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True Self-Reliance

Edward Jerningham Wakefield

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A BRIEF REVIEW
OF THE
CAUSES OF THE PRESENT CONDITION
AND
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE RELIEF
OF
NEW ZEALAND.

BY
E. JERNINGHAM WAKEFIELD, ESQ.

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TRUE SELF-RELIANCE.

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Nearly thirty years have elapsed since we commenced the regular colonization of New Zealand. For sixteen years we have had the power of making most of our own laws, of dealing with the public lands, and of borrowing money on the security of future revenue. Only in Maori affairs have we been restricted by Imperial interference: and within the last few years that interference has not been exercised, although the power has still been reserved to the Governor to veto any Colonial legislation or executive action which he may consider, or may be instructed to consider, hurtful to Imperial interests, or to the interests of those who, like the Missionary bodies at home, exercise an indirect influence over the Imperial Parliament and Government. Apart from the difficulties placed in our way by this distant and ignorant meddling with our relations towards the Maori race, we have made, generally, a very bad use of the great opportunities afforded us. We are in a far worse state as to money matters, both public and private, than we ought to be. We have made far less progress than we ought to and might have done. We have shamefully neglected the ample means at our disposal for making New Zealand attractive as a very extensive field for the employment of British capital and labor in various profitable pursuits, tending to develop the mining, manufacturing, and commercial, as well as the agricultural, timber-dealing, and pastoral resources of the Colony, and to advance its greatness and prosperity.

Those resources are undoubtedly very large; but they have hitherto been left almost as an unimproved waste. With few and trifling exceptions, the only industries pursued have been – farming of an inferior character; the very roughest growth of sheep, cattle, and horses on wild pasture; and, of late years, gold-mining.

The last, whether in alluvial diggings or in reefs of rock, is an exceedingly precarious pursuit. Its benefits to the country in which it is carried on are only temporary, unless the development of its resources induce the successful digger to settle and invest his earnings in it. Hitherto this has not been the case in New Zealand. Far from being developed, such resources are hardly known to exist by more than a few of even the dwellers in it. No effort whatever has been made to acquaint the energetic men who take so much gold out of the country with the opening that might be made for its investment therein. The General Parliament and Government have

never made any systematic efforts to collect full and authentic information on all such subjects; to publish it in a cheap, simple, and attractive form – even among the population within the Colony – far less among populations from which we might gain large additions to our powers for colonizing progress; or to encourage enterprising and adventurous people either in or out of the Colony to engage capital and labor in new industries likely to be profitable and permanent. Some of the Provincial Governments have done a little in this way recently: but it cannot be expected that these desultory and divided efforts, each limited to a particular portion of the Colony only, should lead to any great result. Otago, Southland, and Canterbury have, through their Provincial Governments, published more or less useful handbooks, and the first and last of these at least have offered bonuses for the establishment of one or two local industries, each within its own limits only. But these little books are all difficult to get, or not to be got, in the Colony; and some of them are out of print or out of date. In Canterbury, for instance, I could only procure with some difficulty a copy of a six-penny handbook for that Province, which its agent, Mr. Marshman, got published in London in 1862. I was told he had issued also in London another edition in 1864, of which I could not get a copy; and that he was perhaps to revise it for a third London edition, in whatever leisure he can spare from his well-paid duties in the Province. But if ever this is done, the information will relate to a smaller portion of the Colony than before, because Westland was separated from Canterbury on the 1st January, 1868, and the Timaru and Gladstone districts are considered contumacious, and not likely to receive a large share of attention from the Government which centres its extravagant expenditure and its effete energy at Christchurch. The Otago guide-book is a good one, and was published in Otago in 1868; the Southland one inferior, published at 6d. in London in 1867. I have not yet heard of any practical result from the offer of rewards for the establishment of local industries within Provincial limits by Otago and Canterbury.

