Can you show us these letters ?—Yes, they are in my bag. I have indicated the three points I should like shortly to handle and submit evidence upon, and it is for you to say whether I can traverse that ground.

The Chairman : It is a question of how much you dealt with before the Statutes Revision Committee of the Legislative Council. I understood from what I read of the evidence there that you dealt with the first point, as to the request of the Presbyterian Church in 1911, and that you also dealt with the third point, as to the issue of certificates ?—No. I submitted the question of the certificates to one of the members, thinking he would bring up the correspondence. The fact is that in the Legislative Council I was in this position : I sat for four hours listening to the Protestant Political Association stating its case, and I came in at the end of the day when the Committee was rather wearied and I felt myself pretty much of a nuisance. Most of the members would have been glad, I suppose, if they could have ended the business then. I was at a disadvantage, and had to cut out of my statements some of the things I had wished to bring before the Committee, and that was one of them—the certificates.

Hon. Mr. Lee : I do not see that we are concerned with the second question at all.

The Chairman : It relates to the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church.

Hon. Mr. Lee : That is so. The witness says that some people have charged that Church with having a *Ne temere* decree of a kind, which they have not got. What has that to do with us ? If they say they have not a *Ne temere* decree, and they have not, it is not for us to worry the thing.

Witness : The speaker I refer to quoted from a parliamentary paper. The evidence he submitted to the meeting was the report of the Legislative Council, and the point is that the Presbyterian Church has no *Ne temere* decree.

Hon. Mr. Anderson : The important thing the witness said this morning is that Registrars have issued permits to marry a second time. Can the witness produce those permits ?

Witness : I can produce the letters of the Registrar-General.

Hon. Mr. Anderson : I take it that is the only point that interests us.

Mr. Sidey : Mr. Wood also wishes to suggest an amendment to a clause.

The Chairman : Yes.

Witness : In 1911 I reported to the Assembly, as convener of a Special Committee, "Our New Zealand Marriage Act, we are informed on good authority, can be used in the interests of the *Ne temere* decree. A second certificate may be issued to parties who are already registered as persons to go through a second marriage ceremony ; and through this seemingly legal sanction a Roman priest may declare the marriage ceremony of a Presbyterian minister to be null and void. If a second certificate may be issued, why may not a third, or a fourth, or a fifth, and a reign of freakdom be set up under our New Zealand Marriage Act ? The administration of our Marriage Act, in such a way as to weaken the sense of the bindingness of the first marriage covenant, opens the door to the entrance of the most dire evils."

Hon. Mr. Anderson : But where is the letter ?

Hon. Mr. Lee : Show us what has been done. That is only what you say has been done.

Witness : I have this letter :—

"DEAR SIR,— "Wellington, 16th September, 1912.

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 12th instant, and to inform you that it is not uncommon for parties to be remarried by an officiating minister after a previous marriage by the Registrar. This procedure is in my opinion strictly legal provided the provisions of the Marriage Act are complied with.

"For your own information I will quote two legal opinions on the subject :—

"1. On the question of the Registrar issuing a certificate for the second marriage: 'No doubt the point is a novel one in some respects. Nevertheless it must have occurred before that a second marriage has been solemnized though a previous valid one has—for example, Gretna Green marriages, and in the case of Catholic and Protestant. On the whole I think there is no lawful impediment to the marriage, and that the certificate should issue on the usual declaration.'

"2. The second opinion deals with the solemnization of a marriage by a minister when the parties were previously married before a Registrar or by another minister : 'I think it clear that if parties, having been duly married before a Registrar, at a later period are married according to the form and ceremony of a religious body, such second marriage can only be upon the issue of a second certificate ; and in such a case all the provisions of the Act as to registration will take effect accordingly. The first marriage is presumably good ; the second is contracted possibly to quiet religious scruples ; but, although a voluntary and in a legal sense an unnecessary act, yet if parties choose to take this course they must do so in accordance with law.'

"Yours faithfully,

"F. W. MANSFIELD, Registrar-General.

"The Rev. R. Wood, The Manse, Waikari, Christchurch."

Hon. Mr. Lee : That was in 1912 ?—Yes, in 1912. I have not a copy of the letter I wrote to Mr. Mansfield. I was puzzled as to how I could fill in my marriage-book. There is no provision made in the Marriage Act as far as I know for describing the parties as "already married." They are described as "bachelor" or "spinster," "widow" or "widower," or "divorced." I wrote to him asking him how I should fill in my book, and he replied as follows :—

"DEAR SIR,— "Wellington, 21st September, 1920.

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 17th instant on the subject of the remarriage of parties already married.

"In all such cases the party should be described in the Marriage Register, in the column Condition,' as 'Previously married at on ' [*Quote date of first marriage*]. You will, however,