

Colonial Secretary's Office,
Auckland, February 10, 1855.

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Honor's letters of the 8th and 15th ult., on the subject of the disturbances amongst the natives at Taranaki, and in reply his Excellency, the Officer Administering the Government, has directed me to state that those documents have been laid before the Executive Council, and that the Government has arrived at the following opinion upon the whole question.

As the 58th Regiment, the troops now stationed in Auckland, has recently received notice to be in readiness to embark for England, the Government does not consider itself justified, in the absence of imminent danger to the settlement of New Plymouth, in incurring the responsibility of detaching any portion of that regiment to Taranaki, and a considerable time must elapse, before a portion of the 65th Regiment, at present at Wellington and at Wanganui, could be detached on that service.

Assuming troops to be at once available, the Government doubts the expediency of *at present* making Taranaki a Military Post. The disturbances have been confined to the natives themselves, and the Government believes that it is essential to the present safety of, and to the future progress of the settlement, that neither the settlers nor the Government should be drawn into the quarrel, and that the stationing of troops in the district would almost certainly be followed by the commencement of hostilities, and that the amount of force likely to be available for service in that locality, would be inadequate to protect the property of numerous settlers scattered over a considerable extent of country, in the event of the district becoming the scene of a protracted native war.

Looking also to the unfavorable nature of the Country for Military operations, and to the difficulty of access by sea, the Government thinks that every effort should be used ; to avoid the risk of hostilities with the natives in the Taranaki district.

The Government is of opinion that an officer of intelligence and conversant with the native character, should, as soon as possible be despatched to Taranaki, charged with the duty of occupying himself constantly among the various parties, by persuasion and argument, in endeavouring to keep the peace, and to remain in the district until relieved or recalled.

The Government will also authorise the Resident Magistrate to incur such reasonable expense as may be necessary, for the construction of a stockade or block-house as a place of refuge, if the Magistrates think the erection of such a building under all circumstances expedient, and also the expense of such other precautionary measures as may be deemed necessary for the safety of the settlers, and he will be instructed to take such means as may be necessary for the safe keeping of the arms, &c., deposited in the settlement, at the same time care should be taken that they be kept in repair and in readiness for immediate use in case of emergency.

With this object in view it is important that the Magistrate without making any demonstration of preparation, should be prepared to select from amongst the community those who may be most able and willing to make use of arms in case of need.

As it appears that the natives, in various parts of the country, have been supplied with arms and ammunition, notwithstanding the provisions of the Arms Ordinance, a circular will be addressed to every Resident Magistrate and Justice of the Peace in the Colony, calling upon him to use his utmost endeavours to prevent and punish infringement of that ordinance, for as long as arms are put into the hands of the natives, it will be impossible to answer for the peace of the country.

As the disturbances in Taranaki appear to have had their origin in a dispute about the title to land, the Land Purchase Department will be instructed to use great caution in entering into any negotiation for the purchase of land, until the views of the various claimants should have been ascertained.

As regards the purchase of lands from the natives, the Government is of opinion that to make Taranaki a Military Post would tend to operate unfavor-