

It will be seen that while the Victorian Ministers hold it to be their duty, in self defence, to place on record their opinions regarding certain points raised in your Despatches, they disclaim emphatically (and, I am sure, sincerely,) all intention of showing any want of the respect due to your Excellency alike officially and personally.

The general rule that the Intercolonial correspondence should be carried on (except when Imperial interests may be concerned), not by the Governors personally, but by their Responsible Ministers, was established by the late Sir W. Denison, when Governor-General of the Australian Colonies, at the time of the inauguration of Parliamentary Government. When I became Governor of Queensland, in 1859, Sir W. Denison fully explained his views to me on this subject. He pointed out, in the first place, that it was desirable, for obvious reasons, that the forms of Parliamentary Government in use, in this and in other matters, in England, should also be observed, as far as possible, in the Colonies. He further observed that, even in the Crown Colonies, it had been found expedient that the Intercolonial correspondence should be carried on through the respective Colonial Secretaries. He added that if Governors of Colonies possessing Parliamentary Government were to conduct personally the Intercolonial correspondence, they would be occasionally required to become the mouth-pieces of charges advanced by the Ministry of the day in one Colony against the Ministry of the day in another Colony, and would thus be inevitably mixed up with personal recriminations; would lose their proper position of "dignified neutrality" (to adopt Lord Elgin's phrase); and would be practically disabled from using, for the public advantage, the influence of their offices as arbiters and moderators of extreme views.

The principle recommended by Sir W. Denison has certainly been the almost universal rule ever since in New South Wales, and also in the three Colonies with the government of which I have been successively connected, namely, Queensland, New Zealand, and Victoria. There may have been, as you state, a few exceptions, but I am assured that it will be found that these exceptions took place in cases in which Imperial interests were directly or indirectly concerned; or, at all events, in matters not likely to cause Intercolonial ill-feeling or recrimination, such as charges of illegal or otherwise improper conduct against the Government of a Colony are sure to provoke.

I have no intention of arguing this question on abstract grounds. I regard it chiefly as a practical question. Nearly twenty years ago a certain rule was established by competent authority, and in conformity with constitutional usage in England. This rule has been almost invariably adhered to since that period; and any attempt at innovation upon it of the nature of your Despatch of the 23rd November ultimo, will certainly provoke strenuous resistance in Australia; and will lead to much unpleasantness and inconvenience; possibly, to grave future complications. Under these circumstances, I am very glad to learn that your Excellency agrees with me that the official correspondence between Victoria and New Zealand shall continue hereafter to pass through the usual channels, as during the administrations of our predecessors in those Colonies respectively.

I need scarcely say, in conclusion, that it will always afford me sincere pleasure to co-operate with your Excellency, so far as may be practicable, in all measures tending to promote the welfare alike of New Zealand and of Victoria, with both of which Colonies I have had the honor of being intimately associated.

His Excellency the Right Hon. Sir James Fergusson, Bart.,
New Zealand.

I have, &c.,
G. F. BOWEN.

Enclosure.

MEMORANDUM for His Excellency Sir G. F. BOWEN, by the Hon. the CHIEF SECRETARY, Victoria.

IN returning the letter addressed to your Excellency by the Governor of New Zealand, dated 20th February, on the subject of the Memorandum in reply to His Excellency's protest against the proclamation issued with a view to restricting the importation of stock into Victoria from that Colony, the Chief Secretary desires to express his thanks for the opportunity afforded to him of perusing that document, and at the same time submits the following remarks upon it:—

His Excellency Sir James Fergusson is pleased to say, "Such variations of terms as 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."

Upon what grounds His Excellency can place such a construction upon the circumstance of the Chief Secretary having made use of those different terms, in the course of a somewhat lengthy and argumentative Memorandum, in allusion to the document which was the subject of remark, Mr. Francis is really at a loss to understand. But that the words were used by him with the object of conveying a personal affront to Sir James Fergusson he emphatically asserts is altogether an erroneous assumption on the part of His Excellency, and quite opposed to the real facts of the case.

Having absolved himself from such an imputation, Mr. Francis thinks he may, without impropriety, observe that the very fact of Sir James Fergusson having, in this present instance, allowed himself to be influenced by his private feeling in discussing a question of public concern, and resenting as personally objectionable sentiments expressed by your Excellency's Responsible Ministers in the discharge of their duty with reference to his official act, furnishes a strong commentary upon the impolicy of introducing into Intercolonial correspondence a practice, which, whatever may be the course followed elsewhere, is, at least as far as the Colony of Victoria and the neighbouring Colonies (including New Zealand) are concerned, an innovation and a departure from the principle established (avowedly on the English model) when Sir William Denison filled the office of Governor-General of the Australian Colonies; namely, that all communications on local as distinguished from Imperial affairs, should be made directly by the Responsible Ministers of the Colonies interested, and not by the Governors of those Colonies acting on their behalf.