

RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS

JOSEPH HOWE AND HIS TIMES.

And Incidental References to Some of His Prominent Public Contemporaries.

By "Historicus," Fredericton, N. B.

NO. 7.

The Club Continued.—How Great Officials Were Formerly Appointed.

The subject matter treated in some of those Club articles may be here noticed by way of specimen. As these Provinces once upon a time were held as a nursery and feeding ground for the scions of influential place hunters in England, it was no uncommon thing when a vacancy occurred in some good fat office, for the Governor to inform his master at the Colonial office, when forthwith one of those favored youths would be sent out to stop the gap while our own people loyally acquiesced. The names of some of those outsiders will readily suggest themselves to "the oldest inhabitants" over the way. In this Province our old folks have a vivid recollection of those exotics. In 1835 a Judge is required, and our own Bar is considered to be so poor in material, or perhaps so un-

influential, that a young man had to be sent out from England to fill the place; and although he proved to be an excellent upright Judge, our legal gentry continued to smart for some years under the ill-advised infliction. But so decided a stand was taken on the occasion, that we have been permitted to make our own Judges ever since. Then a Surveyor General is wanted, when, lo, another official is made to order in England and sent to Fredericton to fill the gap, and pocket all the revenues of his department. The yield of the Crown Lands was not what it is today; the revenues probably amounted to ten or fifteen thousand dollars, and by the time the Surveyor General's and the other salaries were paid there was very little left. But it was all right and dutiful in those days—for the heads of departments rode in their chariots, sometimes drawn by four horses richly caparisoned with outriders and footmen. The business people of Fredericton were satisfied, because all this grandeur and big salaries brought grist to their mills. As to the rest of the Province, no one seemed to care—it was too many hours before the dawn ere the people began to get their eyes open and compass the full glare of day. Then again, a head clerk is wanted for the Crown Land Office (the place now occupied by Mr. Andrew Inches), and if any one wants to know how we got hold of this rare-acis he will just refer to a work in our Legislative Library, called "The Life of the Countess of Blessington." "Gore House" in London about this time was the most famous resort for men of letters, great generals, poets and leaders of fashion. Among her ladyship's visitors was the Duke of Wellington, probably the most influential man in England. Now the Countess of Blessington had a brother (there was no harm in that) and she wanted the Duke's influence to procure for him a situation in New Brunswick. Sir John Harvey was Governor at the time, and when two such heads were got together through letters of correspondence, it did not take long after for the brother of the Countess to obtain a good seat in the Crown Land Office in this city, next to the head of the department and over the heads of the native clerks.



MRS. JOSEPH HOWE.

Now, the Club articles dealt with such subjects as these—for the same injustice prevailed in Nova Scotia as here and indeed in all the British Provinces alike. But of course the articles applied to the sister Province only and said nothing about New Brunswick; and vast indirect good came out of their publication.

Mrs. Joseph Howe.

Mrs. Howe was the daughter of Captain John M'Nab, Royal N. S. Fencibles, and was born in 1807, in Barracks at St. John's, Newfoundland, where her father's regiment was then stationed. Afterwards the family proceeded to Halifax where the regiment was disbanded. Her parents then removed to M'Nab's Island, a property which was owned by Hon. Peter M'Nab, brother of the Captain, he having obtained it from Lord Cornwallis at the early settlement of Halifax. Here Miss M'Nab continued to reside with her parents until her marriage with Mr. Howe in February, 1828. Mrs. Howe died two years ago, and reposes beside her husband in Camp Hill Cemetery. The offspring of this marriage was ten children, two only of which survive, viz., Mr. Sydenham Howe and Mrs. Cathcart Thompson, both living in Halifax. As some of the wives of famous men have much to do with shaping if not directing the lives of their husbands, I have thought it not out of place here to introduce to the attention of the reader a lady whose superior qualities were highly adapted for the encouragement of a man who had to pass through many trying vicissitudes during his checkered political course. Mrs. Howe was a lady of fine intellect, and her sound judgment and advice never failed in producing wholesome results. She was to her husband a helpmeet indeed. Whenever the clouds lowered upon his house, as they often did, she stood beside him as his stay and comforter, with words of cheer and consolation, always making the best out of the worst features of the trouble. She was fully aware of her husband's great talents, of his ambition and of his faults, which no man living is without, and she knew how to minister to every necessity as a "guiding angel," and to lead by the hand, as it were, beside still waters. Preferentially Mrs. Howe was domestic in her habits; but deferentially and in obedience to her position, society claimed a large portion of her

time—indeed the time of the wives of leading public men, like that of their husbands, is regarded by the general public in the light of a bill of exchange—to be drawn upon at sight—so that during Mr. Howe's palmy days, extending over a long period, there was very little repose or retirement from the cares and responsibilities of official life. But such must ever be the penalty that waits upon fame. On the death of her husband Mrs. Howe was considerably remembered by the Legislature of the Province, so that her closing days were passed in comparative ease at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Thompson.

Mr. Howe as a Reporter.

