

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. 11.

Among Members in Bringing Forward Their Bills—Earnest Temperance Discussion—Church of England Bill—Who Should Appoint the Rectors—Minister—Initiation of Money Grants—Change in the Appointment of Common Clergy—The Late John M. Robinson and W. R. Morris, Esqs.

What appears most remarkable at this time is that several important Bills and resolutions which had for some time been lying on the table, were only incidentally referred to, when questions were asked, notwithstanding particular days were set apart for their discussion; but when those days would arrive the Members were either not in their places, or not ready for "the order of the day." There was for example, Mr. Hatheway's resolution for considering the initiation of the money grants—Mr. Connell's resolution for withholding the surrender until Municipal Corporations were established—Mr. End's Bill for the repeal of the Liquor Law (a measure calculated to stir up more controversy than perhaps any other.) Time wore on—the season was getting late—but those and other like important topics were avoided, as if both parties were timid to touch them. As an instance of the manner in which those topics were nibbled at, the following conversation upon the subject of the Liquor Law may not be uninteresting, not only on account of the question itself, but as exhibiting the constitutional views held by different members, some of which it will be seen are rather crude.

Hon. Mr. Smith denied that it was a Government measure. He held that the Executive Council could not do otherwise than recommend its sanction after the Law had passed both branches of the Legislature. Mr. Street said he was more strongly confirmed in the opinion it was a Government measure, from a statement made by Mr. Tilley in a recent speech that before the Law should be repealed without having a fair trial, he would sooner see the Government sink. Hon. Solicitor General said, as a counterpoint of what had been stated by the Secretary, it was (Mr. Johnson's) vote, for the repeal of the Prohibitory Law should sink the Government he would not withhold giving such vote. Mr. McPherson wanted to see a Revenue Bill brought down before the Bill for the repeal of the Prohibitory Law was taken up. Mr. Hatheway referred to the Minutes of the Council, and said he did not understand how it was that Messrs. Johnson and Tilley should so express themselves, if the Government by the Council referred to were all considered responsible for the bill. Mr. Steadman (now Judge) thought the question of raising a Revenue had nothing to do with the repeal of the Prohibitory Law. It the Bill was right let it stand upon its own merits; the Government had no right to suppose there would be any deficiency in the revenue by the operations of the Law, and therefore it would be premature in them to prepare a Bill to that effect. Mr. Wilmot said that if the Government were not responsible for the Bill they were for the deficiency in the Revenue. Mr. Cutler said that the principles of Constitutional Government had been adhered to when the Executive recommended His Excellency to assent to the Law. After the Bill had passed both houses of the Legislature, he (Mr. C.) held it to be the imperative duty of the Ministers of the Crown to act as they did.

[NOTE.—Nothing can be clearer than this question. To make it a Government measure, it must be introduced as such, and in such a way that there can be no misunderstanding. On the contrary Mr. Tilley introduced the Bill as a private one on his own responsibility, and it was so fully understood. But the object of the opposition was to trip up the Government no matter how—hence their insistence upon this being a Government measure.]

The consideration of this Law reminds one of the volcano in the distance not a very great distance either, to the brink of which the Government is hastening. The above conversation is, but the rumbling of the internal fires, which are soon to belch forth into eruption—the overturning of the Liberal party and the serious crippling of its comely child—Responsible Government—in the house of his friends, and in the presence of its sponsors, after many years of hard struggling.

The mania for making long speeches this Session was remarkable. Unless some hon. gentleman had the floor for three and four hours, they and their friends did not appear to consider that they had properly acquitted themselves. This was especially the case in discussing the Railways Bills from day to day.

On the 22nd March the House not being very full, it was moved that the question be taken, as the "next speaker" was not forthcoming. Mr. Gilmor resisted the motion. He said that he intended to speak himself on the Revenue; his notes, however, were only of sufficient length, he said, to enable him to make a speech of three and a half hours in length; and as it was his desire to speak four and a half hours, he thought he could wait for another day. This was considered to be a most happy hit at long story tellers. Dr. Franklin, it is said, never made a speech in his life that exceeded half an hour; but then he said as much in that time as most of his contemporaries could have in half a day. He did not utter a superfluous word,

and consequently all that fell from his lips was the pure metal without the usual dross, a thing not found wanting in the laboratory of common sense.

