

CORRESPONDENCE

WITH THE

NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS

RELATIVE TO

DEFENCE.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND OF
HIS EXCELLENCY.

WELLINGTON.

—
1870.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS RELATIVE TO DEFENCE.

No. 1.

The Hon. W. GISBORNE to the NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS.
Colonial Secretary's Office,

(No. 899.)

Wellington, 29th November, 1869.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honor to enclose a Memorandum from the Commissioner of Armed Constabulary on the supply of Small Arms and certain other articles required for the use of that Force.

It appears that the 2,000 Sniders which have been supplied to the Colony by the Imperial Government are too long for service in the bush, and that 1,000 short Sniders, as recommended by the Small Arms Select Committee of the House of Representatives in last Session, should be obtained. The best arrangement, if practicable, will be to exchange 1,000 long Sniders with the Imperial Government for the same number of short Sniders.

With respect to the Steel Gun Batteries, I believe that the Imperial Government will, if applied to by you, be willing to give or at least to lend such batteries to the Colony. The General Assembly has not appropriated any funds for the purchase of such batteries, and I cannot authorize you to incur any expenditure for that purpose.

The ammunition and the minor supplies you will no doubt be able to purchase from Imperial stores at contract prices.

The Hon. F. D. Bell and Hon. I. E. Featherston, M.D.

I have, &c.,
W. GISBORNE.

Enclosure in No. 1.

The COMMISSIONER, ARMED CONSTABULARY, to Hon. W. GISBORNE.
Colonial Defence Office,
Wellington, 29th November, 1869.

Memorandum for Commissioners on the subject of Arms, Ammunition, and Equipment for the use of the Colony.

DURING last Session of the General Assembly a Select Committee was appointed to report upon "the best description of Small Arms for use in New Zealand."

On the 1st of September the Report of the Committee was brought up, and upon the Hon. Mr. McLean promising that "every possible care would be taken in sending to England, to see that the views expressed by the Committee should be adhered to, and that the arms imported should be of the best description and most recent improvement, and suited for New Zealand warfare," the motion, by leave of the Chairman, was withdrawn. (*Vide* "Hansard," pp. 887, 888, September 1st.)

Since then, however, the Imperial Government have sent from England on loan, and for the use of the Colony, 1,832 converted Sniders, and have also handed over from Imperial stores in Auckland 163 more, making a total of 2,000, all excepting 100 being of the long Enfield pattern, and therefore unfitted for bush warfare; the 100, being sword-rifle pattern (short), may be considered suitable, and are now being issued to the Armed Constabulary.

There are also 500 medium rifles converted to Snider shortly expected by the "Melita." These, however, being longer than the sword-rifle referred to above, are not suitable, but they will be temporarily issued to the Armed Constabulary until weapons better adapted for the requirements of the Colony are received.

I would therefore recommend that 1,000 Snider Cavalry Carbines, the same pattern as those now in use by the Imperial Cavalry, fitted with the knife-bayonet with saw back, as nearly as possible per pattern, be ordered, as the most serviceable weapon for the Colony (*vide* printed Report of Small Arms Committee, attached); 200 revolvers, medium size, Colt's latest improvement, for using metallic central fire cartridges, fitted with leather sheath, so as to be worn on the waist belt; 500,000 rounds of ammunition for the Snider cavalry carbines, and 50,000 rounds of metallic centre fire cartridges for the Colt's revolvers; 50 officers light-cavalry swords; 100 privates ditto—these swords ought not to be too long or too heavy; 50 officers shoulder pouch belts, fitted with pouch of brown leather for revolver ammunition, the ornament V.R. and crown on pouch; 100 privates do. do., to carry say 30 rounds of breech-loading ammunition; 50 officers sword belts, brown leather, cordovan; 100 privates do., made of bridle leather; 500 sets of accoutrements for foot constables, to consist of waist belt fitted with pouch to contain 40 rounds, slightly curved, so as to fit close into the small of the back, ball bag of ordinary size, and frog,—all of brown bridle leather; 50 latest Manuals for Manual and Platoon Exercise for the Snider Breech-loading Artillery Carbines, revised edition, price 2d., Horse Guards, January 1868, or later edition, if published; 20 latest Instructions for Musketry Instruction of the Army, revised edition, price 1s. 6d., 1868, or later, if published; 12 Sapper's Manual, by Captain Frankland, R.E. These books may be obtained at W. Clowes and Sons, 14 Charing Cross, Five thousand buttons of the size known as "shoulder buttons" or "shell jacket," to be made of white metal (not copper-gilt), with raised crown in centre, and "N.Z. Armed Constabulary" encircling crown.

CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO DEFENCE.

I think the steel mountain guns would be admirably suited for New Zealand warfare, as they are light and portable. I would therefore recommend that three batteries complete, fitted with Otago saddles, and the required amount of working gear and ammunition, be obtained.

I find, on reference to the Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution, Woolwich, for December 1868, that the common and double shell was the most effective in the Abyssinian war, while the shrapnel case shot and rockets were not to be depended upon, except under certain circumstances. It would therefore be desirable to secure a supply of the first-named projectiles.

Mr. Sub-Inspector Rowan, at present on sick leave in England, having offered his services to the Commissioners in procuring patterns, or in any other way, has been instructed to wait upon the Commissioners on their arrival in England.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

ST. JOHN BRANIGAN,
Commissioner, A.C. Force.

No. 2.

The Hon. W. GISBORNE to the NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS.

(No. 905.)
GENTLEMEN,—

Colonial Secretary's Office,
Wellington, 1st December, 1869.

Adverting to my letter No. 899, of the 29th ultimo, on the subject of supply of small arms for the Constabulary, I would further suggest, that as long Sniders are not so useful in bush warfare, the Imperial Government should be requested by you to exchange the whole number of 2,000 long Sniders now in possession of the New Zealand Government, for the same number of short Sniders, instead merely, as stated in my letter, of only exchanging 1,000.

The Hon. F. D. Bell and Hon. I. E. Featherston, M.D.

I have, &c.,
W. GISBORNE.

No. 3.

The Hon. W. GISBORNE to the NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS.

(No. 205.)
GENTLEMEN,—

Colonial Secretary's Office,
Wellington, 24th December, 1869.

Adverting to my letter of the 29th ultimo, enclosing a memorandum on the subject of small arms, I have the honor to request that you will be good enough to procure and forward to Wellington, as early as possible, addressed to the Inspector of Stores, 300 Cavalry Swords, similar to those used in the light Cavalry Regiments at home, and also a similar number of bridle-leather sword belts made of stained leather, with leather carriages and plated furniture.

If possible, these swords and belts should be obtained from J. and J. Wilkinson, of Pall Mall; and as a guide to the price of the belts, I have to state that they could be procured in Wellington, if 300 were taken, for 12s. 6d. each.

The Hon. F. D. Bell and Hon. I. E. Featherston, M.D.

I have, &c.,
W. GISBORNE.

No. 4.

The NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

SIR,—

London, 23rd February, 1870.

We have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th December, No. 205, in further reference to the subject of arms and ammunition, to which you had directed our attention by your letters of 29th November and 1st December (the latter received by this mail).

It has been impossible for us yet to attend to this matter, for we have had not a moment's leisure since we arrived; but we shall do so without delay, and communicate to you by next mail.

We have, &c.,
I. E. FEATHERSTON,
F. D. BELL,
Commissioners.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

No. 5.

The Hon. W. GISBORNE to the NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS.

GENTLEMEN,—

Colonial Secretary's Office,
Wellington, 29th April, 1870.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23rd February last, in further reference to the subject of arms and ammunition.

The Hon. F. D. Bell and Hon. I. E. Featherston, M.D.,
Care of John Morrison, Esq., 3 Adelaide Place,
King William Street, London, E.C.

I have, &c.,
W. GISBORNE.

No. 6.

The NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

(No. 10.)

SIR,—

London, 24th March, 1870.

Adverting to your recent letters on the subject of arms, we have the honor to enclose a Memorandum, which you will no doubt transmit to the Defence Office, for the information of the Honorable the Defence Minister.

We have, &c.,

F. D. BELL,

I. E. FEATHERSTON.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, New Zealand.

Enclosure in No. 6.

The NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

Memorandum respecting Arms.

