

I am directed to report that, as the subject-matter of this petition is now before the House, the Committee do not consider it necessary to make any recommendation.

19th August, 1880.

No. 292.—Petition of JOSEPH ERRIDGE.

THE petitioner states he was dismissed from the Dunedin Gaol in April last on the charge of leaving a prisoner for a short time; but that in so doing he was acting under the instructions of his superior officer. He has had no opportunity of making his defence, and now prays for an inquiry, and that justice be done.

I am directed to report that the Committee is of opinion that the case of the petitioner is one for the Government to deal with.

19th August, 1880.

No. 298.—Petition of R. J. MARSH and Others.

THE petitioners complain that highway districts are put to considerable expense in advertising, and pray that a scale of charges be fixed by the Government when appointing any paper a gazette for highway advertisements as the present charges are extortionate. They also pray that the yearly valuation be altered to a triennial one, thereby saving needless expense.

I have the honor to report that the Committee recommend the prayer of this petition to the serious and favourable consideration of the Government.

19th August, 1880.

No. 104.—Petition of STEPHENS and STEPHENS.

THE petitioners state that one Edward Ffrancis Ward, Registrar of the Supreme Court in Dunedin, was, by order of the Court, appointed trustee of the estate of the late James Schoefield Douglas; that, as trustee, certain English property belonging to the estate was realized, and the proceeds—£526—were duly remitted to the trustee; that the value of the property in the colony was unknown to the petitioners, but two sums of £600 each were sent to the deceased in the year of his death; that the widow of the deceased J. S. Douglas has only a life-interest in the property, and has been reduced to the greatest destitution in consequence of the trustee having left Otago without rendering any account or giving any information as to the trust estate. The petitioners consider that, as the Judge issued letters of administration to the Registrar of the Court, the Government is clearly responsible for the administration of the estate by its officers. They pray for redress.

The Committee has made inquiry into this case, and find that the will of the late J. S. Douglas named Arthur William Morris as executor. This gentleman, in a letter dated the 18th August, 1873, addressed to J. Hyde Harris, Esq., of Dunedin, who appears to have acted as solicitor for the widow of J. S. Douglas, states that he cannot undertake the duty, and suggests that the trust be transferred to the Public Trustee. On the 1st day of September, Jane Douglas, the widow of the deceased, applies that the administration of the estate be granted to Edward Ffrancis Ward, of Dunedin, Registrar of the Supreme Court. On the 5th of September, 1873, Mr. Justice Chapman grants administration to E. F. Ward without the usual bond, and directs that a full, true, and perfect inventory of the estate be made by him to the Court on or before the 5th December, 1873, and a true account of his administration be made on or before the 10th August, 1874. The order of Mr. Justice Chapman has not been complied with, no inventory of the estate or any account of administration having been made by Mr. Ward.

I am directed to report that, taking into consideration the fact that a Registrar of the Supreme Court was appointed trustee without the usual bond for the proper performance of his duty, the Committee is of opinion that the Government cannot divest itself of moral responsibility, and recommends that the Crown Prosecutor be instructed to take action against the said Edward Ffrancis Ward, on behalf of Jane Douglas, to recover the property which appears to have been misappropriated.

25th August, 1880.

No. 53.—Petition of WILLIAM THOMAS L^{td} TRAVERS (referred to the Committee by special order, dated 9th July, 1880).

THE petitioner states that the Government, in a letter dated the 10th September, 1877, addressed to him by John Knowles, Under-Secretary for Public Works, became responsible for the payment of a sum of money due to petitioner by Frank Oaks, contractor for the Pakuratahi section of the Wellington and Masterton Railway, on the completion of his contract; that the contract was assigned to Joseph Edward Nathan, and on its completion the balance of the money due on the contract was paid over to the said Joseph Edward Nathan by the Government; that the payment of the money by the Government, without giving petitioner an opportunity of prosecuting his claim, was a breach of faith, in view of the letter of the Under-Secretary for Public Works of the 10th September, 1877: and the petitioner prays that the House will take such steps as may be necessary in order that justice may be done him.

I am directed to report that the Committee, having made an exhaustive inquiry into the petitioner's case, is of opinion that the petitioner is not entitled to recover from the Government the amount claimed by him.

25th August, 1880.

No. 44.—Petition of WILLIAM BELL and Sons, of Marlborough.

THE petitioners pray that the driving of infected sheep under the 69th section of "The Sheep Act, 1878," be put a stop to.

I am directed to report that the Committee is of opinion that this petition be referred to the Government for consideration.

27th August, 1880.