statement of a principle not as applicable to that particular point, but as embodying a principle of general application which is to guide Committees in dealing with matters where the general law is a guide. What the Lord Chancellor and Lord St. Leonards said was this:—

"The Lord Chancellor.—Where the Legislature has said that a particular rule of evidence is to be adopted in 'every Court of civil judicature,' if that rule is in itself convenient, it would be strange for us to refuse to adopt it, simply because the words of the Act are not binding upon us."

"Lord St. Leonards.—I entirely agree. The provision in the statute does not apply to this House, for, strictly speaking, we are not a Court of civil judicature. But here is a rule of evidence adopted for the purposes of the public good. If there was a good reason shown why we should not adopt it, we would not do so, but would make a rule of our own for the purpose of greater care and caution."

The Committee of the House of Lords was there, I submit, stating a principle which should guide Committees in dealing with matters in respect of which a principle of law bound other judicial bodies, and, as I understand, the Committee said that, if that rule of law was a convenient rule, the Committee ought to follow it. My learned friend says that they were dealing with a question of evidence. I submit that he had only to read those passages which he did not read to the Committee. I venture to submit that the Shrewsbury Peerage case is precisely in point, and that Mr. Hutchison did not even endeavour to distinguish it in any way in which he would have distinguished it if he had been standing and answering me as counsel in a Court of law. It may be that I am wrong in supposing that his criticism of the case had been such as would not have been addressed to a Court of law. I may be wrong there, but I do think that he simply scoffed at an argument which was based upon sound foundation, and offered no real answer to it. He stood upon his position, which I admit is superior to mine here, as a member of the House, for the purpose of pooh-poohing an argument which he could not fairly meet. The result of the Committee insisting upon compliance with this summons would be—as I have already said—first of all the bank would be prevented from carrying on its business as a bank; and, secondly, that it would present to this Committee for inspection, if it thought fit, the accounts and affairs of all its customers since the year 1885. No Committee of this colony will ever call upon it to do that.

*Mr. Hutchison.*—I claim the right to make an explanation. I do not think Mr. Bell has been at all just to me. I never saw the Shrewsbury Peerage case until at this table, and what I endeavoured to do, not in any way to mislead the Committee, and not to repeat again what he had read to the Committee as a ruling of the Court, was to try and ascertain the circumstances in which that ruling was given. I showed to the Committee that it was in reference to a point of evidence as to handwriting. I think Mr. Bell has not shown that spirit of fairness which ought to have been shown in referring to the remarks I made. I directed the attention of the Committee to the point he relied upon and to the surroundings of that point.

*Hon. Sir J. Hall.*—I wish to ask you, Mr. Bell, a question, which you need not answer unless you see fit. Can you suggest any other way in which the Committee can obtain the information they require? I do not ask you to reply to that if your prefer not.

*Mr. Bell.*—Yes; I believe the whole of it, with the exception of the matter of private accounts, is contained in a return now in the Colonial Treasury Office in this city.

*Hon. Sir J. Hall.*—Then with regard to the private accounts?

*Mr. Bell.*—A copy of the private accounts can be delivered to the Committee without the slightest difficulty—a complete transcript.

*Hon. Mr. Hislop.*—That is, subject to the objection of the bank.

*Mr. Bell.*—The bank "respectfully submits."

*Hon. Mr. Hislop.*—Perhaps the Committee would not object to my making a few remarks in regard merely to the question of the production of documents.

*The Chairman.*—We cannot go beyond that.

*Hon. Mr. Hislop.*—I was going to suggest to the Committee that it should not come to a decision upon this matter until it has formulated the charges. I did not address the Committee to-day on this particular point as to the liability of those gentlemen mentioned—namely, the Premier, Mr. Mitchelson, and Sir Frederick Whitaker—to open up their accounts to the Committee, because I thought that the time was not ripe to do it. I think the time will only be ripe when the Committee are considering the formulation of the charges. I shall then have a good deal to say on the question of whether the Committee is in a position to compel the disclosure of what Mr. Hutchison evidently desires. I only mention this so that it may perhaps help the Committee in their deliberations. With regard to the public accounts, what Mr. Bell says is quite correct: that we can furnish almost daily returns of the bank account from the Treasury here—all the accounts as furnished by the bank from time to time of the daily transactions.

*The Chairman.*—We have your letter addressed to the Committee.

*Hon. Mr. Hislop.*—When I placed that letter before the Committee I only had in view the particular charge which was made by Mr. Hutchison against Sir Frederick Whitaker—namely, that on a particular date he was indebted to the bank in a large sum of money. I stated to the Committee that, if it determined to go into that, notwithstanding my protest, I should submit to the ruling because it might be considered to be within the four corners of the speech; but it becomes quite a different matter when Mr. Hutchison attempts to drag out the whole dealings of three gentlemen with the Bank of New Zealand during a period of five years, which matters are not referred to in the speech, which are not disclosed, and which could not have been contemplated when the reference was made to the Committee by the House. Before the Committee comes to a decision as to whether they will go into these matters I should like to be heard.

*Dr. Fitchett.*—You told us, Mr. Bell, that the Committee compelling the production of the books, documents, and papers would involve the stopping of the business of the bank. Well, suppose the Committee were not to ask for any books during the current half-year. You know the practice in the banks, that they open fresh books every half-year.