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**T**HE Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament of New Zealand was this day opened by the Governor, when His Excellency was pleased to make the following

S P E E C H.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

The pleasure with which I have hitherto met you in Parliament assembled is on this occasion clouded by the distressing intelligence of His Majesty's illness, and the consequent postponement of the Coronation.

The sad news reached me from the Secretary of State on the 25th June, and it was at once decided that all contemplated festivities should be abandoned, excepting, as intimated by His Majesty's wish, those relating to the children and the inmates of benevolent institutions, and this accordingly was done. Intercessory services were held in the churches, and the deepest regret and sympathy were universally manifested. I telegraphed to the Secretary of State, expressing, on behalf of the Government and people of New Zealand, their deep sorrow at hearing of His Majesty's illness, and their earnest wishes for his speedy recovery. The latest medical bulletins are reassuring, and we wait in prayer and hope that Divine Providence, in its wisdom and mercy, may long spare him to his people and the Empire.

I have to congratulate you upon the termination of the war in South Africa and the restoration of peace—a peace honourable to the Empire and generous to the vanquished. There is every prospect that our late enemies will loyally accept the new conditions, and, as members of the Empire, enjoy in the near future the same constitutional rights of self-government as are possessed by the people of New Zealand.

During the year three additional contingents—the 8th, 9th, and 10th—were despatched, making a total force of 6,704 officers and men and 6,620 horses sent from New Zealand to South Africa during the war. The last contingent was raised as readily as the first, ample proof—if proof were needed—that the

colony has been moved not by passing impulse but by a firm resolve to maintain the integrity of the Empire. Our troops have borne themselves gallantly and well, and the colony is proud of them. It will give some measure of consolation to the relatives of those who have fallen to know that there is universal sympathy for them in their sorrow, and that their memories will always be held in honour by New-Zealanders as those of men who fell fighting for their country.

The birthday of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales—his first birthday under that title—was celebrated on the 3rd June. The respectful congratulations of the Government and people of the colony were duly conveyed to and graciously acknowledged by His Royal Highness.

An Imperial Conference of the Colonial Premiers and representatives of the British Cabinet has been summoned to meet in London, and, as you are aware, the Premier of New Zealand is representing this colony. Important subjects will be discussed there, and Parliament may be asked to pass such legislation as will be necessary to give effect to the decisions of the Conference in so far as they affect New Zealand.

His Majesty having honoured New Zealand by inviting the Premier to attend the Coronation ceremonies as his guest, Mr. Seddon proceeded to London by way of South Africa. He spent over a week there, and made all possible inquiries as to the condition and comfort of the New Zealand troops, as well as to matters affecting trade relations with this country. He reached London on the 14th of June. My Ministers are satisfied that at the Conference and elsewhere he will do good service to the State in questions of Imperial concern, as well as in those more immediately affecting New Zealand. The hearty reception everywhere accorded to him as the representative of New Zealand is a gratifying recognition of the assistance rendered by this colony during the war.

I am pleased to inform you that the Australian Commonwealth has agreed to admit New Zealand letters at the penny rate, and our penny-postage system has thus within the British Empire become universal.

A work of Imperial-colonial importance—namely, the laying of the first sections of the Pacific cable from Queensland to Norfolk Island, Fiji, and New Zealand—has already been completed, and the final section connecting Vancouver, Fanning Island, and Fiji will probably be finished in about six months. This work may be fittingly termed a link in the chain which will bind the various portions of the Empire with ties of a common cause and common interest.

His Imperial Japanese Majesty's training ships "Hi-yei" and "Kongo" lately visited the colony on their way to Fiji. The Commanders and their officers were welcomed by my Ministers, and every attention was shown them. The courtesy they received was cordially acknowledged.

The terrible disaster which has overtaken the residents of the Island of Martinique, and other islands adjacent thereto, has excited the sympathy of all classes in this country, and a message to that effect has been despatched to the French Government.