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The results of private efforts, unaided by Government, have been anything but satisfactory, whether colonists have invested capital brought hither by themselves, or have borrowed it from bankers and importers of goods on the security of property and produce. During the whole history of the Colony, the capitalists, whether as actual workers or money-lenders, have encouraged scarcely anything else but the three pursuits I have mentioned. It may be said, indeed, that capital has been applied almost exclusively to raising wild stock on wild land, and supplying the shepherds and herdsmen, scarcely less wild at least in the rising generation, whether masters or servants, with imported goods of all kinds, many of which might have been long ago produced in the country, to its great advantage and that of all its inhabitants,

Much of the tilled land has been worked by men who are not at all skilled in agriculture, or who, although good laborers, are hardly able to master the secret

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of success on small farms, where labor is high-priced, the market for produce precarious, and the communication between the farm and the market mostly inferior and costly. California, with its cheap, simple, and easily repaired machinery for economising labor in every farming operation, its boundless extent of most fertile land, its even climate, and its generally excellent communication between a magnificent port and productive districts, offers a far more attractive field to the enterprising agriculturist, and must always compete successfully with the Australian and New Zealand growers of grain, even in their own ports.

The run-holding industry is useful as a temporary make-shift for food and export in the early days of founding a Colony; but it is the least profitable use of land that can be made, in proportion to the area occupied. Employing but little labor, and desiring as few and as distant neighbours as possible, this pursuit only rears a scattered population, incapable of energetic combination for religious, educational, social, or industrial objects, and especially so for military or political purposes. The children brought up in the districts so occupied mostly degenerate from the type of their parents, are deficient, not only in learning and accomplishments, but even in mental activity and energy; and are thus apt to be contented to potter on in the comparatively unproductive and useless life of Arabs or Tartars, rather than engage in some pursuit more worthy of a scion of the British race pushing forward the outposts of refinement and civilization. The pursuit has nearly come to an end in New Zealand, except in districts which cannot yet be so occupied, lest the untamed natives should roast both the sheep and the shepherd. Sheep and cattle multiply faster than mankind, and new fields of almost unlimited extent are opened out to the mere shepherd or herdsman, whether master or servant, all over the world. The supply of wool, meat, and tallow is daily tending to exceed the demand. There is no room in New Zealand for the disposal of the increase, until more good land shall have been brought by tillage into a state fit to carry more stock on the same area, of a kind more suited than most of that now in the country to produce the best results from the best use of good land in this climate. The merino sheep, for instance, will thrive well, in its wild way, when not too thickly crowded, on the mountains, hills, downs, plains, and table-lands of inferior soil in New Zealand; but nearly as well in more arid climates, such as Australia, Saxony, Spain, South Africa, Tartary, and West and South America; in all which such land is plentiful, and in most of them labor and beasts of burden uncommonly cheap. The New Zealand occupier of wildland with wild stock-meat, wool, tallow, and beasts of burden all having a constant tendency to fall in price – is driven to seek such temporary

relief as producing preserved meat for exportation, and in the meantime he must give away the increase or the old stock at a nominal figure, lest both should starve; or, as some have done, adopt the Malthusian plan of positively ceasing to breed!

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In the meanwhile the "class" legislation, consequent on the power in the Legislatures acquired by run-holders and those who advanced capital to them, has locked up most of the country fit for agriculture from any better use of it than wild depasturage. As an instance, take the Wairarapa, which is the nearest district to Wellington where any large extent of agricultural land has not been excluded from careful tillage and dense population by Maori obstacles. The nearest part of the district, by the present cart road, is 40 miles from Wellington, over a range which rises to the height of 2000 feet above the level of the sea. Parts of the district were occupied by "squatters," by agreement with the natives, and contrary to law, about twenty-five years ago. These occupations were first winked at, and afterwards legalized by the Government when they extinguished or confirmed the native title. Under the delusive "cheap land" laws of Sir George Grey and Dr. Featherston in 1853, these now licensed occupiers and their followers became monopolists, "spotting" all the richest and most accessible land on their runs, chiefly with borrowed capital or scrip on deferred payments, and maintaining the monopoly by "class" legislation favoring the run-holder at the expense of the freeholder. The craving of the humbler population for land was satisfied for a time by the meagre sop-in-the-pan of very circumscribed reserves for "small farm settlements," which began to be founded about fifteen years ago. The result at the present day speaks volumes. The population of the Wairarapa – run-holders and small-farmers alike – is almost entirely fed upon wheat from Canterbury, where the "sufficient price" preserved the good land for extensive tillage; and the very costly carriage of the wheat, or of the flour ground from it in Wellington, for a distance of from forty to sixty miles, is performed by horses fed mostly upon Canterbury oats! Wairarapa has been settled for sixteen years by farmers in the midst of run-holders, and contains probably 100,000 acres of land good enough for grain crops; but it does not grow wheat enough for its own bread, or oats enough for the beasts of burden that bring it from the ships that import it to Wellington from Canterbury!

