

and our action, but he found fault with us for two particular circumstances. He found fault with us because, as he said, we were not prompt enough in acting—we were too slow; and he found fault with us because we had not done enough—we should have done more. Let me now examine the criticisms of my hon. friend. As to the first, my hon. friend says that we have been very slow in acting—that we did right in the end, but that it took us a long time to do our duty. Sir, we were slow to move—this is the charge which my hon. friend brings against us. I do not see that any man can properly find fault with us for having reflected and weighed before we came to a conclusion. It was due to the country at large, whose interests were entrusted to our hands, that we should not move hastily, but only after due consideration. Simply by showing the facts as they are, it will be easy for me. I am boastful enough to say, to show that there is absolutely nothing in the charge of the hon. gentleman. I take the essence of the charge as he laid it before the House, and what was it? The charge which the hon. gentleman brought against us was that we had not moved until public opinion had spoken its will in no uncertain tones. Did the hon. gentleman expect that we should do anything else? Will the hon. gentleman tell us, when we had no parliamentary appropriation, that it would have been in order or permissible for us constitutionally to take money from the public treasury and lead the country into military expenditure unless we had behind us the strong verdict of public opinion. But Sir, that is the contention of my hon. friend, and he only shows how incongruous are his ideas of responsible government; this is a responsible government. This is a constitutionally governed country; this is a government of the people for the people. We have no power here but the power which is vested in us by the people. We have no authority but the authority which is vested in us by the people. We have no mission but the mission confided to us by the people. And the hon. gentleman knows very well that there is only one way, under constitutional government, by which the people can speak, and that is by the voice of their representatives in parliament assembled. There is this difference between the Australian colonies and the Canadian parliament, that in the month of September and October, when the war broke out, the Australian colonies had their legislatures in session and could act immediately. But the parliament of Canada was not in session. It had been in session a few months before, and had made no appropriation for the event of war, although at the time a war was contemplated and known to be possible. There is this to be remembered, that the unfortunate condition of things which existed in South Africa was

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not unknown in this country. It had been known for a great many years. It had reached the acute stage, and we knew it, and it engaged the attention of this House. During last session parliament took the matter under consideration and voted a resolution of sympathy for the Outlanders and expressed the hope that their grievances would be remedied, but parliament never made an appropriation for the carrying on the war, supposing a war were to take place. The thing was pending, it was mentioned across the floor, but no appropriation was ever made; and I repeat that unless we had a strong mandate behind us of public opinion, it would have been criminal in us to plunge our hands into the public treasury, however worthy the motive might have been.

When the conduct of the people of the Transvaal made it clear that they were seeking war, and when the ultimatum of President Kruger aroused a storm of indignation all over British-speaking countries, from that moment not one hour was lost, and in three weeks from that day our volunteers were on the ocean. Sir, the hon. gentleman has held it a crime in us that before taking such an important departure in our colonial history, or, as I should say, in our national history, we should have thought and reflected and pondered as to what was to be done. But the reptile press of this country which supports hon. gentlemen opposite, that reptile press which has done so much reptile work in this connection, endeavoured to sow the seeds of discord, endeavoured to impugn our motives and attributed our delay to motives which are too low to be mentioned here. I tell the hon. gentleman that one of the things which made us ponder and reflect as to what should be our course in this matter is the very opinions held by himself, and more than once, as to the advisability of the colonies taking part in a war of the motherland. He repeated this afternoon the words I spoke in England two years ago, when I said that Canada was a nation perfectly independent, that the lien of the empire over us did not weigh the weight of one feather, but that we were just as independent to-day, under the suzerainty of England, as we could be if absolutely independent. And I said likewise that if England at any time were engaged in struggle for life and death, the moment the bugle was sounded or the fire was lit on the hills, the colonies would rush to the aid of the mother country. When I said this, I did not speak only my own mind or the mind of my hon. friend, but the mind of every Canadian. There are no two opinions upon that point. But while every Canadian admits that he would be ready to contribute our treasure and our blood, and the resources of Canada at the disposal of this country, for the rescue of England,