

friend the ex-Minister of Justice, who is learned in precedents, to point out to us, in the history of any British community, a case in which seven ministers of the Crown have resigned in the interval between the placing of a speech in the mouth of the Governor or Sovereign of the country and the debate that usually follows thereon. Sir, we have heard of sudden conversions and sudden convictions. We know, on the authority of an eminent English writer, that

“Mercy was sought and mercy found  
Between the saddle and the ground;”

But that is not a circumstance to the speed with which these new convictions have dawned on the minds of hon. gentlemen opposite. Now, Mr. Speaker, it does appear to me that these hon. gentlemen, one and all, have offered a direct insult to the representative of the Sovereign, and a direct insult to the House. No matter what their grounds or their reasons may be, for a cabinet to place a speech in the mouth of His Excellency, and then, before the ink on the document is dry, to put a pistol to the head of their own colleague, the Premier of the country—to place him in the utterly humiliating and degrading position in which they have tried to place him, whether successful or not,—is, I am happy to say, utterly unparalleled in the history of any British community. Neither, Sir, is it a less insult to the House. We are, for the first time in Canadian history, summoned to hold a sixth session of Parliament for a most precise and special purpose; and the men who unanimously declared, speaking through the mouth of the hon. gentleman who has just addressed us, that it was necessary to the best interests of Canada that this extraordinary step should be taken, that this Parliament should be summoned on the 2nd day of January, 1896, to consult on a measure to which they declared themselves pledged, which they informed us it was their duty, their imperative duty to bring down, now present themselves before us as the very men who have—what shall I say?—combined together or conspired together to render its discussion impossible. More than that, Sir, I say it is a fraud on the country. If these seven gentlemen long entertained, as is perfectly evident from the statement we have just heard, such sentiments against the leader of the Government as have been expressed, each and every one of them have openly and shamefully perpetrated a fraud upon the electorate of the country. Sir, during the recent bye elections—during the election of my hon. friend who has just taken his seat for Montreal Centre (Mr. McShane), during the election in Jacques Cartier, during the election in North Ontario, during the election in Cardwell—I might almost say during the recent election in Victoria—have not these men, one and all, been declaring that the cabinet were in perfect unity, that they were a band of brothers

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT.

without any dissensions or disputes? Have they not, in tones of thunder—especially through the late Secretary of State—what is he now?—the ex-Minister of Agriculture—declared that these assertions about cabinet dissensions were the vilest slanders of an unscrupulous Grit press? Have they not over and over again declared that all these assertions which we have made so recklessly against men so notoriously at one as the late Minister of Railways and his colleague the Minister of Public Works, were pure inventions of the enemy, and not entitled to the slightest consideration? Now, Sir, it is no light thing at a crisis like this—it is no light thing when several constituencies are called upon to record their verdict—that Ministers of the Crown should come before the country with statements in their mouths which I cannot characterize in parliamentary language other than this, that they appear to have not the slightest foundation in fact, judging from the statement which the ex-Minister of Finance has just made. Then, Sir, over and above all this, the matter is complicated by another consideration. It appears to me that these gentlemen's own honour demands now a full statement of the reasons which impelled them to take that extraordinary course; and it is certain that two of these hon. gentlemen, in view of the most extraordinary statements which are being circulated broadcast from one end of this country to the other, ought, before this day closes, or before this House rises, to inform us what truth there is or what truth there is not in the statement that one hon. Minister or ex-Minister has been caught in the act of slandering anonymously the reputation of an honourable colleague. I offer no opinion on the subject beyond this, that it is due to both those gentlemen that if this statement be true the proofs be given, and that if it is false, it be contradicted on the spot. I shall not say much about the modus operandi of these anonymous letters, but will merely offer the suggestion that if it should again become necessary, in the discharge of a patriotic duty, for any gentleman in similar position to address an anonymous correspondence to His Excellency, the communication should, for the sake of decency, and for the sake of preventing future scandals, be typewritten, and the typewriter be broken up immediately, so that there may be no possibility of afterwards detecting it. What sort of opinion are we to suppose these hon. gentlemen entertain of each other, if they have been sitting in Council, devising schemes for the welfare of Canada from day to day, and entertaining the opinion which apparently they must have entertained of each other, if we are to place the smallest reliance on the statements which have been circulated broadcast through the newspaper press. I will say but this one thing in conclusion, before these hon. gentlemen