

properly, must keep a register of the letters received, and the action taken upon them and copies of the answers. If therefore, the same thing is done in the Corresponding branch, the work is twice performed without any adequate benefit. If all the letters relating to any of the branches are to be directed to the Secretary of State, it may be proper that they should be entered in the general register, but the action taken thereon need only be recorded there as "transferred to the Indian branch," or as the case may be. Any further action as correspondence arising out of such a letter until the final conclusion of the business, should be entered in the Indian Branch Register, to which reference can always be had. But the letters sent occasion a still greater unnecessary multiplication of work. In the Ordnance Lands Branch, the Agent generally only reports the answer which should be given; although it appears that he sometimes drafts it. These reports and drafts are copied by press in his office, and the letter is written, and copied by hand into the letter book in the Secretary's office. In the Indian Branch, the Deputy Superintendent always writes the letter, and it is copied by hand in his office. It is then sent to the Secretary's office to be signed, and is again copied by hand. In one respect, the practice of the Indian Branch is much preferable, as it must often be most unsatisfactory, that the letter actually written has not been seen by the person most intimately interested, and is not entered in his books. But on the other hand, the copying a letter twice over by hand, into two books kept on opposite sides of the same passage, is a most unnecessary multiplication of labour. We think that the course to be pursued should be the same in both cases. The Officers of the Ordnance Lands and Indian Branches should each write the letters which have to be sent. Having received the signature of the Secretary or his Deputy, they should be copied in the letter book of the Branch by press, the only record of them kept in the Secretary's office being an entry in the Register against the letter to which they are a reply, and perhaps a note in the letter book "vide Indian Letter Book."

We have been thus particular upon the subject of recording correspondence, because this is the main business of the Secretary's Office proper. The whole system pursued in the office has this one object in view, to keep an exact record of all letters and what has been done in the matter, whether transferred to some other Department for action or only referred to it for report, and of what further action or correspondence arose out of such report. The system upon which these registers are kept, and the papers filed away, appears to be methodical and regularly kept up, and no doubt worked satisfactorily in relation to the former business of the office. But when the two new branches were added to it, involving the action of the head of the Department himself, and not, as was most frequently the case before, a reference to some other Department, we think that it was a mistake, though perhaps under the circumstances not an unnatural one, to treat them as far as correspondence was concerned almost as if they were separate Departments. It has certainly been the cause of unnecessary labour, and if the system were altered the staff might be reduced.

But this is not all the copying of letters which takes place. It has been the custom in both branches of the Secretary's Office, first to draft the reply to any letter, the draft being filed together with the other papers. It is then copied for signature and again copied into the letter book. A letter is thus written three times over in the Secretary's Office, besides such copies as may be made in the Indian Office or elsewhere. We believe that this system is a remnant of the old practice when all letters were first sent to the Governor General for approval. It is defended upon the ground of the convenience of having all the correspondence together—the original letter, the references to other Departments, and the reply or replies—and no doubt it is a convenience; but it may be a question whether it is worth the cost. Other Departments have correspondence fully as important as any in the Secretary's Office, but if the same system were followed by them a very large increase of the staff would be the consequence. There is another evil resulting from this system—that with so many copies to make, it is almost impossible that an answer to every letter can go by that day's mail, which in other Departments, specially interested in the matter on hand, would be an almost insuperable objection. For this reason, if it is considered necessary to have all these hand-made copies, the plan pursued in the Department of Public Works would be an improvement. They also copy all letters by hand into a book, but to save time they copy them first by press and send them off and copy from the copy in a book at their leisure. The Assistant Secretary strongly urges the necessity of copying by hand in consequence of the fragility of the press-made copies, and important documents which have frequently to be refer-