

A GREAT FARCE.

Tory Spouters With Little Knowledge of Public Questions

TALKED TO MANY EMPTY BENCHES AT THE OPERA HOUSE,

Sad Disappointment for Mr. Borden's Followers.

The first shot in the political campaign in the Opera house stage last evening. The "guns" used were old time muzzle loaders, and while they made plenty of noise, the damage to the enemy was very slight. The meeting was, beyond a doubt, the tamest political gathering ever held in Fredericton. If you doubt the truth of this statement ask any fair minded person who was present and listened to the speeches.

The meeting was advertised to begin at eight o'clock, and fifteen minutes later, when Mr. G. J. Colter, president of the York Liberal Conservative Association, took the chair, there were not more than 150 persons present. One solitary lady had a seat in the main auditorium, and she got tired of the show before it was half over and left in disgust. She certainly showed considerable pluck to remain as long as she did.

The platform contingent included such stalwart Tory gladiators as Rev. Dr. McLeod, Dougald McCatharine, John M. Wiley, A. D. Thomas, Major Cropley, H. F. McLeod, O. S. Crockett, Calvin Estabrooks, David M. Richards, C. H. Thomas, Matthew Tennant, Coun. John McKeen, Coun. Haining, Coun. Robison, Dr. Morehouse and several others. Our old friend, Mr. Pinder, was overlooked when the list of platform invitations were sent out, and was obliged to mingle with the "main body."

Some Disappointment.

It was first announced that the speakers were to be Hon. T. C. Casgrain, M. P. for Montmorency, and E. F. Clarke, M. P. for Toronto, but as already stated in these columns, those gentlemen were obliged to cancel their engagements and flee to their constituencies several days ago. Mr. George Macinerney, ex-M. P., and Dr. Stockton were invited to step into the gap, but the learned doctor was obliged to decline, and it was afterwards announced that Mr. J. B. M. Baxter, a young lawyer, was to take his place. Mr. Baxter failed to connect, and the result was that Mr. Macinerney made the trip from St. John alone, to enlighten the electors. The evening train was half an hour late, and Dr. McLeod and Mr. O. S. Crockett were put up to fill in the time pending the arrival of Mr. Macinerney.

Chairman Colter, who was applauded by the faithful on rising, opened the meeting with a five minute speech, which was scarcely audible even to those in the front seats. He expressed great regret at the absence of Messrs. Clarke and Casgrain, (a regret which was heartily shared by the audience before the meeting was half over,) and explained that as they were leaders in their respective provinces, their presence home was necessary for consultation purposes. Later on another speaker who was more frank than the chairman, stated that Messrs. Clarke and Casgrain were needed home to look after their own constituencies. Mr. Colter promised the audience a variety show, and fulfilled his promise to the letter.

An Old Friend.

Dr. McLeod, who was first introduced, spoke about fifteen minutes. He said he had seen smaller meetings and he had also seen larger ones, which had produced poor results. He expressed regret at the absence of Messrs. Clarke and Casgrain. He knew Mr. Clarke personally, (they were both members of the Royal Commission farce,) and he had differed sharply with him, but they had remained friends. The doctor mentioned a few of the issues of the campaign, but did not attempt to discuss them. The fact is the doctor's knowledge of political questions is only superficial, and he was afraid of getting into deep water, as was the case when he bumped against the Hon. D. C. Fraser during the last campaign. The doctor wound up with a high sounding appeal for purity in elections. His speech was a great disappointment and fell very flat on the audience.

An Aspirant.

Mr. O. S. Crockett was the next speaker, and bored the audience for three quarters of an hour. He was also sorry that Messrs. Clarke and Casgrain were not present, and stat-

ed that their absence was due to the short notice given of the elections. He informed the audience that Mr. Casgrain was the Conservative leader at Quebec, but neglected to state what position Mr. Monk occupied in the party councils. Mr. Crockett devoted the greater part of his time to the Grand Trunk Pacific railway project, and indulged in the most flagrant misrepresentation. He claimed that the road would cost \$170,000,000, or \$31 per head of the population. Mr. Borden estimated that the Winnipeg section will cost \$35,000 a mile, but Mr. Crockett, who knows all about the matter, figured it out at \$40,000. Before Mr. Crockett had got through with his tirade on the Grand Trunk, Chairman Colter and others on the platform began to twitch nervously in their seats, and it was plain that they were becoming anxious over Mr. Macinerney's non arrival. The chairman and H. F. McLeod held a whispered conversation, and the latter was sent out to ascertain what was causing the delay. He returned a moment later with a look of disappointment depicted on his countenance, and shook his head sorrowfully at the chairman.

