

I returned to Wellington on Tuesday, the 12th March. On Friday, the 15th, I left by train on my way to Auckland to see Sir Frederick Whitaker, in accordance with my understanding with you. I arrived there on the 20th. There were some unexpected delays. I discussed the question on several days (three, I think,) with Sir Frederick Whitaker, and left Auckland for Wellington on the 26th. On Wednesday, the 27th of March, the Hon. Mr. Stevens, the Hon. Mr. Fergus, and I arrived in New Plymouth, they going north, I going south; and on the night of Friday, the 29th, I arrived in Wellington. Saturday, the 30th, I devoted to my departmental duties. The Sabbath, I believe, is a day of rest. I received your letter asking me to resign on Monday, the 1st of April, so that one day after my arrival in Wellington, and literally at one day's notice, you wished to hustle me out of office. Now, the "unprejudiced critic," I am sure, will see that I had had a busy, a restless, and an anxious month. It is true, I might have saved myself all my pains, for it had been determined during my absence from Wellington, as I afterwards ascertained, that I should be forced to retire from the Ministry, and that, at the time the Hon. Mr. Stevens, the Hon. Mr. Fergus, and I crossed at New Plymouth, the Hon. Mr. Fergus was armed with authority to offer my portfolio to Mr. J. B. Whyte, in Auckland.

(2.) I concede that the brewery cases were the immediate cause of difference seized upon by some of my late colleagues to create a rupture in the Ministry, but I deny absolutely that it was the actual or real origin of the rupture. As I stated in my letter of the 6th April, I differed with the Cabinet upon eight large questions of public policy, but the real or active difference arose out of the peculiar influence exercised by a section of the Cabinet in regard to the appointments to the Railway Board, the appointment to the Supreme Court Bench, and to the proposed appointment of an Engineer-in-Chief. As to my acting in direct opposition to the Cabinet held in your absence on the 4th March, although I convened the meeting myself I did not regard it as a decisive Cabinet meeting. No resolution was proposed, none was passed, or formally put. The Hon. Mr. Richardson and I were ranged on one side, and the Hon. Mr. Hislop and the Hon. Mr. Fergus on the other. Mr. Richardson and I very much disapproved of Mr. Hislop's assumptions and presumptions, for he had previously, in your absence, treated us to many grandiloquent samples of his "precedence" as a Cabinet Minister, which always had the effect of exciting our mirth, as being extremely comic. But then you say I acted "in direct opposition to your own opinion, which I subsequently telegraphed for." You have evidently forgotten the facts. I understood one expression of the feeling of the Cabinet meeting to be that I should communicate with you (*vide* my telegram to you of the 4th March); but, as nobody knew in what part of the county you were, I asked the telegraph authorities to search for you until they discovered you. You were ultimately found at Wanganui, and my message was sent to you there at 7.40 p.m. In addition to sending that message, I also, being extremely anxious to discuss the whole subject with you, when I found the Court had closed, and that it was too late, therefore, as I thought, to lay the information, asked if you could make it convenient to attend at the instrument at the Wanganui Telegraph-office, so that I could speak to you from the instrument at the Wellington office. You agreed to do so, and 8 o'clock was the hour fixed upon for our meeting, when, to my sorrow and annoyance, I found that after attending at the office you refused to discuss the matter. Why? You refused to discuss what you now deem to be an important public question because, as you said, you had to keep a private appointment. This branch of the subject is further referred to in paragraph I.

(3.) You say, "When I found you considered it right to continue your departmental duties as Minister of Education [after the 1st April] I felt that your idea of the constitutional duties of a Minister was so much at variance with mine that I had no alternative but to ask for a definite reply "by Thursday night, especially as I had reason to think that you had in contemplation the possibility "of taking no definite step for a week or ten days." Again I have a word of explanation for the "unprejudiced critic." Had I been made aware that I had been allowed to go to Auckland on a fool's errand, that my forced retirement had already been determined upon in my absence, that the pretence that I was to be allowed to go to Auckland for an impartial hearing was a deception and a sham,—if instead of all these things I had remained in my office in Wellington, my departmental work would not have fallen into arrear, and I should have been in a position to retire on the 1st April, immediately on the receipt of your letter. But, as I have already explained, from the 10th to the 29th of March I was engaged upon what subsequently transpired to be an absolutely futile and needless expedition to the Hon. Mr. Stevens and the Hon. Sir Frederick Whitaker. The 30th March was Sunday, my departmental work had greatly accumulated, and it had not escaped my attention that in the Colony of New South Wales, when the last Parkes Administration went out of office, one of the greatest offences laid to the charge of some of Sir Henry Parkes's Ministers was that they had left their departmental work hopelessly in arrear—so much so that the public interests had greatly suffered. With this experience before me I determined to leave no departmental arrears which should either embarrass my successor or cause the public interest to suffer. The belief is not altogether groundless that, had I left any considerable arrears of work, that circumstance would have been trumped up into a further serious charge against me. You go on to say "you had reason to think that I had in contemplation the possibility of taking no definite steps "for a week or ten days." In one sense you had well-grounded reason for that belief. One of your colleagues, in conversation with me upon the subject of your letter of the 1st April, asking for my resignation, said he saw no reason why I should resign before the decision was given by the Court in the Junction Brewery cases (the decision was to be given on the 10th April), because if it was in my favour—that is to say, if convictions were obtained, the convictions would dispel the erroneous impression that had gone forth that the Junction Brewery had been allowed to escape, and in that way I should be fully acquitted in the public mind of any charge of having allowed the cases to lapse. As I have said, the impression in the minds of Ministers at one time, and in the minds of a great many other persons, was that through some act of mine the Junction Brewery had altogether escaped punishment. Had that been so the case would have indeed been serious. The