These two pursuits of precarious result, producing at any time barely more than enough export to pay for the numerous imports, have been mostly carried on by means of borrowed capital, or foreign goods, supplied at heavy interest and charges by money-lenders or importers, or their agents. While these interests prospered, the lenders advanced freely to farmers and graziers, especially to the latter, and to the tradesmen supplying them. Success was counted upon as certain and permanent before it was hatched. Extravagance

was encouraged in public and private establishments of all ranks; and every trade and profession, from the highest to the lowest, was entered into on a scale far beyond the real wants of the people. The prices of town and suburban lands rose to absurdly fabulous rates. Competition soon diminished profits in most lines of business. The payment of interest became uncertain, and the value of securities depreciated. The money-lenders "put on the screw;" and the consequent reaction was redoubled by the collapse of the only two productive interests so extravagantly fostered, and on which, especially the least productive in proportion to the area of land, all the other business had been so improvidently built.

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Is it, then, matter for wonder that, except at the gold mines, everything is in a depressed state, and yet everything is overdone, both at the gold mines and elsewhere? Plenty of public-houses, most of them empty all day long! Plenty of drapers' and other shops, all "selling off" and "clearing out" at "unheard-of sacrifices." Plenty of good houses to let, although plenty of new houses are being built! People of all ranks and trades in want of employment; and yet some people calling out for a renewal of immigration to remedy the scarcity of labor! Plenty of money rushing to be invested in countless mining companies, whose "paid-up capital," to the tune of thousands, consists of "the estimated value of the mine;" while those anxious to establish other industries for local production, promising more steady and permanent returns, can find no capitalist to back them! What energy, what activity, what accumulated earnings of former industries, what power for successful and satisfactory colonizing, such as that which is carrying American industry from New York across a vast continent to San Francisco, is here frittered away in abortive attempts at small things, or squandered on gambling for gold, which, even if gained, must go out of the country to find a profitable investment, or an object of purchase satisfactory to the winner! Sound resources are neglected, while capital and labor of both head and hand are either left lying waste, or risked on undertakings whose permanent, and in many cases even fleeting success, is most doubtful.

In this miserable state of political economy, which is quite independent of Maori obstructions to progress, and affects every part of the Colony from which progress is not excluded by the savages, and their backers or hangers-on of both races, those obstructions throw additional difficulties in the way of peaceful, profitable, and creditable advancement. Hitherto, our endeavors to remove them have been almost unmitigated failures. We have tried conciliatory and forcible measures, both by turns and together. These sugar and shot policies have neither of them ever been conducted on any definite system for any length of time continuously. They have both been enormously expensive, without any adequate result.

The temporizing, pampering, or "peace-at-any-price" practices have especially been of this description. I shall not go into details, because that would take a pamphlet to itself; and as it appears certain that we shall not solve the difficulty without at least some more warlike action, I prefer dwelling on our short-comings in that direction.

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We have tried to subdue the natives who unreasonably obstruct colonization by means of various armed forces – Imperial troops by themselves; the same combined with Colonial troops and "friendly" natives; and a Colonial army by itself.