March 28. On motion of Mr. Gray the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole in consideration of a Bill relating to the Church of England. The mover explained the features of the Bill, and the nature of the privileges asked for by the Wardens and Vestry of Saint Mark's Church in the City of St. John. Messrs. Street, Johnson and Tilley followed—the latter gentleman in support of the Bill. It was argued by some members that the Bill proposed to give to the Church-Wardens and Vestry of the Parish the right to accept or reject the Clergyman whom the Bishop might appoint to preside over the congregation. Mr. Allen contended that it was taking the power out of the hands of his Lordship that was vested in him by the Ecclesiastical Law of England. He was also opposed to the passing of the Bill inasmuch as it was asked for by only one Church, and not by all the churches throughout the Province. Mr. Armstrong supported the Bill, contending that the principle which gave to the Bishop power to grant Licenses to Clergymen to preside over a Congregation, irrespective of the will of its members, was incorrect. Mr. End opposed the Bill in a lengthy speech, and contended that if members of a congregation did not agree with the doctrine enunciated by their clergymen they could withdraw from the church. Several honorable members differed with the views expressed by Mr. End. Mr. Gilmor stated that the honorable gentleman had changed both spiritually and politically since October, 1854. Mr. G. supported the Bill, and looked upon it as a species of hardship where a congregation had no voice in the selection of a spiritual teacher. Mr. Street contended that it was only asked for by one Church, and not by all the Churches of the Province. He believed the Bill would lead to a spirit of antagonism if it passed in its present shape. Mr. S. proposed an amendment which was lost by a large majority. Mr. Gray warmly contended that the Bill should pass, and it would be no more than an act of justice to those who asked for it. The Bill was further supported by Messrs. Kerr, Steadman, McLellan, and opposed by Mr. Johnson, Mr. End, and Mr. Waters. The Bill was sustained by a large majority, but was afterwards rejected by the Legislative Council.

April 2. The long looked for—long talked of resolution "the head and front" of years of "log-rolling," submitted at the opening of the Session, viz.: the Initiation of Money Grants, was, on motion of Mr. Hatheway, taken up for discussion this day. A mere epitome of the lengthy speech of the mover, and the remarks of several other Members, having covered nearly all the ground that could be occupied, for and against, will suffice to show the general arguments used in the debate. Mr. Hatheway explained the motives he had in view in introducing the Resolution. He thought enough had transpired to justify its passing, and gave the Government power to check extravagance. He referred to the views expressed by members of this House in 1852, and at a subsequent period, and also to the opinion of Lord Durham upon the subject. He believed that we had evidence every day of the necessity of this measure. He was in of favor introducing it by Resolution rather than by Bill, and he considered it more necessary at the present time owing to the great falling off in the Revenue and the commercial depression. The passing of the Resolution would make the Government responsible for the expenditures, and be productive of beneficial results. Mr. Harding (of St. John) wished to place the responsibility somewhere, and he thought the Government the most proper persons to have it. If we went on in the way we had for the two or three years back, the province would be in a condition similar to that of several of the States of the neighboring Republic. He should oppose the passing of the measure by Bill, but would support it by Resolution, and he further thought that there should be a Committee of Public Accounts to examine the estimates and papers of the Government, and thus have one set of men act as a check upon another. An Estimate similar to that brought down by the Government last year was all that the country required. He thought that some of those prescriptive grants which were in the habit of being appropriated annually should be gradually wiped off and done away with, else the Province would shortly become a Public Insurance Office. He concluded that the time had arrived for closing the door of recklessness and extravagance, and he should vote for this Resolution.

