

here. Sir, it would hardly be going too far for me to say that on the right or the wrong handling of the questions incidentally involved in this motion, depends, I will not say the possibility, but I will say the utility, of parliamentary government, in Canada. The question really amounts to this: Is this House of Commons, from this time forth, to be considered as a place of assembly where the representatives of the people are to meet and discuss matters affecting the welfare of the community, or is it to become, from this time out, a sort of happy hunting-ground for needy and unscrupulous adventurers? Is the House of Commons to be known henceforward as a body composed of trustees of the people, bound to act for the benefit of the people, or are the members of the House of Commons from henceforth to get full license to use their position and influence in this House for the purpose of their own private gain and advantage? These, Sir, are some among the questions which appear to me to be involved in the discussion of the motion now on hand. My opinions on this and on certain kindred questions are well known. Both in this House, on many occasions, on the hustings, before my own constituents, and in published speeches of mine, I have not infrequently called attention to the extent to which, as it appeared to me, the public service was being demoralised, and in danger of being further demoralised under the twofold influence of a corrupt fiscal system and a corrupt Administration. Sir, it seems that things have been going from bad to worse. In a late Parliament it was stated on the floor of this House, and, so far as I can remember, the facts were fairly made out, that out of the majority of 140 very nearly seventy members, or one-half of the whole, had entered into such pecuniary relations with the Government in one form or other, as could not fail most seriously to embarrass their position as free agents and representatives of the people. I have always myself had a very strong prejudice, indeed, in favor of our form of government. I have always regarded what we may call the Cabinet form of government as a great improvement in many ways on the Presidential form of government adopted by our neighbors; but I am bound to say that the events of the last few years have caused me at times to entertain grave doubts indeed as to whether the fathers of the American Republic did not, after all, better understand in some respects the condition of society on this side of the Atlantic, when they saw fit to separate the executive from the legislative function. Still, notwithstanding that, I am of the opinion that there is a better mode than they have adopted, but I am free to admit that, if no remedy can be found for the state of things to which I have alluded, we might do well to consider whether, under the circumstances, it was not necessary for us to adopt somewhat similar precautions. Sir, I think that the facts disclosed in the case of the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Rykert) show that it is a very bad case. But I am not at all disposed to say that the hon. member for Lincoln is, by any means, the only sinner in this matter; I am not at all disposed to say that that hon. member is the only man who has transgressed all those wholesome maxims and principles on which the vitality and usefulness of parliamentary government depend. More than that: I have said elsewhere, and I repeat here, that I hold a considerable

section of the people of Canada, a considerable number of the constituencies of Canada, are far from blameless in this matter. I have always believed that to a very great extent members of Parliament were likely to be as honest as their constituents required them to be; and there was one fact, perhaps one only, which the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Rykert) stated in his defence, recorded on the Journals of this House, with which I am disposed to agree: that is, the statement which he made in which he implied, at any rate, that he came here with the full knowledge and consent of his constituents, who were acquainted with all the material facts now stated before they sent him here. And he implied, and I think he implied correctly, that if he was wrong, his disgrace was their disgrace. If he had committed a crime, his constituents were accomplices in it. I am not disposed to dispute that statement. It is well, and it is right it should be understood, that if constituents condone these things, they have only themselves to thank if the members of Parliament fall far below the standard set by our English forefathers for their members of Parliament. Every practical man knows perfectly well that, in most cases of the kind which are now coming before us, the facts are apt, as a rule, to be exceedingly well covered. It is probable that in not one case in ten, or one case in fifty, can we obtain full and complete evidence detailed, as it is here, of all the ways and modes in which members of Parliament can exercise their influence for their own personal gain. Sir, it is very hard indeed, and it will always be very hard for a minority, no matter how resolute and determined, to uncover these things and obtain the requisite evidence, and still harder for them to punish. In fact, Mr. Speaker, unless the thieves fall out, unless there is a quarrel over the division of the plunder, unless these things come before a court of law and are there subjected to the ruthless cross-examination of counsel on both sides, it is the rarest thing in the world to obtain absolute and complete proof such as we have now recorded on our Votes and Proceedings. Here such an accident has occurred. Here there was a quarrel over the division of the plunder. As Carlyle puts it, we have had a glimpse of the workings of Satan's invisible world, and we are now able to understand in some degree how that personage, with the aid and assistance of some of his most favored friends, has contrived to bedevil and to pervert the representative institutions of this Canada of ours. Mr. Speaker, this is a matter which the House and the country will do well to consider. I repeat, that where you have disclosed one transaction of this kind, where you obtain against the accused clear proof and evidence of what has happened in a particular case, you may rest assured there are ten times as many cases in which the evidence cannot be brought forward, however strong and well grounded our suspicions may be. This transaction, after all, is only a sort of peak on which the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Rykert) stands self-gibbeted, by his own act, but a peak below which lies a mountain—or, perhaps, I should say a mountain range of undiscovered, but well developed rascality.

Mr. MITCHELL. That is a strong word.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. It is a strong word, and the transaction is one which deserves the strongest terms in the English language I am