

of Great Britain and Ireland, where many thousands of the electors have not the slightest idea of many of the questions before the country nor any knowledge of the relations of the political parties. Everybody knows that from the frequent electoral contests that take place in Canada, the great mass of the people are not only thoroughly intelligent, but thoroughly well informed on political questions, and in a position to give an intelligent expression of their opinion upon them. I therefore do hope that before this measure is pressed to a conclusion, the Government will give careful attention to the advisability of adopting a simple franchise, adapted to the whole country—one that will be inexpensive, and that, with a proper registration, will remove almost every objection that has been urged against this measure.

Now, Sir, I am at a loss to understand why hon. gentlemen opposite should denounce so fiercely the present law. I look upon it as an act of base ingratitude on their part. Why, Sir, what has the present law done for them? We had the local franchises in this country in 1867; the Liberal party were badly beaten. We had them in 1872; again they were badly beaten. We had them in 1874, when, as hon. gentlemen opposite know, they got a snap verdict from the country before the country understood the question that was under consideration. But that was the only occasion down to 1891 on which they succeeded. Out of seven elections, they were beaten every time but one under the very provincial franchises they now propose to bring into operation. Now, since this law has been on the Statute-book, we have had three elections. And in the last of these they succeeded, going to the country without a policy, without a principle, without anything except the prestige of my hon. friend opposite (Mr. Laurier) which, I confess, was a very great source of strength, and I look upon it as an act of great ingratitude to the present law that they should denounce the very means by which they succeeded in obtaining office. I am quite sure that the more hon. gentlemen opposite think of this question, the more they will find that the adoption of such a Bill as this will be fraught with great injury to the country, will give great dissatisfaction, and be attended by none of the advantages which we all agree an election law should possess, and they will find, I believe, sufficient talent and ability among themselves to devise a cheap and inoffensive measure that would apply to the whole of Canada and that we need not be ashamed of, and under which all members elected to this House would stand on the same footing.

The **MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES** (Mr. Davies). I ventured at a public meeting which was held a short time ago, to express my opinion that the hon. gentleman would receive one of the sur-

prises of his life after Parliament met and he found the Liberal party redeeming the pledges they had made previous to the elections, and I am vindicated to-night in the speech he has just made in which he expressed his unqualified surprise that the Liberal party, who, for some ten or twelve years past have pledged themselves in and out of the House to the introduction of just such a Bill as we have before us now, should have redeemed that pledge on this occasion. The Liberal party are mindful of their pledge and not unmindful of the handsome majorities they have received, and in redeeming that pledge they are carrying out the wishes of the large majority of those who voted for them at the last general election. The hon. gentleman is to be congratulated on the mild and quiet way in which he to-night addressed himself to the subject under discussion. He commenced in the afternoon with his usual vigour, but as time went on he became milder, and after dinner we found him resuming the discussion in a still milder tone. For some unaccountable reason we found the hon. gentleman evincing a mildness altogether foreign to his character, and which only can be accounted for by some extraordinary influence? What is the cause? How is it he is not thundering to-night as usual on the delinquencies of the present Government? How is it that he has not been charging hon. members on this side with having lost the confidence of the electorate? How is it he does not tell us that the remarkably intelligent province from which he has the honour to come has listened to the weary diatribes which he and his friend and lieutenant beside him (Mr. Foster) have uttered since the session began and has shown that it saw some strength in their arguments. Sir, the whole secret of the mildness and quietness with which the hon. gentleman addressed the House can be found in the telegraphic despatches which have just reached us from the province of Nova Scotia. Sir, to the three weeks of wasted time for which the hon. gentleman was accountable he has just got his answer from his native province. He sent perhaps the most brilliant and able of his lieutenants down there to take charge of the campaign. He resorted, I have no doubt, to those devices than whom no one knows better how to use, to carry the elections, and although the Liberal party in that province were deprived of the assistance of my hon. colleague, the Finance Minister (Mr. Fielding), who has been compelled to remain in this House, yet, under the leadership of the Hon. Mr. Murray, that province has returned to its local House, out of thirty-eight members, thirty-two to support Liberalism and five to support the Tory party. Sir, I think the hon. gentleman is to be commiserated.

Mr. CRAIG. From the sea alone.

The **MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES**. Slowly but surely, not from