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A Sequel to 'One of England's Little Wars'

Octavius Hadfield

First published by Williams and Norgate in 1861

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ISBN 978-1-927288-40-5

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A SEQUEL TO

"ONE OF ENGLAND'S LITTLE WARS:"

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BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE

REAL ORIGIN OF THE WAR IN NEW ZEALAND,

ITS PRESENT STAGE,

AND THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE COLONY.

BY

OCTAVIUS HADFIELD,

ARCHDEACON OF KAPITI, NEW ZEALAND.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,

14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON; AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

1861.

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This copy of the original edition is published by the Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 1967.

NOTE.

The subjoined letter, addressed by Archdeacon Hadfield to the Editor of "The Times," was forwarded to that journal immediately after the arrival of the last mail from New Zealand via Marseilles, but the insertion is apparently refused. The public will be better able to form their own opinion of the Editor's want of fairness in this matter, when it is remembered that his columns are so frequently open to articles and letters defending the policy of the war, and the Governor's proceedings in relation thereto.

London, May 24, 1861.

Recently published,

ONE OF ENGLAND'S LITTLE WARS. A Letter to the Duke of Newcastle, by OCTAVIUS HADFIELD, Archdeacon of Kapiti, New Zealand. 8vo. 1s.

THE WAR IN NEW ZEALAND. By WILLIAM FOX, Member of the House of Representatives, Auckland, N.Z. Sept. 1860. 8vo. 1s.

Printed Itek-offset in New Zealand by John McIndoe Ltd. Dunedin.

A SEQUEL,

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ETC.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES."

Otaki, New Zealand,

Feb. 26, 1861.

SIR,

As I observe that my name has been repeatedly brought before the public in your columns, in connection with New Zealand matters, I trust you will allow me to make a few observations on the present state of this Colony.

When I see the efforts that have been made by the Local Government to mislead and deceive the Colonial Office, I cannot be surprised that a very simple subject should have appeared confused and complicated. I endeavoured to guard the British public from being misled, by publishing a letter to the Duke of Newcastle, which appears to have attracted a little notice after some of the predictions contained in it began to be fulfilled: probably when all these have been realized, it will be a matter of regret with those whom it most concerns, that it had not attracted more. I now write with a view of eliminating, from what appears to have been re-

garded in England as a complicated question, all that is extraneous and irrelevant; and of recalling attention to the real origin of the war, its present stage, and the future prospects of the Colony.

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It must be quite evident to all who have paid the least attention to the subject, that Governor Browne blundered into the war; that he had no notion when he first took possession of Waitara, and wrote to the Secretary of State, saying that he intended to hold it by means of a block-house, to be defended by twenty men, that he was about to involve Great Britain in a war with the whole Maori population. Nor can it be doubted that the Governor was led into the blunder he committed by underhand and sinister influence. I have seen a letter from Mr. Parris, the local land-commissioner, dated 1858, in which he says that there was then "a dishonourable and treacherous conspiracy to drive William King from Waitara." For a time Governor Browne resisted the pressure put upon him, but he at length gave way.

Strenuous efforts are now being made to defend the war, on the ground that there was a Maori-King movement; and that there was a disposition on the part of the Natives to resist the law. It would be wholly beside the question to discuss the real value of these reasons, now put forth in justification of the war, because it is notorious that these had no connection whatever with it. That the King-movement had nothing to do with the origin of the

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war is clear, from the fact that the Governor himself at the time the war was begun did not regard it as a serious movement. He publicly stated in my neighbourhood, in the year 1859, to a large assembly of Natives – several Europeans also being present – that he did not regard the movement as important, and that he did not intend to oppose it. And when he subsequently, since the war began, in his address to the assembly of Chiefs at Auckland, denounced it as an act of hostility to the Government, it was thrown in his teeth by a friendly tribe that he had encouraged it. I cite from their answer to the Governor's speech, as given in the official report in the Maori Messenger. "This is another subject – the Waikato movement: Hearken to us. The fault is your own. Some time ago we informed you of its commencement, and that Potatau was set up as king. You answered that you did not believe in it, and that it was mere child's-play.... This is your fault. Had you extinguished it [the Maori-King movement] some time back, it would have disappeared."

