

be difficult to lay down any precise times for such visits or their duration, yet the suggestion is one that is well worthy of consideration by the Imperial authorities, not only with regard to New Zealand, but other places; for it would be an unwise policy to allow a feeling to grow up in any of the colonies that they were less worthy of receiving visits from ships of Her Majesty's navy than from those of other nations.

I would urge specially for the consideration of the colonies that the advantage of having an increase to the Imperial squadron, in its fullest sense, instead of having in any degree a colonial navy would be, that we would have the benefit of officers and men specially trained for the work, with an experience gathered in all parts of the world, and of every improvement which naval science and skill can command, both in ships and in other armament.

Whatever decision is arrived at as to the amount of contribution to be paid by the various colonies should be embodied in statutes, and not left subject to annual votes.

ALEX. STUART.

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No. 24.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, Queensland, to the PREMIER, New Zealand.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 2nd June, 1885.

I have the honour to enclose herewith a memorandum upon the subject of united action on the part of the Australasian Colonies for the purpose of naval defence, to which I beg to invite your careful consideration.

The importance of the subject and the desirableness of an interchange of opinion upon it will, I am sure, commend themselves to you, and I take leave to suggest that it would conduce to an earlier mutual understanding if you would forward to the Governments of the other colonies copies of any observations you may think fit to make on the subject.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier of New Zealand, Wellington.

S. W. GRIFFITH.

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Enclosure.

MEMORANDUM.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 1st June, 1885.

RECENT events have impressed upon the Governments of all the Australasian Colonies the importance of making adequate provision for naval as well as land defence, and have, I think, indicated with tolerable clearness the defects inherent in the systems at present adopted. Each of the colonies has made such preparations as it could for defending its coasts—some have provided gun-boats, torpedo-boats, and other floating defences, and all have done their best with regard to their land defences; but so far as regards dealing with a hostile squadron in Australian waters, we have at present to rely entirely upon such ships as the Imperial Government are able to detach for this station. And it is manifest that the ships at present on the station are insufficient both in number and quality to afford such offensive and defensive force as a community of over three million persons, with wealth far beyond that possessed by a similar number in most other parts of the world, ought to have at its command.

I use the word "community" because, although for many purposes the several colonies are and are likely to remain separate, yet from many points of view we are one, and certainly to this extent—that the effect of a hostile attack, or of the presence of an enemy's fleet in our waters, would indisputably be felt by all alike.

Whatever views may be entertained in the abstract as to the duty of the Mother-country to maintain a naval force on the Australian Station sufficiently strong to destroy any hostile squadron that could reasonably be expected to attack us, and to protect the merchant shipping in Australian waters, there is, I think, every reason to suppose that until the colonies take the matter to some extent in their own hands, that degree of security will not be attained which we should like to feel, and which, with our geographical position and wealth, we are alike entitled to expect and bound to insist upon. No nation of a population and importance equal to that of Australasia has secured or can hope to be able to secure immunity from attack without some substantial sacrifice of money for defence purposes, which may be regarded as expended by way of insurance. And, while I maintain that it is in accordance both with the duty of the Imperial Government and with the interests of the Empire of which Australasia is an integral part that the Admiralty should maintain a powerful detachment of the Imperial navy in the Australian seas, I submit that it is our duty, and should be our pride, as self-governing countries to establish and maintain side by side with it an auxiliary squadron specially adapted for the peculiar duties required on this station. The question of expense I do not propose to deal with; but assume that if the desirableness of the end in view be admitted, the same spirit which has lately been displayed in the several colonies, and most notably in New South Wales, would willingly inspire the Legislatures to make all reasonable provision necessary for the purpose.

How, then, can the work be done? It cannot be done satisfactorily by the colonies individually. Supposing, for example, that each of the larger colonies maintained at its own expense, and as its own property, a fast and powerful cruiser under the orders of the admiral commanding the station, the sense of individual proprietorship would be so strong that, in the event of war, a feeling would arise not altogether rational, I admit, but I think too strong to be neglected, that that ship should be specially available for the defence of the colony which owned it. Yet it is manifest that the best course to be adopted for the defence of any one colony might be to concentrate all available force at a distance from it. The decision of such questions must be left to some independent, competent, and trusted authority, who would naturally be the admiral commanding the station,