Mr. Connell would support the Resolution, on account of its absolute necessity; he had concluded not to move his amendment, [it will be remembered that Mr. C's amendment was to the effect that the House should only surrender the Initiation in case Municipalities being established] but he was aware of the importance of it. From experience in his own County, he knew that of Municipal Corporations would be of immense utility to every County that should adopt the principle. Mr. End led up the Opposition; and his remarks are here condensed. He said he would perish at his desk before he would consent to adopt it. He disapproved of being governed by Lord Durham's Report, which all who had been in the habit of praising, had not read at all. But what would answer for the political atmosphere of Canada would not answer for New Brunswick. He would never consent to tie up our hands by this Resolution. The Government had suspected him of being in the opposition; but he would support them in any good measure, and he was not disposed to offer factious opposition to them. Nothing could ever convince him that it was a correct theory to surrender the purse strings to the Government. Mr. End here spoke at some length of the difference between practice and theory, instances of which were respectively

ly observable in Mr. Steeves' Report and in the report of Lord Durham, the latter of which he looked upon as a farce. He believed that if the Resolution passed, it would be in the power of the Government through numerous rills to command a majority in the House. To talk about responsibility was all nonsense. He did not consider there was any analogy between this country and the Imperial Parliament, and he would never consent to becoming a galley slave by surrendering up this privilege. He liked to see a proper spirit of constitutional antagonism kept up between the different branches of the Government. He respected the Legislative Council, and he wanted to see that body independent of the crown and the people. He felt indignant at the dictation that had been offered by the Colonial Secretary some years since. He contended that the passing of the Resolution would be a vote of censure upon the House, and in conclusion he would say, "God forbid that I should give up the inheritance of my fathers."

The question was taken on the 3rd of the month and carried.

The majority was only two. The names of some of the leading Conservatives appear among the "Yeas," and those of Liberals among the "Nays." Although this was essentially a measure of reform, no fault can be found with old professed reformers for voting as they did; nor yet by Conservatives against their friends who voted for the measure. It was at the time supposed to be a very great experiment—to transfer from the House to the Government such a tremendous power. There were thinking men of both parties, who failed to see the advantages claimed for the transfer from the House to the Government such a tremendous power. There were thinking men of both parties, who failed to see the advantages claimed for the transfer—on the contrary they saw in it more mischief than was common to the existing system. The vote was taken upon the question (although a reform) not upon party lines, but what was believed to be at the time from pure and independent convictions. Good reasons were assigned on both sides, (whether Liberal or Conservative,) for the votes given—but the adverse reasons have been dissipated by time—the fears entertained have never been realized. For example, Mr. McLellan (the present Senator) "had no doubt that the principle of the Resolution was good, but as we were yet without the general establishment of Municipalities, he should vote against the change." Mr. M.L. had the reputation of being a good Liberal, but he was not bound to sacrifice his independent feelings at the shrine of party, or rather it should be said to try an important experiment, when it was generally considered that Municipal Corporations were correlatives or preliminary to a change in the system. Mr. Street, on the other hand, the leader of the Conservatives, fell in with this reform movement, without expressing any misgivings as to the consequences. He said he would support the principle of the resolution, and he did so irrespective of its being a measure towards which the Government might be favourable or unfavourable. If the measure had proved beneficial in England it also would here, and he was for placing the responsibility where it belonged. He maintained that the House should be restricted by the Estimates of the Government, and that it was a loose principle to misappropriate the public money without any check as under the present system. Such a system he contended required to be immediately remedied, and this resolution would have the effect of stopping this frittering away of the public funds. He thought, however, it should go further, and that the principle should be sustained by Legislative enactment. What was done by resolution could be too easily undone. He did not regard it as an infringement upon the privileges of the House, and he believed the carrying out of the resolution would tend to preserve the dignity of the Legislature.

This was a new and most useful installment of Responsible Government. The machinery was now pretty nearly complete. Had the Government faltered as with their predecessors in the old time, or showed the smallest disposition to the assumption of this fresh responsibility, "the surrender" would still be in the distance, and the mischief keep on increasing. Up to this time then, so far from Responsible Government proving what its former opponents predicted, viz.: revolutionary in its tendencies, it has been gradually developing and gaining strength, and the elements of conflict, which an open and unguarded chest encouraged every Session, were being gradually subdued and brought under the control of a single arm, over which any opposition might keep a strict and jealous watch.

