

that, in the face of so large a majority, it was, in his opinion, contrary to constitutional practice to advise Her Majesty to dissolve Parliament. He also went on to state the circumstances under which he thought an Administration would be justified in advising the Crown to dissolve. He expressed his opinion as follows:—

“There are two conditions, as it appears to me, which are necessary in order to make an appeal to the country by a Government whose existence is menaced, a legitimate appeal. The first of them is that there should be an adequate cause of public policy; and the second of them is that there should be a rational prospect of a reversal of the vote of the House of Commons.”

The Government must be menaced—that is his first proposition. Was the Government of Canada menaced here? What measure did the Government propose to the late Parliament which they felt assured they could not carry? Upon what question were they here defeated? The Government were not menaced and there was not a rational prospect of a reversal of the vote of the House of Commons, because there was no question of difference between the House of Commons and the Administration. I say, then, that there is not a particle of ground for the course the Government have taken. There is no constitutional precedent. There was nothing whatever to warrant the Administration in advising His Excellency to dissolve the late Parliament. The law says that Parliament shall last for five years. The law has entrusted to the Administration a great power—a power which, in their hands, is a great trust. They have the power of shortening that period of five years when the necessity arises. What is that necessity? The principles, the practices and the maxims of parliamentary government point out when that necessity arises and when that advice may be constitutionally given. It may be given when the Government are defeated in the House of Commons. It may be given when they find it impossible to get on in the House of Commons. It may be given to obtain from the political Sovereign a mandate to the Upper House when it has stood in the way of necessary legislation. But that was not the condition of the Administration here, and the dissolution of Parliament on their part was a most unwarranted exercise of power. It is not to be supposed that because certain power is vested in the Crown, there is no restraint upon the exercise of that power. Every power possessed by the Crown is to be exercised in a particular way. We know perfectly well under what circumstances the power of disallowance will be employed. We know perfectly well what measures are likely to be reserved for the consideration of the Imperial authorities. The power is not limited in point of law, but it is limited in point of convention, and in this country the conventions are as forcible as the law itself. What does our constitution begin with? It begins by declaring that we have a constitution similar in principle to the constitution of the United Kingdom. If, therefore, there is anything in the constitution of Canada which agrees with the constitution of the United Kingdom, the strength and binding character of the rule is in favour of our constitution, because the preamble gives the force of law to the conventions themselves, and this makes it less excusable to depart from the well-settled principles here than it would in the United Kingdom. Look at the well-settled conventions in regard to the Government

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell).

itself. I find that by law each department has for its head a particular Minister who is appointed by commission under the Great Seal, whose duties are specified by law, and who is sworn to discharge those duties. Yet we know that he is interfered with by his colleagues. We know that the Prime Minister may override his judgment, or he may be interfered with in Council, and his opinions may have to give way to those of his colleagues in office. That is not from the force of any law; but the conventions of the constitution make it so, and those conventions rule. The hon. gentleman himself fills the office of First Minister, but that is an office not under the law. His office is unknown to the law. The hon. gentleman assents to that proposition. Yet he knows that his power is paramount to that of his colleagues. He may dismiss anyone of his colleagues, or he may advise the Crown to do so. If anyone of his colleagues resigns, that does not break up his Government; but if he resigns the Ministry is at an end. According to law each of his colleagues is as much an adviser of the Crown as he is, but the conventions arrange the matter so that his power is superior to theirs. There is no convention or rule by which the Crown can dissolve Parliament under the circumstances which existed under which our dissolution took place. The hon. gentleman said he was appealing to the people for the purpose of ascertaining their opinions, upon what? I listened to his speech and I could not ascertain. I listened to the observations addressed to the House by the Minister of Finance, and he did not tell us. It was not for the purpose of condemning our policy, for he did not know what it was, and, if he did, that would be irrelevant to the issue. It was not to sanction the negotiation of a scheme between the United States and this country, because we do not know to this hour what that scheme is, or what negotiations have taken place. But he says that this House is summoned to decide on the policy, the papers in reference to which are to be submitted a few days hence. The hon. gentleman assents to that statement. But that policy and the papers were as much concealed from the country as from us. Then what did the elections take place for? The hon. gentleman has always held it to be a most unconstitutional proceeding to dissolve Parliament in order to decide upon a question which is in the future. Does he remember what he said in 1874, in regard to Mr. Gladstone's appeal to the country? Does he remember reading and approving an article from the *Spectator* which accused Mr. Gladstone of having proposed a bribe to the country by proposing a change of taxation, and declared that it was improper to ask the public to decide, not in regard to the past but in regard to the future? Does he remember that he did not appeal to the country in regard to our present constitution on the ground that there was then a Parliament that had no mandate from the people? Does he remember that the question of the Union of the Provinces was never submitted to the people in any shape? It is true that on that question many eminent English statesmen have differed from the ground taken by the hon. gentleman. It was on different ground that important changes in the constitution ought not to be made without popular sanction, that Mr. Disraeli justified the dissolution of Parliament on the question of the Separation of Church and