

members of the government in retiring from the Cabinet, unless there was something in the character or reputation of its head which would warrant their leaving and refusing in future to associate with him. Whether such a state of things exists I leave to the judgment, not only of this House, but of the country in which I have lived for the last sixty-two years. These gentlemen in their statement make one important admission which I shall read, because I am desirous of having it placed upon the records of the Senate, though some portions of it reflect upon myself—not upon my moral character, not upon my political character, for I defy any man whether he be a political opponent or a political friend, from one end of the Dominion to the other, though I had served my constituency for twenty-five consecutive years, during seventeen and a quarter of which I have been at the head of some of the most important departments in the state—to put his finger upon a single act of either political or moral dishonesty. It may be thought that I feel somewhat warmly upon a question of this kind. You will come naturally, I think, to the conclusion that one who has been so long in public life, and has served under the most brilliant statesmen that have ever graced the Parliament of Canada, and who has remained in the Cabinet for no less than seventeen and a-quarter years while all the rest have either retired or passed away, must have something at least in this old gray head that justifies his retention of a position of that kind, notwithstanding the disparaging remarks of those men who have left the Cabinet over which I preside. It is not my habit in private life, and still less in public life, to boast of my achievements and acquirements. No man in this assembly knows better than I do how ill-fitted I have been for the important positions which have devolved upon me, but I say this, and I desire to say it so that it may be handed down to my children and others, that whatever position in life I have occupied, whether it has been in the Commons of Canada, in the Senate, or in the council of my country until I reached the highest State office so far as political aspirations are concerned, I have never sought, directly or indirectly, from friends or from any one, for any of those positions. When as a young man I was dragged from my business and asked to con-

test a constituency, it was against my own inclination that I became a candidate. I positively refused until forced into it by the party to which I have adhered, I hope with fidelity, throughout my political life. I say that because I am firmly of the conviction—I dare say my friend who sits opposite me will not acquiesce—that the maintenance of the Conservative party in Canada is essential for the prosperity and good of the country. I make that explanation as a reason why I have adhered from boyhood to my early opinions. I know of no party that has for the basis upon which it acts a more firm and fundamental principle than that of adhering strictly to the constitution that guides us. Now, I do not desire to dwell at any great length upon the personal part of this explanation. I have however to state, after a long life in this country, working my way up from the printer's desk to the position which I hold to-day, that I can appeal with satisfaction to the whole country, and more particularly to those with whom I have been associated the most of the time, to say whether I have faithfully fulfilled the duties pertaining to the different positions which I have filled, or whether I have been a failure. I have been successful in every position in life which I have held, having risen to the top wherever I have been placed. Even in the present trying circumstances I hesitate not to say, and to say it boldly—I would not have stated it had not such reasons been given to the House as the cause which induced these gentlemen to leave the Government—that had I had that loyal support which every Premier ought to receive in the arduous duties incident to the governing of a country, such support as was given most loyally to my late chief, Sir John Macdonald, and Sir John Thompson, we would have been just as successful in carrying on the affairs of the Government as my predecessors, though not possessed of their measure of ability or political tact. No one felt his inability more than I did when I was placed at the head of the Government, following such men as the Right Hon. Sir John Macdonald, Sir John Abbott and the Right Hon. Sir John Thompson, whom we all knew and revered, not only individually but for their intellect and their ability. Had not jealousy and a determination to destroy the usefulness of the head of the Government been firmly rooted in the breasts of those with whom I was associat-