at any moment assume. This much, however, is certain: that the English settlements in New Zealand are at present in a more dangerous and precarious state than they have been at any period since the foundation of the Colony.

DONALD McLEAN.

March, 1861.