me that I confess myself in some surprise. The report is for the year ended the 31st December, 1893, and, as more than five months have since elapsed, might thus seem to have been delayed until—what may be said to have actually happened—I should hardly have time to deliberately deal with every point. Such, however, have been the conduct of Mr. FitzGerald and the circumstances of this report; and such is the strength of my own position, that even my ability is sufficient to enable me to reply in time, though not perhaps so completely as I would wish. Of the work which I have done during my long official career of nearly thirty-three years, and of which so much has been acknowledged to be of substantial merit, no part ought, in my humble opinion, to bring me more commendation, on impartial inquiry, than my administration of the Public Trust Office, and its present efficient condition.

When Mr. FitzGerald was, by the legislation which he deplores of 1891, deprived of the power to control the Public Trustee, and it became practicable for me to make simple and efficient arrangements as well for keeping the accounts of the Public Trust Office as for its general administration, I came to the conclusion that, as the necessary consequence, the withdrawal should have followed of his authority to audit and report on the subsequent administration of the office. For it was not in human nature to be expected that Mr. FitzGerald would furnish, as to the result of an arrangement which implied at the least a condemnation of the administration of his own department, a report which should justify that condemnation. I did certainly think of suggesting to the Government, as much in consideration of the difficulty of Mr. FitzGerald's own position as with a view to an audit from which a fair and unbiassed report on the Public Trust Office could be reasonably expected by the Government, that there should be an independent audit; but I regret to say that a weakness which is not always regarded as a fault, and which has often been the occasion to me of many sufferings, overcame me into silence. If, indeed, I had not been powerfully moved by a regard for the interests of the Public Trust Office, of the Government service, and of the colony, my naturally compliant disposition would have led me to make, at the expense of these interests, my peace with Mr. FitzGerald. I was influenced also by a consideration for the younger man on whom Mr. FitzGerald imposes the clerical duties and the other services which are required in connection with the audit of the Public Trust Office, and who has been, in Trust Office matters, Mr.FitzGerald's mouthpiece. But now to his report.

In this report, or, as it may now be called, annual attack by Mr. FitzGerald on my administration of the Public Trust Office, and of the legislation by which his power of control over the office has been withdrawn, his confession that in the books and accounts of the office —books in which so large a volume of pecuniary transactions is daily recorded, and in which the entries are made in continual doubt as to what the law may authorise, and accounts of every variety of commercial and official transactions—he, the director of a fault-finding department, and with the strongest possible motive to establish a case against the Public Trust Office, should have been unable to make up, for the whole year, a list of more than 320 errors, can only be regarded as a very flattering testimony to the general accuracy and efficiency with which the books and accounts are kept. He has doubtless studied the list anxiously, and though I shall make clear that, to speak tenderly, he has, in many of the statements which he has made, exaggerated or garbled the facts, or been inexcusably careless, his assertion that he has been unable to discover more than one error a day, involving not the loss of a penny, would, even if correct, be consistent only with the rarest accuracy in the accounts. Here is the Auditor-General of the colony making—after probably the longest and severest study to which he has ever subjected the balance-sheet and the administration of the Public Trust Office, and with a naturally stong desire to prove a case which would counteract in some degree the reflection under which he lies in being deprived of his former power over the Public Trustee—a declaration that the accounts of this great department have been so well kept that, notwithstanding the number, character, and variety of the pecuniary transactions, he has been unable to discover more than one error a day, and, as he ought to have added, an error which had been commonly adjusted at the time of the discovery, and which, if corrected according to Audit method, would not have been counted an error.

Mr. FitzGerald's allegation as to the absence of errors in the books of the Treasury, and in the books of other accounting offices, I shall leave for what it may be considered worth, after the perusal of my remarks respecting the character and accuracy of his other charges. I know nothing of the Government Insurance Office accounts; but I question the truth of Mr. FitzGerald's statement, for even should there be clerks enough to do the work as leisurely as the Audit officials perform their duties in the Public Trust Office, and the expense of accounting should thus be unwarrantably high, one error a day of the trifling character of those of the Public Trust Office must be very far below the average. His statement, indeed, carries its own refutation. The Public Trust Office is authorised to pay and make up accounts according to the practice so long adopted by the Post Office—that is to say, without being subjected to that system which, of audit before payment, would render impracticable the present safe, efficient, and satisfactory conduct of the Post Office business. When a payment is to be made about which there may be doubt, the doubt rarely applies to more than a small portion of the amount. The payment can therefore be made safely enough, subject to the deduction of the doubtful portion, and the public thus saved inconvenience and delay, with no worse a result than the precaution becoming one of such errors as have made up Mr. FitzGerald's list of 320. An audit preceding payment, or administration, gives Mr. FitzGerald the power to paralyze business, and, if he puts his own interpretation upon the law, in defiance even of the Solicitor-General, and makes law defeat the principal object of all laws, everything must stand still.

I have, however, seen kept in the Audit Office one important book so full of errors, and in such regular confusion, as to prove a periodical puzzle, amusing to those who have the time to unravel it; while the colonial balance-sheets, which Mr. FitzGerald has himself prepared, independently of