

He said: In moving this resolution it will be necessary to remind the House of the circumstances which brought about this visit of the two Ministers to the penitentiary. Hon. gentlemen will recollect that a serious revolt took place in the penitentiary of St. Vincent de Paul on the 24th or 26th of April, 1886. A few days afterwards an inquiry was made in both Houses of Parliament as to what the Government intended to do. In the Commons the Minister of Justice answered in the following words:—

“I have determined, as early as possible after the close of the Session, and after the recovery of the Warden, to make as full an investigation into the affairs of the penitentiary as can possibly be made. I do stand committed, as head of the Department, to having a full and thorough investigation.”

In the Senate, the answer given was in the following words:—

“It is the intention of the Government to order a serious and minute inquiry into the circumstances of the revolt, and into all the troubles which have occurred in the said institution for the four years past. The investigation will embrace an inquiry into the proximate and remote causes of the said revolt and of the said troubles.”

These quotations I take from the official reports of the debates of the two Houses of Parliament. In December following the Minister of Justice, and the Secretary of State, left Ottawa on the 9th of December, and having arrived in Montreal on the morning of the 10th the Minister of Justice sent to my address a telegraphic despatch from there in the following words:—

“I visited penitentiary to-day. Will send letter to your residence as to object of visit. Please rush.

“J. S. D. THOMPSON.”

This was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. At 12.15 p.m. a young gentleman who accompanied the Ministers came to my house with a letter from the Minister of Justice. I read the letter and told the young gentleman that I would write my answer and send it to the Ministers. From the letter of the Minister to me I take the following:—

“MONTREAL, 10th Dec., 1886.

“DEAR SIR,—I intend to-day to make a visit, accompanied by the Secretary of State, to the penitentiary of St. Vincent de Paul, and intend to make such enquiry as may give me information as to the efficiency of the staff and the state of discipline in the institution. \* \* \*

I am, yours truly,

“J. S. D. THOMPSON.

“Hon. Senator BELLEROSE.”

On reading that letter I said to myself, the Minister wishes to do like his Inspector, have another sham investigation, and I will not go. So I wrote my answer in the following words:—

“Whenever you are ready for such an investigation as you promised I will be ready to give a list of the parties whom I wish to be called to give evidence, and will myself be ready to state what I know.”

Having written that answer, I thought it was best to go myself to the penitentiary. It was 12.45 p.m. on the 10th. I met the Minister of Justice in the street of my little town. He shook hands with me, and he told me that he was going to his lunch. I said, “all right,” that I would wait at the penitentiary for him. It was about 1.30 p.m. when the Minister of Justice and the Secretary of State came back to the penitentiary. We had some conversation, and he called for the Warden, and so on, and then told me that he would not take evidence under oath. I said, in that case I would not be a party to such a sham investigation; that it was a repetition of what the Inspector used to do, and, moreover, I thought that the Minister had a right to swear the witnesses, and that I could not, in such a serious matter, assist, unless the investigation was conducted under oath and was to be a searching one, such as had been promised. I wish you to recollect this, because it is not only facts we want, but the intention. I am invited by letter to go to the penitentiary. What for? To accompany the Minister, who is on a visit, to enquire into the discipline of the institution? That was not the promise. The promise was to make a searching investigation into the causes of the revolt. That was the promise, yet the Minister informed me that he was there to make an enquiry into the discipline of the institution; so I told him that as he would not do what he had promised I would have nothing to do with it. It was two o'clock—I beg hon. gentlemen to note the hour. There are about 70 officials employed in the penitentiary. At two o'clock the Ministers began examining these officials, and at about four o'clock both of the Ministers left for Montreal. Yesterday we were told that the enquiry occupied the whole of the first day. I do not blame the leader of the House for making an incorrect statement, because he does not know what occurred; but I do blame the Ministers who misinformed him. The next day both