

they put to me—questions of a one-sided character, which specially served to lead up to certain conclusions—just those, in fact, which the report contains; and, had I allowed the matter to rest there, these questions would have placed the Commission in possession of only one-half the truth.

In reply to the questions of the Commission, I frankly acknowledged that I had served an apprenticeship as a carpenter and builder, and that I never before acted as a locomotive engineer; but I insisted upon adding to this that all my experience and practice had been of a professional character, first as a road engineer and then under Messrs. J. Brogden and Sons as a constructor of railways; that I held first-class testimonials in these capacities, and also as a draughtsman—the latter being one important qualification of a mechanical engineer; and that the position of locomotive engineer of the Otago railways was never sought by me, but was voluntarily offered to me by the Provincial Government, who were satisfied with my qualifications. All these salient facts the Commission have seen fit to repress.

I also informed the Commission that the charge of the locomotives is not the only portion of the duties of my position; that the building and maintenance of the carriage and wagon stock of the department also devolves upon me. This part of my duty, which, measured by the amount of money-expenditure involved, proves it a most important one, and for which, even by the showing of the Commission my early training specially fits me, they have thought it consistent with their notions of honourable dealing to make no mention of.

As to that portion of my duties in respect of which the Commission have thought fit to insinuate an unfavourable verdict, I may point out, that the fact of the Provincial Government having conferred upon me, unsought, the appointment of Engineer of Permanent-way and Rolling-stock to their railways, is sufficient evidence, until the contrary is proved, that I was then (and that is six years ago) competent to take the discharge of the duties required of me.

It is true the railways were only sixty-two miles in length, but the experience I have gained, combined with incessant study and attention, has enabled me to keep pace with the gradually extending duties which have devolved upon me as the mileage has increased; and I appeal to my immediate superior whether the functions of my position have not been performed with credit to myself, and, to speak modestly, with some advantage to the department.

It is not only that harm has been done to me in this colony by this most unfair procedure of the Commission, but in the neighbouring Australian Colonies. Wherever, in fact, this newspaper publication of the report reaches, I am rendered a marked man; and, although I entered the service with professional credentials of a high character, any attempt to retrieve my credit and restore my prospects, even out of the colony, would be almost hopeless in the face of the damnatory and degrading remarks the Commission have introduced into their report.

I cannot believe that this procedure of the Commission is otherwise than distasteful to the Government. They cannot see, with approval, old servants who have served them faithfully thus held up to the odium of the country, their dearest interests injured, and their prospects fairly blasted; and I beg you will appeal on my behalf to the Hon. the Minister who presides over this department, and to whom, through you, I am more directly responsible, that some reparation may be made to me for the grave injustice and wrong which have been inflicted upon me.

The Commissioner of Railways, M.I.,
Dunedin.

I have, &c.,
ALEX. ARMSTRONG, M.I.M.E.,
Locomotive Engineer.

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