

18. That neither Sir James Prendergast nor the Ministers had any official knowledge of my impending return is perfectly correct, and when Sir James Prendergast says he did not *know* that my return was imminent I, of course, at once accept the statement, so far as absolute and positive knowledge are concerned.

19. But if Sir James Prendergast and Sir John Hall did not know that my return was to be expected, I must be pardoned for believing that it was to some extent due to the fact that they had no desire to seek for information which would have made it certain. I enclose the copy of a memorandum given to me by Mr. Murray on the day of my return, which, I have no doubt, relates with accuracy the communications he had made to Sir James Prendergast and Sir John Hall on the previous day. It can hardly be said that Mr. Murray's statements were not such as to raise a strong presumption, to say the least, that my return might be expected. In these circumstances it would only have been natural to take one of three steps to ascertain the truth: either (i.) to have asked of Mr. Murray the direct question whether he knew I was about to return, or (ii.) to have inquired of the members of my family actually resident in Government House, and with whom both Sir John Hall and Sir James Prendergast were on terms of friendly intercourse, whether they had received any intelligence of my return, or (iii.) to have acted on Mr. Murray's suggestion and awaited the arrival of the Fiji mail steamer, already overdue. The adoption of any one of these courses would have removed all doubt on the subject.

20. It was, I think, in the circumstances, an error of judgment on the part of Mr. Murray not voluntarily to have told Sir James Prendergast all he knew; but I thoroughly appreciate and respect his reticence: he had only become acquainted with the contents of my telegram in consequence of the confidential position he held in my family, and had no right to disclose them without express permission, though the extraordinary nature of the situation might have excused his doing so.

21. Of Sir James Prendergast's "warm indignation" I now hear for the first time. The respect I entertain for the important judicial office he holds would have effectually precluded me from imagining it possible that he could have found grounds for "warm indignation" in the fact that I had relieved the natural anxiety of my wife as to my proposed expedition among savages, a visit to whom had already proved fatal to a Bishop and a Commodore, by giving her the earliest possible intimation of my movements, without, at the same time, making a similar communication to himself; nor had so odd an idea even crossed my mind until I read his memorandum. On the contrary, so different are the impressions which men may receive from the same facts, that I had thought that Sir James Prendergast was somewhat embarrassed at the interview to which he refers, and seemed rather to regret and apologise for his own precipitate action.

I have, &c.

ARTHUR GORDON.

The Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office.

P.S.—I return, as requested, the printed papers enclosed in your letter. The documents forwarded by Mr. Whitaker are incomplete, and do not contain my replies to the memoranda of the Ministers. I have now the honour to rectify, as far as possible, that omission by enclosing a copy of my reply to Sir John Hall's memorandum of the 21st October, 1881.

See A.—4, 1883,
No. 8.

See A.—4, 1883,
No. 27.

See A.—4, 1883,
No. 31.

Of my reply to Mr Whitaker's memorandum of the 10th June, 1882, I cannot at present find a copy, and am not sure that I possess one, as I left New Zealand only a few days subsequently. Should I discover it, I will at once transmit a copy, to be added to these papers. Meanwhile, it may be sufficient to say that my view of the facts is essentially different from that of Mr. Whitaker, and that Sir John Hall, on being appealed to, stated in writing that his recollection of what passed "was in substantial agreement" with my own.—A.H.G.

Enclosure.

On Saturday last, the 16th instant, a telegram from Sydney was received at Government House, announcing the immediate return of His Excellency from Fiji. This telegram was a private one, and I was not justified, without authority, in communicating it to others.

Yesterday morning Mr. Hall (who had some time previously remarked to Mr. Romilly and myself that the return of His Excellency would probably be accelerated by the receipt of the Native news telegraphed by me for the Fiji mail from Auckland on the 26th September) asked me, as he went away from Government House, whether I had any news of the Governor.

I replied that the "Southern Cross" had not yet arrived in Auckland; that she might be looked for at any moment; that she would bring definite news as to His Excellency's movements; but that I had reason to believe that the "Emerald" would be in before her.

Mr. Hall said that he saw from the papers that Sir Arthur Gordon was intending to visit New Guinea.

To this I replied that I knew His Excellency had no such idea. That he had intended to go to Samoa and Tonga, but that I knew he had certainly given up this idea also.

Mr. Hall, having asked how far Samoa was from Fiji, said that the Governor might still have time for that voyage.

To this I answered that His Excellency had undoubtedly given up everything except his work in Fiji, and would, on receipt of the Native news by the last mail, come back direct, as soon as possible; so that, as I had begun by saying, he might be looked for at any moment.

My intention in these remarks, which seemed to me sufficiently plain, and, as coming from His Excellency's Private Secretary, sufficiently worthy of consideration, was to convey to Mr. Hall, without quoting a private telegram, the strong probability there was of the immediate return of the Governor.

At 5.30 yesterday afternoon I received a note from the Administrator, desiring me to summon a meeting of the Executive Council for 8 o'clock the same evening. I sent out the summons as directed, and then went to see Sir James Prendergast to ask what was the business for which the