

POLITICAL NOTES.

A Glance at the Leading Measures Carried in the House of Assembly of New Brunswick, from the Year 1854.

By G. E. FENEY, Fredericton, N. B.

No. 18.

The Double-headed Member for Queens—The Government Defeated but not Annihilated—Appeal of St. John Police Magistrate—For want of a Quorum the Sergeant-at-Arms is Sent Abroad Among the Hotels to Hunt up Members—The Opposition Impatient and Wrathful—Mr. R. K. Gilbert's Disqualification Bill—The Speaker Still a "Kicker"—The Speaker's Inconsistency—He has a Hard Time of it From the Opposition.

There were only two members of the Government present when the question was put, [in reference to Mr. Earle's appointment to a seat in the Legislative Council,] and as it came suddenly upon them, it was the cause of some embarrassment. The answer was therefore somewhat evasive, as it could not otherwise well be—for in matters of diplomacy there are numerous doors to close, as well as loop holes to creep out of, before raising the curtain upon the principal actors. One of those honorable gentlemen said he was not prepared to give an answer. An Opposition member replied that this was treating the House cavalierly. Mr. Earle (one of the principal stars in the comedy) remarked that "he was not up there yet," but he thought the County of Queen's had a right to be represented in the "upper branch." Failing to give a satisfactory answer, Mr. Perley moved an address to His Excellency upon the subject. This was opposed by the members of the Government. Mr. Smith, (Albert,) contended that the right to put the question implied the right to pass the address, and he urged that the House had a right to have such information as they asked from the Government. Mr. Fisher quoted from the Records of the Imperial Parliament, and showed that the resolution did not violate a single constitutional principle. He maintained that if the Executive had recommended the appointment of Mr. Earle, and that recommendation had been sent home to receive the Royal sanction, it was tantamount to the appointment having been made. Mr. Johnson replied to the arguments, urged by Mr. Gray, showing that they were fallacious, and that it was right for any member of the House to ask any member of the Government for such information as the country required. Mr. Watters supported the resolution, believing that if the Government substituted the term "inconvenience" for that of "unconstitutionality" in their objections, it would be more appropriate in their case. Mr. Mitchell, now Hon. Peter, took the same side, warmly defending the resolution, and showing that it did not conflict with Imperial practices. Mr. Perley still a member in the present House, 1894, in a short speech spoke of the weakness of the Government by their efforts to "beat around the bush." He had no doubt the question was a very embarrassing one to them. Mr. Kerr followed on the same side, and Mr. Street defended the Government. The debate was hotly maintained by the opposition, and at each stage the excitement grew more intense, inasmuch as the question was purely one between the Government and the Opposition, and great anxiety began to be felt as to which side would be victors. Finally the question was put to the House, and the GOVERNMENT WAS DEFEATED BY A MAJORITY OF FOUR! All the members were present. Messrs. McMonagle and Kerr were against the Government this time, and voted with the Opposition.

