

Government for a grant to him of a portion of the confiscated lands; but Ministers do not propose to review his opinions, whether in his assumed position of political censor or otherwise.

Mr. Strickland's letters, however, re-open that very serious question of official libels secretly written by Imperial officers in the Colony against the Colonial Government. The letters are ostensibly official reports, but are in fact political tirades, the character of which partakes more of incoherent abuse than of definite accusation. The fascination of evil speaking, seems to have transported the writer beyond the ordinary bounds of reason and propriety. The only possible danger of such letters lies in their secrecy, and in that aspect, insignificant as they otherwise are, they vividly illustrate the course pursued by Imperial Departments in this Colony, and tacitly recognized by the Imperial Government, of secretly traducing the character of the Governor and the Colonial authorities. Ministers do not refer to the numerous private letters from Imperial officers serving in the Colony, many of which have appeared in the public Press, and in which the actions of the Colonists have been distorted and their motives misrepresented; however unjust and injurious to the settlers in New Zealand such communications have been, they are not fit subjects for notice in this Memorandum. Ministers confine their remarks to official, or to so called private-official communications. Mr. Strickland's letters may be taken as a sample of many which have ultimately been published and of others which have not yet come to light. In this instance, as in many others, refutation only follows after an interval of several months, and during that time even so coarse a style of calumny would probably have some effect where the facts were unknown. Ministers again most earnestly protest against this pernicious system which has grown up in spite of the regulations of the English Military and Civil Services, and which it appears the Imperial Government is unable or unwilling peremptorily to suppress. In a Despatch dated 27th November, 1862, Sir George Grey, writing to the Duke of Newcastle, calls official attention to this practice in the following words, the truth of which subsequent events have remarkably proved:—

"Adverting to your Grace's Despatch, No. 37, of the 26th of April last, which contains such strong censure on the want of energy of my Government, and which has since been published in the papers presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, without any previous opportunity having been afforded to myself or my Responsible Advisers of offering any explanations regarding the questions raised in it, I beg most respectfully to represent to your Grace that during the twenty-two years in which I have administered difficult Governments, it has been the invariable rule of Her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State to require that all copies of such letters as Lieutenant General Cameron appears to have sent to the Secretary of State for War, should be supplied to the Governor of a Colony at the same time they are sent home, in order that he may furnish such explanations upon the subject as he may deem necessary."

"In this instance, although your Grace has addressed so severe a reprimand to me, and it has been made public in England, I have not, to the present moment, seen a copy of Lieutenant-General Cameron's letter, nor do I know what may be the allegations it contains."

"I submit to your Grace that if such a system is allowed to prevail, an officer sent to fulfil such difficult and delicate duties as those you have entrusted to me, will occupy a very precarious and unhappy position; that allegations against his public conduct may be made against him; that these may be treated as true, and the censure consequently passed on him made public, so that his character as an efficient and energetic public servant may be irretrievably ruined, even before he knows he has been accused. In the present instance I fear that some of your Grace's Despatches may, as I think undeservedly on my part, have created a public feeling against me in England, which I may find it very difficult to remove."

These words were written on the 27th November, 1862, and it was not till the 25th September, 1865, that the Secretary of State, in his Despatch (No. 78), recollects the fact that the hundred and ninety-fifth section of the Rules and Regulations of Her Majesty's Colonial Service prescribes as follows:—

"The respective officers employed under the War Department are in all cases, without exception, to give timely notice to Governors of any communications which they may intend to send home affecting such Governors, or the orders given by them, so that Her Majesty's Government may be simultaneously made acquainted with the opinions of the Governors as well as those of the officers, in question on any matter on which it is requisite that the views of both should be known."

Mr. Cardwell, in the same Despatch, states:—"It is much to be regretted that this regulation was not observed by General Cameron, and that copies of the Despatches in question were not sent to you by him before the Despatches themselves were sent to Earl de Grey;" and in the enclosure to that Despatch Earl de Grey states:—"Sir Duncan Cameron ought, however, in accordance with the Horse Guards' Circular Letter, dated February, 1859, to have furnished the Governor with duplicates of any Despatches addressed by him to the Secretary of State for War, other than those relating to discipline and military routine. Lord de Grey had no reason to suppose that Sir Duncan Cameron was unaware of this rule, and was not in the habit of acting upon it."

Ministers need scarcely observe that "the respective officers employed under the War Department" have constantly violated this rule to which the special attention of the Secretary of State had been drawn in November, 1862, and now it would appear that it does not apply to officers of the Commissariat, but that they are exempt from an obligation which is imperative on the Commander of the Forces, and can officially claim the privilege of secret defamation. In the case now in question, both the letter of Mr. Strickland to the Imperial Treasury, and the enclosure addressed to his commanding officer in the Colony, were, until the documents returned from England, withheld from the knowledge of the Governor and the Colonial Authorities, whose acts he misrepresented and whose character he aspersed. Such communications may account for the unfriendly tone of recent Despatches from the Imperial Government, which cannot otherwise be accounted for, and which is greatly to be regretted.

The rule of the Colonial Civil Service on this subject, with respect to the correspondence of private individuals, is equally explicit. The reasons on which this rule is founded are explained in a letter dated 15th February, 1843, written from the Colonial Office to the Directors of the New Zealand