

being Reform and one Government; and in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces there were forty-one cases of delay, thirty-eight being Reform and three Conservative. In Ontario, as far as I can make out from the return, there were seventy-four members gazetted in those four weeks, about forty being Conservatives and thirty-four Reformers. Of the forty Conservatives, thirty-nine Tories were gazetted in the first *Gazette* and one in the second *Gazette*. Of the thirty-four Reformers, nine were gazetted in the first *Gazette*, twelve in the second, nine in the third, and four in the fourth *Gazette*. Thus you see that one Conservative was delayed out or forty, and twenty-five Reformers were delayed out of thirty-four. These are the facts as we find them in the statement made by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery himself, in a case where the law required him to take the return sent down to him, and gazette them in the ordinary form in the order in which he received them. I have shown you some seventy cases in which the law was not followed, and I have shown you that almost everyone of these cases affected the Reformers, and that hardly one affected the Conservatives. Therefore, there is an enormous number of instances of apparent breach of duty, and you have to add to that the fact that the breaches of duty affect one side almost exclusively, and affect the other side hardly at all. Surely that is a state of things which demands enquiry. The hon. gentleman says that we ought to get a letter from the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. Does he suppose that we will be satisfied with that letter or with that plea of the Clerk of the Crown, whatever it may be? Of course, if this is referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, the first thing the committee would do would be to ask the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to come there and make his statement, but they would not be satisfied with his statement alone; they would cross-examine him; they would ask him the reason why, and the persons by whose command, connivance, or suggestion this was done; and that is the reason why the hon. gentleman moves his amendment.

Mr. PLATT. I hope that the amendment placed in your hands by the First Minister is not intended to indicate the character of the investigation which is to be had. If it be, and if it is carried out by the consent of this House, I think we may well despair of obtaining at the hands of the Government of the day anything in the shape of fair play. I do not know of any case which has come to my notice during my short parliamentary career which so imperatively demands and richly deserves investigation and action as the case in regard to the conduct of an officer which has been brought under our consideration to-day. I have already in this House, in regard to the returning officer in my riding, relieved him, as far as I knew the facts of the case, from any error in regard to the matter. I have nothing new to state in regard to his conduct in that election. I have been informed, however, and the returns show, that in many other constituencies, the conduct of the returning officers has been just as blameworthy as in my opinion is the conduct of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. and I think that an investigation should be held. We have this gentleman here at our command to a certain extent, and that is a very different thing from the returning officers. I know that in my constituency our friends are well able to take care of the returning officer; and, if any palpable unfairness were shown by him, I think they would be able to take a shorter means of inflicting condign punishment than by bringing him to the Bar of the House. As far as the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery is concerned, he is an officer of this House, and is here. I suppose he is in the service of the Government, and that they can dismiss him or retain him in his office. If anything can be done by a public officer which deserves the immediate attention of

the Government in dismissing or retaining him, I think the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery has shown clearly that he should be dismissed, and if the motion had been so framed I should have been better pleased with it. It has been said that his excuse was that the returning officers were at fault, and we know that he informed many of those who called on him for information that this was the case. Then he brought down a return to this House showing that in only two cases had he to call on the returning officer. He stated to the press that he had, in several cases, to write to these returning officers in order to get returns. Other cases are given by him in his statement which I believe will fall to the ground when they are investigated. We are asked to request the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to direct a letter to the Clerk of the House, giving explanations in regard to this matter. I have a letter from the Clerk of Crown in Chancery which I do not consider very satisfactory, and I do not believe that any other letters he may write will be very satisfactory. I will give the House the benefit of that which I have, and I think the House can judge from that whether we are likely to have a satisfactory explanation from the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. After my election I waited very patiently until the 3rd April, and not having been gazetted at that date, I addressed a few lines to the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to ask the reasons for delay. In reply he wrote me as follows:—

“OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE CROWN IN CHANCERY,

“OTTAWA, 5th April, 1887.

“DEAR SIR,—In reply to yours of yesterday, I beg to state that the papers in Prince Edward, with those in other constituencies, had to be examined before I could gazette them, which, of course, takes considerable time, as they are voluminous. Prince Edward, with some others, will be gazetted on Saturday next.

“R. POPE,

“Clerk of Crown in Chancery.”

Well, Sir, I do not know that can be held as being very satisfactory, I do not know how these papers are very voluminous. If he had opened that package and taken out the writ, he would have found endorsed on the back of it these words:

“I hereby certify that the member elected for the electoral district of Prince Edward, in pursuance of the within writ, as having received the majority of votes, lawfully given, was John Milton Platt, of the town of Picton, in the county of Prince Edward, physician.

“GEORGE ALCORN,

“Returning Officer.”

This was the voluminous document which he said took several weeks to examine and report upon. I have further to say in regard to the assertion that a delay, such as occurred in my own particular case, was occasioned by dereliction of duty on the part of returning officers. I have here from the returning officer these words:

“I have had no communication with the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery since the acknowledgment of receipt of the return, which receipt I showed you,” &c.

This was written on the 26th April. I now come to another part of the charge which I have to make against that gentleman. I said that not only has he, by delaying the gazetting, violated the law and endeavored to deprive certain members of this House of the chance of receiving fair play as compared with those on the opposite side, but, in excusing himself, he says that the returns are irregular, that these registered packages were not received here until several days after they were mailed. I informed the House on a previous occasion that I was in possession of proof of the fact that a registered package from my town was mailed on the 9th. I have since Sir, received from the post office authorities proof that it was mailed on the 9th, that it was despatched on the morning of the 10th, that it was received here on the evening of the 10th, and yet the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery brings down to this House a statement that he received it on the 14th.