When these matters were managed by the Imperial authorities, the war operations not only cost the Colony a vast sum of money, but plunged the colonists into a worse dilemma still. They were made to share the responsibility of having made an enormous display of armed numbers, and power for destruction, without any sound advance towards the establishment of "peace, order, and good government" throughout the North Island, or towards rendering the whole of it accessible to colonization, and secure for the peaceful and progressive industry of the well-disposed of both races. The disturbers of the peace became well aware of this, notwithstanding the deplorable slaughter on both sides, and their own temporary ejection from certain portions of several isolated districts. It was thus under very disadvantageous circumstances that the Colony almost unanimously adopted the "self-reliance" policy of Mr. Weld, with the consent of the Home Government. It was only by being carried out in the most vigorous and statesman-like manner, then, that it had even a chance of success. It had none under the management of its author. Mr. Stafford ejected Mr. Weld from the helm by a promise to do the same thing at less cost. As to inefficiency he kept his word; as to economy he did not.

No definite system, possessing any marked features or principles, was adopted by either Premier towards such natives as need not, or such as could not, be persuaded to prefer peace to war. A civil native department and a Colonial army grew up, equally cumbrous and costly, and equally unfit to obtain any good end in either alternative.

The mongrel army, consisting of various scattered, and often most undisciplined bodies of Constabulary, Volunteers, Militia, and more or less friendly natives, increased in numbers and costliness, while it deteriorated in efficiency. Temporary successes, however brilliant, alternated with dire disasters, or long intervals of doing worse than nothing; while the barbarous murders of men, women, and children remained unpunished; and wanton damages to property, involving ruin to many, and the abandonment of much settled and productive country, were received as inevitable incidents to the state of things. The army, and the War Department which directed it,

began to swarm with Colonels and Secretaries, many of them sadly incompetent, and generally disunited if not antagonistic, for the want of a firm, reliable, and intelligent head either in the field or in the cabinet. Appointments, promotions, and contracts became far more the reward of political support, than the result of competitive excellence. The Colonial army was plainly more costly, and perhaps less useful, for any permanently good result, than even British troops. A re-action took place in public opinion; and it was easy for Mr. Fox recently to terrify the General Assembly – by mysterious hints of special danger, founded on telegrams which the next showed to be themselves exaggerated, or devoid of foundation – into calling out unconditionally for the help of Imperial troops. This explains the otherwise strange fact of the indiscriminate abandonment of "self-reliance" by politicians of all parties, so many of whom have raised themselves by advocating it to place, power, and profit.

The "demilitarizing" policy of Mr. Fox is now to be tried. We may assume that the explanation thereof in the Wellington Independent of the 30th September is an authorised one. Imperial troops are considered as merely a temporary arrangement, while the proposed changes take place. Large reductions have already been made in the Colonial forces, both white and brown. The only white force retained is to be on the model of the Irish constabulary, and located at points on our frontier especially exposed to aggression. The re-modelling is entrusted to Mr. Branigan, who has earned some reputation as a member of the Victorian, and as head of the Otago police. He is said to be an adept in instructing men in the duties of catching thieves, bushrangers, and escaped convicts, and of quelling drunkenness and "the social evil." It is doubtful whether the same course of instruction will produce a cheap and effective frontier guard. It is said the "friendly" natives are only to be paid by "subsidizing results," that is, on piece-work. In that case, everything depends on the direction in which results are sought, and the gauge by which they are estimated. The directions and estimates are probably just now given by the Maori experts, Messrs. McLean, Ormond, and McDonnell. It would be not only rash, but unfair, to judge too hastily of the likely consequences.

Even in the face of the sudden panic of our Parliament, I venture to believe that Imperial troops are not needed at all. The actual colonists, if well trained to the duty of defence, would form a militia quite capable of protecting the towns and populous districts. But to make this duty popular and the force efficient, firmness and intelligence are required, to sweep away the useless part of the staff from both cabinet and field, and to get rid of the malign influences of political jobbing in and out of Parliament, and of personal "snobbism," which have nearly strangled "self-reliance" in its cradle. We cannot afford to pay the whole cost of Imperial troops.

