

No. 13.

His Excellency the GOVERNOR to his Honour Sir JAMES PRENDERGAST.

SIR,—

Wellington, 7th December, 1897.

(1.) As you are aware, in 1890 Her Majesty's Government established a Protectorate over the group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean known as the Cook or Hervey Islands, and in the same year Mr. Frederick Joseph Moss was appointed by such Government to be British Resident at Rarotonga in these islands—an office which he still holds.

(2.) For some time past dissatisfaction has existed among some of the inhabitants of these islands with regard to certain action taken or advocated by Mr. Moss, and, as it is important that Her Majesty's Government and the Government of this colony should be fully informed as to the causes of this, and be in a position to suggest remedies, I have deemed it advisable to appoint some person in whom full confidence can be placed to conduct the various inquiries referred to in this letter.

(3.) Having ascertained that you would be willing to perform this duty, I have the honour to request that you will, at your earliest convenience, proceed to Rarotonga, and there, or at such other place or places in the Cook Islands as you may deem expedient, conduct the several inquiries hereafter mentioned. I hereby nominate and appoint you for these purposes accordingly.

(4.) In particular, it is desired you should inquire into the following matters:—

- (a.) The petition, dated 7th September, 1897, of the Arikis of Rarotonga, addressed to the Governor of New Zealand.
- (b.) The petition of the Cook Islands Parliament, dated 13th September, 1897; also addressed to the Governor of New Zealand.
- (c.) Other petitions, dated respectively 9th and 16th September, 1897, being in the nature of counter-statements to those before mentioned.
- (d.) The petition of Messrs. C. Kohn, Piltz, and others, dated 15th September, 1897, to the Governor of New Zealand, complaining of the general administration of affairs in the Cook Islands.

Copies of these various documents, and the comments of Mr. Moss thereon, are sent herewith for your information.

(5.) It is not desired you should limit your inquiries to these petitions, or the answers that may be made to them; but that, if any allegation is made to you affecting the relations of Mr. Moss to the Parliament or Government of the Cook Islands, the same should be by you fully investigated: Provided that, if any such allegation should relate personally to Mr. Moss, you will not inquire into the same unless made in writing, and until a copy thereof has been delivered to him.

(6.) Having regard to the importance of this subject, and with the view of affording the fullest information to Her Majesty's Government and that of this colony, I am desirous you should endeavour to obtain accurate information on the working of the constitution of the islands—whether it is carried out in accordance with the local law, and how far the restriction imposed upon the Arikis of legislating with the consent of the British Resident is beneficial or otherwise.

(7.) In the course of such inquiries you will no doubt be able to learn much as to the political and social condition of the people in these islands, and I shall be glad to have your views, based on inquiry, touching the fitness of the native inhabitants for the efficient discharge of the duties devolving upon them as legislators, as Judges, or in the ordinary administration of Government.

(8.) Generally I wish to obtain as much information as possible as to the political, educational, commercial, and social condition of the native inhabitants—indicating whether, in your opinion, inconvenience results from the presence or action of persons of other nationalities resident in these islands.

(9.) Respecting the conduct of these inquiries, as this will not be a judicial investigation, with evidence taken upon oath, I think the form of inquiry should be left to your own discretion. It will no doubt consist of written and oral statements made to you, and the latter should be reduced to writing and authenticated by the persons making such statements—opportunity being afforded to those directly concerned to cross-examine such persons and make rebutting statements as the case may require.

(10.) Upon the completion of these inquiries I request that you will embody your conclusions in a report setting forth the result of your action, and containing any suggestions you may think fit to make as to all or any of the subjects dealt with by you.

(11.) Arrangements will be made for your conveyance to Rarotonga by H.M.S. "Torch," leaving Auckland on Saturday, the 11th instant, and for your return to New Zealand.

His Honour Sir James Prendergast, Chief Justice of New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

RANFURLY.

[For enclosures see enclosures to No. 1.]

No. 14.

His Honour Sir JAMES PRENDERGAST to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

MY LORD,—

Wellington, 24th January, 1898.

In obedience to the request conveyed by your Excellency's letter of the 7th ultimo, I left Wellington on Thursday, the 9th of that month, for Rarotonga, proceeding by steamer to Auckland, which place I reached in the forenoon of Saturday, the 11th, and at once went on board H.M.S. "Torch." That vessel took its departure early in the afternoon of the 11th, and reached Rarotonga on the morning of the 23rd. Immediately on arrival of the "Torch" a party of Arikis