

1875.

NEW ZEALAND.

COMPILATION OF MAORI LEXICON BY MR. COLENZO,

(LETTERS RELATIVE TO).

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

No. 1.

Mr. COLENZO to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Napier, 20th July, 1875.

In sending you herewith, and in accordance with your request, a few specimen pages by way of prospectus, copied roughly from my MSS. of the Maori-English and English-Maori Lexicon, on which I have been engaged for some time, I have also the honor to submit a brief *résumé* of the whole affair from its commencement, accompanied with certain new proposals of my own respecting the work. I do this for three reasons:—1. Because there has been so much erroneously said about it, both in the House of Representatives and in the public prints of the day. 2. For the better information of the General Assembly. And, 3. For the early final determination of the matter.

In 1861 I first brought a motion before the House of Representatives respecting “A Standard Library Dictionary or Lexicon of the New Zealand Language.” I did so much in the same way as Sir David Monro did his somewhat similar motion respecting the Hand Book of the Botany of New Zealand. My motion was favourably received, and the resolution the House came to was,—That it is highly desirable, as soon as the finances of the colony will permit, that a sum of money be devoted for the purpose of commencing a Standard Library Dictionary or Lexicon of the Maori Language.

In 1862, finding that the finances of the colony were in a flourishing state, I again brought it before the House, and the reply on the part of the Government was (Sir Dillon Bell being then the Native Minister) that it should be commenced forthwith.

In 1863, finding that nothing had been done during the recess (possibly owing to the serious war), I again brought the matter to the notice of the Government, writing at the close of the Session to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary about it.

In 1864 I did the same, besides during these two years having had several conversations with the then Governor Sir G. Grey concerning the work, who always warmly supported it.

In 1865 I received an official letter from the Native Minister (the Hon. Mr. Mantell) concerning it, asking me to furnish the Government with a plan or prospectus of the said work, to which I promptly replied. And as much of what followed is necessarily grounded on these two letters, I will, with permission, make extracts from them here:—

“Native Secretary’s Office, 21st June, 1865.

“I am directed by Mr. Mantell to request that you will be good enough to forward to him a plan or prospectus of the Maori Lexicon you propose to prepare, together with an estimate of the time likely to be required for its completion, and of the expense which it may entail. The Government will then submit to the General Assembly a specific vote for the purpose, in fulfilment of the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 13th of August, 1861.—W. ROLLESTON.”

In my reply I said:—

“1. The plan or prospectus is simply a Maori-English and English-Maori Lexicon, to contain every known word in the Maori tongue, with clear unquestionable examples of pure Maori usage, and with copious references, as far as known, to the principal cognate Polynesian dialects. To be completed in, say, two volumes—the Maori-English, or first volume, to be first finished.

“2. The time required for the whole work, to do it satisfactorily, cannot well be estimated at less than seven years; the first volume alone might be got ready at the end of five years.

“3. The maximum total expense, during five or seven years, may be reckoned at £300 per annum. As however the pay to the Editor for his whole time will be but small, it would be only fair to ask of the General Assembly some supplemental vote on the full, entire, and satisfactory completion of the whole work.

“In addition to the foregoing, very efficient aid is further to be hoped for from the Government:—
1. Through the Government obtaining from several Polynesian Islands copies of every vocabulary or local published work. 2. Through their issuing a circular to their officers in Maori districts, inviting their kind co-operation in the work, and in obtaining from them any MSS., notes of language,

songs, sentences, words, &c. And, 3. Through their granting free postal communication between the Editor and the Government Officers, Maoris, and others, throughout the colony, on all inquiries respecting the Maori language.

"It is deemed advisable that the preparation of the Lexicon, being a purely literary work, should not be placed under the control of any department. It might be undertaken upon the order of the General Assembly, or it might, if required, be placed under the formal supervision of the Speaker, or the Clerk of the House of Representatives."

In the Session of 1865 the question was again brought before the House (this time by the Hon. Mr. Mantell), and the House again decided,—“That it is highly desirable that the Maori-English Lexicon, as proposed and affirmed by the House on the 13th August, 1861, and subsequently agreed to by the Government on 20th August, 1862, be forthwith commenced.” And in December of that year I received the official appointment from the Government to proceed with it.