The discussion which took place, on the same day, upon the "Contingent expenses of the House," showed that the principle of the transfer of the money grants, as holding the Government accountable for all the expenditures, was not carried into effect a day too soon. Under the head "Contingencies," articles had been provided for the use of members, which were now called "boodle" of a most extraordinary description.

[NOTE.—It is unnecessary to specify these articles or go any further into a subject which it is better for the credit of the Province, to pass into oblivion. If any one is anxious about the matter he will find some of the particulars reported in the News, April 9, 1856.]

These "contingencies" furnished another proof of the defects of the old system. They were the result of habits of recklessness, or extravagance, and concupiscence, which had been allowed to go on unchecked from year to year, by a Government that complacently looked on, feeling that they could not help it, and even knew not how the money was going, but were impotent, or thought they were, to interpose a barrier.

The Saint John City Charter was amended in an important particular, viz.: by taking out of the Government hands the power of appointing the City Clerk, and placing it in the hands of the Council. The motion originated in this wise: On the death of the late incumbent the Common Council (having a Conservative majority) appointed Mr. John M. Robinson, as had hitherto been the practice, pending the Governor's confirmation to fill the vacancy. The Government refused to confirm the nomination, and appointed Mr. W. R. M. Burris. [NOTE.—Mr. Burris through ill-health retired from the office in a few years afterwards into private life, and died upon his farm in 1883—a very worthy, upright,

honorable man, possessing a fine legal mind and solid attainments. Mr. Robinson is also dead—a gentleman who was universally liked for his fine, genial manners, and excellent gentlemanly qualities.] The Council waxed indignant. Hence, a very essential reform spirit suddenly possessed the members of the Board, and they asked the Legislature to vest the appointing power in them—to apply to all future cases. Reform being the order of the day in the House, the concession was unhesitatingly made. On the retirement of Mr. Burris, the Council for the first time had the opportunity of exercising their authority, by appointing Mr. B. L. Peters (now Judge) to the vacancy.

[NOTE.—The next and following letters will open up the most interesting and political revolutionary period (the most startling incidents) ever known in the legislative annals of New Brunswick, the autocratic conduct of the Lieutenant-Governor, and the position of the temperance party as well as the liberal party.—Ed. Progress.]

Resistless Power of Knowledge.

I knew one colored minister in the Bahamas who had quite a reputation for learning, because in his sermons he used alternately the phrases "ipse dixit" and "ex nihilo nihil fit."

I noticed that whenever any of his congregation showed signs of losing interest in his discourse, or an inclination to slumber, he would throw out at them a long, hooked forefinger, and exclaim: "How do I know this, do you ask? Because, 'ipse dixit'." It that would not bring them to their senses, he would let his chest swell, stretch both arms to their full length, and cry, "Ex nihilo nihil fit!"

Then eyes would bulge as it about to start from their sockets, mouths (open indefinitely, and the congregation would stare and wonder how "one small head could carry all he knew." Cicero, with his elegant Latin, never made so profound an impression.—Donahoe's Magazine.

Gave His Definition.

Teacher—Now, children, I want to explain the difference between lady and woman. Suppose one of either class should be seated in a horse car, and should give up her seat to an old gentleman, what would she be?

Bright Boy—I guess she would be a phenomenon.

Somewhat Strange.

"A red light is a sign of danger, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, isn't it rather queer that they should have them in drug-store windows and not in Saloons?"—Judge.

THINGS OF VALUE.

On these occasions when a girl is as good as gold, she preserves the unities of the situation all the better if she shows a proper reserve.

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Bay of Islands. J. M. CAMPBELL.

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Springhill, N. S. WM. DANIELS.

I was Cured of Chronic Rheumatism by MINARD'S LINIMENT.

Albert, Co., N. B. GEORGE TINGLEY.

"De trouble wid too many ob you niggers," says Uncle Mose, "is dat you wants to lib sinners an' die Christians."

Hale and Hearty.

The Englishman says he "drinks hail and it makes him ail." The Canadian drinks Putnam's Emulsion and it makes him hearty.

The only thing in this world that is prettier than a pretty girl in the moonlight is a prettier girl.

There is no danger of a man being forgotten so long as he is in a position to extend favors.

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