

The first proposal for the erection of a separate Native state under the Waikato Chief Te Whero Whero, (now generally called Potatau) seems to have been made as far back as 1854. There was at first considerable diversity of opinion amongst the promoters of the movement, and great consequent uncertainty as to its precise objects. Many well-disposed Natives seem to have joined in it without any thought of disaffection towards the British Government, and purely, or principally, with a view to establish some more powerful control over the disorders of their race than the Colonial Government has found it possible to attempt. But there are others whose objects have been, from the beginning, less loyal. These men have viewed with extreme jealousy the extension of the settled Territory and the increase of the European population. Various influences have combined to augment the effect on their minds of this natural feeling. The lower class of settlers, sometimes wantonly, sometimes under provocation, have held out threats of a coming time when the whole race will be reduced to a servile condition. Of late a degraded portion of the Newspaper press has teemed with menaces of this kind, and with scurrilous abuse of the Natives, and all who take an interest in their welfare. False notions respecting the purposes of the British authorities have been industriously spread by Europeans inimical to the Government, and whose traitorous counsels enable them to maintain a lucrative influence over their credulous Native clients. And there may have been some few honest friends of the Maories, who, looking only to the better side of the agitation, have given countenance to a movement which, in their opinion, promised to promote the establishment of law and order and the advance of civilization, and to afford a beneficial stimulus to the languishing energy of the Maori people.

The Government at one time entertained a hope—a hope now deferred, but not abandoned—that the good elements in the King movement might gain the ascendancy, and become the means of raising the Native population in the social scale. It must, however, be admitted that the agitation has of late assumed a most dangerous phase.

The two objects of the league may now be affirmed to be, first, the subversion of the Queen's sovereignty over the Northern Island of New Zealand, and, secondly, the prohibition of all further alienation of Territory to the Crown.

As regards the first object, the more advanced partisans of the Maori king now distinctly declare, that the Queen of England may, for aught they know, be a great sovereign in her own country, but that, here, in New Zealand, she shall become subordinate to their Native monarch from whom the British Governor shall take his instructions: the utmost conceded to the Queen is an equal standing with King Potatau.

The absolute prohibition of further land sales is a necessary part of the new policy. For it is plainly seen that unless the further colonisation of the country can be put a stop to, the Europeans will shortly outnumber the Natives even in the Northern Provinces.

The general sentiment of the New Zealanders with respect to their territorial possessions entirely harmonizes with the views of the King makers. The Maori feels keenly the parting with his rights over the lands of his ancestors. The expressive words of the Deeds of Cession declare that, under the bright sun of the day of sale, he has wept over, and bidden adieu to, the territory which he cedes to the Queen. It is in vain to assure him that the land remains open to him upon the same terms as to the European settler. He cannot see the matter in this light. The soil, with all its memories, and the dignity conferred by its possession, have passed over to the stranger; and in its place he has acquired only perishable goods, or money which is speedily dissipated. The land-holding policy of the King party is popular, because it secures to every Native the occupation, in savage independence, of extensive tracts of wild land.

When the first emigrant ships arrived at Port Nicholson, and landed their hundreds of colonists, the Natives are said to have wept at the sight. They had been told, but had not believed, that the foreigners were coming to settle in great numbers upon the land which the agent of the Colonising Company had just acquired. They had not realised to themselves that their country was about to be occupied by a civilized race in such force as to be able to hold its ground in spite of Native resistance. The New Zealanders have always been fond of having amongst them a few Europeans, dependent on their good will. But they love to remain masters. It is the notion of the King party that the settlers in New Zealand should be placed much on the same footing as the European squatter in a Native village, whose knowledge and mechanical skill procure for him a certain amount of respect and influence, but whose homestead is held on sufferance, and who is obliged to comport himself accordingly. "Send away the Governor and the soldiers," they say, "and we will take care of the Pakehas."

The old chief Te Whero Whero, who has been a firm ally of the British Government, has been removed by his relatives of the new faction from his late residence at Mangere, near Auckland, to a place called Ngaruawahia, at the confluence of the Waikato with its principal feeder, the Waipa. There, his supporters have established the old man (who seems to lend himself unwillingly to the farce) in a kind of regal state. The deputation despatched from Taranaki to solicit support for W. Kingi were clothed for the occasion in a uniform dress. They approached in military order. At a given signal all fell on their knees, whilst some one in a loud voice recited the text "Love the Brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King!" After the interview the deputation retired, facing towards the Royal presence. They appeared to have been well drilled in this ceremonial.

The absurdity of these pretensions does not render them less dangerous. Unfortunately they are supported in the minds of the Natives by an overweening opinion of their own warlike skill and resources. It must be confessed that the imperfect success of military operations in New Zealand has given some countenance to the Natives' fixed opinion of their own superiority. In the debates of the Maori Council at Ngaruawahia, the experience of the wars against Heki and Rangihaeata, and of the Wanganui war, are constantly referred to as showing how little is to be feared from the prowess and the boasted warlike appliances of the Pakeha.