

resemblance in the handwriting in some parts, yet in the figures, which are the essential thing to show collusion, there is not the slightest resemblance. Yet the hon. gentleman is able to say without a moment's hesitation that they were written by the same hand.

Mr. BENNETT. Is there any resemblance in the handwriting?

Mr. PUGSLEY. I said that in some parts there was some resemblance. But I have had a large experience in court and my experience tells me that if a man has a vivid imagination he can see resemblances in handwriting specimens that one less gifted would fail to discover. When experts in handwriting desire to find resemblances, it seems the easiest thing in the world for them to do so. The result of my experience is that I do not place great reliance on the tests of experts in handwriting. With regard to the figures which, as I have said, are the crucial thing, I venture to say that the figures in the two tenders do not bear the slightest resemblance, nor is there anything else to indicate that they were prepared by the same person. Now, when these tenders came to the attention of the minister he found that there were three tenders, one from the Owen Sound Company, one from the Penetanguishene Company, and one from the Dominion Dredging Company, the prices being 57 cents, 53 cents and 30 cents. It was obviously the minister's duty to accept the lowest tender. He accepted the Dominion Dredging Company's tender, and advised the company of that fact. They had tendered for other works on the St. Lawrence and other rivers; and they informed the minister that with the other contracts which they had accepted and the work they had to do, they would not be able to perform this work, not having a sufficient dredging plant. And so they declined to do the work at 30 cents. What better evidence does the hon. gentleman want that there is nothing in his statement—which, if not unparliamentary, I would call a reckless statement—that it is the practice of these companies to combine and secure whatever prices they desire from the government, than the fact that the Dominion Dredging Company which he likes to call the 'Stewart Company,' because Mr. Stewart happens to be the son of a member of this House—what better evidence could he desire of the lack of foundation of his statement than the fact that when the Dominion Dredging Company could not do the work, and, in a perfectly proper manner the minister called for new tenders, the company with which Mr. Mackay is connected, which, for some reason that I am not aware of, probably a perfectly good reason had not tendered before, tendered for 27 cents a cubic yard? So the country got the work done at 3 cents

Mr. PUGSLEY.

a cubic yard less than the lowest tender, that of the Dominion Dredging Company, which he has so frequently mentioned in this House in terms, certainly, not of the greatest respect. Can any fault be found with the minister?—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Six o'clock.

Mr. PUGSLEY. I would suggest that this item be passed—

Some hon. MEMBERS. No, no.

Mr. PUGSLEY. Then, I shall have some remarks to make after recess.

At six o'clock, committee took recess.

After Recess.

Committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. PUGSLEY. Just before recess I was making some observations in reply to my hon. friend from Simcoe (Mr. Bennett). I shall not pursue the matter along the same lines beyond saying this, for I want to be as brief as possible. My hon. friend has failed to point out that in any single case the department has accepted any other but the lowest tender; in every case the contract for dredging work has been given to the lowest tenderer. There have been a few cases, very few indeed, in which there has been a failure to perform the contract satisfactorily on the part of certain companies, in these cases the contracts have been given to the next lowest tenderer, provided he has brought his price down to the price of the lowest tenderer. But with those exceptions, which have occurred very rarely the contract has always been awarded by competition to the lowest tenderer. I may also say that in some cases where the work is urgent, exceptions have been made, in cases where it was necessary that work should be done immediately.

Now my hon. friend referred to the fact that something had been said in the newspapers regarding the objection which he made to the extension of the dredging contracts. I do not know what has been said, but I do know that after the matter had been raised in the House by the hon. gentleman, when I decided to extend the dredging contracts, there were in the newspapers supporting hon. gentlemen opposite, strong expressions of triumph at what was supposed to be some great act performed in the public interest and which would redound to the party benefit. Now I want to say a word or two with regard to the extension of the dredging contracts. When the question of how to deal with the various dredging works came before us, I looked into the existing contracts, looked into the prices, and I found they provided that the dredging should be completed during the then current season, or at such other date as might be fixed by the minister. It seemed very