

DESPATCHES

FROM THE GOVERNOR OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

No. 1.

COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor Sir G. F. BOWEN, G.C.M.G., to His
Grace the Duke of BUCKINGHAM.

(Confidential.)

Government House, Wellington,

MY LORD DUKE,—

New Zealand, 7th December 1868.

It may probably be interesting to your Grace to read the opinion of the present condition of affairs in this Colony entertained by so able, experienced, and dispassionate a person as Sir George Arney, the present Chief Justice of New Zealand. He had lately been at Wellington, as President of the Court of Appeal, and on his return voyage to Auckland, where he generally resides, he encountered the vessel carrying some of the fugitives from the cruel massacre of English settlers perpetrated at Poverty Bay on the 10th ultimo. I enclose an extract from Sir George Arney's letter to me, to which I refer. I annex also a copy of Mr. Justice Johnston's charge to the Grand Jury at the late assizes at Wellington.

2. It will be seen that the Chief Justice sums up his opinion in the following terms:—"I will not venture to speculate on what may be done: but of this I feel convinced, that the Colony must . . . brace itself up to hold its own until the time may arrive when the Native race may feel constrained to respect us in our strength as they now despise us in our weakness. Meanwhile, I do not envy you having to take up the government of this beautiful country at precisely that period of its history when, I believe, it has been left more embarrassed in its finances, more crippled, relatively, in its power, and more exposed, from its advanced settlements and increased cultivations, to the savagery of the Maori race, than it has been left to any preceding Governor. I only hope that we may find our respite from destruction in the distracted councils and divided allegiance of the Natives, the mass of whom know full well that they have received little wrong and much good from the settlers."

3. Since the control of Native affairs, including, practically, the conduct of the present and of future Maori wars, was transferred in 1862 from the Governor to the Ministers of the Colony for the time being, a number of able public men have succeeded each other in office in New Zealand, all doubtless animated with a sincere desire to promote the welfare of their adopted country. But if the exigencies of parliamentary government have sometimes embarrassed elsewhere the conduct of even foreign wars, it will be easily understood that those exigencies have created still greater difficulties in the conduct of the internal Maori war; when, as in New Zealand, the Legislature is so equally divided between the two conflicting political parties, that neither of them can make sure of a working majority of more than two or three votes in the House of Representatives,—when almost every leading member of both Houses has a Native Policy of his own, and is swayed by various kinds of personal and local feelings and interests. Under such circumstances, as will be manifest without entering into any details, there can be but little consistency of policy or unity of action.

4. Mr. Herman Merivale, in his able and elaborate work on the Colonies,* has shown at length that even in England the establishment, definitively and on a solid basis, of any fixed system of colonial policy, "requires a degree of consistent firmness on the part of the Executive, which it is difficult to secure under constitutional government. No Colonial Minister can venture to oppose with deliberate steadiness the supporters of any prevalent and popular doctrine. . . . The consequence of these opposing political tendencies is a vacillation of purpose

* See "Colonization and Colonies," (edition, 1861). Appendix to Lecture 18, pages 513-523.