In the following month (January) I wrote to the Native Minister (the Hon. Colonel Russell) respecting the better and more speedy way of getting the said work out, saying that I thought it would be preferable to publish it in parts, the first part to be ready in, say, three years. To my letter the Hon. the Native Minister replied saying “that he would not interfere in any degree with the action which had been already taken by his predecessors in office as regards the time and manner of carrying out the work.”

I had also requested him officially to ask for the official and other aid I had been led to expect I should receive: this he declined, but requested me to write a circular to be addressed to him, and he would get it published if approved of in the *Gazette*. I did so; and it was published, with a cold and brief official remark prefixed.

I now commenced my arduous task with all my heart. I gave it the whole of my time. Many days have I shut myself up from twelve to fourteen and even to sixteen hours a day. And here I may be permitted to mention:—1. That had this work been commenced when I first brought it before the House of Representatives in 1861 or in 1862, it would not, it could not, have been undertaken by me; because at that time not only had I no notion, no desire, for it, but my hands were already full; for I was then filling the offices of Provincial Treasurer and Inspector of Schools of the Province of Hawke's Bay (without a clerk), besides being a member of the House of Representatives and of the Provincial and Executive Councils of my own Province. My only wish was to see the noble New Zealand dialect of the great Polynesian language conserved, and I should have gladly handed over my numerous MSS. of nearly thirty years' collection to whomsoever the Government might appoint to do the work. 2. I (who had always from the creation of our Province of Hawke's Bay been a member of its Provincial Council) immediately placed a legal bar in the hands of the Returning Officer, to hinder my being again nominated. 3. I threw up entirely my favourite scientific pursuits (botany, &c.), through which I fear I displeased not a few of my old scientific friends, with whom I had always been in close and constant hearty correspondence, among whom I may mention, in England, Dr. Hooker and others, and, in New Zealand, Sir G. Grey, Drs. Hector and Haast, Professor Kirk, &c. Indeed, Sir G. Grey, who was then Governor, not only wished me to continue my botanical researches, but generously offered to equip and supply me fully in every way. 4. I even employed a land agent residing here in Napier to do my little business for me, even to the receiving of small rents, I paying him his commission for so doing. And, 5. I gave up my long-cherished hope of visiting England.

I may also mention here that about this time the late Bishop of Wellington (Dr. Abraham), in calling on me at my house in Napier, and in conversing about the work, in which he took a great interest, said that he had only one thing to remark on in the whole arrangement; and that was that seven years was far too short a period to execute the work as I had planned it.

To return. I went on closely with my work; but, although I wrote many letters, and also sent copies of the circular which had appeared in the *Gazette* to many persons, official and non-official, residing all over the colony, from not one European did I ever receive any answer, save from my lamented friend the late Superintendent of Auckland, J. Williamson, Esq. Subsequently, however, two European gentlemen filling official situations (S. Locke, Esq., R.M., and Mr. James Grindell) have assisted me; also the present Colonial Secretary, G. S. Cooper, Esq., when at the head of the Native Office in Wellington. Moreover, what those gentlemen did they did both courteously and heartily, and I have great pleasure in recording it.

In 1867, in less than two years after I had commenced the work, and to my very great astonishment, an official inquiry was called for by the House; and the member for Clive, Mr. Ormond, was officially appointed to inspect and to report. That gentleman did so; and I have casually learned that his official report, which was, I believe, duly laid before the House, was a favourable one.

In 1868, I invited his Honor Mr. Justice Johnston, during his official visit to Napier, to inspect my MSS. He kindly did so at some length, and expressed himself as much pleased with the work.

Again in 1868 another official inspection was made by the Native Minister (the Hon. J. C. Richmond), who spent some time in examining what I had written, and who also strove very hard, both by talking and subsequently by writing, for an alteration of the original terms of agreement. On his return to Wellington he wrote me a long official letter, in which he said “that he recognized the method and clearness of the work, so far as it had proceeded, and that he had no wish to complain of the amount already accomplished,” &c., &c.

At the same time Mr. Richmond forced upon me his official determination (1) that the work must be finished by a certain fixed time (the end of March, 1870); and (2) that no more money should be paid to me after that period, from which date I have received no pay from the Government.

The Hon. Mr. Richmond did, however, in reply to my last letter to him of remonstrance, promise “to lay the same before the House of Representatives;” at the same time adding “that the Government cannot go beyond the offer already made; but I never heard if such were done, or, if done, that anything resulted therefrom.

From my appointment to this work in 1866 down to March, 1870, inclusive, a space of four years and a quarter, I only received from the Government about £980 net, or, say, about £230 per annum.

