

positively and absolutely knew nothing whatever about the cases at the date at which the unpleasant feeling is attributed to them by you. And so as to "the Cabinet, myself, and the Acting-Secretary of Customs being all anxious that the cases should proceed, and that no steps were taken." Is it not a fact, Sir, that Ministerially you controlled a good deal of the business of the Customs Department? And, if you were anxious about this matter, as you now pretend you were, was it not your duty, as a colleague of mine, to have mentioned your anxiety to me, and to have put me right in any matter in which you thought me wrong? Did you do so? No. But this is like the reason you gave for not appointing Mr. Justice Ward to the Judgeship—a reason of which you were totally oblivious at the time you decided in your own mind that Mr. Justice Ward should not be appointed.

You speak frequently of my friendship for Mr. Gilmer. "All this is unfortunate," you say, "considering your friendship for Mr. Gilmer," whom "you have thus attempted to screen." Nowhere in your letter do you make the slightest reference to your friend Mr. McCarthy, whose brewery is never inspected or reported upon, and who could, if he chose, defraud the revenue more than all the other brewers in Wellington put together, because he, of them all, is the only one who has a malt-house attached to his brewery. Upon my return from Melbourne, in December, I found that Mr. McCarthy pervaded the Customs Department and the records of the Customs Department—so much so that on one occasion I felt compelled to inform the Acting Secretary of Customs that "Mr. Fisher, not Mr. McCarthy, is Commissioner of Customs; and Mr. Fisher, not Mr. McCarthy, will in future direct the officers of the department in carrying out the provisions of the Beer Duty Act." In your telegram to me of the 5th March, from Wanganui, you are good enough to tell me that Mr. McCarthy had spoken to you about "the frauds that were going on, and that he was going to give you hints how to prevent frauds by other brewers." A creditable position for Mr. McCarthy to take up, truly!

Now, as your colleague, it was clearly your duty, when you had received this information, to have informed me of it at the time. It related to the administration of my department. Did you so inform me? No. You receive hints and suggestions from outside persons upon matters concerning the administration of my department—you, the person who now make pretence that you had undergone so much anxiety in connection with these matters—and you never, on any single occasion, say a word to me about them. All I can say is, that, if that is your conception of what is due from one colleague to another, it is certainly a strange conception. Did you at any time tell me that you or the officers of the department were aware that frauds were being committed under the Beer Duty Act? Never. When you were aware—as you now say you were aware—that I had failed or neglected to take action in these cases, did you remonstrate, or make any personal representation to me of any kind? Never. What does this argue? Loyalty to a colleague? No. Upright, straightforward conduct? No. It argues that you knew nothing of the matter whatever, or thought nothing of the matter whatever, until your mind was prejudiced by the Hon. Mr. Hislop and the Hon. Mr. Fergus, who built upon these cases their effort to oust me from the Ministry. And, when you talk of my having deceived you, let me call your attention to this fact: Speaking of the decision of the Cabinet of the 4th March, "that the prosecutions must be instituted," you use these words: "You telegraphed to me *on the same day*, asking my assent to your settling the case 'out of Court. I replied that the information should be laid.'" The Cabinet meeting was held on the 4th. I telegraphed to you on the 4th, at 7.40 p.m. You replied, you say, that "the information should be laid." Did you telegraph that reply on the 4th? No; you replied on the 5th, not on the 4th, which in this case makes an important difference. But I do not ungenerously accuse you of deception. It is possible that in writing your letter you have inadvertently fallen into error. So then in my case. I frankly acknowledge that I ought not to have said in my telegram of the 4th, "A brewery prosecution against a man named Hamilton has resulted in infliction of a 'penalty of £100.'" That is incorrect, but I absolutely repudiate any imputation of a deliberate desire to deceive. We sit down now and calmly review the whole proceedings; but you would allow, if you were a man possessed of a spark of generosity, that that telegram was written under a feeling of great haste and anxiety. I wrote the telegram in Mr. Glasgow's presence. He at least should be able to say whether the proceedings of that afternoon were surrounded by haste and anxiety. What I meant to convey was, that the Hamilton case had resulted ultimately in a mitigated penalty of £100; for Mr. Glasgow's recommendation to mitigate, and my concurrence, were already minuted on the papers. I therefore resent your imputation that the intention to mitigate was only "in my mind." But, apart from this, the actual position of Hamilton's matter was very plainly expressed in my telegram to you of next day, which said, "Glasgow, in report on 'Hamilton's case, says £100 is highest penalty that can be imposed.'" That is the form of words in which I should have expressed myself in the first telegram. I hardly think I shall be believed to be such a poltroon as to stoop to the petty deception you impute to me. Mr. Glasgow, too, has evidently had a terrible drilling at your hands. He told me, before I left office, that you and the Hon. Mr. Hislop had given him a dreadful talking-to for having made the recommendation in Hamilton's case. I thought it great presumption on the part of the Hon. Mr. Hislop, or any other Minister, to give an officer of my department "a dreadful talking-to." As charges of corruption are being strewn broadcast, I think I ought to charge Mr. Bell with corruption, in agreeing with Mr. Jellicoe to accept £200 from Hamilton, when the Magistrate had inflicted a total fine of £250 upon him. This is absurd, but we are dealing with absurdities.

(L.) This paragraph relates principally to the statement that Mr. Glasgow's recommendation in the Junction case, and my minute, were written on the papers after Cabinet had decided that the Junction Brewery was to be prosecuted. "This fact was, of course, known to you, but unknown to Mr. Glasgow." Now see how this house of cards tumbles to the ground. "Mr. Glasgow warned you that the time for laying the information would expire on the 4th March. . . . Mr. Glasgow knew that the Junction Brewery was the worst of the three offenders."