In the meantime Mr. Crockett having exhausted the G. T. P. subject, fished a scrap book from his pocket, and began to expatiate on artificial limbs and false teeth, to the great delight of the small boys in the rear of the hall. After exhausting that subject he plunged into figures, and sought to convince the audience that the Liberals were spending more money than the late Tory government, of which he was so devoted an admirer. He carefully avoided telling the audience that the Liberals had administered the affairs of the country, without adding to the public debt, nor did he touch on the remarkable increase in foreign trade under Liberal rule.

A Welcome Arrival.

While Mr. Crockett was floundering about in a vain attempt to prove that the country was going to the dogs, the door opened and Mr. A. R. Slipp, who had been doing sentinel duty at the depot, entered the hall. He tip toed cautiously up the aisle, so as not to break in on Mr. Crockett's flood of eloquence, and made a break for the stage door. As he reached for the door knob, he turned his head in the direction of the audience, and the look of anxiety on his countenance made it plain to all, that things were not going just right to suit him. It became plain to the audience that Mr. Slipp had planned a surprise for them, but a hitch in carrying out the details of his plan had rather spoiled the effect. The fact was he had escorted Mr. Macinerney to the hall, from the depot, and in his anxiety to have Mr. Crockett squelched, he had outfooted his companion in the race up the aisle. The thing was so badly arranged that the audience missed connection altogether and failed to "catch on" to Mr. Macinerney's presence, until he had disappeared through the stage door. Then there was a faint outburst of applause.

MR. MACINERNEY.

Mr. Crockett gave way to Mr. Macinerney at once, and the few people who remained in the hall, gave a sigh of relief. Mr. Macinerney spoke for over an hour, and though he is a pleasing speaker, he had a wretchedly bad case and failed to hold his audience. People began to move out before he had been speaking five minutes, and when he sat down not more than a hundred persons remained. Mr. Macinerney devoted the greater part of his speech to the Grand Trunk Pacific, and endeavored to show that the policy of the government was inferior to the "crazy quilt" railway scheme outlined by Mr. Borden. Mr. Macinerney preached the doctrine of high protection for Canadian industries, and told the audience how money could be made by converting pig iron into watch springs. Chairman Colter was so impressed by the suggestion that he smiled and stamped his feet, and his example was promptly followed by Mr. Slipp.

Touching on the sale of the Canada Eastern, Mr. Macinerney claimed that the Conservatives had not opposed the bill in parliament, evidently forgetting to tell of the hostility of Mr. Haggart. When it came to discussing the Conservative prospects in the approaching elections, it became evident to the audience that the speaker had been consulting his dream book of late. He declared that there were only two or three men in the Laurier cabinet above second and third rank, but he did not go to the trouble of elaborating on the galaxy of great statesmen who are behind Borden in this campaign. He told the audience that in 1900 the name of Laurier when spoken at a Liberal meeting in Quebec was greeted with cheers and wild huzzas, but claimed a change in public sentiment was apparent today. He told of the great work done for Canada by Macdonald, Cartier, Tupper, Tilley and other old time Conservative leaders, but neglected to say that he was a Liberal when those gentlemen were at the zenith of their fame. In closing he eulogized Borden, and had a good word to say for Dr. McLeod, whom he had never had the pleasure of meeting.

Mr. Macinerney resumed his seat amidst applause, and received a hearty hand shake from the two McLeods and Mr. A. D. Thomas.

The chairman reminded the stampeding audience that the party convention was to be held on Tuesday next. He forgot to call for three cheers for the King, but the gallant Capt. McLeod supplied the omission.

The remnant of an audience responded with cheers for His Majesty, and the faithful on the stage added a cheer for Mr. Borden.

The number present did not at any time exceed three hundred, and not more than one hundred remained until the close. There was a fair sprinkling of Liberals present, and it is needless to say they greatly enjoyed the show.

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