

CANADA.

they had ceased to support the Government. Their names were conspicuously absent from the Memorial. The sixty or sixty-five members who were away cannot complain if I have interpreted their absence as an indication that they endorsed the policy of Government, so far at least as prorogation was concerned. That the memorialists were so many and no more was in itself significant, for it gave the measure of the effort made and the maximum result. They were not even a moiety of the House. They were a minority, and therefore not in a position to acquaint me with the wishes of the majority, or to speak in behalf of Parliament at all. So acutely was the force of this fact felt that within a very few days after prorogation, it was industriously circulated by all the Opposition newspapers, that in refusing to acquiesce in the suggestions of the signatories of this Memorial, I had flown in the face of a "*majority*" of the House of Commons. It is said that hypocrisy is the homage paid by vice to virtue. The pertinacity with which this mis-statement has been propagated, I cannot but regard as a homage to the strength of my position. But not content with this, some papers have even gone farther and stated positively that other gentlemen, friends of the Government, waited upon me the same day and held language similar to the remonstrants—an assertion for which there is not the slightest foundation, for on that day, up to three o'clock, with the exception of the Speaker, the remonstrant members themselves, and my Ministers, I had neither spoken to or heard from a single Member of Parliament.

But it has been subsequently argued, that inasmuch as no division ever took place in a perfectly full House, ninety-two signatures implied a practical majority,—as though my appreciation of what should constitute a majority is to be regulated by my estimate of the cogency of the respective whips. If, however, we are to count noses with such particularity, let us see how the case stands. I admit that the numerical strength of a House is always in excess of its voting power. There will always be accidental vacancies. But the ranks of each side are equally liable to be thinned by casualties. What was the voting power represented by this Memorial? It is true, on the word of the Chairman, I took 93 as the number of persons on whose behalf he spoke, but the actual signatures at the time I had to decide on my course were only 92. Of these, three were affixed by proxy, reducing the momentary voting strength of the body represented to 89; for it is to be presumed that, unless detained from Ottawa, the remaining gentlemen would have signed with their own hands. Now, if we double 89 we get a House of 178, and no later than last Session 183 names appeared on a division list,—so that the 89 remonstrants represented only a minority of the House even on this principle of reckoning. But during the whole of last Session Government had a large majority, a condition of affairs which superinduces a laxity of attendance. Had the two parties been more evenly balanced, had victory depended on only a few votes, the muster of members would have been inevitably stronger, and the maximum division list of 183 undoubtedly exceeded.

But I am not prepared to admit that a Governor-General would be justified in taking so serious a step as was then urged upon me, on the strength of a Memorial signed even by a majority of Members of Parliament. Except so far as bringing a certain amount of pressure to bear upon him for a momentary purpose, a document of this nature is quite inconsequent. It would prove so much waste paper in the presence of a different mandate from the constituencies of many of these gentlemen, and when the time for voting arrived the Governor who relied upon it might very well find a considerable proportion of its signatories on the wrong side of the division list, with a dozen plausible excuses for their having played him false. Indeed, within a couple of hours after the deputation had left my presence, I was assured on trustworthy authority that some of these very persons had openly stated that in signing the Memorial they by no means intended to signify that they withdrew their support from Government.

It is further to be remembered that, although I was in Ottawa at six in the morning, I heard nothing of this Memorial until one o'clock, that three was the hour at which Parliament met, that the gentlemen bringing it must have known that its presentation and perusal must have occupied some time, and that I was bound to communicate it to my Ministers; yet it was upon the strength of a document of this nature, presented in this fashion, when my speech from the Throne was in the hands of the printers, and the guard of honour under arms, that I was expected to take a step which, under such circumstances, must have inevitably led to a change of Government, and possibly a general election.

I have one further point to mention, and I have done. It is a favourite theory at this moment with many persons that when once grave charges of this nature have been preferred against the Ministry, they become ipso facto unfit to counsel the Crown. The practical application of this principle would prove very inconvenient, and would leave not only the Governor-General, but every Lieutenant-Governor in the Dominion very