

*Attorney-General.*

16th Oct., 1872.

be employed. Mr. Brogden, it would appear, told Mr. Holt that he would not entertain any proposition of the kind, being altogether opposed to the employment of any such person in the capacity suggested by Mr. Holt. In regard to the particular person suggested to him, namely, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Brogden expressed the greatest disinclination to use his services. At this time Mr. Holt was certainly acting in the interest of his employer, at all events he was acting in the services of the firm. Despite the disinclination of his employer, Mr. Holt made an appointment with Mr. Harrison, and in pursuance of that appointment they met in the offices of the firm, and then and there came the proposal with regard to the employment of Mr. Harrison's services as a writer of articles in the interest of the firm. That part of the matter had not been satisfactorily cleared up. Certainly he (Counsel) could not say that he had come to the conclusion that there was evidence to show Mr. Brogden's authority to the purchase of Mr. Harrison's influence and action as a Member of the House. But that was not the only question—the question had Mr. Brogden authorized these negotiations. The real question to decide was, whether taking Messrs. Holt, Harrison, and Tribe's evidence fully into consideration, there was sufficient evidence to justify Mr. Harrison in supposing that an attempt had been made to influence his actions as a Member of the House. It constantly happens that persons engaged, as these witnesses are, in business and about the House, that their recollection of the exact words made use of is not quite so distinct as it ought to be. His learned friend had imputed to Mr. Harrison that he had not given reliable testimony, but the very same might be said of Mr. Holt. He denied that anything had been said which indicated that it was Mr. Brogden's interest that the Government formed by Mr. Stafford should be kept in office. Mr. Tribe states that that did take place. Mr. Tribe, in his evidence, in reply to questions, stated that Mr. Holt had said to him that it would be for the interest of Mr. Brogden to retain the Stafford Government in office. The whole tenor of his evidence, as given in questions 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255 and 256, is to that effect. The first question for the Committee to come to a conclusion upon was, whether there was sufficient evidence to show that Mr. Brogden had authorized Mr. Holt to make any proposals of the kind to influence Mr. Harrison's conduct as a Member of the House. The next question for them to consider was, had Mr. Holt taken such a part in this transaction as to justify Mr. Harrison in believing that an attempt had been made to influence his conduct in that way. It appeared beyond all doubt, from Mr. Holt's own statement, that he (Mr. Holt) had suggested Mr. Harrison's name to Mr. Brogden. There can be but little doubt but that Mr. Harrison was aware that his name had been so suggested. Referring to the alleged proposal to influence Mr. Vogel not to bring down a vote of want of confidence against Mr. Stafford's Government, Counsel said that he would take only the evidence of Mr. Tribe on that point, and leave out other evidence altogether. It is plain, he said, from the evidence, that it had been suggested by Mr. Holt, in presence of Mr. Tribe, that it would be better for Mr. Brogden's firm if matters were to remain as they then were. In his evidence Mr. Tribe was asked, "Did Mr. Holt at any time suggest to you that, in the interest of Mr. Brogden, he would ask you to take such a course?" To which Mr. Holt replied he never went so far as that, but he said it would be for the interest of Mr. Brogden to retain the Stafford Government in office. Really, and in fact, looking at what took place, it was not so much a question of his vote, as it was his influence as a Member outside the House that was of importance at the particular juncture. It was of more importance than his vote in the House that the assured majority in favour of a vote of want of confidence should be prevented. The next point to which he would call attention raised the question whether or not what had taken place between the parties in presence of Mr. Tribe, justified Mr. Harrison in the opinion that a gross attempt had been made to influence his conduct by the offer of pecuniary consideration, and which he considered necessary to bring before the House. In his letter to the Speaker he states that while he was to use his influence as a Member of the House, he was not to be required to vote in a particular direction. Apparently the vote of want of confidence was to be prevented by preventing an assured majority at the meetings of Mr. Vogel's political supporters. What he (Counsel) asked the Committee to assume is, that Mr. Harrison thought he had good grounds for coming to the conclusion he did when he heard that a similar conversation had taken place with Mr. Tribe, and that some pecuniary consideration had been granted by the Messrs. Brogden to him. Mr. Tribe's explanation of that transaction is as follows. He says that he had no idea of making any charge at all for the services he had done; that in fact the money he received from Henderson was a present. Mr. Tribe and Mr. Harrison appear to have been in constant communication, being interested in certain West Coast projects. For the services so rendered, Mr. Henderson suggested that a present should be given to Mr. Tribe, and a sum of £50 was named by the latter. Mr. Henderson then offered £100, or double the amount asked by Mr. Tribe. It was when he (Mr. Harrison) came to think over that fact—to put all things, as it were, together—that his suspicions were aroused that an attempt had been made to buy his political influence. Certain pecuniary loss had been spoken off by Mr. Tribe as having been sustained by him, and the question was whether, was this £100 paid as compensation for the pecuniary loss, or was it paid by Mr. Henderson as a present? There was no evidence that the sum proposed as a present bore any relation to the alleged pecuniary loss.