

1876.

NEW ZEALAND.

SIR G. GREY'S LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

(FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

His Honor Sir G. GREY to Governor the Most Hon. the Marquis of
NORMANBY.

MY LORD,—

Wellington, 17th October, 1876.

On Friday, the 13th instant, I for the first time read the despatch which your Excellency addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the 21st June last—that is, nearly four months after it had been sent from this colony.

I was surprised and sorry on finding the statements your Excellency had made to the Queen's Principal Secretary of State regarding myself, and beg to offer the following explanations in reference to them:—

In the first place, it should be remembered that the circumstances upon which your Excellency's despatch rest are stated to have transpired in a private conversation I am alleged to have held on some evening about June, 1875, at the Club at Auckland I presume, for I think I never met the narrator of this alleged conversation at any private house on any evening, or at any other time.

I never held any conversation or answered any questions at the Club at Auckland except in that easy confidence of privacy commonly prevailing amongst gentlemen admitted into such institutions, and without giving that care and attention to precise form of expression, and without that accuracy of recollection, which I should certainly have bestowed on any conversation I believed was shortly to be conveyed to your Excellency's ears, and to be by you reported, twelve months afterwards, to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State, for the information of the Queen and the British Parliament.

Especially should I have used greater caution in the respects to which I allude, had I known that, after such a report had been made, I was to be left in ignorance for more than four months of what had been done, of the words and expressions I was to be charged with having used, and of the interpretation your Excellency was pleased to put upon them. Men's honor and character, nay their very lives, are held upon a frail tenure, if such things can be done.

The state of affairs when the alleged conversation is said to have taken place was quite different to that which prevailed when I wrote to your Excellency on the 5th June, 1876. In June, 1875, the Colonial Government had only proposed to abolish the provinces in the North Island. No form or method of abolition had been made known either to myself or to the public. I was altogether unaware what circumstances might have to be met. When I addressed your Excellency on the 5th of June, 1876, I had to speak of pressing difficulties which were known to be almost certain to present themselves for solution, in consequence of the Abolition Bill having been passed and made applicable to both Islands of New Zealand. It therefore never entered into my mind, on the 5th of June, 1876, to allude to a past state of affairs which was not under consideration, or to a conversation which I am alleged to have had twelve months previously to the date of my writing to you, but which I had totally forgotten; and I only addressed myself, I