Major-General Babington has been appointed Commandant of the New Zealand Forces, and has assumed control. Under his direction I trust this branch of His Majesty's service will receive the attention its importance demands. He has already visited a large number of corps and is making himself acquainted with the country and its requirements. His report will be duly placed before you.

The legislation passed during last session of Parliament creating a system of Maori Councils has been favourably received, and promises to be successful. The Native Minister has visited the various parts of the colony and met large numbers of Maoris, placing before them fully the nature and details of the system. It is with pleasure I inform you that the relationship existing between the Europeans and Maoris is of the happiest description, and that the new legislation gives good hope of a higher and more intelligent life for the Maori people.

The administration of the Cook Islands is proceeding satisfactorily. The changes consequent on their being included within the boundaries of New Zealand have been effected without friction, and the Natives seem perfectly contented with the new order of things. Figures relative to the trade of the Islands will be placed before you. As the Act expires soon after the close of the session an amending Bill will be necessary.

Trade with South Africa has developed during the year, and I am happy to say that a considerable portion of it has come to New Zealand. Much difficulty has been experienced in obtaining suitable steamers for carrying on a direct service, but it is expected that the negotiations which have been proceeding for some time will be successfully completed. My Ministers are of opinion that it is advisable to appoint commercial agents in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Australia without delay, with a view to obtaining increased markets for our produce.

Pursuant to statutory provision in that behalf, Representation Commissioners have met for the purpose of readjusting the boundaries of the electoral districts on the basis of the last census, and assigning electorates to the six additional seats created by "The Representation Act, 1900." Their report will be submitted to you at the earliest possible date.

Since the last session of Parliament I have visited various parts of the colony and am happy to inform you that upon all sides I found evidence of the progress and prosperity of the people.

MR. SPEAKER, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

Notwithstanding many heavy and unusual items of non-recurring expenditure and the large concessions made to the public in railway charges, Customs duties, and postage rates, the result of the year's operations has been satisfactory. The revenue has kept up, and a substantial balance stood to the credit of the colony at the end of the financial year.

Estimates for the year, prepared with the strictest economy consistent with efficiency, will, in the ordinary course, be placed before you for consideration.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

Measures will be submitted dealing with the electoral laws, so as to bring them more in touch with the existing circumstances of the colony; they will include the Referendum Bill, which was passed last session by one branch of the Legislature.

A Bill providing for State fire-insurance will also be introduced.

Some necessary amendments in the Land Act, including proposals for rebates to Crown tenants, will likewise be submitted.

You will also be asked to consider a measure making provision for the aged and retired officers of the Railway Service.

The labour legislation is working with reasonable smoothness, considering the complex interests involved, but some amendments of a detail nature may be necessary.

Under the Act of last session a State coal-mine has been purchased, and my Ministers hope it will soon be in working-order. The Point Elizabeth Railway and Coal Company's Railway has been acquired in connection with it.

In the opinion of my Advisers the question of preventing combinations by which the prices of food-supplies are improperly raised to consumers is of importance, and should be considered.

You will be asked to make provision for the important work of prosecuting the trunk lines of railway, as well as of carrying on other lines now in course of construction.

Difficulties have arisen in applying the Military Pensions Act to South African service, and several cases of undoubted hardship have occurred which, in the opinion of my Ministers, should be provided for by an amending measure.

The timber industry is active, but, to insure its permanency, further provision should be made for tree-planting and forest-conservation.

Further provision is equally necessary for the roading of the lands to open up back blocks and assist settlement. Several estates have been acquired under the Land for Settlements Acts, and are being satisfactorily disposed of, and it is the anxious desire of my Advisers to do all in their power to make settlement a success.

Proposals on these subjects will be submitted to you, and in addition you will be asked to deal with measures relating to mining matters, the public health, the protection of young persons, company-law, and other subjects affecting the social and industrial welfare of the community.

Commending the proposals of my Ministers to your earnest attention, I pray that, with the blessing of Almighty God, the results of your labours may be for the good of the Empire, and of lasting benefit to the people of New Zealand.