

FRIDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 1898.

CHARLES SLIGHT was examined on oath.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are an ex-member of the Police Force, I believe. In your own way, tell us the story you wish to bring before us, will you please?—Yes. I may say that I am a colonial. I first entered the Volunteer service in 1866, and in 1872 I joined the Armed Constabulary. I left the A.C. Force in 1874, and I joined the Volunteers again, and in 1881 I joined the Police Force in Wellington.

2. You were not transferred from the A.C. Force to the police?—No.

3. Will you kindly tell us the circumstances of your joining the Force in 1881?—It was my first intention to join the Gaol Department, but as they were wanting police, I joined that Force, and was sent to the Thames.

4. Did you send in an application to be enrolled in the police?—Just the ordinary application. I produced my testimonials, and my discharge was held in the office. I was sent to the Thames as a third-class constable. During the time I was at the Thames, my wife became ill, and I had doctors' certificates that the climate did not agree with her, and I applied for a transfer South. It did not seem to be entertained, because it hung on for a long time. My wife continued to get worse, and finally I applied for a month's leave, and came to Wellington.

5. In what year was that?—That would be 1883. I resumed my application for transfer, and I got it, to Wellington. After being a short time in Wellington, I was appointed to take charge of the Upper Willis Street sub-district.

6. Was that a separate station—I mean, was there a lockup there?—No. I think I had that for about four or five months, when I was sent to take charge of Manners Street Station; and my wife was appointed female searcher at that station. I held the station for a year and eleven months. During that time there was a good deal of dissension between the Detective Force and the general police, and very burning it was, too. At that time I was one of the unfortunates who were not in favour with Chief Detective Brown, because I arrested a prisoner, and would not give the case up to the detectives, but worked it up myself. The case was that of Samuel Bennett, charged with breaking and entering Collins's store. Mr. Brown tried to hand over the case to a man named McGrath, a third-class constable who was acting as detective, and who was married to Brown's niece.

7. Your rank then was what?—I was a second-class constable. Brown tried his best to get me to give up the case, which would have been about McGrath's first case as a detective; but I objected, and looked after it myself. Mr. Brown took me to task very severely for this, and from that out I was never very friendly with Mr. Brown. However, a combination, consisting of Inspector Brown, Sergeant Ready, and O'Rorke, Hadden, and Hattie, was formed against me—this was in 1884—and they succeeded in putting me out of the station after I had fought them for four months on paper. I was sent back to take charge of Upper Willis Street, with the promise of Mr. Shearman, who was then Inspector, that I would have the first country station that became vacant. Shortly after three stations became vacant, and I was sent to the one at Pahautanui.

8. What year were you sent to Pahautanui?—I think it was in August, 1886. During the time I was at Pahautanui one very singular thing occurred. I was sent to take charge of the ship "Pleione," which was wrecked on the Waikanae beach. I was just six weeks there, away from my station, camped on the beach. Two Permanent Militiamen were sent out to assist me in supervising the transfer of the cargo from the ship to the Waikanae Station, and I was in charge of them. We superintended this work, and there was no claim for lost cargo against the contractors from the time the ship started to unload until she was emptied, owing to the great care and attention we gave to the matter. There was not one complaint from the underwriters or consignees of cargo about lost goods. I destroyed two suits of uniforms through the salt water, tar, and dirt about the ship, and a suit of plain clothes as well. After the work was done I applied to the proper quarters, as I thought, for a reward or some compensation for this duty, as it had been special extra duty. The Commissioner of Police (Mr. Gudgeon), referred me to the Customs Department, and the Customs referred me on to the underwriters, and the underwriters to the contractors; but by the time I got to the underwriters I was full up of it, and I would not apply any further. In consequence I got nothing, and lost two uniforms. Another case, that of James White, wanted for horse-stealing, cropped up, and I arrested White under circumstances referred to in the correspondence. I applied for a reward, and it was not given to me. What I complain of in that case is that Constable Carr, my comrade with me on that occasion, was transferred to Maketu, and I understood that he got a rise in salary. However, I was left with only a record of merit.

9. *Colonel Pitt.*] You resigned?—Yes; I think on the 1st August, 1890, in consequence of this. I saw it was no use my remaining in the Force. Other men were getting promoted over my head. There was Gray, of Dunedin (116), my junior, and Maddern (108), my junior in the service, and both got rewards and promotions for services which I considered were no greater than mine.

10. In your letter to the department you say that if your resignation is not accepted it would cost you £1,000?—Yes; because I had partly entered into an agreement which involved that amount. After leaving the Force for some time I met Constable Hattie in the street, and he told me he had left the Force. He asked me if I had got compensation when I retired, and I said I had not. He told me I ought to have done as he did, go sick for a week and get a doctor's certificate and get compensation. Now, my grievance is that I did not get any compensation, and I consider I ought to, as I left the Force with honour to myself and credit to the country I served. I heard that Constable Cullinane also got his compensation.

11. You resigned out of the Force?—Yes.

12. Do not you know that men who resign out of the Force are not entitled to compensation?—I know that, and I understand it has been the rule.

10—H. 2.