

I have to express my regret that my own absence from this place until the day before yesterday has prevented my earlier acknowledgment of these papers.

The desire expressed by your Excellency that "further official correspondence on this subject, and on all other intercolonial matters, should pass through the ordinary channels," by which I understand you to mean our respective Ministers, will be observed by me; and indeed I hope that it may not be necessary for me to incur the risk, with reference to any subject, of receiving at your hands any further communication from your Responsible Advisers, in which I may be the subject of personal censure, criticism, and innuendo.

I cannot admit, however, that in addressing you officially, at the request of my Responsible Advisers, with reference to the proclamation issued by you, I have "adopted a peculiar and unprecedented course." I am not conversant with, and I am not bound by, the rules and customs of Victoria; and it is not the case that official communications with reference to matters not distinctly involving Imperial interests, are not, at least occasionally, made through Governors of Colonies possessing Parliamentary Government. I have not long since received a Despatch from the Governor of such a Colony, upon their receipt of which my own Advisers took action.

But I must notice, further, the expressions in the Memorandum which your Excellency has thought proper to forward, "Sir James Fergusson states that he is 'moved by his Advisers to write.' It is singular that the New Zealand Government never before felt any difficulty in corresponding with this Government direct. . . . While this allusion to his Advisers is also very inconsistent with the fact, &c."

"Addressing the Governor of this Colony on such a question, and in the manner he did, argues, on Sir James Fergusson's part, a strange want of knowledge of the facts of the case, or a disregard of the practice and settled principles under which Responsible Government is conducted."

These expressions appear to me to be somewhat inconsistent with my own acquaintance with the principles of Responsible Government, inasmuch as they impute to the Head of such a Government personal fault while expressing avowedly the sentiments of his Responsible Advisers. I might, or rather my Ministers might, as well have accused your Excellency personally of faults with reference to the proclamation to which your name was appended, or to a speech which you had delivered to your Parliament.

Such variations of terms of those of "communication," "letter," and "despatch," as Mr. Francis has applied to my Despatch in question, may possibly be inadvertent, but taken in connection with other portions of his Memorandum, they rather bear the appearance of affront.

I think it due to myself to notice these features, but abstain from further comment upon them.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FERGUSSON.

His Excellency Sir George F. Bowen, G.C.M.G., Victoria.

His Excellency Sir JAMES FERGUSSON, Bart., to His Excellency Sir G. F. BOWEN.

SIR,—

Government House, Wellington, 12th March, 1874.

In further reply to your despatch of the 28th January, 1874, in which you enclosed a Memorandum addressed to you by the Chief Secretary of your Government, I have now the honor to transmit to you a copy of a Memorandum addressed to me by the Premier, the Hon. Mr. Vogel, which it is his desire that I should bring to your notice.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FERGUSSON,

Governor.

His Excellency Sir George F. Bowen, G.C.M.G., Victoria.

Enclosure.

MEMORANDUM for His Excellency Sir JAMES FERGUSSON, Bart., by the Hon. the PREMIER, New Zealand.

I HAVE read the Memorandum by the Chief Secretary of Victoria upon the letter forwarded by your Excellency to the Governor of Victoria, respecting the proclamation issued by the Governor of Victoria, forbidding the importation of stock from New Zealand into that Colony.

The Memorandum of the Chief Secretary is mainly noticeable for the scarcely concealed attack which it makes upon your Excellency, under the assumption, apparently, that you had acted in the matter without the advice of Ministers.

With respect to the other portions of the Memorandum, I may say that the Chief Secretary is, on the whole, not incorrect in the history he gives of the past negotiations on the subject. The representatives of New Zealand at the Conference did agree, subject to the approval of their Government, to prohibit, for two years, the importation of stock, except from the Australian Colonies. But it was found that the Government did not possess power to enforce such a prohibition; and Parliament, when applied to, refused to grant the necessary power.

Regarding subsequent occurrences, I believe that the action of Victoria was, as the Chief Secretary states, more friendly to New Zealand than was that of New South Wales. I may observe that, although I was aware New South Wales had issued a proclamation prohibiting the importation of stock from New Zealand, I was not aware that it was of the same character as the one subsequently issued by Victoria. Had I been so aware, I should have been equally ready to take the same action as was taken in respect to Victoria, to which I will presently refer.

Upon the whole, I am quite prepared to accept the Chief Secretary's statement, namely, that he would not have been inclined to take the action he took, but for the action of New South Wales." But I am bound to say that, to my mind, the admissions of the Chief Secretary bear this character :