

No. 3.

His HONOR the SUPERINTENDENT, Wellington, to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR—

Superintendent's Office, Wellington, 15th September, 1865.

On looking over Mr. Mantell's notes, I feel bound to notice the following mis-statements.

It is not true that I ever informed Mr. Mantell "that Mr. Buller had been instructed by Mr. Dillon Bell (Native Minister) to negotiate for Native lands at Manawatu, or that I expressed my astonishment and anger at a practice so detrimental to a magistrate's judicial efficiency having been permitted by the latter gentleman." On the contrary, Mr. Mantell was well aware that I was availing myself of Mr. Buller's assistance, both in the purchase of the Upper Manawatu Block and in the adjustment of the Rangitikei land dispute, and I have repeatedly acknowledged that the purchase of the Upper Manawatu and the virtual adjustment of the Rangitikei quarrel could scarcely have been accomplished without Mr. Buller's aid.

What I complained of privately to Mr. Mantell was, that Mr. Buller had suggested to Mr. Bell a mode by which a certain block of land at Horowenua could be brought within the operation of the Native Lands Act, notwithstanding that it formed part of the Manawatu Block. The correspondence on the subject between Mr. Bell and Mr. Buller was shown me by Mr. Buller, when he was accompanying me up the Manawatu for the purpose of completing the purchase of the Upper Manawatu Block.

The description of the manner in which my negotiations with the Natives were conducted, which Mr. Mantell says was given by Mr. Buller, is in every respect untrue. No such arrangement as that alleged, ever existed between myself and Mr. Buller. I never offered any price whatever to the owners of the Upper Manawatu. I never proposed or dreamt of proposing that the value of the land should be assessed by Mr. Buller, and I need scarcely add that Mr. Buller would have indignantly scouted and denounced as a gross personal insult to himself, any proposal that after obtaining the consent of the Natives to his fixing the amount of the purchase money, he should "then ascertain from the Commissioner what price he was really ready to give—say £3000—and then give that as his award." I simply requested Mr. Buller when the Natives came to him, to advise them not to make any exorbitant demands; and neither Mr. Buller nor any other person knew what sum I was prepared to give. When the Natives at last offered to take £12,000, I at once accepted their offer.

I have, &c.,

I. E. FEATHERSTON,

Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

No. 4.

MEMORANDUM by MR. MANTELL.

In my notes I gave the impression conveyed to me by Dr. Featherston's somewhat mysterious communication in 1863. I see no reason to alter it. As to Mr. Buller's share in recent negotiations, I have only stated the account given by him to me, without pledging myself to the truth of that account. I by no means wish to accuse the Land Purchase Commissioner of any knowledge of the course which Mr. Buller said he pursued. I may add that to the best of my recollection, I was not aware that Mr. Buller was engaged in the purchase of lands during my tenure of office in 1863.

19th September, 1865.

W. MANTELL.

No. 5.

W. BULLER, Esq., R.M., to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 27th September, 1865.

Having noticed in the "Correspondence relating to the Manawatu Block," (Sessional Papers E. No. 2, p. 8,) a statement by Mr. Mantell, the late Native Minister, in which I am represented as having said to him what I never had the remotest idea of saying, I trust that you will allow me the opportunity of vindicating myself, and that the Government will do me the justice to add this letter to the printed correspondence now before the Assembly.

Mr. Mantell states that when he spoke to me on the subject of the land purchases in which I had been assisting Dr. Featherston, I described the system of these transactions as follows:—"The Natives and Dr. Featherston would commence negotiations about a block of land, for which the Commissioner would offer a certain price, say £1000, and the Natives demand, say £10,000. The Commissioner would then propose that the value should be assessed by Mr. Buller, and on the Natives assenting to this reference, that gentleman would ascertain from the Commissioner what price he was really ready to give, say £3000, and give that as his award. Of course I pointed out to Mr. Buller the danger of his losing the respect of the Natives, should the character of his awards ever become known to them; and was myself confirmed in my determination to check the continuance of such traffic on the part of Resident Magistrates."

Mr. Mantell evidently refers to a conversation that I had with him at the Wellington Club, in March last. He appears however to have totally misunderstood what I said to him on that occasion, and I certainly did not understand him to refer in any way during that conversation, or at any other time, to the character of my awards.

I deny ever having made the statement alleged either to Mr. Mantell or to anyone else. I had never had the smallest intention of arbitrating between the Commissioner and the Natives. No suggestion of the kind had ever been made either by Dr. Featherston, or by me. I had never pretended to the Natives that I possessed the power of making an award, nor did I know what price Dr. Featherston was prepared to give for the Upper Manawatu Block till the day on which the purchase was effected.