But, besides, it has been officially stated, and it is well known, that stringent instructions were given by Governor Browne to the officer in command of the forces, not to attack William King except on the particular block of disputed land at Waitara. It is also well known that the officer in command was cautioned by the Governor not to take any active proceedings against William King, lest,

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by the death of some Waikato man, the Maori-king party should take up the quarrel.

I have no hesitation in avowing, that I heard these facts from the commanding officer himself. With these facts undisputed, it cannot be necessary for me to argue that the acquisition of this particular block of land, and not the suppression of the King-movement – (with which let it be remembered that William King, as it is now admitted by all, had no connection until after the commencement of the war) – was the object aimed at by the hostile movement on Waitara. Of course, the Governor and all concerned with him are thoroughly ashamed at what they have done, and desire to mislead the Colonial Office and the public, by saying that it was needful to enter into a war for the purpose of crushing the King-movement; but the assertion is notoriously at variance with facts.

The other reason assigned for the war is not more tenable. There was no resistance of the law on the part of William King and those acting with him; nor is there anything to warrant the assumption, that he would have resisted a decision of a Court of law.

It is a curious but an important feature of the present war, that the Natives regard themselves as fighting in support of law and order, in opposition to the illegal conduct of Governor Browne; and there can be no doubt that they are right in this view of the subject. The universal complaint heard

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from them is, that all minor matters are regularly adjudicated on; but a man's land, which he has inherited from remote ancestors, is taken away at the caprice of the Governor, or even by a subordinate land-agent. When, therefore, it is asserted that the Queen's sovereignty and the supremacy of the law is being contended for in the present war, it is so gross an attempt to misrepresent the real character of the contest, that it has done much to destroy all confidence in the Government, as it is manifest to every one that the only question at issue was the title to a particular piece of land. Had it really been the object of Governor Browne to maintain the Queen's sovereignty in that dignity which is highly desirable, is it to be believed that he would have selected a disputed block of land claimed by a loyal and peaceable Chief as a means of testing it? Is it to be believed, that great zeal for Her Majesty's sovereignty was uppermost in Governor Browne's mind when, in March 1859, at the time when he first lent himself to the project of ousting William King from Waitara, he made the following remarks, which I cite from an official document?

"Had he (the Governor) been in New Zealand when Katatore slew Rawiri, he would have had him arrested and brought before the Judge, and the Judge had sentenced him to be hanged: – that he had not thought proper to arrest Ihaia, because though the murders to which he was a party were horrible and disgraceful, yet they admitted of some

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extenuation, inasmuch as they were committed for retribution for the murder of Rawiri. All this, however, now belongs to the past: but, for the future, he had determined that every man (whether he be European or Pakeha), who might commit any violence or outrage within the European boundaries, should be arrested and taken before the Judge, and the sentence of the Judge, whatever it might be, should be carried into effect."

Was this attempt to cast a slur on an absent predecessor in office dignified, or was it likely to cause increased respect for the Government? But what are the Maories to understand by the assertion that the war – in their opinion unjustly commenced for the purpose of obtaining a piece of land coveted by the settlers, and one which the Governor confesses was "necessary for the consolidation of the Province" – was undertaken for the purpose of maintaining Her Majesty's sovereignty intact throughout New Zealand, when the same Governor had very recently told them, that he did not care to punish even murderers when their offence was committed outside the English settlements? The assertion may be believed in Downing Street, but it is too flimsy, too transparent, too much of an afterthought to deceive the acute Maori mind. Murder is included in the category of crimes which are Mala in se, and the very lowest degree of Sovereignty gives a right to punish such crimes. But Governor

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Browne publicly and officially abandons this right, and repudiates this duty: throws the onus of punishing criminals on the Maori Chief – compels him to arm himself and his tribe, and to build strongholds for their security: and then having repudiated the very first duty incumbent on a Government, that of protecting life, he proceeds to assert a right, on the plea of the Queen's sovereignty, which is absolutely untenable, namely, that any tenure of lands except by individuals, or, in other words, that Tribal right to land, is inconsistent with the Queen's sovereignty: which is just as absurd as it would be to say that corporation property is inconsistent with the same sovereignty.

