

The fact then which appears to be established, is the willing assent of a large proportion of the Maori Race to the establishment of some system of Government amongst themselves.

Mr. Richmond passes over very lightly the causes which have induced a people consisting of Clans or Septs, analogous to those which used to occupy the Highlands of Scotland, to forget their old feuds and to unite together for a common object. He says little or nothing as to the origin of the wish on the part of the Maori, to subvert the Queen's authority over the Northern Island, and but little more as to the foundation of their wish to prohibit all further alienation of land to the Crown—might not however the movement have its origin in the conviction of the Natives that their position as nominal subjects of the Queen, while it brought them under a variety of limitations, preventing them from selling their land to private individuals, and subjecting them to taxation at the hands of the white population occupying the sea-ports, did absolutely nothing for their benefit, and was the means of preventing the introduction of more wholesome social arrangements, having a tendency as administered to retain them in the position of isolated savage Tribes, instead of assisting to raise them to the rank of a people? And with regard to the alienation of land, might there not exist a well founded distrust of a Government, which, while it will not permit the sale of land to individuals, does, by holding out inducements which few savages are able to resist, acquire the article which the Maori has to sell at a very low rate (6d. or 1s. an acre) which article is instantly retailed to the white man at 10s. an acre.

The fact is that Mr. Richmond's letter is based on the assumption that New Zealand is a Colony of white people, with whom unluckily there happens to be mixed up a portion of the Native race strong enough to make itself respected. His policy and that of his colleagues would lead to steps which, if they were backed up by England, would in a short time annihilate the Maori race, and permit the occupation by the white man of the rich land yet in native hands, upon which for years past greedy and longing eyes have been cast.

My view, however, of the Maori is very different—he is the subject of the Queen, and as such is entitled to have his rights respected, his feelings considered; he has shown an aptitude for civilization which ought to be encouraged; his efforts to raise himself in the social scale should be assisted. If this policy were carried out steadily and consistently, all causes of disaffection would soon be done away with; there would be an end to these petty measures, which, while they cause a large expenditure of money, result in nothing but an aggravation of the feeling of hostility between the races. The Government would, it is true, be abused by certain classes of the white population—the land speculators might grumble, but I feel convinced that the prosperity of the Colony, and the happiness of the people would be promoted by such a change of system.

You may say that all this is Utopian, that it supposes a state of things which cannot exist. This, however, would be to beg the question. You may, however, very fairly ask by what means it is proposed to work out such a re-organization of society. If you recollect, when I was with you in 1857, we were talking of the policy to be adopted towards the Maories, and I then suggested that your legislation should be based upon the positive fact that the inhabitants of the colony consisted of two distinct races, whose amalgamation, however desirable it might be, could not be expected to take place for very many years. My opinion now is much the same as it was then, and the late occurrences have only served to give greater distinctness and precision to that which in 1857 was more an instinctive feeling than a carefully-formed opinion.

You have now as a fact the establishment of something analogous to a general government among the Maories, a recognition on their part of the necessity of some paramount authority: this is a step in the right direction; do not ignore it. Do not, on the ground that some evil may possibly spring from it, make the Natives suspicious of your motives by opposing it, but avail yourself of the opportunity to introduce some more of the elements of good government among them. Suggest to them the necessity of defining and limiting the power of the person who has been elected as the Chief or King (I should not quarrel with the name) of establishing some system of legislation, simple, of course, at first, but capable of being modified and improved, but do not attempt to introduce the complicated arrangements suited to a civilized and educated people; recognize publicly and openly the Maories not merely as individual subjects of the Queen, but as a race, a body whose interests you are bound to respect and promote, and then give to that body the means of deciding what those interests are, and of submitting them in a proper form for your consideration. This you may say will be very well for the future, but how will it affect the issue of the present quarrel between the Government and the Maories? It appears to me that it will have a most material operation upon the combination of the Maories. If Potatau and his abettors are made aware that there is a prospect of obtaining by legitimate means a recognition of their position and an acknowledgment of their rights, they will hardly be induced to plunge into a contest in which they must eventually be worsted. They will withdraw from the present contest, and leave you to deal with Kingi and his immediate adherents, and these, when they find themselves unsupported by the other tribes, will speedily be brought to submission.

The first effect, of course, of the new system of policy will be the cessation of purchases of land from the Maories. They will decline to sell, and were I in your place, I should be in no hurry to buy. In proportion, however, as the Maori gets more civilized, will his appetite for gain overpower his nationality, and he will be found in a short time quite willing to part with his land to purchasers who will give him a better price for it than his Native friends. I do not therefore believe the prohibition of sales to the Government would prevail for any length of time, in case the Government can be persuaded to give the full value for the land, but you will have to give up your present practice of purchasing land at a cheap rate from some of your subjects, and of retailing it at a high rate to others—in fact the Government must show itself impartial, and if circumstances compel it to limit the power of the Maori to sell to any but the Government, the latter must give him the full market value of his land, less of course, the costs of survey, &c.