

*Inspector Atchinson.* sittings of the Supreme Court. It was said that on the first occasion there were eleven to one in favour of an acquittal, then eleven to one in favour of a conviction; but in the end he was convicted of arson, and was sentenced to six years.

11th Oct., 1878.

1800. *Major Atkinson.*] Was that for perjury?—No; for arson. The perjury charge, having served its purpose of keeping him here, was abandoned. That occurred in October, I think, and immediately afterwards I had to go to Wanganui, and did not return till November. I never expected anything from the insurance companies, and should have been just as well satisfied if they had given nothing; but in five or six weeks I distributed the money as I thought fit, according to the services rendered by the various persons.

1801. *The Chairman.*] In your opinion, Farrell was not entitled to anything?—He had nothing to do with the matter beyond what I stated. I have two witnesses here, Price and Smith, who will prove that what I have said is correct. I gave money to men who most assisted me. Connor assisted me in every way. When Quinn's case happened, I was away at Wanganui; but as soon as I came back Farrell presented me with a report about it. I read it at once, and studied it. Mr. Boardman says I told him I had not had time to read it. That is quite correct, but I had a reason for telling him so. I did not want to tell him what I thought. When I read the report, I said to Farrell, "This is all very well; but we have no evidence to go upon yet. So far as what the sister told you goes, it is of very little value, because, if we put her in the witness-box, she would immediately say she had never told you what you alleged; her word would be as good as yours, and we have nothing to support you. I have had Quinn up before, and I know his shuffling way." He accounted for papers being burned by saying he believed there were defalcations in the Foresters' accounts, and I said, at once, "If we can get evidence of that then we shall have something to go upon." A correspondence took place between Colonel Moule and myself on the subject, and I kept worrying Farrell to know when he was going to bring the case to a close. I continually told him to find out if there was any embezzlement, because it was only on that assumption that we could take proceedings. Colonel Moule became anxious on the subject, and I went down and explained everything to him, and told him, if he thought it advisable to take steps on so weak a case, I would do it; but he did not say anything. Then I went to Mr. Izard on the matter, and he told me it was a very weak case, but that, if we could get evidence about the embezzlement, we could get a committal if nothing else, yet it was risky. I explained all this to Farrell, but could never get anything more from him. Now, as to Mr. Boardman. Mr. Boardman had got the key of the place and would not give it to me unless he went up to the place with me at the same time. This I objected to, because, necessarily, private conversation must pass between Farrell and myself which I did not care for Boardman to hear. One day I was making some inquiries at the Empire Hotel, and Boardman came to me and said, "Will you go up and see this place." I said, "Yes, give me the key; surely you can trust Farrell, if not me." He said he would not, and I replied I should not go up, to which he retorted, "Then I shall report you to the Government." I told him he could take proceedings if he fancied there was a case, because there was nothing to prevent him. That is all I have to say about the case. I over and over again urged Farrell to find out if there was any embezzlement. Some weeks ago I asked one of the Forester's if there was any embezzlement, and he said not a sixpence had been taken.

1802. *The Chairman.*] Who told you that. Evidence has been given us by the secretary, Mr. Sutton, that there were large defalcations?—I was not aware of that. I think I asked Mr. Valentine, who said there was nothing wrong, so far as he knew, and that, if there had been, he would have heard of it.

1803. Was the secretary not asked about it?—I left it entirely in Farrell's hands. I do not like to interfere with an officer who has a case in hand. It is unsafe to do so, because, if anything goes wrong, it is at once said, "Oh, if you had not interfered it would have been all right." Sergeant Smith several times heard me ask Farrell to find out if there had been any embezzlement, and tell him I could not go on until there was some information. Mr. Boardman mentioned another case in which, he said, a boy had been arrested on a charge of arson, and then had been discharged without having first been brought before a Magistrate. That is not the case. There was some suspicion attaching to some old hags who had been near the place, and, as the boy had some information in his possession, he was sent down to me. He was never in custody, but merely came down to see me and give me information on the subject. Now, Farrell, in his evidence, says something about the "Pier gang," and says there is such a body, and that I belong to it. I distinctly deny that. It is a false statement. The fact is that a man named Fisher, who is in the Council, had some dispute with a contractor named Saunders, another named McKirdy, and a gentleman named Perrier, and, in spite, he designated them as the Pier Hotel gang. Afterwards I saw Fisher and told him I thought it was an improper remark to make, and he seemed sorry for it. The Pier Hotel is one of the most respectable houses in town, and is a good deal frequented by mercantile men. In the evening one room is a kind of private club, where a few respectable persons meet for social purposes. There is Mr. Fife, chemist; Mr. McCarthy, of the Press Agency; Mr. Crease, merchant; Mr. Stewart, of Greenfield and Stewart, and others; but I never saw any gambling. I have seen games of cribbage and euchre played, but have never seen any money passed. A sixpence or a shilling a game may have been played for, but I have never seen it. As for me, it is very lately that I have known how to play; nor do I play billiards or anything else. My usual time of going there was about half-past 10. I had then gone my rounds, and generally called in to talk over the events of the day, or to see if anything was moving, just as any other person would do; but I never saw anything wrong in the house, nor do I believe Mr. Downes would allow anything of the sort. Then a charge was made against Purcell, Donnelly, and Byrne. Donnelly is a teetotaler, and I never saw him gamble. Purcell is pretty much the same; and Byrne, I think, never played cards in his life. I may explain that the reason of these men stopping at that house is this: There is no accommodation at the station for up-country constables coming down, and, as they have to leave town early in the morning, they go to this house, because it is handy to the post office, where the coach stops. In conclusion, I may add I have always had a friendly feeling towards Farrell. I should like to state this: It was by the recommendation of Sergeant Monaghan and Mr. Perrier. He