

would give their lives to keep from leaking out. It must not be forgotten that the contractors at the time of contracting with the Government were not ignorant. For years they had been working over the ground covered by the works, for years the location surveys had been in their hands, and altogether they were contracting with as much knowledge as if they were looking back over completed works. And yet we are expected to believe that these men, who have grown gray-headed in contracting, these men who had no competition against them, these men who had possession of the works and all the legal strength which such possession gave them, these men with all their knowledge of the works and ground, were such fools as to enter into contracts for sums less than the work could possibly be done for. If the people are such fools as to be gulled by anything so preposterous they deserve to lose several millions more than the one that is gone.

These things to which I have referred should be enough to condemn a dozen governments, but there are other things to come. Almost from the day of signing the contracts the contractors have been running the lines for traffic, and thus they have netted immense sums, in cash taken day after day, none of which has passed into the public funds, or been accounted for in any way. The Government have paid for engines, rolling stock, rails, station buildings, every thing indeed, without retaining even a drawback, for the contractors to wear the materials out for their own profit. The contractors have so excellent a thing that they intend to hold on to it just as long as possible. Immense claims for extras will be put forward, these will be fought through the courts and take years to settle, and meantime the contractors will hold possession and work the lines for their own profit. Fancy it! A road into which about eight millions of dollars of public money has already been put, the contractors have only to pay a few salaries and run it for years. When the line gets into the public hands it will require new rails, rolling stock, and all. This excellent Conservative Government, this wise Government, into whose hands the electors have, in two years, placed eight millions of the public money for railway works alone, were so innocent that they made contracts without giving it a thought that the lines might require to be run for traffic before they were completed. Thus hundreds of thousands of dollars of the public money will be lost in addition to the million of which I have spoken.

No words can do proper justice to the state of things that the late Government have brought about. Their scandalous criminal folly passes belief. They dare to come before the people and say this by their last report:—The utmost value we can put on work done is, in round figures, seven millions two hundred thousand dollars, (\$7,183,492), but we have paid away fifty thousand dollars more than this. (Pages 14 and 12 Commissioners' Report for December, 1877). In other words the Government have