

CANADA.

who passed the one and the individuals who proposed the other must have contemplated the probability of the Report of the Committee being considered, not in the present but in a subsequent Session of Parliament. Indeed, the mere fact of prorogation being fixed for the 13th of August implies this much, for it is not to be presumed that the House would have proceeded to consider the Report, until both it and the evidence upon which it was founded had been printed and distributed to members; but to enable this to be done an interval of a few days, after Parliament had reassembled and had received the Report, would manifestly have been required before action could have been taken upon it. If, therefore, Parliament had contemplated considering the Report during the current Session, it would have desired a later day to be fixed for prorogation than that on which the mere manuscript copy of the Report was to be laid on its table.

Again, when Mr. Dorion moved in amendment of the motion for the Committee's adjournment to the 2nd July, that "inasmuch as the Committee will have no power either to enforce the attendance of witnesses or to compel them to give testimony without the action of this House, it is essential to the proper conduct of the investigation that it should be prosecuted under circumstances that will admit of the prompt exercise of the authority of the House, it is therefore necessary that the House should sit on the day to which the Committee has leave to adjourn," the House decided against him by a majority of 101 to 66,—one of the Representatives from British Columbia, as I am informed, protesting against members from the more distant Provinces in the Dominion being required to return to Ottawa so late in the summer as the 2nd of July.

But the intention of the House is still further exhibited by the following circumstance. During the Session a Bill was passed increasing the indemnity paid in this country to Members of Parliament for their attendance. Into that Bill a clause was introduced to the following effect: "The said amendments shall apply to the present Session of Parliament, and if either House shall adjourn for more than thirty days such adjournment shall, for the purposes of such Act, be equivalent to a prorogation." This provision was intended by its authors to enable members to receive their salaries and travelling expenses on the 23rd May, the day on which Parliament adjourned, without having to wait for the 13th August, the day named for prorogation. I may also mention that the same day, i. e. on the 23rd of May, I came in state to the Senate Chamber to give my assent to the Bills of the Session; and in view of a progress I intended to make through the maritime Provinces during the summer, I provided, before leaving Ottawa, for the prorogation of Parliament by commission, in order to spare myself the labour and fatigue of a journey of 2,400 miles for what I understood would be a mere formality.

From the foregoing narrative your Lordship will probably agree with me in the conclusion that up to the time when the Houses adjourned, it was clearly the wish and the expectation of Parliament that prorogation should take place on the 13th August. And it is most natural that this should have been the case. The commercial business and the agricultural operations of the year have to be crowded into the five short months of summer. Almost every member of both Houses in this country is actively engaged in business pursuits requiring his personal attendance. To be detained from home at this season implies not only extreme inconvenience but pecuniary loss. Already the lateness of the current Session had bred considerable discontent, and it had been expressly determined by the House that in future the Session should never begin later than the first week of February. The distance from Halifax to Ottawa is something like 1,200 miles, from Victoria in British Columbia it is 4,000 miles. The reassembly of Parliament in August, for the transaction of business, would have cut up the entire summer, as far as many members were concerned, and would have been more or less inconvenient to all but those who reside within a day or two's journey of Ottawa. The majority in the House of Commons appear to have attached but little significance to Mr. Huntington's accusations, for they negatived his motion without even requiring my Ministers to reply to it, and I do not imagine that any one of them contemplated a renewal of the Session on the 13th of August. But though the conduct of the majority who confided in the Government is easily understood, the procedure of the members of the Opposition is more difficult to explain. They had in their possession, it is to be presumed, what they considered convincing proofs of the corruption of Ministers. The matter had been referred to the adjudication of a Committee, and according to the theory of the prosecution, could have but one result. Strong in these convictions, they should never have allowed the announcement of prorogation to have passed unchallenged, but should have resorted to every means known to the Constitution by which such a consummation could have been precluded. Indeed, so obvious was their duty in this respect, that their opponents have attributed to them a deliberate intention of allowing the dispersion of