The real object of the war was nothing else than the acquisition of 600 acres of land which the settlers were anxious to obtain, and which the Governor thought proper to imagine were "essential for the consolidation of the Province."

There were more than a hundred owners of this land, which had been minutely subdivided during former generations. About one-tenth of the owners professed to sell, while the other nine-tenths refused to take any part in the alienation of this land. The local land agent, without even taking any evidence, decided that it belonged to the ten or eleven who offered to sell, and the Governor proceeded to take possession. It will be observed that what has brought the whole transaction into prominent notice

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and stirred up a large proportion of the population to oppose the Government is the illegal mode in which the Governor himself proceeded.

The war was begun without anything like even a decent pretext for it: on the 25th January, 1860, before a single overt act of any description had been committed, a proclamation of martial law was signed and sent down to Taranaki. This was bad enough; but it is not all: the proclamation was so rendered into the Maori

language that it actually proclaimed war on all the natives in the Province of Taranaki, and even implied a permission to fight until the Governor revoked that permission.

I observe that Mr. Richmond, in his Memorandum written in reply to Sir William Martin's "Taranaki Question," says: – "One practical issue now being tried, is, whether the natives are in future to trust to the justice of the British Government for the recognition of their rights, or to force of arms."

If Mr. Richmond means by trusting to the justice of the British Government, trusting to the justice of the decisions of the Courts of Law, I must take leave to say that no such issue is raised by the present war: on the contrary, it is the absence of law in the Governor's proceedings which is the grievance. But if Mr. Richmond means that the Natives are now to choose whether they will trust their rights to the arbitrary caprice of a Governor, or any of his subordinates, rather than to force of

arms, then there can be no difficulty in deciding which alternative they will adopt: they prefer trusting to the force of arms, to trusting to the arbitrary decision of any man.

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And it is perhaps quite as well that Mr. Richmond has raised the question, because the sooner the British Government decides the point the better for all parties. But let it be distinctly understood, that if this view be adopted, the British Government will have the unenviable task before it of slaughtering every man, woman and child of the Maori race. And this brings me to the consideration of language which seems to fall so glibly from some men's lips, I mean, the extermination of the Maori race. Let me at once say that I have no fear whatever upon this point, (whether the Maori race will in the course of ages disappear before the white man, or not, is a subject foreign to my present purpose). I express a confident opinion on this subject, in order to obviate a stock cry raised against facts and arguments that cannot be refuted, that they are advanced by an interested and prejudiced person – to anticipate the objection to myself that I am a missionary, and that my zeal for the preservation of the race blinds my judgment; no force that Great Britain could possibly maintain in this island would exterminate this race in fifty years. But let me call attention to a preliminary extermination. Nothing is more certain than that the whole white population of this island would be exterminated so soon as the war of Maori extermination began in good earnest. I have

only to draw attention to what has already taken place at Taranaki: what has happened there would happen everywhere. There are no gold diggings or sources of immediate wealth to induce men to leave their families and band together in parties of many hundreds armed with rifles, for the purpose of carrying on in the midst of danger their lucrative and remunerative pursuits.

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Property would be destroyed, the settlers would all be immediately driven in upon the towns; employment for labour would cease, and settlers would leave these shores for the neighbouring colonies. Doubtless Great Britain might maintain as many soldiers in fortresses as she thought proper, and steadily, and at a great cost proceed with the course she had undertaken. But what would the people of Great Britain think of this process of exterminating the Maori race? What would civilized Europe say of it? Do I ask these questions as a missionary? I ask them as an Englishman.

It is sometimes doubted whether Christianity can have had any effect on the Natives, since many professing Christianity are now in arms against the Government. I have laboured for twenty-two years among them, and I take this opportunity of saying that I never, before the war broke out, was so thoroughly convinced of the deep hold the Christian religion had taken of those under my charge as I have been since that event. I behold men deeply convinced of the injustice of the Governor's attack upon W. King's

tribe – amazed that people born and educated in the midst of Christianity, can be guilty of such premeditated wickedness, and tempted to think that Christianity, if such be its fruits, may be a sham after all – possessing physical strength and courage not to be surpassed, and having formerly joined in wars under far less provocation, I say I believe these men paralysed, because they cannot bring themselves to believe that the Creator and Redeemer of men will allow such iniquity to prosper. They wait on Him.