THE Colonial Secretary's letters, Nos. 899 and 905, dated respectively 29th November and 1st December, desire the Commissioners to obtain from the Imperial Government, in exchange for the 2,000 long Sniders recently lent to the Colony, an equal number of short Sniders of the kind recommended by the Small Arms Committee of the House of Representatives last Session (Report, 19th August, 1869).

On inquiry, however, from Colonel Dixon, R.A., Superintendent of the Ordnance Factory at Enfield, who gave the Commissioners the most detailed information as to all arms used in the Imperial Service, it appears that there are no short Snider Cavalry Carbines, of 577-bore, in the Government Stores; all they had of that kind have been issued to the Cavalry at home.

But, with respect to the 45-bore arm, which the Small Arm Committee recommended (called here the Martini Rifle), Colonel Dixon pointed out that this arm had not yet been actually adopted for the English Army, and that none had been made except the patterns. Only last week a further report was sent in to the War Office in favour of this arm; and it would probably be extensively ordered but for the great number (exceeding half a million) Sniders actually in store, which would be wasted by the adoption of the Martini 45-bore. The latter is a beautiful weapon, and has great advantages over the Snider in some respects; but for bush warfare Colonel Dixon does not consider it a very safe weapon. The difficulty about it, which cannot be got over, is that it is impossible to manipulate the loading without at the same time manipulating the action; and there is no external indication to tell the soldier whether the gun is loaded or not. In the ordinary rifle the soldier can carry his gun at half-cock; but the Martini 45-bore is always at full cock. With regard to the possibility of procuring a supply there is this difficulty—that if adopted for the Imperial service, none of those to be then made could be immediately spared; while it would take any private manufacturer a long time, probably at least six months, to alter his machinery so as to be prepared to execute a large order.

2. With regard to Revolvers. Colt's patent, asked for by Mr. Branigan, would not do. Colt's revolvers were never used in the military service here, and are now entirely given up in the navy. What is used is Adams' revolver; and as this is now being supplied to the navy as fast as possible, Colonel Dixon doubts whether any could be spared at this moment, but application will be made to the War Office to ascertain. This revolver is a beautiful arm, and by a simple action any cartridge can be removed, instead of the chambers having to be fired off. The cost will be about 60s. 6d. each. As to sending home any revolvers from the Colony to be altered, Colonel Dixon does not consider that would be worth while, for the cost of conversion would be 25s., besides freight and repairs. The ammunition for the Adams revolver is very perfect.

3. As to Sword Bayonets. Colonel Dixon showed the latest improvement made, which differs from the pattern recommended by the House of Representatives Small Arm Committee, which was not to exceed 15 inches in the blade. The total length of the sword bayonet now issued to the Irish Constabulary is 23½ inches; length of blade 18 inches, with saw back extending about 8 inches: weight without scabbard, 1 lb. 6 oz.; and scabbard 7 oz. more. Exactly the same pattern would be issued with the Martini 45-bore; this bayonet is perfectly balanced and easy to handle.

4. With regard to tenders for Cavalry Carbines of the Snider 577-bore. Offers have been procured from the London Small Arms Company, and the Birmingham Small Arms Company. The price charged by these respectively would be about 63s., complete. The London Company could execute the order in ten (10) weeks, and the Birmingham Company in twelve (12) weeks.

We have not thought it right finally to decide on ordering these rifles yet. In consequence of the impossibility of obtaining a present exchange of short Sniders for the long from the Imperial Government, we assume that some of the long Sniders now in the Colony will have to be issued, in addition to the five hundred (500) medium converted Sniders sent out by the "Melita." And if any rifles are to be ordered at all, we should prefer, before deciding finally, to know whether the Martini 45-bore is finally adopted by the British Army; accordingly we have arranged to see Colonel Dixon again before coming to a decision. It is unnecessary to observe that the same observation applies to the ammunition, especially as there is just now an improvement in the rifle cartridge, by the shortening of it and a compression at the top, and a heavier charge is carried.

5. Respecting Cavalry Swords. Colonel Dixon showed us two or three patterns; one which he has just perfected being especially recommended. It has a perfect balance, and though somewhat lighter and shorter than the arm now issued to the British Cavalry, the hilt of which is solid while this is open, seemed to us the most useful. The cost will be from 18s. to 20s., and we are going to Birmingham to see the only maker whom Colonel Dixon says could execute the order. It was a mistake to suppose that Wilkinson, of Pall Mall, is a sword-forging at all; he is only a buyer and seller.