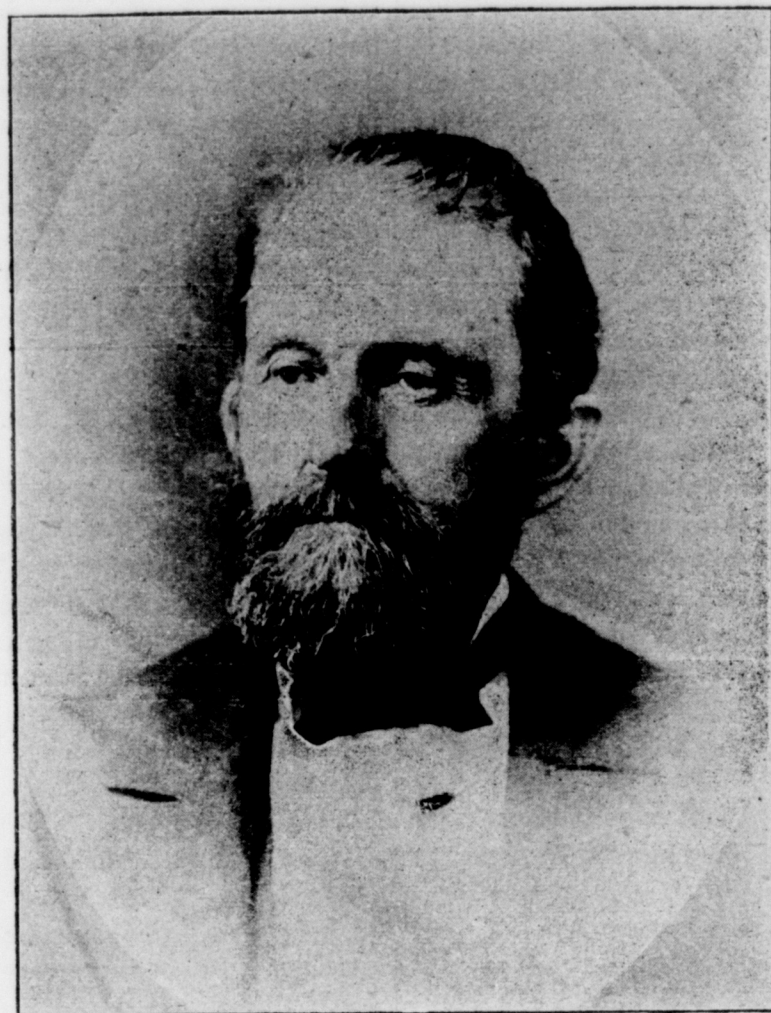
The address was accordingly presented to His Excellency.

The terms of the Constitution, however, did not demand the surrender of power into the hands of the opposition in consequence of this defeat; for it was well understood that the twenty-one Government supporters were as adamant as ever, still remained a unit, and would not act upon a single catch vote to turn the Government out. No further action in reference to this matter was, therefore, deemed practicable at that time. [Mr. Earle did take the seat up stairs afterwards.]

March 14. There was a long discussion on a Bill to alter and amend the law relating to the office of Police Magistrate in the City of St. John. The Bill contemplated an increase of salary to £400, the amount at that time being £300. A petition was also laid before the House from the Common Council, praying that the bill should not be allowed to pass. The result of the sending in of this petition was, that many members gave the Bill their support, believing from the action of the Common Council that that body wished to have control of the office. There was a very strong feeling in the House against the Corporation having such control, and those who supported the bill argued that the office should be free from the influence of men or any body of men. On the other hand, it was argued by two or three members that the Common Council were supposed to represent the feelings and wishes of the City of St. John, ergo their request should receive some consideration. The Speaker argued that as the Common Council had personal feelings in the matter, they were

not in this instance entitled to any attention from the House. He believed that the Magistrate had received great injustice at the hands of the Common Council, and he believed that the latter did not correctly represent the feelings and wishes of the people, as the next civic elections would prove. Many other opinions were expressed pro and con on the Bill.

On the 16th, the House was so thinly attended all the morning that the Speaker began to think that hon. gentlemen had "taken French leave" of Fredericton. He said that if there was not a quorum, or twenty members present at twelve o'clock, the House must as a natural consequence adjourn until next day. The Sergeant-at-Arms was therefore called upon to proceed upon an expedition in search of the absentees and have them brought into



HON. A. H. GILLMOR.

their place by the hour named. At twenty minutes before twelve the Sergeant returned, like the dove to the ark, but without even an olive branch, or rather a word that the requisite number could possibly be got together in time—and this after crusading through the hotels, boarding houses, committee rooms, billiard rooms, bar-rooms, and all other places where hon. members were supposed to congregate, at an expense too of wind and muscle which bore heavily upon a somewhat uncertain constitution; in fact the good official was all but exhausted, and unfit for his arduous duties in the House during the remainder of the day. At twelve o'clock, however, hon. members began to drop in one by one—no doubt the search of the Sergeant for them, having by this time spread pretty well through the naughts of Fredericton, and so had made up their minds like so many school-boys for an overhauling by the Speaker for their tardiness. All knew that the Government and House were in the power of this mighty functionary, and he could cut their heads off by a single blow at any moment.

