

been making in the last few days is history that will not redound to our credit. Sir, if it may be said that truth has fallen in our streets, it would be sad to know that it fell because it was slain by men in high places. But while I wish to use no language too strong, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and the members of this House if they can reconcile the different statements which have been given to this House solemnly by hon. gentlemen opposite. To-day they tell us that they have the authority of His Excellency the Governor General for informing this House that the reason they resigned was because the Cabinet was not complete, inasmuch as one portfolio was not filled. Sir, that was not the reason which was given to this House in a carefully prepared and written document, in which all the gentlemen who had resigned, concurred. In that document, the reason assigned was because the Prime Minister was not strong enough to lead a Government and conduct the Government. What this country wants is that there shall be truth and honour in high places, and whether there has been honour in high places, let these gentlemen say who sent in their resignations to the Prime Minister, alleging as they did in this House, that the cause was his unfitness and incapacity to administer the Government of this country. These gentlemen who gave that as their reason should have adhered to it and not have come before us to-day with another and a totally different reason. The hon. Minister of Finance asked that the very words he had used should be given, and said it was not fair to paraphrase his statements. Well, in order to gratify him, let me read the reason he gave for these resignations :

We have lost none of our confidence in the sound and healthy condition of the Liberal-Conservative party of Canada, or of our belief that it embodies a policy which the majority of the electorate considers essential to the continued welfare and progress of the country, or of our faith that under firm and prudent leadership it will come back triumphant from the polls. Though with many misgivings we agreed to enter the Government under Mr. Bowell, in succession to Sir John Thompson, we have, nevertheless, unitedly and loyally striven to the best of our ability to make it strong and efficient, and it has been with growing regret that we have seen our efforts result in a measure of success less than that for which we had hoped and striven.

Going on, he says :

This we have repeatedly urged upon the Premier, with the result that we found ourselves face to face with Parliament having a Government with its numbers incomplete, and with no assurance that the present Premier could satisfactorily complete it. Under these circumstances we thought it our duty to retire, and in this manner to pave the way, if possible, for the formation of a Government whose Premier could command the confidence of all his colleagues, could satisfy the Liberal-Conservative party that its strongest elements were at its head, and im-

press the country that it had a Government which was united and had power to govern.

Now, Sir, I have read the very words, as desired by the Finance Minister, of the reasons given to this House, and I would ask if it is not there emphatically shown that the reason that these gentlemen resigned was that the Prime Minister was not strong enough in character, was not mentally fit to guide the affairs of the country and discharge the duties pertaining to government. To-day they come down and assign a totally different reason. They give as their main reason what at first was only given as a proof of the incapacity and weakness of the First Minister. They tell us now that it was because the Government was not full that they sent in their resignations. And the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat, feeling the weakness of their position, seeks to strengthen it by alleging that a question was then pending before the Government which made it absolutely necessary that this one member who was lacking should be in his place. How is it that they have secured that one member now when they could not secure him before ? The Prime Minister, in his speech in the other House, which I have in my hand, in dealing with this question, stated that it was not without precedent for the Government to carry on the affairs of the country without its membership being full. He cited two instances, and one of the instances the vacant portfolio had been held by Sir Charles Tupper, the great man of the Conservative party, the only man, apparently, in the Conservative party who has strength of character and ability to re-unite and lead forward the Conservative host. The Prime Minister said :—

The record shows that Sir Charles Tupper resigned the office of Minister of Railways and Canals on the 24th day of May, 1884. Parliament met the following January. The Hon. John Henry Pope was not appointed to succeed Sir Charles Tupper until the 28th September, 1885, so that through one long session of six months some of these very gentlemen sat in the House, while one of the portfolios was vacant—that, too, one of the most important in the Cabinet.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. Will the hon. gentleman allow me to interrupt him ?

Mr. PATERSON (Brant). Certainly.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. I interrupt in order that the point that I alluded to may be understood, because the hon. gentleman does not understand it. I do not deny that there are precedents for vacancies in the Administration during the session, even running through the whole session. That was not my point. The difficulty I had, as I believe was the case with the other gentlemen who acted together was not that there was not a precedent for the vacancy, but that it was impossible for us to promote successfully legislation in re-