

down, and on the very motion asking for the papers, that some great wrong has been committed and that some one is bound to suffer censure. Would it not be better to wait until the papers are brought down before discussing the question whether wrong has been done at all? I do not believe, when we come to discuss the question as to the conduct of returning officers during the last election, that hon. gentlemen on this side will have any reason to regret the discussion. Take one case, and that is simply one of a number. Take the case of Kingston, where, it is said, the returning and the deputy returning officers were friends of the First Minister, who was a candidate, and what do we find. The judge who, if he had any politics, is not friendly to the Government, and we have no right to assume he has any politics at all, when he came to review the action of the returning officer found that the difference in the number of votes which ought to have been counted and the number which was counted, operated to the advantage of the First Minister. Twelve was the majority returned by the returning officer, this partisan and corrupt man who had been put in that position for the purpose of electing the Conservative candidate; yet when the judge went over the ballots he found the numbers should have been seventeen. I believe when the time comes to discuss the whole question or the election and all the incidents connected with it, it will not be hon. gentlemen on this side who will have any reason to regret that discussion.

Mr. WILSON (Argenteuil). I am grateful to the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) that he has given permission to the junior members of this House to test the acoustic properties of this Chamber, and at the same time air their eloquence. I had hoped to be spared my first speech until a better occasion offered than the present. I had hoped that something would be before the House more important than the motion of the hon. member for Bothwell, on which I might exercise my oratory. But it must fall to the lot of every hon. gentleman, who represents a constituency in this House, at some time to have to speak for the constituency he represents. If he be a true man, he is attached to one party or the other, and when he finds his party maligned on any occasion, he is bound to stand up for it. I propose to do this in my humble way. I propose to show to this House that if the Government agent acted in my constituency, as these agents are said by hon. gentlemen opposite to have acted in other constituencies, the results in mine might have been very different. I may be allowed to say that in representing the county of Argenteuil, I represent not only the Conservatives but the Reformers as well. I am afraid many hon. gentlemen opposite are guilty of forgetting the fact that they are representatives of the Conservative party as well as the Reform party of their constituencies, and that in their malignment of Conservative partisanship on the part of the returning officers of their electoral districts, they are equally maligning the people they are sent here to represent. The county of Argenteuil has been represented for the last thirty years, with the exception of an interregnum of four years, by a Conservative in this House, the Hon. Mr. Abbott. On each occasion that electoral district returned a member to the House of Commons by a very small majority, and if any effort had been put forth by the Government to prevent the return of a Grit—I use the word advisedly, for the leader of the Opposition uses the word “Tory” without sparing this side—if the Government suspected as they had reason to suspect, that the county of Argenteuil was not a safe one, in view of the small majorities it always gave, they might have named a returning officer in the place of the one who exercised that function at the last elections. But the Government would not interfere with the usage of years gone by in that constituency. In it, the returning officer

is a pronounced Grit, and yet he was allowed to retain his position. He was allowed to remain, despite the fact that he was a Grit, and despite the fact also that the district had been in the habit of returning a gentleman to this House by a narrow majority of between 4 and 100 in a total vote of 3,000. Did the Government act fraudulently in this case? No; they left the gentleman there who had been returning officer for years. Therefore, I must rebut the statement made by the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), in so far as Argenteuil is concerned. But there is a more forcible point to this question. It was well known to the Government that Mr. Abbott was about to resign his position as a member of the House of Commons, or, at least, that he was going to lay no claim upon the electors of Argenteuil. And that was well known to the Government, I am satisfied long before the appointment of a returning officer. Yet, forsooth, the Government did not see fit, nor did they act in that fraudulent manner, that base manner attributed to them by hon. gentlemen on the opposite side. Was it not well known to the Government that it was a very unwise and very unsafe thing to swap horses in crossing a stream? It certainly was, and they must have known that if any effort was to be put forth to reclaim the county of Argenteuil for the Grit party it could well have been put forth at this time. With all this, which they must have known, did they act in this base and fraudulent manner, did they place a partisan there to serve their purpose? No, they left that officer there, and they knew him to be a pronounced Grit. As to the statement made by the senior member for Halifax, and the fault found by him because he was not gazetted earlier, I can scarcely think that his claim that he was not fairly dealt with is well founded, because the returning officer for the constituency of Argenteuil made a return of my election on the 2nd March, and yet I was not gazetted until the 19th March although I was known to be a Tory. Now, if the senior member for Halifax was not gazetted until the 19th March and his return was made on the 4th March, what complaint has he more than I have? None whatever. But the position of the hon. gentlemen on the opposite side of the House reminds me very much of the position of the party they represent in the constituency which I have the honor to represent, after the General election. They believed they were satisfied, and had made their calculations sure and fast, that the candidate who opposed me was to be returned by 450 majority, and I am satisfied that the disappointment of the man when he found I was returned by almost half that majority was not greater than the disappointment of the hon. gentlemen opposite in finding that they are not on the Treasury benches to day. I shall not forget when the hon. the leader of the Opposition took the chance to deliver an address here, whether by fair means or foul, on the day of the election of a Speaker. I have had the honor of representing a constituency in municipal matters, but I had not thought that such devices were introduced into the House of Commons. I had thought better of the conduct of members in the House of Commons. I thought, when I came here, that our time was to be devoted to legislation, and it is well for us that legislation is going on all the time, that we have clerks and servants working for us while we are playing, for, in this little sparring exhibition which we have had going on here from five o'clock this afternoon to the present moment, ten o'clock, I claim that we have been doing nothing but playing. We are talking against time. There is a court where this matter will be decided. It has been said by the leader of the Opposition that it might be as well for us to be here as to be sporting our time in the hotels and in our boarding houses. I question that very much, because if in our hotels and boarding houses we would not now be making objects of ourselves, objects