

number of mistakes, involving the same discrepancies in weight and amount?—I could give evidence on that point.

Mr. Reid : I understood it was so ; but a statement will be produced up to date.

CAPTAIN TURNER sworn and examined.

162. *Mr. Reid.*] What is your name?—Archibald Campbell Turner.

163. What position do you hold in the public service?—I am road surveyor in Wellington Provincial District.

164. Had you occasion to examine the quality of tents supplied by Messrs. Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co.?—I had.

165. Where were you when the first lot of tents came to you?—At Akitio Camp, near Weber.

166. When was that?—It was the 7th or 8th of April last. These tents were sent up from Wellington to meet the men who had been sent up from the Bureau ; they arrived the same day with the men. They were pitched on the 7th, and on the 8th I found they were of inferior quality. When I came to Wellington I told Mr. Ibbetson, and instructed him to inquire into it. One tent was sent back from the overseer, as instructed, to compare with the sample tent ; when compared it was found to be of inferior quality, and I refused to certify for them.

167. Do you produce the voucher for these particular tents?—Yes.

168. Will you state the date and the number?—[Voucher read and put in.]

169. Take the first item on the voucher—15 tents 8ft. x 10ft. charged at 25s. Is there anything wrong in that?—All these tents are of inferior quality ; the voucher, I think, would be correct if the tents had been of the proper quality.

170. You object to the quality, and not to the charge, in that instance?—Yes.

171. Is there an instance where you object to the charge?—Not in this voucher ; if they had reduced the charge I might have passed the voucher.

172. What is your opinion as to the value of these tents?—In my letter to the Surveyor-General I said what the value was. For the first item charged, tents at 25s., I put down 18s. ; for the flies, 12ft. by 14ft., charged at 15s., I put down 10s. ; for the tents, 10ft. by 12ft., charged at 32s. 6d., I put it down at 24s. ; and for 14ft. by 16ft. flies, charged at 20s., I put down at 14s. 6d.

173. What is the total amount of the account?—£40 3s. 11d.

174. That account is still unpaid?—Yes ; it is still unpaid.

175. Do you know anything about pit-saws that were supplied?—Yes.

176. Are they in the schedule?—I think not.

177. What is your objection to this charge?—The charge made for these saws seemed to me excessive ; I got Mr. Ibbetson to inquire whether the charge was not excessive.

178. You refused to certify for it?—Yes ; and I sent in a memorandum to the department.

179. What is the charge?—Two S. and J. pit-saws, 36s. 6d.

180. Is that the price of each, or both together?—For each ; the amount for both is £3 13s.

181. Then, there are two 8-ft., at 45s. each?—Yes ; the amount is £4 10s.

182. Had you any means of ascertaining this overcharge?—I instructed Mr. Ibbetson to make inquiry, and he said they could be had for 23s. [Memorandum read.]

183. Cross-examined by *Mr. Skerrett.*] Pit-saws are not in the contract?—I could not find them in the schedule.

184. Do you know that Messrs. E. W. Mills were also contractors?—Yes.

185. Do you know that it is common enough for merchants and their travellers to quote prices particularly low, when they are required merely for the purpose of comparison with those of another firm?—I do not know the rules of the trade at all.

186. *Mr. G. Hutchison.*] As regards these tents, they should have been according to sample?—Yes.

187. If you had seen them before they were used by the men would you have rejected them?—Yes ; but I was in a fix. It was simply this : the men were on the ground and nothing to cover them.

188. But they were not according to sample?—No ; there are other things that Mr. Ibbetson will be able to give evidence about.

GEORGE RICHARD HARBORD IBBETSON sworn and examined.

189. *Mr. Reid.*] What are you?—I am a draftsman in the Survey Department—Road Branch.

190. What are your duties in reference to vouchers passing through the office on account of supplies?—The clerk first gets the voucher, then he goes through the schedule and checks the voucher with the weights and quantities, so as to see that everything going through the office is right. He calls my attention to anything wrong.

191. You have to check the vouchers?—Yes.

192. Are these your figures on the vouchers produced?—These are not mine.

193. Have you a voucher of the 3rd April (41) charged “ Jumpers, 352lb ”?—Yes.

194. Did you check that voucher?—Yes, I checked that voucher.

195. What is the number?—41 : 3 jumpers, 1in. diameter, 9ft. long ; 8 cleaners, 10ft. by $\frac{3}{4}$ in. : total, 352lb. I got these reduced to 300lb.

196. How?—It was an overcharge.

197. How did you ascertain that?—By tables.

198. Was the voucher paid on the reduced amount—£5 17s. 4d. to £5?—Yes, I believe so.

198A. Now, the pit-saws. What have you to state with reference to them?—Captain Turner told me to go into the matter. I went over to Mills and Company and asked them what they could