

They say, page 87:—"We think it ought to have been evident, before the expedition was started, that no result could be reached beyond showing that a railway on that line was not feasible, and that the consequence would be as it was, no better than a waste of time and money."

It might have been thought that before passing judgment, the Commission would have requested me to furnish some explanation on this point. Is it in accordance with the first principles of justice to condemn even a criminal without being heard in his own defence? The meanest subject has a right to claim a hearing, and surely a Royal Commission should have taken means to ascertain the facts before publishing to the world censures on the conduct of an officer in the position which I had occupied.

I might, as far as this particular charge is concerned, rest my defence on the fact that I was condemned unheard; but it may be thought desirable that I should briefly submit the explanations which I would have given the Commission had they favored me with an opportunity of doing so.

It was found at an early stage of the survey that a line available for a railway could be had through British Columbia to Burrard Inlet. This line was not attainable, however, without encountering obstacles of a formidable character requiring an enormous outlay. Such being the case, the Government did not feel justified in adopting that route until every effort had been made to secure a line which could be established to the Pacific sea-board at less cost. Year by year these efforts were continued, but without marked success. Line after line was examined across the Cascades to Howe Sound, to Bute Inlet, to Dean Inlet, and then to Gardner Inlet, and still later to Port Essington and Port Simpson.

From Gardner Inlet eastward for a breadth of over 200 miles, the map was a blank—nothing was known. In 1874, explorations were commenced and an impression was formed that a favorable line could be had to Gardner Inlet, except for a short distance on the extreme western end. Further explorations disclosed the fact that a favorable line with light gradients could be secured the whole way from Lake Superior to a point within 22 miles of Kemano Bay on Gardner Inlet. At this point the elevation of the ground was less than 3,000 feet above the level of tidewater. The difficulties being limited to a short section of 22 miles, it seemed to me possible that they might be surmounted by such works as are introduced to overcome similar natural obstacles elsewhere. I may instance the works on the Bhoré Ghat, on the railway between Bombay and Madras, and the Thull Ghat between Bombay and Allahabad. I explained my views to the Minister of the Department; I showed him plans and profiles in my possession of the works in India referred to, which had for years been in successful operation. As the suggestion promised a possible saving of many millions of dollars, an instrumental examination was deemed expedient, and the survey which the Commission have so strongly condemned was authorized and directed to be carried out.

It is obvious that the circumstances justified the survey, and that it was undertaken with the knowledge and concurrence of the Minister, to whom I was responsible. The survey was clearly directed in the public interests, as any impartial man must admit.

These explanations I would willingly have given to the Commission, but they did not ask me a single question on the subject; they preferred resting the accusations set forth in their Report, on the testimony of a witness, who had threatened to levy blackmail, and they had evidence in their possession that he had so acted for months before their Report was issued. Moreover, they suppressed evidence which, in the eyes of all honest men, would have weakened the testimony upon which they founded their condemnation of my act. I refer to Document B, appended.

CHARGE No. 5.

(Steel Rails).

The Commission, at page 177 of their Report, state as follows:—"That a large portion of the 50,000 tons, now under consideration, was purchased without any