Charles Dickens commenced his literary career by reporting for the London Morning Chronicle in the Gallery of the House of Commons. So with Joseph Howe. There was but one Gallery in the Nova Scotia House at the time, situated at the Eastern end of the Assembly Room. As the Press was of no account in those conservative and self-contained days, no provision was made for Reporters. It was all one to the highly distinguished members of the House—for it was a great distinction to be a representative—whether their speeches saw the light of day after delivery in the august presence of one another. Here then in this pent up office, hustled by a grimy crowd, our future statesman might be seen day after day taking notes upon the crown of his hat—then, after the House had adjourned at a late hour, and members and the multitude had gone home to dine and wine and retire to bed, Howe would go to work to transcribe his notes for publication—for although his paper came out but once a week, he had to keep up with the day's work of the house, and so he labored day and night, doing with very little sleep. But there never yet was a self-made man whose laurels were not gathered, unless through dint of hard up-hill toiling and determination. Until Mr. Howe's time reporting for the newspapers was a luxury seldom indulged in. Indeed it was considered next to a breach of privilege for a spectator to take notes in the House. Mr. Howe, at all events, broke the ice,

and wrestled in his mind with all contingent probabilities, such as going to jail or having his ears cropped, or some other dire punishment, which it was at that time in the power of the House to inflict. Without reference to party—if there was any party at that time, except one, "the Compact."—Mr. Howe published his reports, without flattery on the one side or acrimony on the other. His own views were sunk in the respective speakers—every member was allowed the full benefit of his own utterances. But then the editor also appeared in each day's debate under the editorial head, in juxta-position, as it were, with each of the speakers, and expressed himself with no uncertain sound upon the questions before the House, and in so able a way that the embryo or forthcoming member had a better hearing in the country than if he delivered himself orally upon the floors of the House. In looking over the debates, the reader of the Nova Scotian would not be swayed by the contesting opinions of this or that member in the discussion, but as a general thing be more or less influenced by the Mentor of the country, if not of the House. Yes, in 1830, six years before Mr. Howe "had the honor of a seat in that House," his pen did more in shaping and moulding public opinion than most of the members—nor do I think it a stretch of the imagination in saying this. And he had ample and congenial work for the exercise of his abilities in attacking the system of Government that then prevailed. The Executive and Legislative Councils formed one body—no two branches as at present—and their discussions were conducted with closed doors. The public had no rights to be respected in that "Star Chamber." There was no departmental government; and the size of the salaries shared by the officials were measured and meted out with no ungrudging hand, but in keeping with the opportunities which the system favored. The City and County were governed by a Board of Magistrates appointed by the Crown, which in plain English meant the Lieut. Governor and Council, all firmly knit together by ties the most indissoluble—unanswerable to any other than their own authority, which was absolute, and so far as the people were concerned irresponsible. (Upon this branch of the subject more definite reference will be made hereafter.) City and Municipal Corporations were things unknown—not even contemplated as possible future eventualities. To these and such like measures Mr. Howe fearlessly addressed himself, and thus was leading to his own entanglement—for his opponents left no stone unturned in their endeavors to work the coils of the law about him, for they well knew that the time was coming when such an outspoken fearless individual must commit himself, when his tongue through the law courts would be silenced forever. That time did arrive and his opponents were not slow to take advantage of it, as will be noticed hereafter in the great Libel Suit, but instead of killing their tormentor, resulted in his becoming the greatest man in British North America.

A PERSIAN PRINCE IN EXILE.

He is the Head of a Religious Sect and Lives in Great Style at Bombay. A Persian prince lives in Bombay of whom very little is heard, though he is a power in the Oriental world. He wields more authority than many Oriental potentates. He is at the head of the Maulai sect of Mohammedans who are widely scattered over northern India and the regions north and east of India. The Maulais regard this religious Persian prince as their spiritual head or pope. Col. Tanner, who has described the inhabitants of the Himalayas recently, says that were this prince to return to Persia he would speedily lose his head, though he exercises absolute spiritual authority over a vast number of followers in the upper Oxus States in Kashmir, in Burmah, and even in China. The constituted rulers of these countries do not influence those of their people who are members of this religious sect so powerfully as does this far away prince.

The lowliest Maulai who wanders over the lofty plateau of the Pamir feels his duty to subscribe from his scanty means every year toward a tribute to his spiritual lord. Across the snowy passes which lie between Central Asia and India this tribute is carried and delivered, regardless of the difficulties which for many stages beset the embassies on their journeys.

The prince, who, by the way, is addicted to horse-racing, and is one of the most liberal patrons of the Indian turf, is one of the descendants of the original saints so commonly regarded in olden times by the Persians as persons of the greatest sanctity. He lives in the greatest luxury. His very large income, wholly derived from the annual contributions of the faithful, enables him to occupy a fine palace. He has a large retinue of servants, a stable of fine horses, and all the outward trappings of a very important and wealthy personage. He is far more fortunate than the princes of the Upper Oxus States, who, within a few years, have been passing under the rapacious rule of the tyrant of Afghanistan. Under one pretext or another the leading and most influential of the Upper Oxus princes have been made way with by the Amer, and the rest are apparently destined to meet the same fate at the hands of the Afghan ally of Great Britain, whose hands are steeped in the blood of every man of note in his dominions whom he considers to be inimical to his rule.

