

common phrase. There is no fishing excursion about this matter. The document placed on the Table shows that the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery has not made the returns as the law requires, that he delayed the gazettement of the returns after he had received them. If that officer has acted properly and can furnish a valid excuse for delay and for disregarding the statute, who will be injured by the investigation? The time of the House will not be occupied; it is a reference to the Committee on Privileges and Elections and the only witness to be examined will be the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. But that is what hon. gentlemen opposite fear; they are afraid that if he is examined he will tell a story not creditable to them. If rumors are correct, the Secretary of State could tell something about this matter. At all events, it is a duty the House owes to itself and the country to see that an explanation is given as to why an officer of this House should utterly disregard the law. If it has been done for the purpose of giving hon. gentlemen opposite a political advantage, then the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery is not fit to hold the position which he has held for so many years. If he has any lawful and valid excuse, then every hon. member will be prepared to extend to him that consideration to which he would be entitled. Hon. gentlemen opposite say that we should not refer to this matter at all. If there is no necessity to refer to the matter, if we have no right to bring that officer to task, why does the First Minister propose this amendment? Why should he ask the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to furnish a letter of explanation, if this House has no right to enquire as to his conduct? And yet the First Minister proposes that this clerk be asked to write a letter to the Clerk of the House, explaining the delay. If we have no right to enquire into it, we have no right even to ask him for that letter, but the amendment proposed by the First Minister on the face of it shows that we have a right to ask for some information on the subject. And having that right, the proper place for investigating this charge is before the Committee on Privileges and Elections. In other cases hon. gentlemen opposite are very anxious to refer matters to this committee. They have proclaimed over and over again that its functions are judicial, and that the actions of its members will be governed by the feelings which should actuate men who are acting in that capacity. If such is the case, this officer runs no risk in having his case investigated, unless he has been guilty of misconduct, and then he should receive his punishment. This is but the last joint in the tail. We have had, in this country, partisan returning officers and revising barristers; we have had gerrymanders; we have had everything that the ingenuity of man can devise for the purpose of keeping the Tory party in power. We have had millions of dollars expended, on the authority of the Governor General's warrants, immediately before the elections, the money taken from the Treasury and expended, perhaps it may be properly. Lastly, we have the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, who is to be used to give an advantage to the Conservative party over the Liberals, by gazettement as he has done. I say that this is not only a gross irregularity on his part, but I say that the documents in the return laid before the House show, as I believe, that this was a deliberate fraud upon the Liberal party of this country. I feel that there ought to be no question about referring this matter to the Privileges and Elections Committee. As I said before, if the conduct of this officer has been right and proper, if it does not deserve censure, he has nothing to fear; but the fact of the Government taking the position they have taken is strong presumptive evidence that they have, themselves, something to fear from this investigation.

Mr. TROW. I will confine myself to the circumstances in my own particular riding. The subject has been pretty

thoroughly discussed generally, and it is evident that a wrong has been perpetrated. The speeches of hon. gentlemen do not seem to me to condemn any of the returning officers, but they all unite in condemning the action of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. In regard to my own particular case, I have nothing to say against the returning officer; I think he acted fairly and rightly. The return was received here on the 10th March, but though the *Gazette* was issued on the 12th, and again on the 19th, my return was not gazetted until the 26th. Under the statute it was unquestionably the duty of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to have included my return amongst those which were gazetted on the 12th or the 19th. I find that my neighbor in the same county and living in the same city, the hon. member for the north riding of Perth (Mr. Hesson) was returned the day after I was returned—he was returned on the 11th and he was gazetted on the 19th, a week before I was gazetted, although my return was received one day before his. I cannot conceive why the Government should hesitate in allowing the matter to be thoroughly investigated. It is due to their credit, it is due to the public at large, as well as the members of this House, that an investigation should immediately take place. The committee is composed of the best legal talent in the House—gentlemen well versed in investigations of this description—and I have no doubt that members will approach the subject without any degree of partisanship. There are no less than twenty-three Conservatives on that committee, as against seventeen members of the Opposition, so that they have sufficient advantage in that respect. The investigation cannot possibly occupy more than a day or a part of a day at furthest in the examination of one single witness. I think it is due to the House and the country that the committee should call this officer to give an account of his stewardship.

Mr. GILLMOR. I have a complaint to make, and I am rather curious to know how the question I am about to ask will be answered. My young friend from Pictou (Mr. Tupper) went fishing. Now when a young man goes fishing he generally wants to catch something, but evidently he did not want to catch anything. It is remarkable to me how few hon. gentlemen opposite want to speak on this subject. I should think that they would want to get up and say something about it—they could mystify the matter, if nothing else. Taking the returns from New Brunswick, I find that the return from the county of Restigouche, where a Conservative was elected, was received here on the 11th of March and gazetted on the 12th of March. In Charlotte, my own county, the return was received on the 11th. There was no room for my name in the *Gazette* of the 12th; there was no room for it in the *Gazette* of the 19th nor in the *Gazette* of the 26th, and they kept me until the 2nd day of April before they gazetted my return. I do not know that I am very much worse off than if I had been gazetted on the 12th, but I would like to know the reason. I do not know whether there is any hon. gentleman on the Treasury benches who can give me the reason, but I cannot think that my hon. friends there, whom I am looking in the face, would have anything to do with such a small, mean matter as this. If they do know anything about it, I would like them to explain why my name was kept out of four *Gazettes* when it could have gone in. I find that the return in the county of Albert, where a Conservative was elected, was received on the 14th and it was gazetted on the 19th, only five days after. In the county of Carleton, N.B., where a Liberal was returned, the return was twelve days in Ottawa before it was gazetted. The return in my own case was in Ottawa twenty-two days before it was gazetted. In the county of Gloucester, where a Conservative was elected, his return passed by one *Gazette*; it