Subsequently, in 1870, you yourself, Sir, also examined my MSS., and expressed yourself as

pleased with the work ; and I could not help thinking, after you had left me, that had you been the Native Minister in 1866, when I first corresponded with the gentleman holding that office, things might have gone on differently.

In 1869-70 my right hand (fore finger and thumb) became so bad, half-contracted, but without pain, save during continuous writing, that I could no longer write legibly, often could not even sign my name. And this, as I firmly believe, was wholly occasioned by my severe and continual writing, having been goaded on to desperation almost through the remarks made in the House, the bad faith of the Government, and Mr. Richmond's new arrangements, and consequently working day and night far beyond my powers, as the time he had fixed was fast approaching.

In November, 1870, after I had undergone a severe surgical operation on my right-hand fore finger, I had two surgeons (Messrs Hitchens and Spencer) to examine my hand, and to report thereupon to the Government. From that time to the present, I write without using my thumb and fore finger, consequently not so quickly and often not so legibly as formerly.

In 1870, at the General Provincial election here in May (all pay to me having ceased), I again allowed myself to be nominated and entered the Provincial Council, and I again took a paid office as Inspector of Schools.

Since then, as I have from time to time informed you, whenever you have inquired, I have only been working at the Lexicon "during spare times, but always heartily."

On a calm, impartial review of the whole, it will, I believe, be found—1. With reference to myself :—That the Government broke faith with me in the three great matters of (1) time to be allowed for the work ; (2) pay ; and (3) efficient aid towards it (this aid, too, which was always in all my letters most carefully brought prominently to the notice of the Government, and was indeed quite a *sine qua non* with me, was exactly similar to that aid which was so readily afforded by us—myself and others—to Dr. Hooker, at that very time too, in his preparing his work on the Botany of New Zealand, which that gentleman has also so fully acknowledged).

2. With reference to the work :—(1.) Had my original proposal to Hon. Mr. Mantell been honorably carried out in its integrity, the work would have been long ago finished. (2.) Had my well-considered and practical proposal made to Hon. Colonel Russell been accepted by him, the first part of the work would certainly long ago have been published, and very likely the remainder, and the House and the colony as I take it satisfied. (3.) Had my notice in the *Gazette* been properly brought before the Government officers and warmly supported, effectual aid must have resulted therefrom. (4.) Had even my last overture to the Hon. Mr. Richmond been allowed and supported, good would have resulted.

I regret to say that I have found it an up-hill work with the Government from the very beginning. As if my appointment was a sinecure, or money thrown away, or at all events as if I were too well paid ! As things have turned out, it has been my great misfortune ever to have had anything to do with this work.

Does any one that knows me (and I believe there are many even now, at this modern date, comparatively, in the House who do)—does any one suppose that I, with my active habits and diligent application to business, could not much more easily earn a greater salary than that which I received from the Government during four years—viz., £230 per annum.

Sir, I have had for years to hear of and put up with repeated heavy charges concerning this work. I have borne with them, ever believing that my countrymen and the colony would some day do a poor scholar justice.

You, yourself, Sir, have more than once in the House, when speaking on this subject, said "the Government had always been willing to offer every facility for the completion of the work." But did the Government, or would the Government, from March, 1870, ever proffer a farthing of pay ? And could the Government reasonably expect me to give my whole time, year after year, for nothing ; especially too after they had repeatedly broken faith with me ? To say nothing of the early official inspection made, as if (I after all the high and important public duties I have been from time to time called to perform during more than forty years of active life in New Zealand)—as if I were not to be trusted.

For it must not be lost sight of that the only agreement ever made between us was in the terms contained in my letter of reply of July 5, 1865, to the Hon. Mr. Mantell's official inquiry ; which indeed was fully conceded by his successor in office, and sustained by successive votes of the House of Representatives in 1866 and 1867, when £300 per annum was repeatedly voted.

The House has often heard from the Government, from 1869 downwards, that the magnificent "sum of £100 was still to be paid me on completion of the work ;" but the Government forgot to inform the House that the original agreement upon which the work was undertaken was for £300 per annum (which sum indeed was annually voted and paid, until, in 1868, the Hon. Mr. Richmond, then Native Minister, took upon himself to set the original agreement aside), together with an additional supplemental vote of remuneration to the Editor on the completion of the work.

