

Mr. LAURIER. While I have no fault to find with the manner in which the mover and seconder of the Address have presented their views to the House, whilst, on the contrary, it is a pleasure for me to testify that they have discharged their duty with great credit to themselves, with great satisfaction, I am sure, to their friends, and with perfect acceptance to their opponents, still I cannot but express my astonishment that having undertaken to review the political situation, such as it exists to-day, they should have entirely failed to notice in any way whatever the late, the inconvenient, the unfortunate season at which Parliament has been called for the despatch of business, that they should have failed altogether to offer, I will not say a word of criticism, which perhaps it would be impossible to expect from hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House, but I will simply say a word of remonstrance such as might perhaps have been expected that they might have offered against the breach of duty of which the Government stand guilty towards the House and the people. Sir, what is to-day? To-day is the nineteenth day of April, and the simple mention of this date means this, that we have now reached a period at which, if Parliament had been called at the proper time, the well-understood time, the time fixed and determined by long usage of Parliament, by the unwritten law of Parliament, the members of the House, who, as a rule, are not millionaires, who are, as a rule, engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, who, as a rule, now all depend on their daily labour, might look to an early prorogation and might expect to return to their business occupations at the opening of the business season. Why, the first paragraph of this Speech which is placed in the hands of His Excellency is strange almost to ludicrousness. It reads :

It is with much satisfaction that I again have recourse to your advice and assistance in the administration of the affairs of the Dominion.

Why, Sir, if it was so much satisfaction to the advisers of His Excellency to have the advice of the faithful Commons and Senate of Canada, it was within their power to have had it long ago. Why did they not get it? I submit this with all respect, that instead of having framed this mocking paragraph, the first thing the advisers of His Excellency should have done was to offer a statement of some kind to explain, to justify and to excuse this unpardonable dereliction of duty on the part of the advisers of His Excellency. But, perhaps, and I rather think it was so, it was altogether too much to expect that hon. gentlemen would make such a statement. What reason could they urge, what explanation could they give, what excuse could they offer? Why, Sir, it is well known, it is a matter of public notoriety, that if Parliament was not called at the proper season, at the usual

season, at the season at which it should have been called, and at the date often promised, it was not from any consideration for the public weal, it was not from any motive which could stand the light of day, but it was simply because it was altogether too much to expect from the hon. gentlemen who now adorn the Treasury benches that they would arrive at an opinion of their own so long as they could put off the day. It is a matter of public notoriety that during the whole winter the Cabinet has been divided into two—what shall I say, two factions, two rival factions, quarrelling, squabbling, fighting, one in favour of holding a session and the other in favour of dissolution, both afraid to meet Parliament or to meet the people. This is the situation. But at last when the day came that they had to make up their minds to do something, when they had to face the issue and have a mind of their own, when they could no longer postpone and put off and delay, when they had to take some action, the faction in favour of dissolution, which had almost triumphed, was upset, and the Government decided in favour of holding a session. I must pay this compliment to them, that from their own point of view, they were wise in their generation. It was true that during a session there might be some very bitter pills to swallow, it was true that during a session the Finance Minister would have to face that spectre, that monster, an ugly ill-visaged deficit, that spectre which indeed we had seen last year lurking in the distance, but which the hon. gentleman had promised to ward off by economy and entrenchment, but at all events, my hon. friend could depend upon it that the majority would be equal to the occasion, that they would swallow the pills, bitter as they were, and even finding a deficit in their minds, a new friend to them, as the hon. member for Simcoe (Mr. Bennett) said, they would think that this new friend when seen among themselves, was not so ugly, not so ill-visaged as it was seen on the other side, and even had some redeeming features, whereas if they had dissolved the House and gone to the country, their majority would have disappeared, would have vanished, would have melted away as snow under the rays of an April sun. The wisdom of their course was fully vindicated on the 17th April, just two days ago. There were four elections on that day. As to one I shall not speak, because the hon. member for East Simcoe (Mr. Bennet) said a moment ago that the Liberal party offered no fight in Haldimand, it was a little family quarrel which they agreed to settle among themselves. But in the other three constituencies I claim a victory for the Liberal party. I claim a Liberal victory in Verchères, although there is not much to be proud of there because it is an old rouge county; but I also claim a Liberal victory in Quebec West, an old Conservative constituency. My hon. friend