

These allegations Ministers most respectfully, but most entirely, deny. They are altogether without foundation. 1. No Minister ever suspected, or knew that it was suspected in official departments, that either Taphana or Tarahawaikē was implicated in the murder of the Merediths. 2. While the prisoners were in custody, Ministers did institute the most searching enquiry it was possible to institute, into the question whether there were any murderers among the prisoners.

Ministers might satisfy themselves with this simple denial of His Excellency's allegations. But the present opportunity seems a fair one for pointing out the manner in which His Excellency, out of the most flimsy materials, builds up the most serious charges against his Ministers—putting upon record, and often forwarding to the Secretary of State before Ministers are aware of it, allegations of grave import, for which there is barely, if at all, a shadow of foundation. They will, therefore, take the liberty of dissecting, with some precision, the three Memoranda now before them.

1. In that of the 26th instant, His Excellency states that Mr. Mackay "told him, on Friday last, that circumstances had come to his knowledge which led him to believe that Taphana was one of the murderers of the Merediths."

Ministers on this asked His Excellency whether he understood Mr. Mackay to say that the circumstances alluded to had come to his knowledge before or after the escape of the prisoners (which point involves the whole gist of His Excellency's charge against Ministers). His Excellency avoids a direct reply, by stating that "he had already said that Mr. Mackay told him that it was only recently that the suspicions attached to Taphana had come to his knowledge." Ministers, it will be observed, had not asked His Excellency whether it was "recently" or not. The escape of the prisoners was also "recent." What they asked was, whether it was "before or after the escape." His Excellency adroitly avoids a reply, by repeating the ambiguous words which Ministers asked him to explain.

Mr. Mackay has informed Ministers that he distinctly told His Excellency that it was "after the escape of the Prisoners;" and on looking at Mr. Mackay's report of his tour in the Thames district, it appears that the "circumstances" came to his knowledge on the 10th, and were reported to the Government on the 12th, while the prisoners escaped on the 9th and 10th of September. It is certainly ingenious on the part of His Excellency so to use these facts as to make them the first step in an induction by which he would prove that, before the 2nd of August, when Taphana and Tarahawaikē were sent to Kawau, Ministers suspected them of being murderers.

2. His Excellency then continues, "The Governor then made further enquiry, which resulted in his believing that a suspicion that such was the case" (i.e. that Taphana had murdered the Merediths) "had for some time existed in the Native Department."

On this Ministers requested His Excellency to state what "further enquiry" he had made, and by what officers of "The Native Department" the suspicion was entertained. His Excellency admits, in reply, that his "further enquiry" consisted in "a single question" put to Mr. Munro, chief translator in the Native Office, from which he gathered "that that gentleman had for some time known that a suspicion was entertained (not in the Native Department), that Taphana was one of the murderers." Mr. Munro's own statement is appended. It appears that what he told the Governor was, that a long time ago he heard a native, whose name he has forgotten, say casually in the Native Office that Taphana and others had murdered the Merediths; that he, Mr. Munro, jotted down the statement on a slip of paper in which he kept loose memoranda for his private use; but he thought so little of it that he never reported it officially, or made any official record of it; and he tells the Colonial Secretary that he never attached, and does not now attach, the slightest importance to it. So His Excellency's broad assertion that "a suspicion for some time existed in the Native Department," dwindles down into the fact that one gentleman of that department had heard that some one out of that department, entertained such a suspicion—or rather hazarded such a remark; and the "further enquiry," which resulted in His Excellency "believing" that "the Native Department" entertained such a suspicion, turns out to have consisted in "a single question" put to one gentleman of that department who had no suspicion himself, but had only heard of somebody else's suspicion, and which somebody else was not of the Native Department. A named logician has said, that a man cannot "believe" what he has no reason for believing. His Excellency evidently uses the word "belief" in his own case in a much wider sense, extending it to the loosest of guesses, and the most unsupported of inferences.

3. But the next example of His Excellency's ingenuity is still more striking. In his first Memorandum His Excellency barely insinuates, or rather leaves it to be inferred, that Ministers were guilty of negligence in not following up the suspicion, which they were supposed to entertain, or somebody in some department was supposed to entertain. In the second Memorandum His Excellency goes a step further. He says, "The Governor thought that it would have been a measure of the most ordinary precaution, before turning these men loose on Kawau, to have instituted enquiries in the Native Office as to whether any of them, or which of them, lay under the suspicion of having committed murder. If this had been done, *the facts*" (what facts?) "*must have come out.*" Then, in the third Memorandum, His Excellency advances another step. He says, "*he is aware that no enquiry had ever been made as to whether or not it was probable that there were amongst the prisoners some who had been implicated in the murder of Europeans.*" In the first Memorandum the allegation is left to be merely inferred; in the second it becomes an hypothesis; in the third it is broadly asserted as a matter of fact, of which "His Excellency is aware."

His Excellency having thus, by gradual stages, got to the assertion of a positive fact, Ministers requested him to state his authority for it. His Excellency's reply is remarkable: "The Governor thinks that the question is in itself one which should not be asked him. If such enquiry as alluded to has been made, it can be stated that such is the case, and that the Governor is in error. No one will be more ready or willing than the Governor to admit that he is in error, and to express his regret that he is so. He can only say that it is impossible for him to say what are all the circumstances connected with recent events, and what are all the inferences he drew from papers before him, which led him to the conclusion he stated in his Memorandum of yesterday's date; but certainly the impression upon his mind then was, and still is, that no such enquiry had been made on the point as ought, after the