

embrace the dead issues of bygone decades. The people desire principles, aims, measures, issues that will live over night—a constitutional structure capable of withstanding the ravages of time; one that future generations may point to with pride and say: That edifice was erected by skilled mechanics, it was the creation of master workmen; the storms and passions and prejudices of centuries have beaten about it, yet it stands to-day as grand, as massive, as impregnable, as when first completed.

Mr. BLAKE. I trust the hon. gentleman who has just sat down will not impute any desire on my part to depreciate the varied and versatile talents of which he has just given us an illustration, if I do not devote any considerable portion of the time that I shall feel called on to trespass on the House, to a discussion of his speech. It was indeed a production which, if it were to be followed and discussed, would lead us tolerably far afield from the question we are now called upon to debate; and there is nothing I more admire than the apparent fervor and freshness and zeal with which the hon. gentleman in his peroration, denounced the propriety of dealing with dead issues, after he had commenced his speech by laying before us an *olla podrida* not very savoury of ancient fancies and fictions, rather than facts, which he proposed should be set before us to prevent us from dealing with the very serious issue which is really before us. I have admired his skill and talent in several capacities. I have admired his skill in the making of printing contracts; I have admired his powers in the acquisition of railway subsidies, and I am to-day called on to admire his attainments in the profession of law and in the profession of medicine, as well as in that process of the collection of odds and ends of dead issues, which he began by telling us about, though he ended by denouncing their being raised. Now, Sir, the question before us belongs to that part of the administration of justice for which the Executive is responsible to Parliament. It is, in its nature, out of the ordinary scope of our enquiries. But I am glad to know that the Government has frankly recognised the proposition which I ventured a few weeks ago to suggest in public—that this particular case comes fittingly within the scope of our enquiry; that it is a proper thing, under the circumstances which have occurred and in the condition of the question, that it should be brought into Parliament, and should be here debated and decided. There is, therefore, on this occasion no necessity to engage in the consideration of what are the limitations under which we may properly intervene in Parliament with this portion of the administration of justice, because both sides of the House appear to agree that this particular case does not fall within any rule which should prevent our interference, but rather that its nature is such as imperatively demands our interference; and, for my part, I should have thought it a humiliation to the Parliament of Canada if—in the circumstances which preceded, which attended, and which have followed the event round which the interest of this debate centres—it should have been argued by any responsible statesman that it was in this Chamber, and in this Chamber only, that there should not be free discussion, and a decision after that discussion, upon the conduct of the Administration. But while this is the case, and while I for my part do not desire to complicate the particular issue which is raised with any other issue not necessary to be considered in order to its determination, I am not equally able to compliment the Administration upon the mode in which they—because I drop disguises, and say they—have brought this question forward, and have insisted that it shall be debated. I entirely agree that, while the case is one for our consideration, the discussion is of a delicate character, dealing as it does with the administration of justice. It is a case in which I believe we ought absolutely

to eschew all spirit of partisanship, in which we ought, as far as possible, to eliminate from our minds all spirit even of party, and which we ought to approach as nearly as we may with the calmness, the dignity, and the impartiality of the judge. This is always a difficult task for a political body, and therefore a task rarely to be attempted—to be attempted only under that pressure of necessity which rests upon us to-day. But it is a task peculiarly difficult on the present occasion, because of those questions of race and creed which have been drawn into the discussion; because of the old offence, which has been made, rightly or wrongly, a part of the question under consideration; and because also of the question of responsibility of the Government itself in connection with the outbreak which gave rise to the trial which resulted in the sentence which the Government ordered to be executed. But, Sir, though I quite recognise the special difficulties which surround us in approaching this our task in the spirit in which it ought to be approached, I conceive that the existence of those difficulties only makes the adoption of that spirit the more imperative, and that our duty is, so far as the interests of truth and justice will allow, to say no word that may irritate, and as far as possible to take a course which may heal old sores—and new sores too. I agree in the observation which was thrown out from the opposite side of the House the other day as to the general tone and temper of the debate so far; and I hailed with extreme pleasure the courteous and kindly compliments which were paid to my hon. friend beside me (Mr. Laurier), by two of the Ministers, on his speech of the other evening. It is to my mind the crowning proof of French domination. My hon. friend, not contented with having for this long time, in his own tongue borne away the palm of parliamentary eloquence, has invaded ours; and in that field has pronounced a speech, which, in my humble judgment, merits this compliment, because it is the truth, that it was the finest parliamentary speech ever pronounced in the Parliament of Canada since Confederation. That speech has been complained of a little because it differed from the tone, it was said, of former speeches. Some things have been said upon it to which I may ask your permission to allude at a later date. Now, Sir, the hon. member for Ottawa (Mr. Mackintosh), announcing in varied tones and at different intervals, the attitude of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House with reference to this question, a little mistook it, and, I think, without any justifiable cause for such mistake. I have the honor to occupy, however unworthily, the position of leader of the Liberal party; and with a full sense of the responsibility attaching to that position, I took, at the earliest practicable moment after my return to the country, the opportunity of declaring publicly what I conceived ought to be and was the attitude of that party towards this question. I have since enforced by argument on all occasions the view that that was our true attitude; and I repeat to-day, in the presence of this Parliament, the declaration I then made, that upon this subject there has not been, nor is there intended to be, the slightest association of party in our ranks—that of set purpose, and in the belief that we shall so best discharge our duty to our country, we have agreed that each one of us shall, after listening to the arguments and coming to such conclusion as we can, vote as he conceives, entirely irrespective of all party alliances, the interests of his country demand.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. BLAKE. Hon. gentlemen opposite cheer derisively. I understand them perfectly; they cannot conceive of such an act. It is incredible to them that public men should so act, and I do not feel moved at all by their cheers, knowing as I do from eighteen years' experience, their manner of conducting business. But what I say is true, for all that; and so, upon this occasion, I must speak, not at all in my