

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

submit, clearly and succinctly to those circumstances which were in existence at the time I wrote, and to events for encountering which provision would probably have to be made.

The charges made against me by your Excellency, and the enclosures to your despatch, are three in number.

(1.) My conduct in relation to improperly dictating, in my office, as Superintendent, a particular resolution to the Provincial Council of the Province of Auckland.

(2.) Some implied charge, but not openly or fairly stated, of attempting to get the command of the police force of the Province of Auckland, to use it against the General Government.

(3.) Of being the author of reports that the Government of this country might attempt to use the Queen's vessels against the inhabitants of this colony, if any of the provinces, as a last resource, resisted the bringing into operation of the Abolition Act.

The first of these charges is sufficiently disposed of by my denial of it, and by the statements made, in their places in Parliament, by members of the Auckland Provincial Council.

The second charge is thus answered: The Superintendents of all the other provinces but Auckland have the police force under their control; and the law requires that this should be the case, as the Superintendents are by law required to pay the cost of the police force, and are made answerable for the peace, order, and good government of their several provinces. There was, therefore, in the first place, nothing unlawful or unusual in my seeking to be placed in the same position in this respect as other Superintendents. In the second place, when the General Government at last, at my request, agreed to hand over the police force of the Province of Auckland to the Superintendent, representations were made to me, on the part of the chief officer of that force, that this proceeding might injure the position of some of the officers, and lose the province the service of at least one very able and deserving officer, possibly that of some of the others, and of some of the men composing the force. It was then doubtful how long the provinces might continue, and any new arrangement made with regard to the police might only be very temporary. Out of tenderness, therefore, for individual interests, I would not interfere with them to gain an advantage which might be so short-lived, and I relinquished all idea of taking over the police, and did not do so. Had I intended to use the police force to support any views of my own, I should certainly have taken it over. The fact of my not having done so was well known to your Excellency's Advisers when you wrote your despatch of 21st June last.

The third charge is thus answered: I first heard of the supposed intention of the General Government to use, under certain circumstances, the Queen's vessels and marines against the people of New Zealand, from a supporter of the Government, some time before any of the circumstances alluded to in your Excellency's letters. I attached importance to that statement from knowing that on a previous occasion the Government here had made arrangements for doing this in the case of trivial disturbances, which they were capable of easily suppressing by police and special constables, as they in fact did.

My complaint also was not that a rumour was in circulation to the effect that the Queen's vessels and forcible measures were to be employed by the supporters of the Abolition policy against Her Majesty's subjects here—a rumour which undoubtedly myself or any other person might be wrongfully accused of having originated—but that the supporters of the Government Abolition measures used threats that this would be done. Now, certainly I could not have been the means of inducing them to use such threats, nor could I in any way be responsible for their doing so. Nor again, until your despatch of 21st June last was made public, did myself or the public know your views on the subject. It is, in my belief, greatly to be regretted that they were not sooner made public.

Threats of the kind I allude to have been made by supporters of the Abolition measures of the Government in my presence—sometimes as warnings, sometimes in a manner offensive to me. Members of the Assembly, the other day, in their places in Parliament, testified to the same circumstances. The public press has

done it. I do not think this can be denied. They produced, I believe, important political effects at the time. Now these warnings or threats are generally disapproved of; it is easy to laugh at them, and they cannot of course be carried out; but I still remain of opinion that they ought never to have been used.

I shall not at present notice those points which I think unconstitutional or wrong in your Excellency's despatch of the 21st June last; but I trust that you will transmit to the Secretary of State a copy of this my defence to the charges you have made against me.

His Excellency the Governor.

I have, &c.,
G. GREY.

No. 2.

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

MY LORD,—

Wellington, 18th October, 1876.

Since I wrote to your Excellency this morning, I have had placed in my hands a Dunedin newspaper, the *Otago Guardian*, date the 16th instant, the Editor of which makes the following positive personal statement:—

“The threat about the man-of-war was started by the Ministerialists. The writer of this has heard it personally from many of them, including Mr. Dargaville himself, and always as a hectoring threat, and long before the date mentioned by Mr. Dargaville, as that on which he heard it originated, as he says, by Sir George Grey.”

I enclose the only copy of the newspaper I have. I beg your Excellency to do me the justice of transmitting it, with a copy of this letter, to the Secretary of State. I would also suggest that Mr. Dargaville should be telegraphed to and informed of the statements now made.

His Excellency the Governor.

I have, &c.,
G. GREY.

No. 3.

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

SIR,—

Wellington, 19th October, 1876.

I have received your Honor's letter on the subject of my despatch of the 21st of June, to which you take exception.

