

Prince Edward county. I believed it to be that hon. gentleman, but even if it were not, I say the arguments he advanced were equally fallacious.

Mr. BLAKE. Hear, hear.

Mr. SPROULE. The hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake) laughs as if there was something ridiculous in that statement, but though it may be so to his great mind, common sense will appeal to common minds with the same force that intricate questions will to great minds, and we are entitled to our opinions just as much as the hon. member for West Durham is to his. There is nothing strange in the fact that a sealed parcel should be sent to the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery on a particular day, and that he should not register it the very day and hour it was received. When receiving, as he must have received, within a few weeks, hundreds of these parcels, is it to be expected that he should open and examine the whole of them and register them the very day they are received. If there is any discrepancy between the time of the post-office register and the receipt of these returns, it would not be at all unusual, because we often find that letters have lain in various departments for days before they are answered, and when you look at the registers you find that they have been filed and registered in the letter-books of the Departments days before their receipt is acknowledged. These returns might lie with the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery days before he could read them and attend to them, as he had a large number of them to go through, and I say that it is no evidence that he did not act in good faith, because a few days intervene between the time the parcel was received at the post-office and the time the member was gazetted. In my own case the election was held on the 22nd of February, and I was not gazetted until the 19th of March, and though I could not see any reason for the delay, I did not find any fault with it; I did not even look at the *Gazette* to see when my return was there, because I believed the election was carried on legally and fairly, and, therefore, I was not afraid of a protest. I think these hon. gentlemen who are so much afraid of a protest must have a strong impression that there was something wrong, or they would not look upon the matter so closely and so interestedly to know when they were gazetted. And there is a strange significance in the fact that these wholesale charges come principally from the men who to-day are haunted with the knowledge that they must shortly appear before the courts to give an account of their acts during the election. I do not see anything wrong at all in the proposition made by the hon. leader of the Government, to order the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to make any explanation he can make to this House. If that explanation is not proper, there will afterwards be the same opportunity to call him to account that there is now. I do not think there is a valid reason why so much of the time of this House should be used in discussing what hon. gentlemen opposite are pleased to call great grievances, but which appear to me to be no grievances at all. In other words, they are trying to explain away the fact of their being in the unfortunate position they are in to-day, and of being obliged to show whether their conduct in the election has been legal or illegal, honest or dishonest.

Mr. BRIEN. In looking over the return furnished to the Government, I find that my return was acknowledged by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery on the 14th of March, and I was not gazetted until the 2nd of April. I would like to know the reason why. But I find that the return of the hon. member for North Essex, who is a general supporter of the Government, was acknowledged on the 9th of March, and he was gazetted on the 12th. There seems to be a strange coincidence in so many of these delays taking place in the returns of Reformers as against the few in the case

Mr. SPROULE.

of Conservatives. As the matter stands at present, the blame rests with the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. Hon. gentlemen opposite try to draw a herring across the trail by saying that we are always trying to find fault with the returning officers. We have found fault with very few of the returning officers. If the motion of the hon. member for Bothwell passes, the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery will have an opportunity to defend himself. There is a strong suspicion that this gentleman has been coached by the members of the Government, and they also will have an opportunity of acquitting themselves, which I hope they will be able to do for their own credit and the credit of this country. Hon. gentlemen speak about the loss of time, but if this motion had been allowed to pass, there would not have been so much time lost. It is said by an eminent authority that he who attempts at any time to conceal evidence is always presumed to be guilty, and the conduct of the Government on this occasion seems to show that there is something they wish to conceal in this matter. In the hope to justify themselves, hon. gentlemen go back and try to find something against the Mackenzie Government, or the Ontario Government; but the hon. member who endeavored to do that only showed that they acted fairly in such matters. Instead of going behind either the Mackenzie Administration or the Mowat Administration, hon. gentlemen opposite should allow the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to defend himself against these charges. If I may be allowed to use the phrase of the hon. member for West Assiniboia (Mr. Davin), I should say that if they deserve a licking, they should take it like gentlemen. There has been a wrong committed in my case, and I am desirous of knowing why it has been done. The argument has been continually raised that wrong has been done before, and, therefore, this is not wrong. The hon. member for Pictou (Mr. Tupper) is fond of quoting precedents. I, for my part, think the time has arrived when this country should cease to lean on the Mother Country, or to be forever going to her for advice. I think this country is quite capable of transacting its business for itself. This Parliament is not a Parliament of imbeciles, incapable of handling a simple case of this kind. I thank the House for the attention with which it has listened to me.

Mr. BAIN (Wentworth). I think there is more ground for investigating the doings of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery than some hon. gentlemen opposite are disposed to admit. It may suit these hon. gentlemen to resist such an investigation, because the dice have been loaded in their favor, and nobody knows that better than themselves; but it does seem to me preposterous for them to say that there is no ground of complaint against the conduct of this officer. We have been told that sometimes the returning officers fail to make the proper form of return, and delays were necessary to correct their returns. Again, the plea was set up by one hon. gentleman that the papers were voluminous, and that time, and care, and attention were required to examine them; and to night we have listened to elaborate arguments from the hon. member for Pictou (Mr. Tupper) and the hon. member for South Leeds (Mr. Taylor) to demonstrate that the returning officers and the revising officers have done their duty properly, and that, therefore, nobody has any right to complain. When the conduct of the revising officers and the returning officers is under the consideration of this House, we propose to discuss their conduct; but the motion of my hon. friend from Bothwell deals in the first place with the conduct of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, and if he fails to show that the fault is not with him, then the conduct of the returning officers can be dealt with. So far as my own case is concerned I do not happen to be decorated with a protest, and, therefore, perhaps, I am not open to the charge that it makes any difference whether my return was early or late.