

In the division upon this second amendment the Government was defeated by a majority of one (37-36.) A tie was claimed on the side of the Government, on the ground that the Speaker was a Ministerialist. If the Speaker's constituency was Ministerial, the Ministerial party was entitled to the benefit of that fact. But no one can reckon the Speaker's vote. He leaves not only party connection but personal opinion behind him when he ascends the chair. Even when called upon to give his casting vote, he gives it not in the interest of his party or of his own opinions, but in the interest of legislation. If the measure is in its final stage he votes against it, that it may not pass without a clear majority; if it is not in its final stage he votes for it, in order that it may not be withdrawn from further consideration. Such at least was the view expressed in the writer's hearing by a Speaker of the British House of Commons, who mentioned at the same time that Mr. Abbot being called upon to give his casting vote upon Mr. Whitbread's motion of censure against Lord Melville, and being a man of nervous temperament, asked the leave of the House to retire for the purpose of considering his course, and after having been absent for some time returned and voted wrong.

Tie or no tie, it would seem that the Ministers ought now to have resigned. They had manifestly lost the control of the House, and with it the chance of obtaining an adjournment till the re-elections. There had been unequivocal symptoms among their supporters of failing confidence and wavering allegiance. It was manifest that in no subsequent division were they likely to command so large a following or to have the opportunity of retiring with so good a grace and so fair a prospect of retrieving their fortunes in case the new elections should result in their favour. If a constitutional Government has ever retained office after a direct vote of no-confidence or anything equivalent to one, it has been because

the Ministers were avowedly about to appeal to the country against the decision of the House. Such was the case with the first Government of Mr. Pitt during its memorable retention of office in face of an adverse majority in the House of Commons; such was the case with the Government of Lord Palmerston when censured by Parliament on the question of the China war. A dissolution was threatened by a reputed organ of the Government; but that idea cannot have been seriously entertained. The prerogative of dissolution is questionable at best, since it enables a Minister to hold over all the members of the House the penalty of pecuniary loss and personal annoyance. But to prevent it from becoming a prerogative of tyranny or anarchy it must be limited by the rules which the experience of British statesmen has practically imposed, and which would have clearly forbidden the Ministers of Ontario to appeal by dissolution to the country against a Parliament recently elected under their own auspices, at a time of their own choosing and with all the influence of Government on their side.

Instead of resigning however, the Ministers brought down in answer to the Address a message from the Lieutenant-Governor ignoring the general expression of no-confidence and stating in regard to the Railway Fund, which was assumed to be the sole subject of complaint, that the Government had done nothing except in accordance with the Act, which the House was at liberty, if it thought fit, to repeal. This was in itself true, pertinent, and in fact a complete answer to the paragraph in the Address. But it came too late. The general question of confidence had been debated on both sides. The doom of the Ministry was sealed.

The Opposition at once moved a string of resolutions condemning the remaining Ministers for continuing to hold office against the expressed opinion of the House and concluding with a threat of stopping the supplies. The combination by which