

This was the position of affairs in the month of March last; but shortly afterwards the New Zealand Government decided not to send a representative to the proposed meeting, and, in the absence of delegates from New South Wales and New Zealand, the Governments of Queensland and South Australia thought it of doubtful expediency that the meeting should be held, and decided also not to send representatives. The proposed meeting thus unfortunately did not take place.

In the meantime the Admiral on the station had communicated to the Governors of the Australian Colonies and New Zealand, in a letter dated the 24th of December, 1885, of which a copy accompanies this despatch, the substance of the revised scheme for naval defence prepared by the Admiralty. This letter would have formed the basis for the consideration of the question at the proposed conference at Melbourne. When it became known that the Government of New South Wales had decided not to take part in the proposed conference at Melbourne, the Admiral was instructed by Her Majesty's Government to endeavour to ascertain their views separately, and on that conference falling through, as shown above, he was fortunately able to make arrangements for a meeting of representatives of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, to consider the subject informally with him at Sydney; and it is the result of that meeting which he has lately reported to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

From the Admiral's report it appears that replies to his letter of the 24th of December, 1885, were received from all the colonies not represented at the meeting, except South Australia, and that of the colonies represented a concurrence in his proposals was obtained from the Premiers of New South Wales and Queensland, who were prepared to bring before their respective Parliaments the necessary measures to carry them into effect.

The replies received by the Admiral from the colonies not represented at this meeting are enclosed for convenience of reference; and, as regards the position taken by the Government of Victoria, Her Majesty's Government have lately received from the Governor the views of his Ministers upon the proposal, to which a reply will be made in due course.

It has afforded Her Majesty's Government great pleasure to learn that the Premiers of New South Wales and Queensland were able to agree to the scheme which the Admiral was instructed to propose, and they trust that it may be adopted by the Legislature of those colonies, and that the further consideration of the scheme by the Governments of the other colonies concerned may ultimately lead to its general adoption.

It is a matter of much personal gratification to me that these important negotiations, which were initiated by the Earl of Derby and carried on by his successor, Sir F. Stanley, should have reached during my administration of this office a stage which gives substantial ground for the expectation that an efficient and satisfactory system of naval defence for the Australian Colonies will shortly be perfected.

I have, &c.,

Governor Sir W. F. D. Jervois, G.C.M.G., C.B., &c.

GRANVILLE.

## No. 42.

### MINISTERS to the GOVERNOR.

(Memorandum for His Excellency.)

THE Premier has the honour to return to His Excellency Admiral Tryon's letter of the 6th No. 39. June last. The matter would have been dealt with earlier had it not been for the sitting of Parliament.

2. Ministers on the 27th March last stated their views in reference to any contribution by New Zealand towards the proposed increase of strength of naval defences in these seas, and in their memorandum they stated their belief that the Parliament of the colony would be willing to contribute an annual payment of, say, £20,000, to be expended in strengthening the naval defences of New Zealand. They recognized that in time of war the extra ships provided would be at the absolute disposal of the Admiral of the station, to be placed by him in such positions as he might think most suitable for the defence of the shipping and the different ports, but Ministers thought that in time of peace some port in the colony should be established as the headquarters of at least two vessels of the fleet. They stated that if this condition were acceded to they would recommend Parliament to make provision for ten years. They named the sum referred to, believing that, with a small contribution from Fiji, it would be sufficient to maintain two vessels of the kind Admiral Tryon had recommended. In a letter from the Admiral, dated the 28th April last, it was shown No. 30. that this sum would be insufficient to maintain two vessels of the class referred to, and in a memorandum from Ministers of the 17th May, in reply, they pointed out that they desired this sum of No. 34. £20,000 to be looked upon simply as a contribution of this colony towards the cost of the proposed additional squadron. Since then His Excellency has forwarded the letter from the Admiral, dated 6th instant, enclosing one addressed to His Excellency the Governor of Victoria, dated the 28th No. 39. May. This letter to the Governor replies to a memorandum of the Hon. the Premier of Victoria, dated the 20th May last, which is also before Ministers.

No. 37.

3. After further consideration of the whole question, Ministers feel unable to dispense with the condition respecting a port in New Zealand becoming the established headquarters of a section of the squadron in time of peace. If it can be shown to Ministers that the cost on a peace-footing would be increased beyond what they had estimated in a former memorandum, they would be prepared to ask for a moderate increase on the sum of £20,000.

4. It appears, however, from the Admiral's letter to the Governor of Victoria that he raises the whole question as to the position of the colonies in reference to naval defence; and he does not merely ask the colonies to defend themselves in case of war, but he asks also that they should give a contribution towards the general expenses of the fleet of the Empire. In fact, there is involved in this question of naval defence the relationship of the colonies with the Mother-country. So long as