

may be settled by your vote of to-night but it will not be settled right and nothing is ever settled until it is settled right. I would say in conclusion that in the great journal of things happening under the sun we, the people of this Dominion, find our account running under date of the 20th century of the Christian era. We find ourselves in peaceful possession of the fairest portion of the earth as regards extent of territory, fertility of soil and salubrity of climate. We find ourselves under the Government of a system of political institutions conducting more essentially to the ends of civil and religious liberty than any of which the history of former times tells us. We are the legal inheritors of these fundamental blessings. We toiled not in the acquirement or establishment of them; they are a legacy bequeathed to us by a once hardy, brave and patriotic but now lamented and departed race of ancestors. Theirs was the task (and nobly they performed it) to possess themselves, and through themselves, us of this goodly land and to uprear upon its hills and in its valleys a political edifice of liberty and equal rights. It is ours only to transmit these. The former unprofaned by the foot of an invader, the latter undecayed by the lapse of time and untorn by usurpation to the latest generation that fate shall permit the world to know. This task, gratitude to our fathers, justice to ourselves, duty to posterity and love for our species in general all imperatively require us faithfully to perform. How then shall we perform it? Shall it be by loosening our hold upon our constitutional and parliamentary rights? I think that that would be the suicidal course for free Canadians to adopt to-day and I would hope that this resolution could be defeated here and now and defeated for all time.

Mr. E. M. MACDONALD (Pictou): Mr. Speaker, the consideration of what should be the rules of this House must always be one of the most important questions that can engage the attention of this House. These rules are usually changed only at long intervals and so the effect of those changes, the influence they may have on the rights of members of the House and upon the rights of the people of this country, becomes a matter of the greatest possible moment. There is no matter which is so little understood by the public of this country and might I say also by members of this House as the effect of the rules of Parliament. I make that statement after having had some sixteen years experience of legislative and parliamentary life and after having seen during that period very many political changes, very many discussions of what the effect of rules is and what new rules ought to be. Neither in legislature nor in Parliament were there very

Mr. EMMERSON.

many men who day in and day out had before them the purport, effect and importance of the rules of Parliament as they were at that time, as they had been or as they might be in future. By this resolution hon. gentlemen opposite propose to take away rights and privileges which have existed in this House for the representatives of the people and for the people themselves for a very long period of time. I can only say that it may be that my hon. friends, like a great many people in this country, have enjoyed for such a long period in Canada the advantages of free government and of free institutions that they have come to regard them as being so much a certainty that there is no particular reason to inquire where they came from or of thinking where they are likely to go. But I especially envied the Minister of Finance, though he has been only a year and a few months in this House, the certain and jaunty manner in which he approached the consideration of these rules, as to what they were, how they should be changed, and what the effect of the changes would be. I say that he was wholly the object of envy and of admiration because in looking around I saw hon. gentlemen who had much longer experience than I have had, and I knew that they, with becoming modesty, would have hesitated about approaching the consideration of the question with that absolute certainty of result which seemed to animate my hon. friend the Minister of Finance. When he dropped into quotations, I could not help recalling a little scripture which I remember hearing long ago. 'Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself as he that putteth it off.' My hon. friend at the inception of his political career enters the lists and the discussion which we have been having on the rules and gave his opinion with absolute certainty as to its effect. I hope that after years of experience in this Parliament he will profit more than from reading books on the question. Now, these rules are very important, because they involve the rights of hon. members in this House. These rights have not been fixed by the majority of the day. They have been fixed by the usages of the Imperial Parliament and by the wisdom and judgment of men of moderation on both sides of politics who have had to do with the framing of the rules from 1867 to the present day. What are the rights and the purposes of Parliament? The purpose of Parliament is not merely to pass legislation at the will of the majority of the day. The purpose of Parliament is very much greater and wider than the passing of legislation which may happen to emanate from time to time from the treasury benches. The purposes of Parliament have been laid down by very high auth-