

I do not attach the least importance to your now splitting straws upon the point as to whether I was or was not in company with Mr. Watson and Mr. Henry McKenzie, and that with them I met Mr. Murray, or that accidentally or otherwise by myself I met him on his arrival, and that the other gentlemen also met him. This is not what you stated at the time in the House; but I accept the position as now altered, and I am prepared to produce evidence that this is absolutely untrue so far as I am concerned, and it is also untrue at least so far as one of the other two gentlemen named is concerned. I had hoped that, in a matter of this sort, as you had made a positive statement, and in the face of my denial had repeated it, and declared your willingness to prove it, which I at once accepted, that if you were sure of your position you would at once have had it borne out by the written statements of those from whom you received your information. If, as I understand from your letter, they are afraid of the influence of the Government and a powerful bank, I can only stigmatise it as exceedingly contemptible, and a palpable subterfuge. Any one connected with the Government or a powerful bank would be only too ready, I should say, to applaud your informants for honourably stating what they know upon this matter. I had hoped that the evidence you professed to have could have been furnished by letters in accordance with my request, and that the correct position of the matter might be made public. I do not ask you to furnish me with the names of your informants, but I ask you to substantiate a statement which I declare to be untrue, and to produce your evidence, and I again challenge you to produce it.

John Duthie, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington.

Yours faithfully,
J. G. WARD.

No. 4.

Mr. J. DUTHIE, M.H.R., to the Hon. Mr. J. G. WARD.

SIR,—

Wellington, 30th October, 1895.

When replying in courteous terms to your very offensive letter of 16th instant, I sought to treat a gentleman in your position with respect, and reduce your alleged grievance to simple lines. Your reply of yesterday is still offensive, prolix, and inaccurate, and makes me pause and consider the necessity of taking any further steps to satisfy so impossible a correspondent. It will, therefore, be now sufficient answer to say that the shipping reporter of the *Evening Post* states that, after paying his usual visit to the purser of the "Hauroto" on her arrival and learning that Mr. Murray was on board, he saw you in conversation with that gentleman; but, being in some doubt as to Mr. Murray's identity, he inquired from Mr. Fitzpatrick, the chief steward, and was by him confirmed as to Mr. Murray.

Hon. J. G. Ward, Wellington.

I am, &c.,
JOHN DUTHIE.

No. 5.

The Hon. Mr. J. G. WARD to Mr. J. DUTHIE, M.H.R.

SIR,—

Wellington, 30th October, 1895.

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated to-day. In reply I regret that it should be necessary for me to repeat—

1. The statement made by you twice in the House was not true, and it was twice contradicted by me.

2. You challenged my contradiction, and stated that you could produce witnesses to prove the accuracy of your statement.

3. I accepted your challenge at the time, and said that I was prepared to take an oath that your statement was untrue, and I offered to meet you outside if you would produce your witnesses.

4. I offered, in reply to your letter of the 29th instant, to allow you to set up your own tribunal to test the accuracy of your statement, and I now repeat this offer.

5. I note that the only witness you now mention to justify your statement is the shipping reporter of the *Evening Post* (whom you do not name).

6. From this I understand that the evidence of the shipping reporter, upon which you made in the House a statement against the written testimony of three of the gentlemen whom you name—Messrs. Murray, Watson, and Henry McKenzie—as well as of myself, is regarded by you as sufficient foundation for the position you have taken up in maintaining your allegation.

7. As the result of the untruthful statements made upon evidence which you said you possessed, the *Evening Post* has repeated your statement in what I regard as a malicious libel.

8. I am proceeding against the paper in question, and I sincerely hope that you will, as a matter of justification to yourself, produce any witnesses you may have, in order to condemn me.

In conclusion, I can only again say that your statement that I met Mr. Murray either on the wharf or on the "Hauroto," or that I met the "Hauroto" in company with Mr. Watson, or Mr. Henry McKenzie, or by myself, or with any other person, is absolutely contrary to fact.

John Duthie, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington.

Yours truly,
J. G. WARD.

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