

would like; but the time is coming when we will get a large majority. (Cheers.) We will have it. We have confidence in the people; they have confidence in us."

After a reference to Mr. Whitney's comments on the hyphenated Government, Mr. Ross went on:—"Now it is a Ross Government, and it is as strong as ever. Whether the gentleman wants a hyphenated Government or not, we will give him a Liberal Government, a good Government; we will meet him no matter what line he takes. Our policy will be defended not only here but everywhere, not by me alone, but by all these Spartans at my back. (Government cheers.) It will be defended by the Liberal party of this country, who know the traditions and history of the hon. gentlemen opposite, who can trust them nowhere else except in the cold shades of Opposition, except where they are powerless for mischief, except where they are amenable to that public opinion which will consign them to the obscurity from which they have never yet been able to emerge, and from which they will not emerge until the crack of doom." (Loud Government cheers.)

At this point the House rose for dinner.

#### Election Irregularities.

Referring to his Whitby speech, Mr. Ross reminded the House that the promise was there made of the appointment of a commission to inquire into the West Elgin irregularities. That promise, he claimed, had been fulfilled to the very letter. In the same speech the statement was made that the Liberal party at present in power in Ontario had taken the first step through the constituted courts of the land to deal with election irregularities. In this statement, Mr. Ross explained, he was not speaking in a personal sense at all, but the reference was to the action of the Government as a Government. Under the controverted elections act, the Premier went on to say, the County Attorney was authorized to proceed against persons reported for corrupt practices, and the Judges were authorized to issue summonses against persons shown during a trial to have been guilty of corrupt practices. Furthermore, it was the privilege of any citizen to enter an action against any person reported for such wrongdoing. The Government promised to bring persons reported for corrupt practices for trial, and also to issue a commission. In regard to the first matter, prosecutions had been begun in the order in which the cases were reported, beginning with South Ontario. The rota Judges who had to try the cases were occupied also with other suits, but they were proceeding as fast as they could. The Government had fulfilled their promise to bring bribers to justice as promptly as was in their power, and nothing more could be done in that connection. Mr. Ross declared that the preservation of the political morality of a community was as important as the preservation of any other form of morality, and he lamented the fact that many people who would scorn to cheat their neighbors of a sixpenny bit, sometimes had very loose opinions as to

what was proper or improper in election contests. Such being the case, they had to deal with the evil as best they could. He did not know why there should have been such an epidemic of corruption as there seemed to have been in Canada for the last few years, not only in Provincial but Dominion elections. There were, for example, the corrupt practices resorted to in Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie and other places in Manitoba in 1896, the ballot-stuffing in North Ontario and the irregularities in South Grey, East Northumberland and elsewhere, all in connection with Dominion elections. Whether the practices of the Conservative party in the House of Commons for so many years had anything to do with infecting the Liberal party was more than he could say. There was no doubt that "evil communications corrupt good manners," and the communications in this instance were very evil indeed. It was under such peculiar circumstances as he had enumerated that the general elections of 1898 were begun. He admitted that corrupt practices on the part of the Conservatives did not excuse Liberal wrong-doing, but in view of the Government's determination to cleanse the political atmosphere of Ontario, the Opposition should see to it that no offences were committed on their own side. The Conservative party could not be identified with any systematic or continuous efforts to preserve the purity of elections, but the Liberal party had always stood up for electoral purity. Under these circumstances it was unfair of Mr. Whitney to try to create the impression that the Liberals sought to countenance or encourage political immorality.

#### Tampering With Ballots.

The purchase of a man's vote, although bad enough in itself, was not to be compared in enormity with the tampering with that vote after it had been cast. The ballot-box should be regarded as a sacred trust, but apparently it was not so respected in West Elgin. There were other cases of ballot irregularities in connection with the Provincial elections of 1898, but the only case of the character reported by the Judges was in West Elgin. Mr. Whitney by inference argued that North Waterloo should also have been inquired into. The law, however, provided that no commission of inquiry should issue except where no petition had been presented against an election, or where a petition having been presented, the proceedings had terminated. Now, the proceedings in the North Waterloo case had not yet terminated, and so the Government were debarred by statute from making inquiry into it. The impression might exist in the minds of some that the Government should have issued a commission to inquire into corrupt practices generally. How did matters stand in that regard? Mr. Ross then pointed out that a commission of such sweeping scope would have entailed the investigation of nearly three-fourths of the elections held in 1898, and another election would have been due before the Judges had got half way through their work.

Had they proceeded to investigate in every riding they would have been