

honorable gentlemen; I am not raising the question whether they were right or wrong in taking that course. They may have been the purest patriots, the most farseeing statesmen the world has known, for ought I care. What I say is merely this, that whether for good or evil, whether wisely or unwisely, the fact is, that the public mind was not occupied in the least with this Confederation question. After having fought a long time, mainly about measures, and secondarily about men, we were all suddenly called upon, in 1862, to consider nothing but the question of the men who were to do everything right, and to settle everything fairly and honestly, and so forth. Representation by population was unmistakably, for a time at least, laid upon the shelf, declared to be secondary, almost unimportant. It had been half shelved some time before; then, it was wholly shelved. It was hardly taken down from the shelf in 1863, when the MACDONALD-DORION Government merely put it back to the same place, which it had long occupied to no purpose of a practical character under the CARTIER-MACDONALD Administration. (Hear, hear.) Such, then, was the state of affairs—nobody thinking or caring about this great question, until last Session of Parliament, when the hon. member for South Oxford, the present President of the Council, moved for and obtained a committee on the subject of constitutional changes generally. Certainly that hon. gentleman did a very clever thing, in embodying in his motion extracts from the unfortunate defunct dispatch of Messrs. CARTIER, GALT and Ross.

HON. ATTY. GEN. CARTIER—It was a fortunate despatch—unfortunate for you, but fortunate for us.

MR. DUNKIN—It is an old proverb that says "He laughs well who laughs last."

HON. ATTY. GEN. CARTIER—I expect to laugh the last.

MR. DUNKIN—No doubt. But I do not care to joke in a matter which I think of a very serious character; and, seriously speaking, I think the hon. gentleman is very wrong. We have yet to see, in the first place, whether the thing is done, and then, if it is done, whether it succeeds.

HON. MR. MCGEE—"If 'twere done, 'twere well 'twere done quickly."

MR. DUNKIN—The Minister of Agriculture is too good a Shakspearian to need to

be reminded that the thing to be done in that case was a something very bad. The hon. gentleman is welcome to all he can make of his quotation,—“If 'twere done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly.” To return, however. It was clever, undoubtedly clever, in the hon. member for South Oxford to quote from the despatch of these hon. gentlemen—then, by the way, in opposition to the then Government and to himself—an expression of opinion almost coinciding with his own. He carried his committee. No one made any great objection to it. I have been told that I am guilty of some sort of inconsistency, after having voted for that committee, in now opposing this measure. The *sequitur* is hard to see. I did certainly speak and vote for it, but on the express ground that I believed it would do no sort of harm, and that, on the contrary, it might have the good effect of leading other hon. gentlemen to the sober conclusion at which I had long before arrived myself. I therefore had no objection to the committee, and I sat on it. I am not going to reveal what have been called the secrets of the committee. As in many other like cases, there was mighty little in them. Owing to accidents, wholly aside from this question of Confederation, the report of the committee was presented on the very night that vote happened to be given, indirectly adverse to the TACHE-MACDONALD Administration. The report itself was an accident. All the allusion there was in it to Federation of any sort, found its way there at the last moment and unexpectedly. It is no violation of confidence to say that it was even voted against by the leader of this House, the Attorney General for Upper Canada, the now leading advocate of the present scheme. That fact is on the printed record. It was voted against, also, by the members for Cornwall and West Elgin. There were five other members, of whom I am sorry I was one, who were absent; had I been there, unquestionably my vote would have been against it. (Hear, hear.) And, Mr. SPEAKER, those who were in this House at the time that report was made, will remember pretty well the more than cool indifference with which it was here received, little or nothing, after all, as it amounted to. Well, this vote in the House thus following, the opportunity suddenly offered to honorable gentlemen opposite of starting on a tack which, up to that moment, I believe no two men in the House had ever thought of as