

V.

FIJI, FRIENDLY ISLANDS, AND NEW CALEDONIA

V.—Fiji, Friendly Islands, and New Caledonia.

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO THE ANNEXATION OR ABANDONMENT OF).

Return to an Address of the House of Representatives, dated 5th July, 1876,

“For copies of all correspondence between the Governor of New Zealand and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, from the years 1845 to 1853 inclusive, relating to the annexation or abandonment of the Fiji Islands, the Friendly Islands, New Caledonia, or any other islands in the Pacific Ocean.”

No. 1.

Governor Sir G. GREY to the Right Hon. Earl GREY.

MY LORD,—

Government House, Auckland, 14th March, 1848.

I have the honour to report, for the information of Her Majesty's Government, that application has recently been made to me by some of the inhabitants, and by the principal chiefs of the Friendly Islands, as also by some of the inhabitants and principal chiefs of the Fiji Islands, requesting, in the first place, that they might be permitted to become subjects of Her Majesty; and, in the second place, if this request could not be immediately complied with, that I would visit them and advise with them upon their present condition, suggesting for their adoption such measures as seemed likely to promote their further advancement in civilization, and to prevent the recurrence of the disturbances which were constantly taking place among them.

At the same time I have received from other sources authentic accounts of outrages of various kinds which are being committed throughout these islands by Europeans, or by natives instigated thereto by Europeans, and of wars arising from these causes, which are greatly thinning the population, and producing much unhappiness and distress to the inhabitants.

Amongst the outrages of this nature is the one more particularly alluded to in my Despatch No. 9, of the 10th instant, in which are detailed statements regarding a species of trade in the inhabitants which has been commenced in the Pacific; as also of an apparent murder, committed under extraordinary circumstances, at the Island of Rotuma. The enclosed memorial from some European inhabitants of the Fiji Islands shows also the evils which bad European characters are entailing upon those islands.

A consideration of the several statements at various times made to me regarding the present state of the islands in the Pacific has led me to conclude that a very general desire prevails upon the part of the inhabitants of the Friendly Islands and of the Fiji Islands, both European and native, to be brought under Great Britain, in the same manner that the New Zealand Islands have been.

This desire I suppose to have originated in the following causes:—

1. There are a large number of respectable British subjects, missionaries and traders, resident in those islands, who must exercise a great influence over the native inhabitants of them, and who, being anxious to obtain security for their persons and property, and foreseeing either that they must fall under some European Power, or that a state of constantly-increasing anarchy and confusion will prevail, are very anxious, if practicable, to secure the protection of British laws and the advantage of British government and commerce, and who probably also have some fear of France making the disturbances now prevailing, and which are likely to increase, the reason for taking possession of these islands.

2. The natives, influenced by their European friends, led by the representations of New Zealanders who are resident amongst them, and who describe what is taking place in their own country, probably, also, alarmed at the recent disturbances in the Pacific, and influenced in some degree by religious feelings, conceive, and, I think, justly, that their greatest hopes of future prosperity and happiness rest upon their incorporation with the British Empire.

When I was made fully aware of these several circumstances, I requested Captain Maxwell, upon his visiting these islands in H.M.S. “Dido,” to institute certain inquiries into their present state, and the probable wishes of the inhabitants. From the enclosed copies of my correspondence with Captain Maxwell, your Lordship will see that I carefully warned that officer that I do not consider myself in any way authorized to entertain any proposition for the surrender to Her Majesty of the sovereignty of any islands in the Pacific Ocean, or to enter into any negotiations with their chiefs upon such subjects, but that I thought that the present friendly feelings which the inhabitants of the islands in the Pacific so generally entertain for Great Britain should if possible be fostered and promoted.

Acting upon these views, Captain Maxwell has visited the Friendly Islands, and I herewith enclose a copy of his very interesting report upon the present state of these islands.

Your Lordship will find that he reports that he is, after personal inquiries upon the spot, of opinion that the information which had previously reached me is correct, and that the nominal King