

No. 6.

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

SIR,—

Government House, Wellington, 25th June, 1891.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your two despatches dated the 9th June respecting the successful establishment of a Legislative Council and an Executive Council for the Cook Group.

Your action has my approval, and I doubt not will also have that of Her Majesty's Government, for the speedy and efficient manner in which you have carried out the instructions given you without apparently causing any friction between yourself and the natives and Europeans of the Group.

I shall address you further at a future date in respect to the peculiar position occupied by the inhabitants of the Island of Aitutaki as compared with those of the other Islands.

I have, &c.,

F. J. Moss, Esq., British Resident, Rarotonga.

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No. 7.

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

(No. 11/91.)

MY LORD,—

British Residency, Rarotonga, 22nd July, 1891.

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your Excellency's despatch of the 25th June (received on the 12th July per "Richmond"), and to express my grateful appreciation of your approval of my action in carrying out under considerable difficulties your instructions respecting the federation of these Islands.

I am glad to state that the federation is now in full working order, with a properly-organised Legislature, Executive, and Supreme Court, as well as a permanent revenue, and all the modest staff of officials necessary to enable the Government to perform its duty. The laws are recognised and accepted by natives and foreign residents; and the Chief Judge of the Supreme Court (Tepou te Rangi) has adjudicated in several cases between foreign residents of different nationalities. One of these cases, between two British subjects, involved the payment of \$1,000, and another, between two American citizens, \$654. His decisions have been based on broad principles of equity, in the absence of statute law—on the "law of the mouth," as the natives term it—and have been accepted by all the parties concerned.

The first meeting of the *ariki*s of the Group (the Government) was held by Makea at her residence on the 17th instant. There were present seven *ariki*s (kings) and five *ariki*s (queens), being the rulers of all the islands excepting Mangaia. No such gathering has ever before been seen here, and the best feeling prevailed.

I enclose the minute of proceedings at the meeting. They were at one stage interrupted by the unexpected entrance of Vaipo, the old Mangaian Chief of Ivirua, who appealed to the assembled *ariki*s to protect him and seek to restore peace to Mangaia. Vaipo stated that the troubles at that island were worse than ever, and he was supported in this by a letter from King John to the same effect. It appears that he himself and King John had intended to be present at the *ariki*s' meeting, but were refused a canoe at Meroa to take them to the schooner "Nassau." He had got off two days later by the trader "Goldfinch," but only in the clothes in which he stood. By thus leaving he had put those who were watching him off their guard. The incident was somewhat dramatic, and as the old man pleaded earnestly there was considerable excitement. Some wished me to go down with them and arrest these quarrelsome chiefs, Others thought that men should be sent down to bring them up instead of running after them; but I was pleased to find them unanimous in telling me that they would do whatever I thought best. I advised them to go on with the work then in hand; that dealing properly with Mangaia required thought, and that we would meet and talk of that another day.

I shall keep this despatch open till the last moment in order that I may send your Excellency the latest information. My present idea is that the Government should appoint a Commission to proceed to Mangaia and there inquire into the causes that led to Mangaia not being represented at the great meeting. In this there would be no interference with the local government, and the susceptibilities of the Mangaia people could not be wounded. The *ariki*s meet to-morrow at Makeas to decide what shall be done. In any case I shall go myself, as the statements respecting Mangaia are so various, and the bitterness of the feeling is so intense, that it is not safe to leave it fermenting any longer. The Rev. George Augustus Harris is the resident missionary. Under him a most narrow and tyrannical system of church discipline has been established. No one, unless a member of the church, can hold office, and expulsion involved civil disability of the most complete kind. The expelled are known as *tutai auri*—dirt from the prisons—gaol-birds, would, perhaps, be the nearest synonym. Obviously this must all be changed, and permanently changed, if civil government is to be successfully established. Mr. Harris has been the absolute and unchecked ruler of Mangaia for the last twenty years. The natives are unanimous on one point, that he could have prevented these troubles had he seen fit to use his power to do so.

I now hear, also, for the first time, that it is contended the *ariki*s of Mangaia are not the proper representatives of the island in the Government, but that the chiefs are there supreme. I was always aware that the *ariki*s were weak in Mangaia as compared with the other islands, but this contention, and many others, can be investigated by the Commission that I hope to see at work. The whole facts will then be clearly known.

I have made arrangements to stay at the house of the King's brother, and shall thus be able to hold aloof from all parties. The "Torea," or some other trading vessel, will probably give an opportunity of getting to the island within a week or ten days, and I hope to be able to report to