

“Waikato and Ngatimaniapoto—Salutations to you! It is not peace that has brought me here: it is because of the distracted state of the country that I have come to see you. I do not wish to deceive you by talking of peace when we may have discord; but let what may happen, whether good or evil, let us clearly understand each other. There is no reason why we should not now decide between good and evil; both have been in existence, and have been going side by side in this Island for a long time. I am no stranger to you; I have talked with your old chiefs—the great trees of the forest,—now passed away. They are gone, we are still here, and I now talk to you as I have frequently done before. We have been enemies, and fought against each other—we may do so again—but is this any reason why we should not, on this occasion, have our fight out in words, in the broad light of day, and then determine whether good or evil is to prevail? It matters not whether I am here by invitation or not; here I am. We are now speaking face to face. I recognize the efforts you have recently made in preserving order in this district. When at Wellington I heard that you had exerted yourselves and had expelled that murderer, Te Kooti, upon which I wrote a letter to your son Matutaera, expressing gratification at the course you had taken. That was a step in the right direction. I want to know if we cannot act together to suppress crime and outrage? If we unite in this object we can do it effectually. You have lately adopted that course. Tamati Manuhiri—I considered it was your place to speak first. You and I are no strangers—we have talked together frequently in times gone by. Why are you now silent? Is it because you consider we are enemies? Should that be your feeling, it is no reason why we should not now talk freely together, that there may be no mistake as to our intentions. If it is to be evil, let it be understood—if peace, let it be proclaimed. My thought is, let the evil be cast away, and let us hold to the good. It is now for you to speak and express your thoughts.”

After the conclusion of this speech there was a long silence. At length Rewi came forward, and addressing the Natives said: “Friends, this is the man—this is Mr. McLean. He has come to speak to Potatau.” Here he chaunted a song, by way of invocation to the spirits of the past; then, turning to Mr. McLean, he said, “There is nothing to be said, except welcome, welcome, come and see us.” He then shook hands and sat down.

There was another long interval taken up in some discussion carried on in a low tone amongst the chiefs.

Rewi then rose, and as if speaking for and at the request of the others present, he said earnestly and emphatically: “This is my word. Kati—Kati—Kati me mutu. Cease—Cease—Cease (fighting), let it end; and here is another word: let my land at Taupo be restored; you have got the men, but leave the land with me. Te Heuheu is in your hand; he has been foolish—deal mercifully with him and let him be liberated. I have yet another word: Te Hura—has he not been sufficiently punished for his evil doing? Let Te Hura be given to me—that is all. Now do you answer me.”

Mr. McLEAN replied: “As to your first word, Rewi, ‘Cease—Cease—Cease,’ I say yes; do you cease on your part, and let all secret and other murders be at an end. If you cause this to be done by all the tribes under your influence, and assist in the work of restoring order, I will do my part; then in reality will peace be established, a peace which shall not afterwards be broken. With reference to your request about Taupo, no land has been taken there; the object of sending troops there was not to take land, but to pursue and punish murderers, and to protect those tribes who adhere to the Government. They are the owners of Taupo, and nothing will be undertaken with the lands of Taupo without their consent. Should you be willing to go to Taupo I will meet you there, and, in concert with the chiefs of that place, will settle that question. As for Te Heuheu, he will be released. With respect to your request that Te Hura may be liberated, I saw Te Hura in Auckland, and received a letter from him, asking to be released. It can be done; but should he be given over to your charge, and goes wrong—what then? Will you be answerable for him?”

Rewi replied: “I will; I do not want Te Heuheu—he belongs to another people; but I wish to see Te Hura here;” and, addressing the Waikatos he said—“Have you nothing to say to Mr. McLean? Is it a small matter that he has come so far to see us? This is the repository of the thoughts, and the person who is able to settle hard and difficult questions.”

Mr. McLEAN: “I have a word to say to you about Te Kooti. Rewi was to blame for accompanying him. You did right to expel that murderer from your district. Have nothing to do with him or his work; leave him to his fate, the punishment due to his many murders—the murder of men, women, and children.”

Rewi replied: “I shall have a word to say to you at some future day on this subject. Te Kooti is at present in the mountains somewhere. Should he not be caught by your soldiers, and comes to me, and is peaceful, I shall not molest him; but should he be troublesome in my district, I will hand him over to you.”

Mr. McLEAN: “Give him up to me.”

Rewi: “I have fifty of his men living with me; do not you seek to attach blame to me on their account, or demand them of me to be tried on account of Te Kooti’s crimes. You blame me for accompanying Te Kooti. I did so to see him out of my district. I did not wish to shield him from you when beyond my boundaries.”

Mr. McLEAN: “With regard to the fifty men that are with you, so long as they remain quiet I will not interfere with those men. I want the head one, for he is the cause of the evils under which we have lately been suffering. You must look after them, and let them work and plant food. I have one more word to say to you before we part, and that is, that you should select a chief from amongst your number—a man that you can trust, to assist the Government in putting a stop to the misunderstandings which have so frequently arisen. I should think, if you do this, you will be more satisfied with the action of the Government, and know better what is taking place. That chief could see the arrangements now made, carried into effect, and keep you advised of all that is going on. Do you carefully consider this proposal. I do not wish you to assent in a hurry. When you have considered it, and made up your minds, write to me.”