

1613. Was it at the instance of the Commissioners that the work had been taken out of his hands?—Certainly. I recommended the Government to do it, and the Government acted upon my recommendation. My first notice was carried out.

*By Mr. Mills :—*

1614. Have you any recollection of the conversation with Fitzgerald, referred to in his letter of 29th September, 1873?—Yes; I saw him in Bathurst, and had a conversation with him on the condition of the work.

1615. Did you ever make any observations or suggestions to him to know what he himself would complete the work for?—I do not think I ever did. It is most improbable. If the contract were re-let, it would have to be re-let by tender.

1616. Was there anything said to you by Fitzgerald which would lead you to think he was unfair to the contractors, or threw difficulties in their way by making improper returns?—No. He never gave me reason to suppose anything of that sort.

1617. Had you any other conversation with him in reference to the matters referred to in that letter?—I never saw him after the date of that letter.

*By Mr. Metcalf :—*

1618. Do you think it right that the contractors should be paid for the whole contract when he actually executed about one-half? Do you think he should be paid for the reductions made in this case?—That is a question that would undoubtedly, at the end of the contract, have been a subject of discussion between the Commissioners and the Government as to what course should be taken. The striking out of thirty-four culverts out of fifty-four I consider to be a most excessive reduction to make,—more than was ever contemplated by anybody. The work must have been very badly estimated at the start.

*By Mr. Mitchell :—*

1619. Did you ever travel over this section?—No. It is the only section I have never been able to get at.

1620. Is it very inaccessible?—I have already said so.

1621. Never having travelled over Section 16, when you state that the character of the work was not satisfactory, I presume you spoke upon information furnished you by the officers on the ground?—I did not refer to the *character* of the work, but to the progress of the work as being unsatisfactory.

1622. From whom did you get your information?—From the Engineers; and from examination of the amount of work done as shown by the progress certificates rendered by Chief Engineer; and also examination of the profiles, showing work done and remaining to be done.

1623. Which of the Engineers was it that gave you information in relation to the unsatisfactory progress of the work?—I had reports from Mr. Fleming and Mr. Light, through Mr. Fitzgerald.

1624. Would you let me look at these reports?—In saying “reports” I refer to verbal communications made to me when I was down in that part of the country. In regard to Mr. Fleming, I know there are written statements, saying that progress of the work was not satisfactory.

1625. Mr. Fleming could not have spoken from personal information, as he was never over that section until last fall?—I presume not.

1626. Were there not very special difficulties with relation to Section 16?—There were.

1627. Did Mr. Fitzgerald ever represent the work in any other than an unfavorable light to you?—He always spoke of it unfavorably.

1628. What did he say about the contractors?—His expressions with regard to them were not of the most complimentary kind.

1629. Was his language of a very extraordinary kind in relation to them?—I do not think I would be justified in saying that it was. Mr. Fitzgerald spoke of the contractors as not being very energetic, or not competent to carry on the work. I will read an extract from a letter which I wrote, dated 6th August, 1872, on this matter, which is as follows:—

“The next Section is No. 16, 18½ miles long, and carries the line nearly half-way