

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,