

parliament itself. It is the body which constitutes the courts, and we here, as members of this House of Commons, at any rate in dealing with this matter, are members of a court with the like responsibility resting upon each one of us as rests upon a judge himself in adjudicating upon the rights of a fellow man. If we look at this case from that standpoint, if we remember that it is something which ought to be decided, not upon appeals to political partisanship, but upon the evidence which has been given by the witnesses, and upon exactly the same principles as would govern us without doubt if we were sitting as jurymen upon the trial of a charge such as this, I venture to think, Sir, that there will be little hesitation in coming to a conclusion with regard to it.

I do not intend to discuss the details of the evidence. That has been done very fully, and I would think very satisfactorily, by the chairman of the committee, than whom no other member was in a better position to have discharged that duty. But I want to point out just one thing in that connection. The great majority of us who have now to pass upon this question have not heard the evidence, have not seen the witnesses who gave that evidence, are not in as good a position as our fellow members who constitute that committee were in, to come to a correct conclusion upon the question of what witness or what statement ought to be believed. If there is a contradiction between one witness and another, it is the function of the judge who hears and sees those witnesses, or of jurymen, if there be a jury, to come to a conclusion which man is, in their opinion, the more likely to be telling the truth, to weigh the evidence, and to draw, in the first instance at any rate, the deductions of fact. No judge, no human being, could be, from the nature of the circumstances, in as good a position to do that work as the men who hear the witnesses and who see the way in which they answer, and who judge as the words fall from the lips of the witnesses which of them is telling the truth. I seek to apply that in this case, only to this extent, that if there is a contradiction between one man and another man, if it is a question of which man is the better entitled of two witnesses to be credited, then we ought to rely upon the conclusions of the committee of our own members who heard and saw those men, and who have reported to us in that respect. But fortunately in this case I think there is less than the amount of contradiction between one witness and another that generally. I am sorry to say, is seen in contested cases in our courts. The facts in this matter are really not open to dispute with regard to the main, and I think all the necessary points in reference to this

Sir ALLEN AYLESWORTH.

charge. There is no difference of statement among the witnesses who have been called. There is no question but that this work was done on the house of Mr. Lanctot by men who were in the general employment of the government; there is no question but that government supplies were used to a greater or less extent in the doing of that work; there is equally no doubt that that work was paid for by Mr. Lanctot, that those supplies which were used in the doing of the work were replaced at his cost, and that there is no loss in respect to them to the people of this country.

The transaction with regard to the supplies is plainly no transaction of purchase on Mr. Lanctot's part. No one can pretend to say that it is; no one does pretend to say that it is. The agreement between him and the government employees with whom he discussed the matter is perfectly distinct—that government supplies should be used for the doing of Mr. Lanctot's work, that an account should be kept of how much of such supplies were so used, and that goods of equal quantity and of equal quality should be supplied at Mr. Lanctot's expense to replace the goods so used. The chairman of the committee, in speaking of the transaction used the word 'lend.' I think it was not an inappropriate word. These goods were lent to Mr. Lanctot to be returned, not in specie, but in kind, exactly the same kind of transaction that often takes place between individuals, in which goods are handed over by the owner to another with the intention that they shall be consumed and that they shall be replaced by goods of equal value and equal quality as the goods which are given by the owner to the man whom he has accommodated and which are consumed. That was literally the transaction here. The evidence is not in dispute, the evidence is distinct that the man who was custodian of these goods in the government service set apart a certain quantity, which he measured and weighed as being sufficient to do the work which was in hand, that some—the greater part, but not all of these goods—were sent to Mr. Lanctot's house and were used in the doing of the work, and that after the work was done that quantity of goods, equal in amount and equal in quality, was supplied at the expense of Mr. Lanctot to replace the goods which had been taken. Now, in that respect, it is impossible for any one to argue that there has been any loss to the public. On the contrary, this evidence is quite distinct that in point of fact a slightly greater quantity of goods was obtained at Mr. Lanctot's expense than had been sent to his house. But whether there was a greater quantity or not, there was no sale, there is no pretense