

**Mr. BLAKE.** Read your proof.

**Mr. PLATT.** The proof that I shall be most happy to read if I have the privilege of bringing this officer before a committee, will be found to be this: The inspector of the Post Office Department writes as follows:—

"The postmaster at Ottawa reports that registered parcel for Clerk of the Crown in Chancery from Picton, reached his office on the night of the 10th," &c.

I have a letter from the postmaster at Picton saying:

"Mr. S. Alcorn mailed a package after all mails were despatched on the 9th of March, and it went forward on the morning of the 10th March by Deseronto, billed on the Grand Trunk mail clerk going east," &c.

If anything more be needed I can read to you a letter from the returning officer stating that he showed me the Clerk of the Crown's acknowledgment of the receipt of the return. I have not that acknowledgment in my possession, but it can be had for the committee's information if necessary. When it was read to me I took this memorandum. He only read a short distance, and I said that was satisfactory, it was all I wished to know. And here is the memorandum I made:

"OTTAWA, 11th March, 1887.

"Sir,—I beg to acknowledge receipt of yours of the 9th instant, enclosing return," &c.

Now, Sir, I do not think that with such evidence before the House, we will be justified in simply asking for a letter from that officer. So far as I am concerned I believe him now to lie under the double charge of having purposely, as I believe, delayed the returns of many members, and in my case he gives the 14th as the date of the receipt, when he received it on the 11th. Why? Because that would pass it over until the next *Gazette*. If he received it on the evening of the 10th, or on the 11th, I should have been gazetted on the 12th. Five that were received on the 11th must have gone to the printing office on the 11th, and were gazetted on the 12th. We know that my return was received at this office on the evening of the 10th and was not gazetted on the 12th, and on the 12th of April when I left for the capital I did not know that I was gazetted. I ask if that is done in a spirit of fair play. If this officer is the only officer at fault, I want him punished. I want some recognition of the fact that we are living in a country where we expect British fair play. There are very many other gross instances of unfairness which can be proved before this House, but, as I said before, my own case appears to be of all the worst. Why, Sir, we find from the 12th of March, the date upon which I should have been gazetted, they had to the 9th of April, twenty-seven days; from the 22nd of February to the date of my being gazetted, was forty-seven days; and from the 22nd February, the date of the election, until the petition was filed against me, there were just seventy-five days. Now, I think, there are very many hon. gentlemen holding seats in this House who, after the excitement of filing petitions had arisen, and as each party was desirous of getting as many in chancery, so to speak, as possible, if their thirty days had not elapsed, would have been, a great many of them, in the same boat as myself, so far as election petitions are concerned. But, Sir, the result of this becoming known, I trust, will be to arouse a spirit and a feeling in the country in favor of fair play. So far as my own individual case is concerned, and this particular officer's conduct, I do not very much regret it, but I think for the credit of the country, and for the credit of this Parliament, it is very much to be regretted.

**Mr. BURDETT.** I believe I have also been singled out as a victim of this species of political rascality. I desire to enquire as to the conduct of the Clerk of Crown in Chancery. Either he or the mail service have been guilty of neglect in my case, and the result of that neglect is that I have to fight, and go to the trouble and expense of defending an election protest. I desire to say that the returning officer

**Mr. PLATT.**

in my own district was and is an honest man; he did his duty like an honest man, but I limit that declaration to the returning officer personally. I have his letter in which he stated that my return was sent forward to Ottawa on the 8th of March. Now, in due course of mail, it would reach here on the morning of the 9th, and I am quite satisfied that it did reach here on the morning of the 9th. I desire an investigation, and I challenge proof upon that fact, and I believe I will be able to prove, if the receipts in the post office are not besmeared with ink, so that we cannot see when these men who get the returns, signed the receipts therefor, it will be found that my return reached here on the morning of the 9th. Yet the Clerk of the Crown states in that paper which he brings down here as a return, and which, probably, is about as truthful as any letter that he may sign—that they did not reach here until the 12th, so that my return was not gazetted until the 19th. Now, I say that is a state of affairs that no hon. member, be he Grit or Tory, will tolerate, and if it is tolerated by members of this House, it will not be tolerated by the people of this country. Now, the result of it is this: there was no trouble found in gazetting the member for West Hastings (Mr. Robertson)—no trouble found in his case whatever; and it was well known that if his election was protested, he, in all probability, would run the same, if not greater, risk of being unseated than myself. If the evidence could be at all relied upon we were certain to unseat the member for West Hastings, and he and his friends were desirous that no protest should be put in against him. But his time for a protest expired much sooner than mine, much sooner than it would otherwise have expired but for this gazetting business; and therefore he and some of his friends said to me that if no protest was put in against him, they would use their best endeavors to prevent a protest against me. I desire to say that I acquit the member for West Hastings (Mr. Robertson) and his friends of any dishonorable action; I believe they honestly wished to carry out what they promised, and if that hon. member had had his way, and if the leading men of the Conservative party in Belleville had had their wishes carried out, there would have been no protest entered against me. But the point is here: I firmly believe that if my return had been gazetted when it should have been done, no protest would have been lodged, because a protest was lodged on the afternoon of the last day. Had that extra week not been given, no protest, I say, would have been lodged, because it is evident from what I can learn that the decision to file a protest was not reached until the Saturday previous to the Monday on which it was filed. This is not only unfair but it is unmanly for an officer of this Government and of the Crown to delay returns in order to give one party an advantage over the other. If the Conservative party can beat us on a fair and open field let them do so; but this striking below the belt, this striking a man when he is down, is an unmanly and cowardly way of attacking any man either personally or politically.

**Mr. MACDONALD (East Huron).** I have a little grievance which I desire to present to this House in regard to the matter under consideration. When the subject was up for consideration before I said nothing in regard to my case, because I was not then in a position to speak for lack of possessing the necessary information. I have, however, received a communication from the returning officer in my riding, who is a man of respectability and honor, stating that he mailed the return on 9th March; but I find by the return of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery that he did not receive the return until 26th March, seventeen days after the time when the returning officer registered the letter containing it in the post office near where he lives. Feeling that some mistake might have arisen, or