In the afternoon business proceeded as usual, serenely; but the clouds were gathering and the storm brewing, but the time was uncertain when it would burst.

On the 17th the opposition murmured loudly that the Government did not give the House something to do. It was complained that they had been now nearly five weeks in Session, and with the exception of the Election Bill, which they alleged was simply a repetition of the old Law, with a few modifications made through the opposition, the House had for so long a time been unfortunately idle. The old enemies of Responsible Government founded upon this do-nothing course of action, an argument against the new principles. Under the old system the House did not wait for the Government to goad them into action. The fallacy of this idea need not be met, as at the present day it is self-evident to every politician.

On a previous day Mr. R. K. Gilbert introduced a Bill, (nick-named "the purification Bill") for excluding all subordinate officials from helping seats in the Legislature; and on the 17th it was taken up for discussion. The Bill by Section 1st, provided that no person will be eligible to be a candidate, or capable of being elected or returned as a member to serve in the Assembly, by any Sheriff or returning officer, where such persons held any office connected with the management or general revenue of the Province, or as Deputy Collector or Treasurer of such revenue, or Deputy Postmaster, or Surrogate, Judge of Probate, Registrar of Probates, Registrar of Deeds and Wills, Clerk of the Supreme Court, or Clerk of the Peace.

The second section was against all railway contractors holding seats, or any one deriving the least emolument from Government works of whatsoever description. The third section was still more emphatic, declaring against commissioners, arbitrators, or, indeed (it might be added by way of joke) any one who stood and looked at the railway for half an hour at a time. The Speaker, like a taper, the more he burned the more his materials of supply appeared to give out. From having at one time been in the full blaze of a Responsible Government man, one of the main instruments in getting the principles into use, he was now tapering down into midnight darkness. In order to destroy the "light of other days," he prepared an additional

section of Mr. Gilbert's Bill, for excluding from the Assembly, Executive Councillors, Heads of Departments, Bankers, Aliens, (and it might have been added, every man who held an occupation for the purpose of enabling him to live by eating and drinking.) His honor, however, found but two supporters to his amendment—the names need not be mentioned, as both are now dead.

Mr. Gilbert's Bill was carried, but was afterwards thrown out in the Council, that most useless of all useful bodies.

21st. This day was famous for another of those unseemly alterations, which had been so frequent of late, the chief actors being the Speaker and the refractory Opposition. The breach between the combatants had gradually widened with every fresh breeze, until now the chasm was too broad to be bridged over, even by conciliatory means, much less by persisting in the old combative course. The subject before the House was a Government Railway measure, for the purpose of reducing the number of Railway Commissioners from five to three, and making such other alterations in the existing law as was considered requisite. Mr. Gilmour having moved as an amendment to the first section of the Bill, that the Commissioners should not be eligible to a seat in the Assembly, the battle commenced. Mr. Botsford (late judge) thought the amendment very inconsistent with the principles of Responsible and Departmental Government. He maintained that there would be a great outlay by these Commissioners for travelling and contingent expenses, and he thought



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ment, but now it seems he had changed his mind. The Speaker denied that he had ever supported Departmental Government. He had always supported true Responsible Government, but there was no responsibility in the present system.

Many other gentlemen spoke, but enough has been given to show the nature or extent of the storm, and the frivolousness of this particular House of Assembly. It was agreed between Mr. Gilmour and Mr. Smith that the amendment should be embodied in a separate Bill, which the latter gentleman introduced as a rider to the Government Bill at a subsequent day and carried it through the House.

Several other battles were fought, one day after another—on the 24th a terrible engagement took place between the inns and outs—but on the 26th the Waterloo of the campaign was commenced and ended in a rout all round, a final break up and a dispersion of the House by His Excellency, as will be explained in the next article.

Blighted Histrionic Ambition.
"So Miss Flightingale is not going on the stage after all?"
"She isn't sure about it. Her prospects were splendid, but the judge excluded most of the sensational testimony from her trial."—[Washington Star.]

Louis Kossuth, in his old age, was opposed to anything like socialism. Talking to an Englishman recently he said: "Your great danger is socialism. I say make no terms with socialism. You must stamp it out."

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