

to the extent of £200,000 a month; on Treasury or deficiency bills, to the extent of £100,000; on debentures quoted on the Stock Exchange, to the extent of £300,000—in the colony at 6 per cent.; in London at 5 per cent., or 1 per cent. above the Bank of England rate.

The Bank is to sell its drafts on London to the Government at one hundred and twenty days' sight at par; at other currencies, at $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. less than the rates offered to the public, but not below par or less than sixty days' sight; drafts on the colony at $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. less than the rate charged to the public.

GENERAL
REMARKS ON
RECEIPTS.

From the above description it will be observed that in most of the colonies the Colonial Treasurer is still considered to be an accountant to the Crown, and is so treated in the public accounts. That was the position he occupied as the Treasurer of a Crown colony, where he was removable from office only by the Crown itself; but it may be doubted if such a position is compatible with that of a Responsible Minister, liable to removal at any time from political causes. In the latter case the Treasurer is a Finance Minister; and the officers who actually receive the money are the proper accountants. By the first Audit Act of Queensland, the Auditor-General was directed to surcharge the Treasurer with deficiencies; and, although in the Act of 1874, now in force, this provision was omitted, yet the Auditor-General is still required, by the latter Act, to give the Treasurer a discharge if his account is correct, a provision which implies that he is still an accountable officer personally. By the Audit Act of Tasmania the Treasurer is still liable to be personally surcharged with all deficiencies in receipts. By the Act of Victoria he is to be surcharged for illegal payments made by his order, but nothing is said as to deficiencies of receipts. In New Zealand the practice has always been to surcharge Collectors of Revenue directly with deficiencies in their collections, but not the Treasurer. In none of the colonies is any machinery provided for enforcing a surcharge. Where the surcharge by the Auditor against the Treasurer is to be enforced by the Government, as is the case in most of the colonies, it is of course a dead-letter.

In comparing the relative merits of the different modes by which public moneys are made to flow from the pockets of the taxpayers into the public chest, it may be stated, as a general rule, that that system is the best which provides that the money shall remain for the shortest possible time in the hands of the collecting officers, that it shall pass through as few hands as possible, and shall be lodged in the Treasury with the greatest expedition. By adherence to these rules, not only does the Government obtain command of the public moneys as soon as possible for expenditure, or for investment at interest, but the temptation to make a wrong use of such moneys is removed from those through whose hands it passes.

It may be gathered, from what has been said above, that four modes of paying in collections to the public chest are in force in these colonies—

- (1.) Where the Collectors pay their collections daily into the Public Account at the Bank, which is ubiquitous throughout the country:
- (2.) Where they pay their collections to a personal official account at a local Bank, and thence transfer it to the Public Account at the seat of Government:
- (3.) Where they pay their collections to another officer by whom it is paid to the Treasury:
- (4.) Where they send the money up to the Treasury without passing through a Bank.

I think it will be admitted that the first system, which is that of New Zealand, most fully satisfies the conditions stated above as those which should determine the relative advantages of different systems of paying in the revenues to the public chest; and that even that might be improved, if the branch Banks were required to transmit the balances to the Wellington Bank by every mail, instead of weekly as at present.

The following table gives the result of the arrangements between each of the colonies and the Banks for the custody and transmission of the public moneys:—