Had the Government supported me fairly and heartily, and had even the whole outlay originally stated—seven years at £300 = £2,100—been expended, that sum, and more, would have been recouped by them before this time.

And now, Sir, in conclusion, allow me to bring before you, and the honorable the House of Representatives, the following four proposals concerning this work. I beg you to note them and their sequence carefully ; and I hope that one of them (or something similar, yet better, it may be) will be fully and finally agreed to and determined on by you. Time was when my first proposal of these four would not have been thought of or listened to by me ; but I am getting old now (after upwards of forty years of active life in New Zealand, *non sum qualis eram*), and I feel it. This is, allow me respectfully to say, my last letter to you concerning this work with which I was intrusted. For, as I told you when here, "the flame is now burning low in the lamp : " this, therefore, is as the last appeal of the Sibyl to Tarquin. It remains with you, Sir, to decide both for us and for posterity.

Proposals.

1. That I forthwith hand over all my Maori MSS. to the Government ; and on doing so receive

£200—viz., £100 as last stipulated remaining due on the work, and £100 long overdue for writing certain elementary English-Maori books ("Willie's First English Book"), &c., as per Dr. Shortland's official letter to me of 1864; or,—

2. That I pay the Government the sum of £500 in two bills of £250 each—one at three and one at six months, without interest, being about half of all moneys (net) received by me from them on account of this work; and that I obtain from them a full acquittance; premising that in this case the whole MSS. in their entirety, and all future profits arising therefrom, to become entirely my own. Of course, should this proposal be selected, then I shall endeavour to proceed with the work with the full intention of making arrangements for the publishing of the same by, or selling the same to, some first-rate London publisher or some Foreign Government, but in no case to the Colonial Government; or,—

3. That I be directed to get on as fast as possible with the work; to do this, however, will be required in conformity with original agreement:—

1. Salary for myself, as originally granted, £300 per annum until finished—say three or it may be four years. (I am now receiving £250 per annum as Inspector of Schools, which office I must either resign, or, if allowed, find a substitute for.)

2. All possible aid from Government officers and others, especially from Maori chiefs and Maori officers in receipt of Government pay; the Government themselves acting heartily, and seeking it for the public good.

3. One of the Armed Constabulary to act as clerk, as offered by you.

4. The privilege of franking and receiving letters and packets for the work free of postage to be again granted me. This was done at the beginning, but in less than a year it was withdrawn.

4. On the satisfactory completion of the work, a supplemental vote to be asked of the General Assembly; or,—

4. That I merely go on quietly and leisurely with the work—as I have been doing for the last five years—trusting to the House for fair remuneration should I live to finish it in this way, which is doubtful; provided also that if I die before I finish it, my executors are to hand over all the Maori MSS. of the work to the Government, and receive from them the (poor) stipulated sum of £100, and whatever amount besides the General Assembly may hereafter be pleased to add thereto.

I have, &c.,

W. COLENZO.

The Hon. the Native Minister, Sir Donald McLean, K.C.M.G., &c.,
Wellington.

No. 2.

MR. COLENZO to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Napier, 21st July, 1875.

In accordance with your wish when last here, and my promise, I have the honor to send you by this mail, in a separate packet, thirty-eight pages of MS. copied roughly from my Maori-English Lexicon, to form a few specimen pages of the said work; and I purpose sending you a few more by the next steamer hence.

By forwarding these now, your printer can have them the earlier in his hands, and the rest will be in time for him. I have not read these since I wrote them (only just concluding the last pages), not having had time to do so, and this I regret.

I also send you in the same packet six parts of the English-Maori portion of the work—viz., the first three and the last three, equal to six. There are nineteen such parts written in all, and from the last one you will know how far this portion of the work is advanced. This is clean MS., and is all but ready for the press, requiring only a slight revision; but I do not suppose you will get any of these printed: they are not sent for that purpose, but merely that the House may see some of the MS. of this portion of the said work. If I have time, I will copy a small portion from what I have left—to be printed, to accompany the other pages.

I trust that every care will be taken of these six parts, as I have no rough copy, no duplicate.

I may also add that I have made this part of the work rather more full and particular than is usually done, in consequence of a remark made to me by the late Superintendent of Auckland (Mr. Williamson), in which I coincided, that by doing so it would prove of great use to Maoris desirous of learning English.

I have, &c.,

W. COLENZO.

The Hon. Sir D. McLean, K.C.M.G., Native Minister, &c., Wellington.

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBUY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1875.