

In their correspondence the Imperial authorities admit that the efforts of the Colony of Victoria for their own protection entitle them to the liberal consideration of the Mother Country. It is submitted that on similar grounds New Zealand has still greater claims than Victoria, or indeed than any other Colony.

Within the last eight years she has spent nearly £3,000,000 on internal defence, and she is now maintaining a regular force of 400 men at about £54,000 a year, and incurs a further expense of £24,000 a year for her Militia and Volunteers, the latter numbering over 4,000 men. It is presumed, therefore, that she might reasonably ask that an armour-clad gun-boat mounting from two to four heavy guns, which could be obtained for about £60,000, should be given her, on condition that the maintenance, manning, and command of the ship should be undertaken by the Colonial Government.

Putting aside however, for the present, any such application, as possibly involving a greater annual expense than the burdened revenues of the Colony could support, she ventures to ask that a certain number of guns may be granted her for the defence of her principal seaport towns.

Whilst it is not perhaps to be hoped that the Imperial Government would supply the Colony gratuitously with modern rifled guns, which, with stores and ammunition are, it is believed, worth from £2,000 to £4,000 a piece, according to size, yet it does ask to be supplied gratuitously with a limited number of large smooth-bore old-pattern guns, of which it is understood that there are a great number lying in store in England, which will never be used by the Mother Country, and which would be serviceable against ordinary wooden ships, and which might be handed over to the Colony, with a limited supply of ammunition.

The Colony should thus, in the event of a sudden declaration of war with any naval Power, be somewhat prepared to put itself in a state of defence; whereas, in the absence of any preparation in the time of peace, the Colony would be at the mercy of its enemies for months after the war had commenced.

As bearing on this subject, reference is invited to a Schedule of Field Artillery which was purchased by the Colony and paid for to the Imperial Government, and then lent to the Imperial troops during the war, as showing the spirit in which the Colony acted with regard to the use of such ordinance as its limited means enabled it to place at disposal.

There is a further question, which, although not directly bearing on defence of the harbours, yet relates to it in some measure, and is therefore now brought under notice.

The survey of the Coast of New Zealand is incomplete; and although much has been done by the Colony, by the erection of Lighthouses, yet the incomplete state of the survey of the coasts is a constant source of danger to shipping frequenting the New Zealand seas.

The petition of the Colony is, that the survey of the Coasts of New Zealand may be completed under the direction of the Admiralty, on the same or similar terms on which it is understood that a survey is now being conducted on the coasts of Victoria and New South Wales.

21 Cockspur Street, 25th November, 1868.

WILLIAM FITZHERBERT.

Enclosure No. 4.

The Hon. W. FITZHERBERT to His Grace the Duke of BUCKINGHAM.

MY LORD DUKE,—

21 Cockspur Street, S.W., 27th November, 1868.

I have transmitted certain Memoranda for the consideration of your Grace, relating to subjects which I was instructed to bring under the notice of the Home Government, and which have formed more or less the subject of conversation at the interviews with which I have been favoured. As my stay in this country is drawing to a close, I venture to press for a decision on the points thus submitted to your attention.

Outside, however, the limited request of the Colony of New Zealand for assistance towards the protection of its harbours, as preferred in the Memorandum on defence, there is a much larger view of the subject of external defence; and as it is one of great importance, no less to the Mother Country than the Australian Colonies, I should, as I conceive, but inadequately discharge my duty if I failed to bring it under your consideration. I refer to the naval defence of the Australasian Colonies.

It is probable that in the case of war with any maritime Power, one of the first points of attack would be the gold traffic between England and her gold-producing Colonies. That would in fact offer the greatest war-prizes. It is, I believe, known as a fact that a few years ago the Russian fleet at Petropolowski was prepared to make a descent upon the Australian Colonies. I need not dwell upon the consequences to English commerce of the sudden stoppage of the great trade now carried on between the two countries, and of that regular influx of gold which sustains in no insignificant degree the buoyancy of the English money market; nor need I dwell upon the vast injury to British shipping which must result from the breaking up of the Australasian trade. I will not attempt to measure the amount of such a disaster to the Colonies. The Mother Country is, I venture to assume, deeply interested herself in averting such a calamity. The question is, what steps would ordinary prudence suggest?

Feebly isolated efforts made by individual Colonies to protect their own harbours and coasts are obviously inadequate to meet the requirements of the case. Without presuming to question the wisdom of the proposal of Victoria, to maintain a ship of war for the defence of Port Phillip, it still does appear to me to be, I will not say a profitless, but at all events an insufficient measure, unless designed to form a part of some comprehensive system of naval defence. Every seaport must of course be defended in the best way which the special circumstances and formation of the harbour indicate. But the naval defence of the Australasian Colonies, each and all, can only be secured upon the open sea by a fleet under Imperial command, capable of guarding not merely the safety of the Colonial Coast, but the free passage round Cape Horn. What is wanted is a special naval station in the South Pacific, under an Imperial officer with an independent command.