

Representatives in return to an address from that House, inasmuch as the correspondence contains reflections upon me which, I am anxious to make clear to your Lordship, are unwarranted by the facts, and have, moreover, been made under circumstances unfair to me.

The address asked for the production of "all correspondence between His Excellency the Governor (Sir William Jervois), the late Vice-Consul for France (Count Jouffroy d'Abbans), and the late Minister of Education (Mr. Fisher)," and I would especially invite your Lordship's attention to the addition, to the correspondence asked for by the House, of a letter dated 4th July, 1889, written by His Excellency the present Governor (Lord Onslow) to the Vice-Consul for France (M. de Lostalot) subsequent to the adoption of the address; for your Lordship will observe not only that this letter is in excess of the correspondence asked for by the House, but that it casts upon me many serious and, as I claim, wholly undeserved reflections; and I feel especially impelled to address your Lordship in consequence of His Excellency's statement, in his letter to the French Vice-Consul (M. de Lostalot) of the 4th July, 1889, that "I have already communicated the facts, and similar expressions of regret, to the Secretary of State."

Putting aside for a moment the merits of the case, I would respectfully submit that His Excellency should not have written such a letter to the Vice-Consul for France (if, indeed, it comported with His Excellency's position and dignity to correspond at all with the Vice-Consul) or have made such a statement to your Lordship, involving my character and good fame, without first according to me the opportunity of defending myself. The voice only has been heard of persons bitterly hostile to me, and interested in and bent on doing me an injury, but who happen at the moment to be in political power here, and therefore happen also to have the ear of His Excellency.

Apart from the fact that I am a member of the House of Representatives, and Consular Agent for Italy in this city, I would respectfully submit that it should be a matter of course that the meanest of Her Majesty's subjects should not be condemned unheard by Her Majesty's representative. But such inconsiderate treatment is indeed hard to bear when the facts, as here, warrant no such reflections. I therefore complain to your Lordship, not only of being unfairly treated, but of being unjustly condemned.

I now respectfully invite attention to the facts of the case:—

Your Lordship will observe that His Excellency's communication of the 4th July, 1889, to the Vice-Consul for France is based upon the request contained in the letter of the late Vice-Consul for France (Count Jouffroy d'Abbans) dated 7th March, 1889—the request, namely, that the correspondence relating to the escape of Gasparini should not be published "pending the consideration of the question by the metropolitan competent authorities."

Upon this request, and without sufficient information, His Excellency, in his letter dated 4th July, 1889, to the French Vice-Consul, makes this comment: "It appears, however, that the papers in question have been printed without the knowledge or sanction of the Officer Administering the Government, and apparently on the authority only of Mr. Fisher, at that time Minister of Education, without consulting his colleagues. Some two hundred copies of the print referred to have been already struck off, and are no longer to be found in the possession of the Government. I have to express my deep regret, and that of my Ministers, that the fulfilment of M. Jouffroy d'Abbans's wish should thus have been frustrated by the unjustifiable act of Mr. Fisher."

This comment contains, your Lordship will observe, two direct reflections upon me—(1) "That the papers in question have been printed . . . . apparently on the authority only of Mr. Fisher, . . . . without consulting his colleagues;" and (2) "That the fulfilment of M. Jouffroy d'Abbans's wish [that the correspondence should not at present be published] should thus have been frustrated by the unjustifiable act of Mr. Fisher." I answer—(1) That the correspondence was put into print with the concurrence and by the express direction of the Premier, Sir Harry Atkinson, the correspondence being so printed for the convenience of His Excellency the then Governor (Sir Wm. Jervois); and (2) That the correspondence was not, and has not since been, printed or published by me, and that, therefore, the fulfilment of M. Jouffroy d'Abbans's wish has not been frustrated by any act of mine.

In explanation of these answers, I have to say that, prior to the printing now complained of, I read to the Premier, at his Ministerial residence, the draft of my memorandum of the 29th September, 1888, which is the answer to the French Vice-Consul's letter to His Excellency the Governor dated 11th September, 1888, and asked him—the memorandum and its enclosures being voluminous—whether it would not be better, for His Excellency's convenience, to put the whole correspondence into print. The Premier answered, "Yes, certainly." I therefore and thereupon sent the whole correspondence, so far as it was completed at that date, to the Government Printer; and, in addition to sending the correspondence, in print, to His Excellency the Governor, printed copies of the correspondence completed to that date were posted to the Premier, who in the interim had gone to New Plymouth, a town 250 miles distant from the seat of Government.

In the House of Representatives, during the discussion on the subject, on 12th July, your Lordship, on reference, will observe that the very question at issue was brought prominently forward, thus: "Mr. Fisher (addressing the Premier): Did you receive at New Plymouth a copy of the printed papers?—Sir H. A. Atkinson: No. I received a copy of your memorandum; but that is not printing 'the papers' at all. Mr. Fisher: I am so staggered I cannot believe my ears. With your permission, Sir, I will put that question to the honourable gentleman again. Is it true, or is it not true, that the honourable gentleman, at New Plymouth, received from me the correspondence, complete, in print?—Sir H. A. Atkinson: Absolutely untrue."

But, my Lord, after prolonged search, I have, notwithstanding the "Absolutely untrue" denial of Sir Harry Atkinson, succeeded in discovering "the correspondence, complete, in print," as it was forwarded by me to Sir Harry Atkinson at New Plymouth, and as it was returned to me by him, with his suggested alterations, in his own handwriting, both on the margin of the printed