2. You state that the charges against you are three in number. 1st. Your conduct in improperly dictating, in your office, as Superintendent, a particular resolution to the Provincial Council of Auckland.

3. If your Honor will read my despatch, you will find that I make no such charge against you. I simply state the fact, that a resolution in favour of a change in the provincial system did pass in the Provincial Council by a majority of five; and my reason for doing so was to show that the feeling against abolition was not so unanimous as your Honor seemed to suppose; and I further stated that that resolution was rescinded the next day by a majority of one, at your Honor's direct instigation and dictation, and this I gathered from the reports of the proceedings at the time, in which I find that Mr. Reader Wood (the Provincial Treasurer) is reported to have said, during the debate, that when he asked your views of ministerial responsibility, you replied, “Well, Wood, if the Council think I am in this way going to act as a Constitutional Governor acts, who does nothing without the advice of his Ministers, I had better go back to Kawau.” Shortly after, in the same debate, Mr. Sheehan is reported to have said, “He had the authority of Sir George Grey for saying, that he regarded the action taken on the previous day as most disastrous, and fettered him to such a degree that it became a question whether it was worth while carrying on any further. Sir George Grey said, he had left his retirement for the purpose of taking up this question. The people heard him. He proclaimed openly what views he held. Resolutions of confidence were passed in him. The provincial press teemed with articles of approval, and yet the Council, which he expected to assist and aid

“him in this matter, appeared determined to convert him to nothing more or less than a mouthpiece. He appealed to honorable members not to spoil the chance the province had of getting a fair consideration of its claims in the General Assembly.” If the report of the debate is correct, and I do not suppose your Honor will deny it, as it is extracted from a paper which has been laid before Parliament, I think there is quite sufficient to justify the statement I made.

4. As regards the second charge which your Honor states I made against you, “of attempting to get the command of the police force to use it against the General Government,” I must again ask your Honor to read my despatch, and you will find that, from the first word of it to the end, I made no allusion whatever to the police, or to your Honor wishing to obtain the command of it. The subject is only incidentally mentioned by Mr. Dargaville in his letter, as the commencement of the conversation, in which he states that you said, “Yes, what is more, I can easily believe it within the range of possibility that we may yet see a British man-of-war in that river (the Waitemata), with her guns pointed towards the city, to coerce us into submission to some intolerable measure of the Government at Wellington.” The subject must have been a matter of pretty general conversation at the time, as I have a distinct recollection of its being told to me in Wellington soon after the occurrence had taken place, and long before Mr. Dargaville’s information was tendered.

5. As regards the third charge, I have no reason whatsoever for supposing that Mr. Dargaville would deliberately invent such a statement as he has placed in writing; nor do I understand your Honor to deny that such a conversation did take place, although you state that you do not recollect it. Under these circumstances, with these statements before me, I think it was not an unfair inference for me to draw, that you had yourself been the first to give currency to a report similar to the one of which you complain to the Secretary of State.

6. You now state that threats of the kind you allude to have been made by supporters of the Abolition measures in your presence, and I think it very possible that many very foolish remarks may have been made by injudicious advocates on both sides of the question. But I have yet to learn that such threats have in any way been countenanced by any one in authority; and your Honor must further be perfectly aware that the Colonial Government have no authority whatever over Her Majesty’s forces, and that any requisition to the captain of a man-of-war must emanate from the Governor himself; and, therefore, when you stated to the Secretary of State that you believed there were substantial grounds for fearing that opposition to the Ministry might involve the City of Auckland being cannonaded by Her Majesty’s ships, you distinctly implied that, for the purpose of supporting the Government of the day, I should, in your opinion, be capable of personally ordering the bombardment of a defenceless city, an atrocity which even in actual war would disgrace any officer who committed it. This is a grave charge, and one which I think required much stronger evidence than a newspaper report or mere rumour to justify.

7. Your Honor further complains that the despatch was not sooner laid before Parliament; but you must remember that the despatch was not one which was volunteered by me. It was simply the comments which I considered necessary to make upon your letter to the Secretary of State; and I think your recollection of official correspondence of that character will remind you that it is not usual, under ordinary circumstances, to publish such correspondence before the answer is received. I had hoped to have received the answer by last mail, in which case I should at once have laid it before Parliament; but as it did not arrive, and your Honor asked for the despatch, I thought it better to lay it on the table of the House without waiting for the answer of the Secretary of State.

8. In compliance with your Honor’s request, I shall forward by outgoing mail your letter, together with my answer, and also your second letter, enclosing a copy of the *Otago Guardian* of the 16th instant.

I have, &c.,
NORMANBY.

His Honor the Superintendent of Auckland, &c.,
Wellington.