

I beg permission to offer my respectful acknowledgments to you for the terms in which you are pleased to refer to such exertions as it has been my good fortune to be able to make in the cause which New Zealand must always have at heart; and so long as I am here I shall not cease to urge it upon the Imperial Government.

I could not read the report without discouragement, because it is vain for us to hope that Germany will consent to the political relations we want with Samoa while we do not meet the indispensable condition without which no real progress can be made. I am only too painfully aware of the financial reasons which made the decision of the Committee an almost inevitable one, and, as happens every day in the world, when this is so, there is nothing for it but that we must all be patient; but I greatly wish, all the same, that the Committee had thought of merely advising the question of expense to be adjourned until some indication could be got of the cost of acquiring the German claims, as this would have helped me in the main thing for which I have been striving—namely, to keep the question open, and avert embarrassing decisions being come to prematurely.

I have taken care to represent privately that the Committee's report is not to be taken as closing the door to further negotiation; but I think it more prudent not to take formal steps just now for urging the views of the Committee upon Her Majesty's Government; for, until the general election is over, and the decision of the country is given upon the question of who the Government are to be, more harm than good would be done by pressing questions which touch international relations so closely, and extend a good deal farther than they seem. You may nevertheless be sure that at the first favourable moment I shall once more try what I can do.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
F. D. BELL.

No. 19.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 7th November, 1885.

I have the honour to forward herewith copy of a memorandum addressed by me to His A.-1, '86, No. 10. Excellency the Governor on the islands question. The occasion of my forwarding it was in answer to a despatch from the Colonial Office requesting our opinion about the appointing of a vice-consul at Rarotonga. We have thought it better, in referring to that subject, to make some comments on the islands question generally.

I may point out, first, in reference to the Pelew Islands—to which reference has been made—that they lie on the route between China and Australia, and are of immense importance to England from an Imperial point of view. I believe that the need of making them British territory was pointed out years ago to the Imperial Government by the then Governor of the Straits Settlements.

As to the Cook Islands, I have already referred to them in previous correspondence; and I may state that the Queen of Rarotonga had a long interview with Mr. Ballance, the Native Minister. She is desirous of having some stronger bond of unity with New Zealand than at present exists; she did not desire to be under the French Government. No definite agreement or understanding was come to; but if we were permitted to make some treaty with her—perhaps of the nature of that which now exists between the Sandwich Islands and America—and if the internationalization of the islands were maintained, it would be of enormous service to us. You will see from the memorandum that our trade is very considerable with the islands. The islands have also been the seat of the London Missionary Society's efforts, and this has made the islanders have, no doubt, a warm feeling towards England.

As to the Kermadec Islands and Sunday Islands, they have been used as places from whence to obtain guano; and further than that they are mere rocks and of no importance, and I do not suppose that any of the European Governments would object to these islands being annexed to New Zealand. You will see from the map that they are not further from New Zealand than the Chatham or Campbell Islands are, which are included in New Zealand boundaries.

We are awaiting with some anxiety the report that will be made on the Samoan trouble by the man-of-war that has been sent there. From letters recently received it would appear that the revolution or dispute between the two sets of Natives still continues, and that the islanders are being still taught to look upon Germany as all-powerful.

Reference has been made, as you will observe in the memorandum, to Rapa; but I need not urge your attention to that question, as you are as fully aware of its importance to New Zealand as we are.

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G., Agent-General.

I have, &c.,
ROBERT STOUT.

No. 20.

The PREMIER to F. H. PRICHARD, Esq.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 11th November, 1885.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th ultimo, and to express my gratification that your Committee is satisfied with what has been done with respect to the annexation petition. Will you be good enough to assure the Committee that the matter shall receive my further attention and support.

F. H. Prichard, Esq., Hon. Secretary, Annexation Committee,
Levuka, Fiji.

I have, &c.,
ROBERT STOUT.

No. 17.