

No. 16.

DESPATCH No. 110.—4th September, 1870.—Transmitting the names of Mr. Stafford and his colleagues, on their retirement in 1869, to be allowed to retain the title of "Honorable."

Copy of Despatch from Governor Sir G. F. BOWEN, G.C.M.G., to the Right Hon. Earl GRANVILLE, K.G.

(No. 110.)

Government House, Wellington, New Zealand,

MY LORD,—

4th September, 1870.

I have been requested to transmit to your Lordship, in the terms of the Colonial Regulations (Chapter VII., section 6) the enclosed correspondence respecting the title of "Honorable" which Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to allow various Colonial Ministers to retain, within certain limits, after their resignation of office.

2. Upon the retirement of Mr. Stafford and his colleagues in 1869, I asked them, in conformity with the practice established for many years past in the Australian Colonies, if they wished to be recommended for permission to retain the title of "Honorable." On receiving a reply in the affirmative, I submitted their names accordingly in my Despatch No. 124, of the 18th September ultimo.

3. In your Lordship's answer, No. 130, of the 13th December ultimo, it was stated, in the form used in similar cases in other colonies, "that the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve of those gentlemen (viz., Messrs. Stafford, Fitzherbert, Hall, Richmond, and Colonel Haultain) retaining the title within New Zealand."

4. Copies of the last mentioned despatch were, in the customary manner, communicated to the above-named gentlemen, through the Colonial Secretary; when Mr. Stafford and Mr. Richmond wrote the annexed letters (enclosures 1 and 2), signifying that they respectfully "declined the distinction offered, in consequence of the limitation assigned to it," and for the other reasons stated by themselves.

5. I pointed out in writing to the Colonial Secretary, and verbally to Messrs. Stafford and Richmond, that the two latter gentlemen appeared to have been under some misapprehension of the case when they respectively addressed their letters of the 16th April and 17th May (enclosures 1 and 2) to the New Zealand Government. I remarked that the title of "Honorable" conferred on certain colonial functionaries is a local distinction while the holders are in office, and would seem, not unnaturally, to remain so after their resignation; further, that there was nothing special with regard to New Zealand in what had been done in this matter, for the local limitation takes effect also in the Australian Colonies. I added that, by the 158th article of the Colonial Regulations, it would be seen that a similar principle appeared to be in force throughout the empire, for "persons entitled to precedence in the United Kingdom or in foreign countries are not entitled as of right to the same precedence in the British Colonies."

6. After consultation with Mr. Richmond and his other former colleagues, and on their part as well as on his own, Mr. Stafford addressed to me the letter of the 2nd ultimo (enclosure 3), in which he withdraws the letters to the Colonial Secretary of the 16th April and 17th May; accepts the honor conferred upon himself and his "friends; and requests me to convey their acknowledgments to Her Majesty and Her Government." It will be seen that he adds the following general observations, which he requests me to bring under the notice of Her Majesty's Government: "We do not contend that honors attaching to local official rank should give a special precedence outside of the sphere of the office to which they attach; but it is in our judgment natural and politic that permanent honors conferred by the Sovereign on colonists in recognition of services should have currency throughout the empire. The limitation to the colony of the right to any personal title of honor held by a colonist, at the same time that distinctions held by subjects domiciled in Great Britain can claim recognition throughout the empire, appears invidious, and tends to weaken that sentiment of loyalty to the Throne and to a common nationality which is now the principal bond of union for many colonies. It is not the local limitation which is objectionable, but the invidious distinction it implies.

"While we should be sorry to intrude our personal claims, or to suffer any undue sensitiveness to influence us in such a matter, we feel it to be our duty most respectfully to record this our strong and unanimous conviction, and to request your Excellency to take an early opportunity of bringing it under the notice of Her Majesty's Government in Great Britain."

7. It will be remembered that the principle for which Mr. Stafford contends is virtually the same as that recently contended for by so high an authority as Mr. Herman Merivale in his article on the "Colonial Question," published in the *Fortnightly Review* of February, 1870, where he wrote: "Let philosophers deem of it as they may, the bestowal of public honors affords one of the noblest incentives to public virtue which the community has in its power to furnish. And the feeling of possessing such honors in common would be specially conducive to that sense of national unity which we wish to foster. We seem, in my humble opinion, to have thrown this advantage, which was within our reach, deliberately away. We have created a colonial order of knighthood, as if to give express sanction to the doctrines attributed to us by the discontented, that the mother-country and colonies are not to be classed together. Every honor which the Crown can bestow should be Imperial, in my opinion, and open to every subject of the Crown, in all its dominions peopled by Englishmen."

8. It appears to be felt in the principal self-governing colonies that the question of Imperial honors has obtained even greater importance than it had before, since the recent withdrawal of the Imperial troops has severed the other most tangible and conspicuous link of national unity. I am aware, however, that this matter is surrounded with many difficulties; and at present I simply (as requested by Mr. Stafford) submit the enclosed correspondence for your Lordship's consideration.

I have, &c.,

G. F. BOWEN.

The Right Hon. Earl Granville, K.G.

Mr. E. W. STAFFORD to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Nelson, 17th May, 1870.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th March, enclosing copy of a despatch from Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, of th