

Simultaneously the following telegram was being sent by Mr. Fox to the Provincial Secretary :—

“ Mr. McLean has practically settled the matter. McDonald, as agent for the claimants, and all the principal ringleaders of his followers, have accepted 1,500 acres at Oroua and Rakehau, in addition to the quantity awarded by the Court, and have bound themselves to offer no opposition to the occupation of the block. The Kakariki and Reureu people have still to be settled with ; but they are chiefly sellers, and Dr. Featherston always intended to make reserves for them, though excluded by the Court. I do not think there will be any difficulty with them. There are also some additional reserves to be given to the sellers, Rangitane and Ngatiapa, but not considerable. The province will get more than nine-tenths of the whole block after deducting all that the sellers and non-sellers receive, either by award of Court, Dr. Featherston’s reserves, or Mr. McLean’s additions. I look upon it as a most favourable settlement for the province and the colony at large.”

But the Provincial authorities did not see it in the same light. The Provincial Secretary immediately telegraphed :—

“ 12 noon. Received your telegram. Extent of concessions is alarming until we know the character of the country given up. Chief Surveyor believes that the alteration of the northern boundary a few miles to the southward gives the great bulk of the land ceded. Is this the case? And does the settlement include the Himatangi dispute? I wish to have more particulars before communicating your telegram to the Council, which sits to-day at 3 p.m.”

To which Mr. Fox replied :—“ I do not understand what you mean by ‘ the extent of concessions being alarming.’ The province will get ten-elevenths of the district after all reserves by the Court, Dr. Featherston, and Mr. McLean. I consider the settlement as a most favourable one, and if the Provincial Government is not satisfied it does not deserve to have an acre. The northern boundary is not altered.”

And three days afterwards, on the 28th November, the following further communication was received from Mr. Fox :—

“ The long vexed dispute about the Manawatu may be now considered finally settled. Mr. McLean, after a fortnight’s hard work, finished a series of meetings on Saturday, at which he succeeded in satisfying them as well as their agent, Mr. McDonald, at a very small sacrifice of reserves ; and they have pledged themselves, in writing, to give no further trouble, and to assist in the colonization of the country. The whole block is estimated at 220,000 acres, of which 20,000 have been returned to the Natives, including the awards of the Court, and the reserves made by Dr. Featherston. Thus the province gets ten-elevenths of the district. This event is not only of vital consequence to Wellington, but to the whole colony, as it obviates all risk of future disturbances, and will entirely detach the Cook Strait Natives from the King party. Mr. McLean is entitled to the greatest credit for the tact, judgment, and firmness exercised by him.”

In the meantime, the Provincial Council had met. On the 28th November, the following telegram from Mr. Fox was read, and entered in the Journals :—

“ The Manawatu affair was finally settled on Saturday at a great meeting at the Reureu, a previous one having been held at Kakariki the day before. The whole block is estimated at 220,000 acres. There are about 600 resident Natives. Including what the Court awarded, the Featherston reserves, and what Mr. McLean has given them, they will receive about 20,000 acres, leaving to the Province the balance, or 200,000. There were only three possible courses : 1st, to fight for it, which neither the Government nor the Assembly would do ; 2nd, to render settlement possible, by satisfying the Natives, as Mr. McLean has done ; or, 3rd, to let it stand over for years. The course pursued has been by far the best and cheapest of the three, and will not only advance the prosperity of this coast a hundredfold, but tell on the Native question all over the island. The grumbling Hauhaus on this coast have no longer any motive to support the King, and will soon forget his very existence. Mr. McLean did his work with great tact and judgment, and deserves great credit. For several days it appeared utterly hopeless, and he quite despaired of a satisfactory solution. His perseverance and firmness were the cause of his success. Had he failed, the Province would not have got the district on any terms for the next twenty years.”

Beyond ordering this telegram to be entered on the Journals, the Council took no step in reference to Mr. McLean’s action. The Superintendent was expected to arrive soon from England ; and after passing an Appropriation Bill, the Council separated on the 1st February, 1871, and did not sit again till it was formally reassembled on the 2nd March.

In the meanwhile, steps were being taken to carry Mr. McLean’s arrangements into effect : but the result was quite unexpected, ending as it did in large additional reserves being granted to the Natives by Mr. Kemp, the officer of his department whom Mr. McLean, being unable to remain longer in the district himself, had charged with the completion of his work. On the 2nd December, Mr. McLean, being then at Wanganui, had given clear instructions to Mr. Kemp as to the reserves he had made. Certain “ large cultivations ” were directed to be “ secured to the Natives in the places they had occupied along the banks of the river,” but they were to be told that “ while the Government would make sufficient provision for their actual wants, they were not to expect any lands, not being cultivated, extending back from the first range of hills.”