

SESS. II.—1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

SIR F. DILLON BELL AND THE AGENT-GENERALSHIP.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, September 29, 1884.

I send herewith extract from "Hansard," showing what passed recently in the House of Representatives, relative to your position as Agent-General. You will see that the Government consider it unnecessary to confirm your appointment; as, in their opinion, that appointment is perfectly valid, and requires no confirmation. Sept. 25th.

In case, however, you may consider it desirable that some official notification should be given to you, I desire now to state, that we confirm the arrangement offered to you by the Premier, in his letter of May 24th.

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G. &c.

I have, &c.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL for NEW ZEALAND to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W. 8th September, 1884.

I received a few days ago, by the San Francisco mail, the *Hansard* containing the debate in the House of Representatives on the 23rd of June, respecting the Agent-Generalship. It is so manifestly undesirable, as a rule, for the Agent-General to comment on a debate in Parliament, that I only ask permission to do so in this instance, because I wish to dispose, once for all, of the merely personal question.

If Major Atkinson's letter to me of 24th May had been laid on the table before, instead of after, the debate, the House would have seen that his offer was one which had to be submitted for the sanction of Parliament. My answer of 17th July showed that I understood it so; and my cipher telegram, "Solidarity," will of course have been read by the light of that answer. I have no wish to be Agent-General for an hour, unless I possess the confidence of Parliament; and I must take leave to add that, if the House is pleased to cancel Major Atkinson's offer, it is free to do so without any fear that I should ever dream of asking for compensation.

I pass over the suggestion of one honourable member, that the Government should retain my services from month to month: that is the sort of thing which is done to a footman. But Sir George Grey can hardly have seriously believed there was any danger that, even supposing me not to be in political accord with the Ministry of the day, I should "actively undermine the influence of that Ministry" in this country. I was a party man while I was in Parliament, and it is in the nature of things that any one who is at all fit to be Agent-General should have been so; but I am quite sure there is not one of our public men who, leaving the sphere of party politics and coming to England to represent the whole Colony, would dream of such odious treachery as Sir George Grey seems to have imagined possible. At any rate, speaking for myself, one thing is quite certain: whoever might be the Ministers, if the day ever came when I could not give fair and full effect to their desires, I should not keep them waiting an hour for my resignation.

The debate was one which could only lead, as it has led, to the impression here, that I no longer possessed the confidence of the House. I may perhaps be permitted to say that, with such large financial operations as are still pending, it is hardly for the advantage of the Colony that the Agent-General, whoever he may be, should be discredited in England. I say nothing of any political things in which he may be engaged, because these can always be carried on by any one who has a moderate experience in affairs. But it is quite another thing when large financial operations are at stake. Confidence is not given by the City in a day, nor is it transferable at the pleasure of our politicians. The long series of financial despatches which I have sent to the Treasury, are necessarily of too confidential a character to allow of their being presented to Parliament. If they could have been, they would have shown that the recent conversion operations were only part of a scheme devised by me on lines essentially differing from those which had been recommended by the former Stock Agents; and, although I have not been accustomed to parade any poor services of mine before the country, the House will hardly have thought it just to me to forget that these