

3. Whatever may have been the real motives or the assigned excuse of Purukutu for the murder itself, it is evident that he is supported by a band of followers who would be likely, perhaps would be glad, to convert the defence of Purukutu into a contest with the Waikato settlers and with the Government. In my Despatch No. 37, of the 7th ultimo, I intimated that Purukutu was supported by some sixty armed followers. Later information leads me to believe that the number of his adherents was not exaggerated, for an important and reliable chief, Hone Te One, has since written to Mr. McLean, naming several chiefs by whom it is alleged the murder was planned, and announcing that their party numbered one hundred men.

4. It is further probable that Purukutu is not really discountenanced by Tawhiao, but that, if attacked, he would have been speedily defended by the whole strength of the tribe to which Tawhiao belongs. The equivocal conduct of Tawhiao and of Manuhiri, as disclosed in my former Despatches to your Lordship, has been followed by behaviour which shows plainly that those chiefs would not assist in the capture of the murderers, much less surrender them to the officers of justice, unless constrained to do so either by a warlike force or by the combined influence of powerful chiefs, whom they might be unable to resist. Mr. Mackay has been escorted safely back from the King district, under the orders of Rewi, but he failed to obtain an interview with Tawhiao; and in answer to plain questions since proposed by letter to Tawhiao, inviting him to declare whether he would either deliver up the murderers or, if not, whether he, Tawhiao, would stand aside and allow the police and their escort quietly to arrest the murderers, merely evasive answers have been returned. In one of those answers it is, indeed, stated that Purukutu was to be fetched to Te Kuiti (Tawhiao's residence), but in a remarkable conversation which Mr. Mackay has had with Rewi, since Mr. Mackay's return from the King district, at Rewi's own place, that chief expressed his belief that Tawhiao meant only to protect Purukutu. Meanwhile Manuhiri, who made such demonstrations of grief or anger at the attack upon Mr. Mackay's life, has since, in his letters both to Mr. McLean and Major Mair, invented excuses to palliate, if not to justify, the attack upon Mr. Mackay. And, whatever be the motives of those chiefs, assuming that Tawhiao is not actuated by any active hostility to the settlers on the Waikato, but merely resolves to resist the authority of the Queen and of her Courts of Justice, I am brought to the same conclusion, namely, that if the Government had hastily sent an armed force into the King district to apprehend Purukutu and his associates in the murder of Sullivan, a conflict would have ensued in which the lives of innocent people might have been sacrificed, and which might even have resulted in a settlers' war.

5. No course could be wise that should be calculated to precipitate such a catastrophe. The Government have therefore continued to deal with this outrage upon the principle explained to your Lordship in my former Despatches, to put it aside as a vapouring challenge of a few disloyal Natives, but to seek the first available opportunity for apprehending and punishing the murderers. Meanwhile, we have every reason to believe that the good-will of surrounding tribes is being, by this forbearance, more and more conciliated, and that, if the King Natives should attack either of the European settlements, we may rely on the support of influential chiefs and of their hapus sufficient to crush them. In my former Despatches I mentioned some of the evidences of this disposition in the Native mind. Since then, those assurances of support have been increased, and the powerful Ngapuhis, of tried loyalty, whose prowess has in former years been felt by Waikato, have tendered their services to the Government in case those services should be needed. Meanwhile, precautionary measures have been taken. The small force of Armed Constabulary in the Upper Waikato district has been increased, and a strong earthen redoubt is being raised upon a well-chosen site within the boundary of the Queen's land, near the scene of the recent murder, to be garrisoned by a mixed force of Constabulary and Maoris. Women and children have for the present come in from a few outlying farms, although we have reason to believe that the deliberate action of the Government, far from encouraging the Hauhaus, is filling them with distrust, if not alarm, and is detaching more and more of their supporters from Tawhiao and Manuhiri.