

The power left to the Governor amounted to this, that administrative matters relating to purely Native Affairs (in which I include the purchase of land at the desire of the colonists) were conducted by the Native Department; that the officers of that department were under his personal control, and that in giving his orders to them he was not bound to follow the judgment of his Ministers. He was, however, bound to communicate to them all his proceedings, which were thus brought within the reach of that Parliamentary and ministerial pressure from which indeed, under the system of responsible government, it was impossible, by any merely formal arrangement such as that of 1856, to withdraw any portion of the internal affairs of the Colony. Even as thus controlled, the administration of Native Affairs by an officer not taking his orders from the responsible ministry was a matter of continual dissatisfaction and complaint.

It is plain, therefore, that all comprehensive action upon the natives depended upon the legislative action of the colonists. All that the Governor could do (as representing the Home Government) was to handle the existing machinery and especially to prevent any injudicious pressure upon the natives on the point upon which they are most susceptible,—the alienation of their lands.

The inadequacy of these powers was represented to the Home Government by Colonel Gore Browne, and an attempt was made, not so much to enlarge them, as to bring them by Act of the Imperial Government into a form in which they would be capable of more effective exercise. The measure was opposed, as inconsistent with the rights of the colonists, by those who claimed to represent colonial feeling, and in deference to that feeling was withdrawn. The matter being afterwards debated in the General Assembly, it appeared that the feeling of the colonists had been accurately represented in England. The colonists not only deprecated firmly any action of the British Parliament, but, through their Ministers and Parliament, they refused to concede more to the Imperial Government than a vote of £2,350, payable for seven years to a Native Council, from whom all practical power was carefully withheld. Even this trifling and simply pecuniary concession was only sanctioned by the House of Representatives, "on the distinct understanding that the control and ordinary departmental administration of Native Affairs shall be placed under responsible ministers, subject to the provisions of the Bill and to the proper constitutional action of the supreme head of the Executive."

You cannot fail to observe the importance of these proceedings. You perceive that since the passing of the Constitution Act, far from New Zealand being, as to Native Affairs, "a Crown Colony," (a theory strangely maintained by some of its leading politicians), the Home Government had possessed a mere relic of that power respecting Native Affairs, to which it was indisputably entitled so long as it was responsible for quelling native insurrections. Small as that relic had been, it had been the object of constant jealousy and encroachment on the part of the Colonial Government; and the attempt, under circumstances of pressing exigency to mould it into some imperfect efficacy, has been met in effect (for I dismiss as unworthy of consideration, unmeaning phrases which merely serve to disguise the truth) by a demand for its abandonment.

If instead of taking this course, the acts of the colonists had shown any such disposition, as might sometimes be inferred from their language, to make the existing condition of things somewhat less anomalous and illusory, it is possible that for their sake and for that of the Maories, the British Government might have felt itself bound to support for some time longer the extreme disadvantages of the position which it occupied. But the proceedings which I have described, relieved the Home Government from any obligation of this kind with regard to the colonists, while your own Despatch, to which I have already referred, furnished sufficient assurance of what recent experience had gone far to prove, that the existing arrangements were not really of use to the natives.

When, therefore, I learnt that your late Ministry had repeated, and that you had acceded to the constant demand of the colonists for the abolition of the Native Department, I had little hesitation in sanctioning your proceedings.

The foregoing statement supplies an answer to much that is contained in the memorials of the Legislative Council and House of Representatives.

It exhibits my reasons for holding that the duty of civilizing and controlling the aborigines of New Zealand, rests in the first place with the inhabitants of the colony, who are primarily interested in the order, prosperity, and tranquility of their own country, and who, within its limits, alone exercise the power of imposing taxes and passing laws—that the Imperial Government is not called upon as a matter of right to relieve the inhabitants from any part of their responsibilities—that for their own supposed advantage it has hitherto so relieved them, but upon implied conditions which have long been imperfectly acquiesced in, and have now been plainly repudiated by the colonists—finally, that the failure of the system hitherto pursued, and the necessity for abandoning it, arises not from the neglect of the Home Government to exercise its powers, but from the inadequacy of those powers, and the refusal of the colonial community to confer, or submit to them. I willingly admit the perfectly constitutional character of that refusal.

I now turn to other matters. The Legislative Council, as I have already said, dispute my statement that the present is a settlers' war, and the House of Representatives use language which is evidently calculated, and therefore I presume intended, to convey the impression that the British Government is the author of that war.

I need not inform the framers of these Memorials, that the purchase of land from the natives is a matter which the various Provincial Governments are directly interested in promoting, even in defiance of native opposition, but which the Home Government, so long as it pays for native wars, is interested in suspending in all cases where it cannot be effected without exciting opposition. I need hardly further inform them that the slow progress of these land sales under the auspices of the