

Justice a judge who is to sit in court and decide on matters generally, although I am informed that is being actually done to some extent in the present instance. I think this is a fitting opportunity to call the attention of the House, and notably that of my hon. friend the President of the Council, to certain extraordinary statements which have appeared in the public journals, purporting to be faithful copies or extracts of speeches and declarations made by him on a former occasion in another place. I should judge from the remarks of the hon. Minister of the Interior that he can hardly be aware of the extraordinary nature of those statements and of what they implied. According to the reports of journals of extremely wide circulation, language of very forcible character has been used by the President of the Council with regard to the hon. Minister of Railways. After a resume of the history of the Pictou Railway, with which most of us are more or less familiar, and after giving an account of the proceedings of the Minister of Railways in reference thereto, he goes on to say:

"But the picture, dark as it is, has something blacker still. I see there, standing in the background, the Provincial Secretary of Nova Scotia privately handing over to this same engineer a contract for the whole work. I see him shroud it in darkness and bury it for months in the grave of secrecy. And now the Provincial Secretary comes forward and tells us it was so hidden to serve the public interest; to enable Sandford Fleming, after he had taken the contract, to make better terms with the old contractors; to grind a few more dollars out of them. Public interest, indeed! Mr. Sandford Fleming's interests alone. Sir, I know not what term to apply to such conduct in a Government. I know not what to call it—I shall not venture an opinion; but in private life it is called extorting money under false pretences, and our laws make it indictable knavery."

He continued in the following language:—

"They have heard of men riding in public conveyances with a loose mantle about them and a pair of false hands folded in front to lull suspicion, while the real hands were finding their way into their fellow-travellers' pockets, and they now think that when the hon. gentleman put on the mantle of Herbert Huntington and the old Reformers, the hands he put to the plough were not real—that the real hands were hidden, that they might the better get deep to the arm-pits in the public chest, and they wait, they long for the opportunity to sweep him from his position. Therefore, Sir, there was no necessity to bring this case here to excite public opinion. But, Mr. Speaker, if having brought it here for investigation in the discharge of a public duty, what if the people should, on an examination of it, decide that the public interests have been bartered away and betrayed—that the man whom they once believed in as the apostle of retrenchment has become the great high priest of jobbery and corruption? Who then shall restrain limits to the just indignation as they take him, loaded down though he may be with the share of the offerings that fall to the priest, and impale him upon the horns of the altar at which he ministers."

I cordially join with my hon. friend beside me in congratulating ourselves on having restored to our seats a man so eloquent, with such a wealth of imagery, as that possessed by the hon. President of the Council. Those statements have been widely circulated; they are very grave. It is very important, in the interest of the public, that we should know the actual facts. A Minister of the Dominion of Canada ought to be like Cæsar's wife, beyond reproach and suspicion; and I am free to admit that, in my candid judgment, some of the present Ministers are beyond suspicion. Now, if this quotation I have made, and which purports to form part of the Official Report of the Debates of Nova Scotia, be false, then there is no more to be said, except that the newspapers which have published and circulated these things are, in my opinion, worthy of and liable to the most condign punishment. But if these statements be true, that is to say, if the President of the Council did really make assertions implying so much, involving so much, alleging so much against the Minister of Railways, as the statements which I have read, most clearly divers questions of interest would arise. Supposing the President of the Council was correct in describing the Minister of Railways at that time, and in that place, as he did, then I would like to know whether that Minister has since repented and become good, and fit to be the associate of the President of the Council? Or, take the other alternative: supposing that the Presi-

dent of the Council was wrong—that he improperly asserted those things of the hon. the Minister of Railways—then we would like to know, because those charges were publicly made and ought to be as publicly retracted, whether he has likewise repented and become good? It is very interesting to know how the matter stands at present: who is the penitent sinner. One of these hon. gentlemen must be. We know that in old times, in Nova Scotia, public men were sometimes involved in rather curious proceedings. Nova Scotia has produced very able men, but those able men have not been always quite so consistent as people could desire. Not quite, I repeat. I do not say that Nova Scotia is the only Province in which such things have occurred. I have known a notable case of a very prominent politician in Canada, who did, upon a time, denounce another prominent politician as a man steeped to the lips in corruption, and take him to his bosom later, after all. I well recollect that, and I am free to say I do not know that any particular harm resulted therefrom, at least in the direction apprehended. I have publicly stated before, and publicly repeat now, that I do not think that any moral injury accrued to the right hon. gentleman in respect to what he did then. I do not think it would be possible for any amount of corruption in another to do any harm to that hon. gentleman. But I have a special reason for alluding to that matter, which is this: very hard things have been often said of the Minister of Railways by eminent countrymen of his own. This is not the first time we have heard that men of high position in Nova Scotia have uttered and endorsed statements almost identical, though perhaps not so strongly worded, as those I have just read, made by the President of the Council. I think I have heard, and think there are on record in our *Hansard*, passages nearly as explicit, from the speeches of the present Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia. Now, those things uttered by men of such reputation and of such high position, necessarily produce an unfavorable effect against the Minister of Railways in the public mind. That hon. gentleman occupies a prominent position in the House, and it is often said that when the right hon. gentleman proceeds to supervise the Canadian Pacific Railway, an event which we hope is a long time off, the hon. the Minister of Railways is the only man fit to fill his shoes and tread in his footsteps. Being a personage of such importance and so distinguished, it is most desirable that the earliest opportunity should be taken to enable the President of the Council, if he is wrong, to show us how he is mistaken; or, if the hon. the Minister of Railways was guilty of all these things attributed to him, to allow him to make a public profession of penitence thereon. I would be most loth to do that hon. Minister any injustice. I may say with perfect truth that my most earnest wish and most fervent desire for him is that he should get justice, and that right speedily. To borrow an expression from a speech of the hon. Minister of the Interior: "That is what I wish for, that is what I hope for, that is what I pray for." But on the present occasion I wish to give the President of the Council an opportunity of answering categorically two or three questions on this important point. I think that it is due to himself, due to the House, due to the position of the Minister of Railways. I desire to know whether these statements, purporting to be speeches of his, extracted from the Official Debates of Nova Scotia, are true and correctly reported, or substantially so, and if so, then I want to know if he still believes that he correctly described the Minister of Railways' conduct at the time and place I have referred to; and whether the President of the Council, if he correctly described him then, is quite satisfied that that hon. Minister has since abjured his evil ways and practices. But if, on the other hand, the President of the Council was mistaken and misinformed, then, Sir, I think it is due to the