6. As to Spare Implements. The new carbine has its own cleaning rod (in two parts, fitting) within the butt. Colonel Dixon is drawing up a table of proportions he recommends of spare implements, with a sufficient margin, in addition to the proportion now fixed for the army; and will

also supply printed tables which will be found of great use, showing every kind of arm in use in the service.

7. Nothing yet has been finally settled about the Steel Mountain Batteries, but information will be sent by next mail.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

F. D. BELL.

I. E. FEATHERSTON.

No. 7.

The Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY to the NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS.

Colonial Secretary's Office,

Wellington, 27th November, 1869.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honor to enclose a Report* of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council upon the Defence of the Harbours and Commerce of the Colony, and to request that you will place yourselves in communication on this subject with the Imperial authorities.

The Government believe that if proper representations are made, the Imperial Government will be willing to grant gratuitously to the Colony, in aid of the defence of its harbours, ordnance of large calibre, though at home comparatively obsolete, and a corresponding supply of ammunition.

You will be good enough, after careful inquiry, to take such steps as you may consider best calculated to attain the object in view. The Government have no funds available for the formation of batteries; but if you are unable to obtain ordnance free of cost, any proposal involving Colonial expenditure which you may, after obtaining the best information and suggestions from professional authority, make in concert with the Imperial Government, will be submitted to the General Assembly.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. F. D. Bell and Hon. I. E. Featherston, M.D.

W. GISBORNE.

No. 8.

The Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY to the NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS.

Colonial Secretary's Office,

Wellington, 20th January, 1870.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honor to enclose, for your information, copy of a letter from Mr. Wellington Guernsey, of London, offering to raise a Corps of Rangers for service in New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. F. D. Bell and Hon. I. E. Featherston, M.D.,

W. GISBORNE.

Care of J. Morrison, Esq., 3 Adelaide Place, London, E.C.

Enclosure in No. 8.

Mr. W. GUERNSEY to the Hon. the PREMIER.

The General Musical and Operatic Agency,

125 Regent Street, W., London, 21st October, 1869.

SIR,—

I beg to bring under your notice the following plan for raising troops for service in New Zealand, which I am certain, if entertained by the Government of the Colony, will smooth many difficulties at present intervening. I propose to raise three regiments of Rangers, 600 men each, for service in New Zealand—an English, Irish, and Scotch—for from two to five years' service, and to be given a grant of land as settlers on discharge. I will guarantee to get the right sort of soldiers suited for the service, knowing the description required. I will also guarantee that, on the security of the Colonial Government, I will procure the necessary funds requisite, without the intervention of the Imperial Government, except so far as getting the permission to raise the men in the United Kingdom.

If these propositions will be entertained, on your authorizing your agent to conclude a contract in this country, the funds requisite will be found in the City of London forthwith. Permission from the Imperial Government, no doubt, will be obtained to levy the men, and forward them to New Zealand. It will be a boon to the Colony, and very soon settle any disturbance with the Natives. An estimate can be very soon made of the total expense, and an agreement made. I can state the bankers in the City of London are prepared, on the security named, to find the necessary funds.

I have, I must tell you, had the requisite experience for years in raising men, both for Her Majesty's Government and other services.

Waiting for your reply, upon which having I will be prepared to hand over and show my requisites for the service I propose from the first men of the day, military and otherwise,

I have, &c.,

The Hon. W. Fox, Minister for New Zealand.

WELLINGTON GUERNSEY.

No. 9.

The ACTING UNDER SECRETARY, DEFENCE, to Mr. W. GUERNSEY.

(No. 8-6A.)

Colonial Defence Office,

Wellington, 21st January, 1870.

SIR,—

I have the honor, by direction of Mr. Gisborne, to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 21st October last, addressed to the Hon. Mr. Fox, offering to raise three corps of Rangers for service in this Colony, and to inform you that a copy of your letter has been forwarded to the New Zealand Commissioners now in England, to the care of J. Morrison, Esq., 3, Adelaide Place, London Bridge.

Wellington Guernsey, Esq.,

I have, &c.,

The General Music and Operatic Agency,
125, Regent Street, London.

G. S. COOPER,

Acting Under Secretary.