

open to me to avoid causing great inconvenience to the people who were ready to proceed, and serious cost to the colony.

5. After the departure of the "Hannibal," on the 12th of March last, there remained of the 2,000 emigrants directed to be provided for Nelson, Marlborough, and Westland, by your letter of the 12th March, 1874, and who, with the exception about to be specified, had all been sent direct to the port of Nelson—there remained, I say, a balance of 136 to complete that order, and of those the number since despatched by the "Collingwood" were many of them urgently pressing to be forwarded. It was impossible for me to obtain a direct ship for such a number as these forty-nine adults, unless at a cost immeasurably exceeding that involved in the process of transshipment at Wellington for Nelson.

6. You state that you have several times spoken to me about Taranaki, and expressed to me the desire that emigrants for that province should be sent out direct. I beg to state that emigrants have been and are being sent to Taranaki direct in a very considerable proportion, as large a proportion as circumstances—and especially as the notorious indisposition of shipowners to send their vessels to the port of New Plymouth—will permit. It is not very easy to effect any summary change in the course of trade and navigation. At the same time, I may be permitted to mention that I received by the mail delivered on the 12th instant a letter from the Hon. the Minister for Immigration, dated 13th February, No. 27, which gives me good hope that the difficulties hitherto experienced will gradually disappear. The Minister writes referring to the safe arrival of the ship "Avalanche" at New Plymouth:—"It is very satisfactory to the Government to find that, in carrying out their wishes as to the sending emigrants direct to Taranaki, no trouble or inconvenience has been experienced by the charterers, and I trust that the experience of the 'Avalanche' may tend to remove the unreasonable prejudice of the shipping firms with whom you do business against laying ships on for New Plymouth direct."

I may add, that I have at present chartered the "Halcione" to proceed to the same port direct on the 26th May, and the "Dover Castle" to follow on the 9th June, calling afterwards at Nelson with the balance of emigrants remaining to be forwarded to that province.

7. It was, however, necessary to make some earlier arrangement in regard to the emigrants for Taranaki since forwarded by the "Collingwood." They had been specially selected with great care by Mr. Burton, the agent for the province in Lincolnshire, where he had been placed in co-operation with Mr. Carter and my local agent, and had succeeded in recruiting a very promising body of agricultural emigrants. As I have already said, I had for a time a hope that I should have been able to send these direct. But I found at the end that I could not get any ship to precede the "Halcione," and Mr. Burton very reasonably apprehended that he might not be able to keep the group of emigrants, which he had formed with some trouble, together until even the earliest date I could foresee for the departure of that vessel. She had not in fact arrived from the colony at the time when I was compelled to consider the circumstances as urgent. I adopted, therefore, the alternative which seemed, according to the letter of your instructions, to be the more desirable.

8. With reference to the third paragraph of your letter, I beg to state I only regarded the arrangements I have explained as ordinary shipping arrangements, and was of course well aware that I was in no respect departing from my instructions.

I have, &c.,

I. E. FEATHERSTON,  
Agent-General.

The Hon. the Premier.

No. 138.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. Sir J. VOGEL.

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.,

28th April, 1875.

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th instant, in which you inform me that you have received a telegraphic communication, stating that in consequence of the intolerably disrespectful nature of my letter of 10th January, No. 5, dealing with the recommendations of the Royal Commission appointed to consider the causes of an epidemic of scarlatina which occurred on board the ship "Scimitar," the Government have determined that that letter shall not be recorded.

2. I confess I feel both surprised and grieved at this decision of the Government. If my views had been considered erroneous, or if it had been alleged that I had given insufficient attention to the proposals of the Commission, or to your letter indorsing them and urgently enforcing them upon my attention, I should not have a word to say. But when it is the "nature," by which I assume is meant the general character and tone of my letter, that is stigmatised as intolerably disrespectful, I take leave to say that the nature of a document so qualified necessarily depends upon the intention with which it is written; and it is both my right and my duty to disclaim, in the most absolute terms, any feeling whatsoever of disrespect, either towards the Government or towards the Royal Commission, in the remarks which it became my duty to make on the proposals upon which you invited my judgment and action. It is quite impossible that the nature of a long and circumstantial public document should exhibit intolerable disrespect towards the Government to which it was addressed, without an official, who has had my long and responsible experience in the service of the colony, being in the very slightest degree conscious of such a sentiment.

3. Indeed, the very nature of the subject was such as to forbid the expression of any such animus, if it could possibly have existed. Your letter brought before me a number of suggestions, some of which I adopted. There were others in which I differed entirely from the report of the Royal Commission which the Government had on those points, as to some absolutely, as to others partially adopted. I was aware, from the terms of your letter regarding the "Scimitar," from your letters in regard to the outbreak of infectious disease on other ships, and from the general sources of opinion in the colony, that I had been subjected to the imputation that all possible precaution had not been taken by me to prevent the outbreak of zymotic diseases, and to insure that none but emigrants of perfect