

IX.—Navigator
Islands.

15. Since writing the foregoing, my attention has been called to the statements in Sydney newspapers that, at the instance of his Advisers, Sir Hercules Robinson has informed your Lordship, by telegraph, of the desire of the Colony of New South Wales that Her Majesty's Government should interfere to prevent the consequences of the present anarchy in Fiji. My Advisers desire that I should express as their view, that the state of affairs in Fiji imperatively requires the control of Her Majesty's Government, and that, in the event of their preferring to empower a colonial Government to undertake that control rather than do so themselves, New Zealand is that colony which has the most natural affinity to Fiji and the adjacent groups, both in regard to its comparative proximity and to the greater facilities of intercourse afforded by the prevailing winds.

I have, &c.

JAMES FERGUSSON,
Governor.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Kimberley.

Enclosure.

MEMORANDUM for His EXCELLENCY.

REFERRING to a Memorandum (23, 1873*) on the subject of the Navigator Islands, Ministers desire to further call His Excellency's attention to the very grave considerations connected with the Polynesian Islands. It need scarcely be urged, as an excuse for Ministers touching upon the subject, that New Zealand, through its geographical position and its trade, is very much concerned in all that concerns the islands of the South Pacific.

Ministers moved His Excellency, a few days since, to despatch a telegram to the Secretary of State on the subject of the Navigator group of islands, urging immediate action. Important as it is that the case of the Navigator group should receive immediate attention, it no less urgently requires recognition that more or less immediate action should be taken in respect to a very large number of the Pacific Islands. It is stated, on apparently competent authority, that the Imperial Government at length entertain the idea of annexing the Fiji group: but the Fiji group comprises islands similar to which there are numbers yet uncounted in the Pacific; and it is desirable, in regard to them, not to allow the same delay that has made the treatment of the Fiji group so difficult. It is respectfully submitted that a policy or line of conduct should be decided on, not alone in connection with one or two clusters of Islands, but applicable to all Polynesia.

In the absence of all machinery for governing, or controlling, or punishing for crime the white race, lawless communities will grow up in these islands. Then, when the necessity for control becomes imperative, it will be found, as in the case of Fiji, that the delay has made it difficult to do that which, at an earlier stage, might with ease have been effected. Again, if Great Britain means to extend her dominion in Polynesia, it will be better, for abundantly evident reasons, for her to do so comprehensively, than to allow herself to be forced into it, the choicest islands being, in the meanwhile, appropriated by foreign Powers. Unless she agree with foreign Powers—say, with Germany and the United States, and perhaps France and Holland—to jointly protect all Polynesia, and in that case it is to be presumed Australasia would have to be included, she would find it easier to deal with the whole of the unappropriated islands herself, rather than submit to taking the leavings of other Powers, and to run the risk of having to deal with complicated international questions. It is respectfully urged that, if the traditions of the nation may be employed as an argument, it could be shown that they point to the glad prosecution by Great Britain of the work of reducing to civilization the fertile islands of the Pacific; and, moreover, it could be shown that, with the modern appliances which science has placed at the command of civilization, and with the enormous wealth and immense naval power Great Britain is possessed of, the work is easy now, which in the past, with like reasons, would have been heroically carried out, whatever the sacrifice it entailed.

But if Great Britain decide upon colonizing or civilizing Polynesia, there is much to be said in favour of her leaving to the already-established colonies a considerable amount of the work and of the control. In the House of Commons, Mr. Gladstone referred to the "experience of New Zealand" as somewhat discouraging the annexation of Fiji. Though this experience was not spoken of in disparaging terms, the surroundings left it open to such an interpretation. Ministers venture to urge that Great Britain, whatever the pecuniary cost it has entailed, may with justice be proud of having reproduced herself in the "Great Britain of the South," as New Zealand has been aptly called. Surely, a pecuniary sacrifice is not to be set against the fact that the islands of New Zealand are open to the enterprise of all British subjects, and that they are already settled and colonized by British subjects who, whilst they preserve the best characteristics of their race, are free, as a community, from wide-spread pauperism, and find in the home of their adoption the means of educating their children and of offering still further relief to their burdened countrymen in the thickly-populated United Kingdom. But there is a lesson which New Zealand teaches, and that is that local efforts to maintain peaceful relations with an uncivilized race are far more successful than those directed by a distant Power. It may be worth consideration whether, if Polynesia is not to be abandoned to foreign nations, it would not be well to intrust to New Zealand, which possesses so much experience in dealing with the government of a mixed race, the task of aiding in extending the British sway to the islands of the Pacific. Of the terms under which this should be done—whether by means of legal machinery applicable only to the white inhabitants; by Resident Governors, or Magistrates, who would continue to recognize the right of the dark race to self-government; or by uniting the islands into provinces, controlled under similar conditions—it is not necessary now to decide. Indeed, Ministers could not accept the responsibility of submitting details, without a reference to the Assembly. But when Ministers remember the enterprise of the colonists—their desire to extend their commerce to all parts of the Pacific—the maritime advantages the colony enjoys, not only in its extensive seaboard and hardy population, but in its facilities for ship-building—they cannot but come to the conclusion that the Parliament of New Zealand would cordially entertain proposals which had for their object to give to the colony the opportunity of assisting Great Britain in the great national work of extending the British dominion throughout the unappropriated islands of the South Pacific.

Wellington, 17th October, 1873.

JULIUS VOGEL.

No. 9.

The Right Hon. the Earl of KIMBERLEY to Governor Sir JAMES FERGUSSON.
(No. 12.)

SIR,—

Downing Street, 10th February, 1874.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch No. 82, of the 22nd October, enclosing a memorandum from your Ministers, suggesting whether, if Polynesia is not to be abandoned to foreign nations, it would not be well to intrust to New Zealand the task of aiding in extending British sway to the unappropriated islands of the Pacific, and stating that they have come to the conclusion that the Parliament of New Zealand would cordially entertain proposals which had for

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