

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE MAORI LEXICON,

(LETTER FROM W. COLENZO, ESQ., RELATIVE TO).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Mr. W. COLENZO to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Napier, 30th August, 1873.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th instant, in which you wish me to make some proposal about the "Lexicon."

Ever since its receipt I have been repeatedly considering how best to do so.

Before, however, I give you my present thoughts about the matter, I would, with permission, call your attention to a very brief outline of a portion of the past concerning it.

When, in the House of Representatives in 1861, I first brought the subject of the "New Zealand Lexicon" forward, I did so much as Sir D. Monro at the same time did the somewhat similar motion respecting the work on the Botany of New Zealand to be edited by Dr. Hooker. Had my motion been carried then, assuredly I should not have undertaken the work, as at that time my hands were quite full (being Provincial Treasurer and Inspector of Schools for this Province, without a clerk), and with every prospect of a long continuance in office. I should have gladly handed over to whoever might have been appointed all my M.S. vocabularies, &c., &c., of the language, which had been accumulating for thirty years or more; all I wished for being the preservation of the New Zealand dialect of the great Polynesian language, which was every day growing less and less.

In June, 1865, the Hon. the Native Minister (Mr. Mantell) wrote to me, requesting me to furnish a plan or prospectus of the said Lexicon. I did so, calling his attention to three main things, viz.,—1. Time; 2. Remuneration; 3. Efficient aid and hearty co-operation (all of which I may remark, had been given to Dr. Hooker in his work). Indeed, in the main matter of efficient aid and assistance from the Government, and from their officials throughout the Colony, I was led to expect very much from the several conversations I had had with Sir George Grey (then Governor) about the work, and from the hearty interest he took in the matter.

In January, 1866, I received the appointment to execute the work, when, on finding so much was left open to me, I immediately wrote to the Hon. the Native Minister (Colonel Russell), sending him a proposal for the better and speedier publication of the same. That proposal, however, was (unfortunately) refused by him: I have always regretted this.

Since then, as you know, much has been said from time to time during several Sessions, in the House of Representatives, concerning the work and myself, in all which I have been more or less charged heavily, as if blame was to be attributed to me. I allow that the work is in a most unsatisfactory state, not only to the House, to the public, and to the Government, but most especially to myself; but I cannot allow that I am or have been to blame in the matter, for I believe that, whenever a strict impartial inquiry into the whole affair shall be instituted, I shall be found to have done very much more than my intended share in the work; but all this has reference to the past.

And now with reference to any "proposal," meaning thereby something both satisfactory and practicable, I am wholly at a loss; there are three things here to be considered,—

1. There is *the present state of the Work itself*.—From 1870 (when the Government ceased to pay me) I have been only working at it during spare time, yet always heartily. A large quantity of matter, however, has been accumulated through my own unaided exertions, which has been all put into its place, in a kind of rough order, in the M.S.; but not a single page of it is ready for the press; it is moreover merely roughly and quickly written with abbreviations (of course intended for my own copying), and the whole has to be thoroughly and closely considered and rewritten. Were my M.S. clearly written, so as to be easily read and copied by a copying clerk, my "proposal" now would be, that the Government take over the M.S. as it is forthwith; but as it is, this, I fear, would be of little if any service.

2. *The present state of my health*.—Getting more and more infirm with advancing years; settled chronic rheumatism, and a contraction of thumb and forefinger of my right hand, caused in 1868 (and, as I believe, through too closely sticking to this work), prevents my writing long continuously.

1—G. 9.

3. *My present engagements, viz. :—*Paid public duties. I am now Inspector of Schools for this Province; this office takes up quite half of my available (or sound) time; and those duties are (generally) of such a nature as to become a necessary relaxation to me.

From the foregoing, it will be seen that I cannot possibly have any very satisfactory or practicable "proposal" to make; and I shrink from making any which I could not fulfil.

Again, it must not be forgotten that the work is still incomplete; from its very nature it is different in this respect from almost any other. Words under A (the *first* letter) cannot possibly be any farther advanced towards completion than those under Z (the *last* letter), perhaps, indeed, not so far advanced; seeing that the last letter, having fewer under it, might be the sooner filled up.

Therefore, under all the circumstances, the only feasible proposal that I can at present make, is the following, viz.,—to proceed at once to do all that I can to get a portion of the work, though incomplete, ready for the press (say, from A onwards); the first parcel to be forwarded to you in January next, the same to be (if possible) followed by other portions throughout the summer; by so doing, a small part of the work would be ready for members by their next session. Meanwhile (and *after* the prorogation of the General Assembly) I will correspond through you with the Government Printer as to the manner, &c., of its being printed. I should be very sorry for it to be printed without my revision of the sheets; that, too, being work to which I have been accustomed.

I will thank you to let me know at your early convenience whether you agree to the above-mentioned proposal.

The Hon. the Native Minister, Wellington.

I have, &c.;
WM. COLENZO.

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1873.

[Price 3d.]