Curiosities of Currency.

Salt was the ordinary money of the Abyssinians. The Carthaginians used a stamped leather currency. Shad scales are used as money in many of the North Sea islands. In parts of Scandinavia nails were formerly used to pay for ale and food. The Burmese, Karens, Hangees and Ghans use lead and silver in bullion. In the interior towns of China slips of mulberry bark serve as money. Dried fish was formerly and is still to some extent a medium of exchange in Iceland. Leather coins with a silver nail driven through the center were issued in France by King John the Good in 1306.

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LARGEST DIAMOND IN THE WORLD.

It Was Found in Brazil and is One of the Portuguese Crown Jewels.

The largest diamond in the world is the Braganza—weight 1,880 carats. It was found in Brazil in 1711, and is now one of the Portuguese crown jewels. Much doubt exists as to its being a genuine diamond, the government never having allowed it to be tested. Another fine diamond is the Mattam, belonging to the Rajah of Mattam, Borneo. It is of the "first water," and weighs 367 carats. It bears a striking resemblance to a pear in shape, even to the indentation in the larger end. It was found near Landak, Borneo, in 1760, and has been the cause of several sanguinary wars. The Koh-i-noor, another of the famous diamonds of history, now forms one of the crown jewels of Great Britain. The history of this gem dates back to 1526. It originally weighed 793 carats, but was reduced by unskillful cutting to 186 carats; this while it was the property of the Emperor Aurenzebe. It was captured by the British troops during the Sikh mutiny and was presented to Queen Victoria in 1850. Since coming into Victoria's possession it has been recut and now weighs but 106 1-16 carats. The Pit or Regent diamond belonged to the French crown jewels. It was bought by the Duke of Orleans, then Regent of France, of Pit, the governor of Fort St. George, for £135,000. When in the rough the stone weighed 450 carats. The cutting alone cost \$10,000. Among the large and otherwise famous diamonds of the world, the following may be enumerated: The Piggot, 82 1/2 carats; the Nassac, 89 3/4 carats; the Florentine Brilliant, 139 1/2 carats; the Eugenie and the Green Brilliant, each 51 carats; the Shah, 80 carats; the Sancy, 53 1/2 carats; the Orloff or Orlov, 194 1/2 carats. The noted diamonds of lesser size and value are: The Dresden, the Hope, the Austrian Yellow and the Polar Star.—St. Louis Republic.

Letter Writing.

Letter writing is of great antiquity. The sending of letters by post was originally established by the Roman emperors for safe and speedy transmission of public documents and in modern Europe by Louis XI. of France for the same purpose. The first approach to a regular postal system in England was in the time of Charles I.

Stamps for letters were first temporarily used in France in time of Louis XIV., and different advices were afterward used in Spain and Sweden. In 1810, the postal reform was first put in operation in England, and first used in the United States in 1847. Two values only were at first used five and ten cents, bearing, respectively, the portraits of Franklin and Washington. In 1845 they were withdrawn and one cent and three cents introduced, and now we enjoy the privilege of sending a letter all over the United States for three cents.

Slaves Very Cheap.

Mr. Stanley tells us that, on the banks of the Congo, he bought eighteen dark-skinned lads at the moderate price of three cents a head. He found in the hands of the Arabs 2300 captives, whom they had dragged into slavery. "Among them," he says, "were many little boys. I selected eighteen of the poor fellows, and bought them of the Arabs for a handkerchief apiece. The handkerchiefs cost three cents each in Manchester, and so I obtained the little negroes very cheaply.

TRINITY CHURCH.

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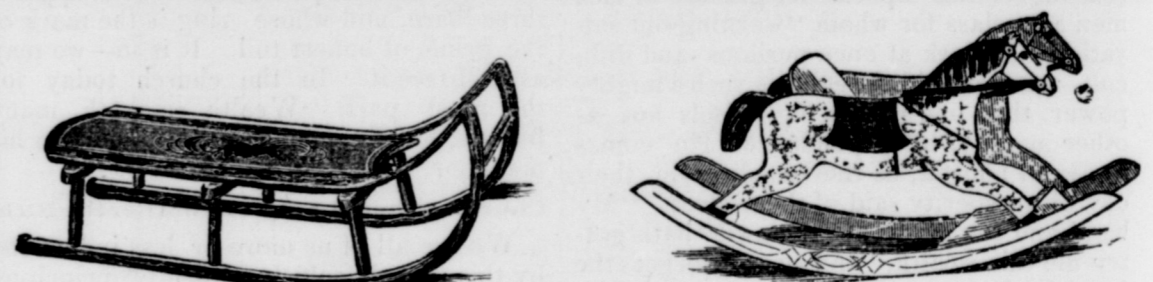
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