Even if we could, we should of course not be allowed the direction and control of them. It would be the old story over again, so graphically told by Mr. Fox himself in his "War in New Zealand" – a triangular duel of uncomplimentary correspondence between Governor, Imperial commander, and Colonial Ministry, with letters home from officers of all ranks, including Commissariat, denouncing the colonists for employing them on such unwelcome duty only to satisfy their own "greed for land."

The costliness and, on the average, inefficiency of Colonial forces, whether white or brown, seems to forbid their use for aggressive warfare, except in extraordinary emergencies, and then only by careful selection of the best volunteers from all ranks. I do not hold so high an opinion as many people do of the "friendly" natives as a good weapon against the refractory. I am aware that on several occasions they have fought bravely and efficiently on our side. But, on the other hand, they have often failed to be useful at the very moment their services were most required. This has arisen sometimes apparently from caprice or laziness, but often really, it is to be feared, from collusion with or sympathy for the enemy; while it is quite certain that arms supplied to them have disappeared from their custody in very large quantities, and there is good reason to believe that the enemy became better armed at the same time. As to expense, the native contingents are fully as costly, in proportion to the work done, as any other Colonial troops.

However I may differ from the opinion of our leading statesmen, I believe that Ghoorkas, as originally proposed by Mr. Cracroft Wilson, would be the best and by far the cheapest force we could employ for repelling marauders and extending our defensible frontier by roadmaking in the intervals. They are already trained to bush work. They do not require the costly and cumbrous commissariat and camp equipage which is the inevitable attendant of British troops, whether Imperial or Colonial. Their use would leave our own people free to carry on those more profitable and less demoralizing pursuits which constitute the real progress of colonization. Mete Kingi, M.H.R., recently made a vigorous opposition to the introduction of Ghoorkas. He said the Maoris were very much afraid of these black fellows – they must not be brought – the English soldiers were very good, because they remained quietly in their barracks. I need hardly say that the very arguments of that gold-laced member of Parliament strongly confirm my opinions in favor of Ghoorkas, and against Imperial troops. But if cheap Ghoorkas were employed in guerilla warfare and road-making, the "friendly" natives might return to peaceful industry, and be struck off pay, except when called upon to do garrison duty – "remain quietly in barracks," along with their white fellow-settlers.

Improved communication throughout the Colony should be our

next care, as well for quelling rebellion as for encouraging industry. The main trunk lines should be cheaply constructed railways on the American model, without the intermediate steps of mud and metalling. Branch roads might be made as the population settled along those lines might choose. Thus the very large natural resources of the northern part of the Colony might be rapidly developed, justifying the investment of capital, and attracting labourers of the class able to pay their own passage, and willing to come on being informed as to the numerous fields thus opened out for their enterprise and industry.

The best "Commissioners" we could send would be Agents of superior qualifications, well acquainted with New Zealand's various resources, and able to communicate the knowledge in an attractive manner to people of all classes who are likely to help in developing them, from whatever part of the world they may come. They should be furnished with a "Handbook for New Zealand," giving a full and impartial account of everything in New Zealand worth knowing by those likely to be attracted to settle or invest in it. This would be a far more valuable product of the Government printing office than the mock "Hansard," which does not print what the members say, but what they wish to have recorded as said by them. Not one colonist in 100, besides the members themselves, ever reads it; very few even know of its existence; and yet it alone costs the public £2300 a-year! Shut up Hansard, and print a good Hand-book for a small part of the money!

Government should be liberal in offering bonuses, or rewards, for the successful undertaking of new Colonial industries of all kinds. The following occur to me; but many others might be added on further consideration:—

