

CORRESPONDENCE

RELATIVE TO

A LETTER BY J. E. FITZGERALD, ESQ.,

ON THE

SELF-RELIANT POLICY OF NEW ZEALAND.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND
OF HIS EXCELLENCY.

WELLINGTON.

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1869.

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CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO A LETTER BY J. E. FITZGERALD, ESQ.,
ON THE SELF-RELIANT POLICY OF NEW ZEALAND.

No. 1.

The Hon. the PREMIER to the CONTROLLER-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Government Offices, Wellington, 6th June, 1870.

The Government has received from the Commissioners in England a letter complaining of the publication of a pamphlet by you relating to the Defence question and other matters.

I enclose a copy of the Commissioners' letter.

It will be the duty of the Government to lay this letter on the table of the Houses of Assembly, together with the other correspondence of the Commissioners; and they are desirous of affording you the opportunity of offering to the Government any explanation you may wish relative to the complaint made by the Commissioners.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM FOX,
Premier.

J. E. FitzGerald, Esq., Controller-General.

Enclosure in No. 1.

The COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

London, 15th March, 1870.

We think the attention of the Government should be drawn to a letter just published here by Mr. FitzGerald, under date 26th December, 1869, and entitled "The Self-Reliant Policy in New Zealand."

No. 8.

Some days before the debate in the House of Lords on Lord Carnarvon's motion, a rumour had got abroad that the Colonial Office was in possession of a letter from a well-known colonist, giving advice very contrary to the course we were urging Lord Granville to take; and we were told that Lord Granville had expressed grave doubts as to the truth of our representations on the ground of their contradiction by letters he had seen from New Zealand. We were unable for some time to learn whose letter it was that had caused this rumour; but a day or two ago our inquiries were answered by the publication of Mr. FitzGerald's letter.

It seems an unusual course for one of the highest civil servants in the Colony to inform the English public that the tone taken by the Imperial Government "had been provoked by the language of Ministers in the Colony." Throughout the discussions which we have had as Commissioners, we have not only absolutely refrained from casting blame on any of our predecessors in office, but have uniformly defended their administration whenever we could do so without sacrifice of our own opinions, for we felt that the character of the Government of New Zealand, as a continuing body, must be upheld by ourselves in the most loyal and generous spirit.

As regards the imputations against Sir George Grey, Mr. Sewell, Mr. Atkinson, and other friends of the Colony who have helped in the endeavour to retain the 18th Regiment in New Zealand, it is not necessary we should notice them. But it appears to us a pity, that when Mr. FitzGerald thought it right to attack them as a means of vindicating his own consistency, he should have omitted a matter of great importance in which he himself played a principal part. Mr. FitzGerald, referring to the time (1865) when he was himself in office, says that "a commencement was made towards the establishment of a permanent force;" and he immediately adds, "It was the next (Stafford's) Government which neglected to bring this force to perfection."

He omitted to state, that when Mr. Stafford met the Assembly with the proposal for a large appropriation for the maintenance of an efficient Defence Force, he (Mr. FitzGerald) moved the following Resolution:—"That whilst this House recognized the duty of providing for the security of life and property and the maintenance of the public peace in all parts of the Colony, it does not perceive the necessity for creating a permanent military force of the magnitude contemplated by the Government, at a cost which cannot fail to inflict burdens unnecessarily heavy upon the inhabitants of the Colony."

This Resolution may be at least supposed to have represented Mr. FitzGerald's own opinions at the time, and we have taken care that the Resolution of 1866 shall be known here as widely, if possible, as the accusation of 1869.

But Mr. FitzGerald's letter has not only interposed a political difficulty in our way; another is added about finance. In addition to the more prominent duty of our mission, we are engaged in a large operation—the re-opening of the Consolidation. The question is put to us, whether the New Zealand Government mean to bring out a new loan? And we definitely answer that there is no such intention, and that we earnestly hope still to avoid throwing a new loan on the English market, pointing to the sale of the Treasury Bills as an instance of our credit being high elsewhere than in London. At the very moment when we are making these statements and working out a financial operation of great delicacy connected with the Consolidation of Public Debts, the Controller of Revenue announces on the London market that "New Zealand cannot long go on without a fresh loan." There is really no knowing how much mischief this statement will do us, nor how much hesitation it will cause among holders in coming in with their Debentures when our arrangements for re-opening the Consolidation are completed.

We have made these observations in no spirit of hostility to Mr. FitzGerald or his opinions. As a private gentleman he is, of course, absolutely entitled to hold them; but it may be doubted whether it is convenient or advantageous to the public service that a high officer should lend his influence to thwart and embarrass other officers expressly sent so many thousand miles on a work in which they might fairly have hoped for the forbearance, at least, of all parties. And we bring the matter before you mainly to give you an idea of the entirely unexpected difficulties by which we have been beset.

We have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

I. E. FEATHERSTON.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,
Wellington, New Zealand.

No. 2.

The CONTROLLER-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Controller's Office, Wellington, 9th June, 1870.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th instant, enclosing the copy of a letter from the Commissioners in England on the subject of a letter of mine to Mr. Selfe, which has been published in England.

I beg to express my great regret that anything which has fallen from me should have been deemed to impede in any way the action of the Commissioners or the policy of the Government. I fully recognize the principle that any such attempt on my part would be inconsistent with the understanding upon which my office is held.

But, in the letter referred to, I thought that I was dealing only with matters which had been already decided, and which could have no bearing on the action by the Government.

With respect to the expression relating to a loan, I was only speaking as any casual observer reading the public press of the Colony, the debates in the Assembly, and the published accounts of the Colony might speak. It did not occur to me that such an expression would be deemed to have more significance as coming from the Controller; and I can only express my regret that it should have been taken for more than it was worth, and my hope that the Commissioners have somewhat over-rated the effect.

I have, &c.,

JAMES EDWARD FITZGERALD.

The Hon. the Premier.