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There is a question of pressing importance to us here in New Zealand which requires an immediate answer, and is that which has induced me to trespass on your columns – it is this: What object has the Home Government in carrying on the war? All sorts of answers are given to this question, but an intelligible one is wanted. There are now several thousands of Her Majesty's troops in the Colony. The war is being carried on against William King, the Chief of one small tribe. It is true that he is assisted by individual volunteers from other tribes; but the tribes to which they belong could hardly be made responsible for their acts, even if they could be got at. Now suppose William King is conquered and he submits – what will be done next? No terms made with him will be binding upon any of the other tribes. What then will have been gained by the war? Will the Government endeavour to stir up war with other tribes in order that the troops may

continue in the Colony, and that every latent and potential spark of disaffection would be brought to light and extinguished? This would be rather too dangerous a game. But suppose W. King is not brought to submit, but retires into inaccessible parts of the country. Is the whole country to be kept in a chronic state of war, and this without any conceivable object in view, and to the certain destruction of all property as well as of all the settlers, who may be sufficiently reckless of life to continue in the Colony?

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I say without any conceivable object in view, because it must be borne in mind that the only point raised by this war (and no ingenuity will ever induce Maories to view it in any other light,) is the wholly worthless one, inasmuch as no amount of fighting will ever settle it – namely, whether land is to be taken away from the Natives in violation of the treaty of Waitangi, and the reiterated promises of each successive Governor, at the beck of a land agent commissioned by the Governor for that purpose. What I mean is this: Governor Browne has illegally and unjustifiably made a hostile attack upon certain peaceable and loyal natives for the purpose of forcibly wresting from them property guaranteed them by the treaty of Waitangi. They resist this hostile attack by force, being told by the Government that there is no tribunal in which they can defend their rights. This conduct on their part, however much to be regretted, is not necessarily rebellion,

or a denial of the Queen's sovereignty. The Governor's act is everywhere condemned throughout the Island even by the most loyal natives.

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Is it wise, is it just, by defending Governor Browne's illegal proceedings, and carrying on the war, to drive good and loyal men into rebellion? I am told that if the Home Government did not do this, its conduct would manifest weakness, and would tend to impair authority. Possibly the Government would lose something, but nothing is clearer than that neither an individual nor a Government can commit a blunder or an act of injustice, without suffering something from it: this is a law of nature that cannot be avoided. But the real question is, which is most derogatory to a Government, more especially when dealing with a brave and honourably minded people such as the Maories, to confess a blunder made by a Governor, and a Governor, let it be remarked, for whom personally the natives never had any respect, or to persevere in an act of injustice which will have the effect of utterly destroying all further confidence both in the Government and in the white man? I can conceive only one answer possible to this question.

There is only one honourable course left to the Home Government. Governor Browne, who ought never to have been placed in the responsible post he has held, ought to be immediately recalled. His name is execrated throughout the land. It is absolutely impossible that peace can be made, or

confidence restored, while he remains here. A Governor of known and tried ability ought to be sent out. An investigation ought to take place as to the title to the Waitara block of land from which William King and his tribe have been driven. And if it is satisfactorily proved that an act of injustice has been committed, compensation ought to be awarded to the survivors. I believe that this would restore peace and confidence throughout the country, and that the British Government would be again respected, trusted, honoured, and obeyed.

If I am asked why I venture to offer my opinion on such a subject, I must answer by quoting a letter of Governor Browne's, now lying before me, in which he expresses his opinion that I am "more thoroughly acquainted with the Maoris than any other European in the country."

I will only add that I have seen no reason to change my opinion as to a single word contained in my letter published in London in August last year, alluded to above. It has been reprinted in this Colony, and I am not aware that any public attempt has been made to question a single fact contained in it.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
OCTAVIUS HADFIELD.

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