Mines of coal, copper, chrome, manganese, silver, lead, plumbago, and tin; quarries of marble and other superior building stone; potteries for the manufacture of the coarser kinds of household ware, drain and water pipes, chimney pots, flooring and roofing tiles, &c.; woollen manufactures, such as tweeds, blankets, rugs, flannels, stockings, shirts, &c.; the cultivation of New Zealand flax, or phormium tenax, of the best sorts, with a view to the production of its fibre and gum of the most available quality, and its manufacture into rope, sail-cloth and other canvas, matting and bagging, paper, and even more delicate fabrics from the silk-like fibre of the finest varieties, as well as its rough preparation for export to England and other parts of the world; the cultivation of beet-root, sorghum, and even American maple, for the manufacture of sugar; of the vine, of kinds suitable to the climate, and the manufacture of wine and spirits therefrom; brewing and distillation, of a character to produce articles fit for export; the proper treatment and economy of the indigenous timber, with a view to turning each kind to its most beneficial uses,

to the felling of timber at the right seasons only, and to its due seasoning before use; the plantation of European, American, Australian, or other timber; ship-building; the renovation of the whale-fishery, in sea-going vessels, and not in shore-parties, which kill cow and calf in the "motherly," or calving bays; fisheries and fish-curing establishments on a large scale, to produce an article of export to the Roman Catholic countries of America, and to rear a hardy brood of sailors all round the coast and throughout the Pacific; trade and commerce with new marts, which the position of New Zealand enables her to command, so as to collect the produce of a great portion of Polynesia, and ship it from the New Zealand ports; the introduction of everything tending to the material progress of the Colony, whether in botany or zoology, or in machinery similar to that used in America to economise labor of all kinds, not costly or ponderous, and easily repaired by workmen of moderate skill.

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Many of the above undertakings might, I believe, be profitably entered into without a bonus. But the pioneer in any such work deserves a reward for showing the way to others. If our capitalists continue to refrain from promoting such pursuits, instead of merely bad farming, wild grazing, and gambling in gold mines, many of the things enumerated might be done by companies with shares of small amount, such as the Wreck Recovery Company, and many others that could be mentioned. Half the money and energy that is being squandered in share-gambling would accomplish some of these surer and more useful objects.

The restoration of the Panama Mail Service on a sounder footing than before, in connection with branches concentrating the vast commerce of various marts within the semi-circle between Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope at its nearest point to the Atlantic navigation, is of the utmost consequence, no less to the power and integrity of the British Empire than to the prosperity of its Colonies. Many goods will not be able to pay the heavy cost of land carriage by the Great Trans-American Railway; and in case of war that line would be closed against Britain and her dependencies.

A New Zealand Mint at Wellington, furnishing a reliable assay for precious metals of various qualities, and the means of turning ore into coin of legal tender, which is free of export duty, would be a great boon to the miners as well as to others, and would help to induce the best among them to remain and invest their earnings in the Colony, instead of taking them away.

If the Colonial Government was one that showed a disposition to spend borrowed money in undertakings so likely to advance the Colony, New Zealand would have a fair claim to ask the English people to guarantee yet further loans; because the result of such expenditure would be to free them from the pressure of superfluous population, and the competition of overflowing wealth, and to extend

the commerce and power for good of the British race and Empire. But I hold such a demand to be reckless, shameless, and improvident, except under the condition of willingness and ability on the part of our Government to sweep away the many and heavy present drains on our revenue, which obstruct, instead of promoting, our healthy advance.

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I have thus ventured to submit to the public a sketch of my views as to the causes of our present depression and retrograde movement. I have suggested how best to remove the Maori obstruction to the march of peaceful colonization; and I have written a catalogue of Government measures, which appear to me calculated to substitute onward progress for stagnation, whether in the districts now free from Maori obstacles, or throughout the Colony, when they shall have been overcome. It is the duty of every one to contribute all he can to the good of his adopted country. Let us all do so! Let us, at least as much as poor human nature will allow, lay aside strife for the mere purposes of place, power, and personal enrichment and aggrandizement. Let us unite cordially to lay aside as much as possible all petty local and personal jealousies. Let us never despair, or think of giving up. Then, with the blessing of God upon our really self-reliant efforts, we shall emerge from the darkness in which we are now plunged, and there will come at length, to reward us for our stalwart hope and hardy endurance, the good day in which we shall achieve the object of every true colonist—"THE GREATNESS AND PROSPERITY OF NEW ZEALAND!"

Wellington, New Zealand,
6th October, 1869.

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