

So much for discussion. Next as to information. For not weeks only but months together, appeal after appeal was made to the Government to supply Parliament with full and authentic information, in lieu of the scanty and uncertain notices which alone could be obtained from unofficial sources. Appeal after appeal was met with dilatory pleas. In these pleas, taken singly, there may often be much reason; but, in the aggregate, they were pushed to excess. Some measure was in progress, and could not be explained till it was completed; or was completed, and therefore a thing of the past, which had disappeared from the range of discussion; or was in contemplation, and the public interest would suffer by disclosure. During this time, instead of preparing the papers and documents, to be ready for instant presentation, when presentation might be allowable, they were left unprepared, so that after every reason and every pretext for withholding them had been exhausted, precious weeks were lost afresh in the necessary labors for, and of, the press.

And the ending of this extraordinary confidence on the one side, and of these free drafts upon it from the other, what has it been? That we have had by degrees, from private and voluntary exertion, the knowledge which it was the bounden duty of the Administration to supply: and that, by the light which this knowledge casts upon past events we learn with astonishment and horror that, so far as appears, we have been involved, in some amount, at least, of moral complicity with the basest and blackest outrages upon record within the present century, if not within the memory of man.

The effect of the course which was taken by the Government was by no means confined within the walls of Parliament. For securing the escape of a great question from public vigilance there is no expedient comparable to adjourning Parliamentary discussion of it until the dying hours of a Session. For thus it is brought before the public mind at a time when the nation is in holiday, when society as well as Parliament is prorogued, when the natural leaders of every country or municipal community are dispersed. It is the great vacation of the year, when no one expects, and few will consent, to be called to serious business. All, who are acquainted with the inner working of our Parliamentary as well as our social system, know the weight as well as the truth of what I now say.

The state of the case, then, is this. The House of Commons