

No. 11.

Mr. F. J. Moss to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

My LORD,—

British Residency, Rarotonga, 30th August, 1892.

I have the honour to report that the American schooner, "Te Uira," trading among these islands, arrived yesterday, and reports that H.M.S. "Champion" arrived at Aitutaki on the morning of the 26th, from Honolulu. The "Te Uira" left Aitutaki the same evening, but the master brought a message to me from the Captain of the "Champion," who was surveying the lagoon and entrance, that he hoped to be in Rarotonga in a few days. Being obliged to husband coal, the movements of the "Champion" must be, I presume, uncertain, so far as this group is concerned.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS,
British Resident.

His Excellency the Earl of Glasgow, G.C.M.G., &c.

No. 12.

Mr. F. J. Moss to the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

British Residency, Rarotonga, 30th August, 1892.

I have the honour to report that the "Richmond" brings from Tahiti intelligence of important changes in the Customs tariff of the French colonies in the Pacific. I have no means of learning them accurately and in detail, but draw attention to them, as the reports made by H.B.M. Consul at Tahiti may not be available in New Zealand for some time.

Hitherto duties have been levied by the Consul-General in Tahiti—a body established by decree in Paris 28th December, 1885. These duties are payable in French money, and, as the currency is in Chilian money, they practically range from 12 per cent. to 35 per cent. higher, according to the premium. The duties are in the nature of an . . . By decree in Paris of 9th May, 1892, authority was given to establish a regular Customs, and to levy certain duties on imports. This decree was transmitted from Paris on the 1st of June, and received in Tahiti by the "Richmond's" mail. It was promulgated on the 4th August by the Governor of Tahiti, and brought into immediate operation. The duties levied by this new tariff are much the same as the *Octroi de mer* levied by the local Government. But they are levied from France, and accompanied with express provision that the Conseil-General may continue its *Octroi de mer* at such rates as it may find advisable.

The inference in Tahiti when the "Richmond" left was that the Customs duties will be appropriated towards Tahiti's considerable debt to the French Government: and this inference is strengthened by a report that firms, well-informed of what is being done from Hamburg, have been clearing all they could from bond in anticipation of this duty, of which they had received news by cable through San Francisco. A trader from Rarotonga, who went by the "Richmond" to make purchases at Tahiti, has returned without doing so, and tells me that cotton goods have advanced about 30 per cent. under the operation of what is expected to be a double tariff.

Under the new Customs tariff, champagne and similar articles, whose designation proclaims their French origin, are left unmentioned. From this, and general terms of the decree, it is inferred that the tariff will not apply to imports of French goods, but be levied only on those from other countries. The imports of French goods have never, I am informed, been extensive in Tahiti, and have not, at all events, clashed with those from New Zealand. The following are of more particular interest to New Zealand: The new tariff enforces a duty on tinned meats, 8fr. per 100 kilos; salted meats, 3fr. per 100 kilos; biscuits (Navy), 3fr. per 100 kilos; tinned fish, 10fr. per 100 kilos; sugar, 25fr. per 100 kilos; butter, 10fr. per 100 kilos; cheese, 6fr. per 100 kilos; furniture, 13fr. per cent. *ad valorem*; galvanized iron, 13fr. per cent. *ad valorem*; carts and carriages, 20fr. per cent. *ad valorem*; hams and bacon, 8fr. per 100 kilos; concentrated milk, 8fr. per 100 kilos; cordage, 10fr. per 100 kilos; tea, 8fr. per cent. *ad valorem*; coffee, 8fr. per cent. *ad valorem*. Live stock are free.

Produce of other islands imported for re-export is also free, but coffee is specially excepted. This should direct the coffee now sent from the Cook Islands to San Francisco, *via* Tahiti, to New Zealand instead. It must close, to some extent at all events, unless the effect in Tahiti be modified by local regulations made under the Act. Gloves pay 30 per cent. *ad valorem*; tissues of cotton wool, 13 per cent.; and if, as it seems probable, both this tariff and the *Octroi de mer* are to be in force together, it will be difficult for traders in these islands, even when branches of Tahiti firms, to supply themselves with assorted goods from Tahiti. Whole packages only can be taken out of bond.

I have also to report the sale to the Natives of Marongaronga (Penrhyn) of the American schooner "Te Uira," for £525 cash. She is an old Californian-built vessel, of under forty-five tons. It is a pity that New Zealand schooners cannot be built in the style which attracts the Natives to purchase these vessels, so much inferior to New Zealand vessels in all other respects.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS,
Agent for the Government of New Zealand

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.