

IX.—Navigator
Islands.

8. My predecessor, in his Despatch No. 56, 1872, transmitted to your Lordship, as an enclosure from the Colonial Postmaster-General, a report by an officer of this Government, who had been sent on a mission to the Samoan group, of the extraordinary capabilities of the harbour of Pango-Pango. In spite of the unfavourable replies which they have already received to their former representations on this subject, they would earnestly solicit the aid of Her Majesty's Government to prevent this colony, whose trade and external transactions bid fair, at no remote period, to be extensively developed, from being deprived of these advantages which by timely action may be secured to them. It would occasion a profound disappointment to the people of this colony, were the present opportunity to be lost, and, in spite of the preference manifested in our favour by the inhabitants, were a port of great commercial, and possibly of great political, importance, which so greatly concerns their interests, to fall into the hands of a foreign Power.

I have, &c.

JAMES FERGUSSON,

Governor.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Kimberley.

No. 7.

The Right Hon. the Earl of KIMBERLEY to Governor Sir JAMES FERGUSSON.

(No. 79.)

SIR,—

Downing Street, 18th November, 1873.

I have been in communication with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the subject of your Despatch No. 65, of the 1st of August, communicating the wish of your Ministers that the Imperial Government should at once take steps to prevent the Navigator Islands from falling into foreign hands, or should allow the New Zealand Government to make such arrangements with the chiefs of the islands as will protect New Zealand interests.

As the nature of the arrangements which the New Zealand Government desires to make with the chiefs of the Navigator Islands is not stated, Her Majesty's Government are unable to form an opinion upon this application.

They would not, however, be disposed to sanction any steps which would lay this Government under obligations to interfere in the affairs of those islands.

I have, &c.

Governor the Right Hon. Sir James Fergusson, Bart.

KIMBERLEY.

No. 8.

Governor Sir JAMES FERGUSSON to the Right Hon. the Earl of KIMBERLEY.

(No. 82.)

MY LORD,—

Government House, Auckland, New Zealand, 22nd October, 1873.

On the eve of my departure from Wellington, on a short visit to this province, the Premier, the Hon. Mr. Vogel, called upon me, and placed in my hands a Ministerial memorandum on the subject of the Navigator Islands, in which your Lordship is well aware a considerable interest has for some years past been felt in this colony, and with reference to which, at the request of my Advisers, I addressed you in my Despatch No. 65, 1873, upon the 1st August. I think it right, on this occasion, to transmit the Ministerial memorandum.

2. Your Lordship will doubtless expect that in so doing I shall make some observations upon its subject-matter, and I trust that I shall not thereby appear to obtrude an opinion upon a question which does not naturally fall within the sphere of my duty. It is unnecessary to say I should in no case engage in, still less encourage, an agitation among the inhabitants of a colony under my government, having for its object to influence or hamper the policy of Her Majesty's Government in any particular.

3. But the future regulation or government of the Pacific has for many years past engaged the lively interest of the Australasian Colonies, and the difficulties which have lately increased in relation to the Fiji group, combined with the rumours of the interference of other Powers in the affairs of other groups, have aroused anxiety, if not impatience, as to the future bearing of their condition upon the interests of our growing communities.

4. The concern of those communities in the future of the Pacific is founded both on general and special grounds. The former they share with a large portion of the British nation, but in an increased degree, on account of their closer and personal interest, and of the part which they have themselves taken in the extension of the British sovereignty. Having themselves added important branches to the British Empire, they wish to see the valuable territory in their own neighbourhood brought under the government of the Crown; and they feel dissatisfaction, if not disgust, that lawless actions, disgraceful to their nation, should be committed, for the most part by their fellow-subjects, for want of the extension of that authority which they think should follow them wherever they go.

5. They regard, too, with aversion the acquisition by foreign nations, whom in modern times we have preceded and far outstripped in this hemisphere, of islands and groups of islands whose trade is already valuable and is capable of great expansion, and whose people have evinced a preference for our government or a desire for our protection. They know how generally commerce has followed the flag; and, looking to the future, they contemplate with discontent the loss of that advantage which might have been expected to follow the extension of British government, and the consequent investment of British capital, throughout the Southern Pacific.

6. But there is also an apprehension of the danger to their interests by the possession, by any great Power other than England, of the great natural harbours which might be made naval stations in case of the interruption of the peace of Europe—a danger which arises out of that connection with England which they are so desirous to maintain.