COLONIAL LEGISLATURE.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

SATURDAY, March 19th, 1864.

House in Committee on the Address in reply to His Excellency's Speech—Hon. Mr. Goff in the chair.

First and second paragraphs agreed to—third read.

Hon. Mr. LORD: His Grace the Duke of Newcastle regrets that he could not advise Her Majesty to assent to the address of the Legislature praying that the Award of the Commissioners on the land question might be confirmed. I thought it was quite useless to waste the time of the Legislature in passing that address, when it must have been evident to every member of the House that it would not be favourably received by His Grace. I am not disappointed at the fate the address has met with, and I think it would be a neglect of public duty, on the part of members of the Opposition, were we not to stand up here and show that our views have been carried out—that we have not been mistaken. His Excellency speaks of the address as having been *adopted* by both branches of the Legislature, which would almost convey the idea that it had originated with the people themselves, and not with their representatives.

Hon. the PRESIDENT: Any address passed by a majority of either House is considered an address of that Branch of the Legislature, though, of course, there may be a minority, and the members of that minority have a right to record their objections. Certainly this Council, and the House of Assembly, too would be more gratified by the address receiving the sanction of the Imperial Government than otherwise; but if the minority wish to offer an amendment, it is open for them to do so.

Hon. Mr. DINGWELL: We were of opinion, that as the Duke of Newcastle had given his opinion that the Award was illegal, and therefore could not be sanctioned by the Imperial Government, it was useless for us to pass the address.

Hon. ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not know in what other language we can reply to that paragraph in the Speech of His Excellency. The address was passed with the concurrence of a large majority of both branches of the Legislature, and those who voted for it were certainly desirous that the object prayed for should be granted; but if those who voted against it did not wish to have the prayer of the address granted, they would be quite consistent in saying that they are not sorry that the prayer of the address has been rejected. The majority, however, were desirous that the prayer of the address should be granted, and I do not, therefore, see in what other language we can address His Excellency. It is as polite and courteous as the circumstances of the case admit; and it is as quiet a way as we can express our disappointment.

Hon. Mr. McDONALD: The address adopted last session, if I remember right, was passed unanimously. There was no division upon it; though it was urged by members on this side of the House that it would be of no service. The objections, however, urged by His Honor from the first district of Prince County (Hon. Mr. Lord), to the word "adopted," may have some foundation, for it might lead some persons to suppose that the address originated with the inhabitants of the Island generally. I have no other objection to the paragraph.

Hon. Mr. RAMSAY: When the address was passed by the Legislature, we had merely the opinion of the Colonial Minister that the Award was illegal; but now we have the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown.

Hon. Mr. BEER: I can assure your honors that I, as one member of this House, do sincerely and deeply regret that the Award has not been confirmed; for I am fully persuaded that if it had gone into operation, it would have been a very essential benefit to the inhabitants of this Colony. And, as just observed by His Honor who spoke last, we had only the opinion of the Colonial Minister—we had no legal opinion that the Award was illegal when we passed the address. Knowing, too, that it was signed by three gentlemen of the highest standing in the neighboring colonies — two of them eminent lawyers—we had reason to think that the Award was legal, and we were perfectly justifiable in endeavoring to get it confirmed. We have very great reason to regret that it has not been confirmed; for the tenants, under its operation, would soon have been able to obtain the fee simple of their farms, on terms similar to the terms on which the tenants on the Selkirk and Worrell estates have become freeholders.

Hon. Mr. LORD: I should like to know how the tenants would be benefited by the Award. Why make those statements without showing a reason for them? And if the party at present in power were so very anxious to get the award confirmed, why was the Bill to confirm it kept back for five months? The Commissioners came here expecting that the Bill was the law of the land; for a notice was published in the *Royal Gazette*, stating that it had been very graciously received by Her Majesty; but they were deceived. We knew that when the opinion of the Duke of Newcastle was given, it would not be changed,—that, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, it was unalterable. Delegates have been sent to the Colonial Office, to endeavour to compel the Duke to assent to the address, and what has been the result? Another four or five hundred pounds of the people's money—people who are more heavily taxed than any in these colonies—have been wasted.

Hon. Mr. BEER: His honor who has just sat down is anxious to know how the tenants would be benefited by the award. I reply, that the price of the land would be fixed under the arbitration clause, except a person choose to give the *maximum* price, and few I believe, would do that. And as the settlers on the Selkirk and Worrell estates obtained their lands at from 6s. to 12s. 6d. an acre, the arbitrators would, doubtless, take those prices as a guide. I, therefore, think that every man of common sense must come to the conclusion that the award would be a very great benefit. With regard to the charge of keeping back the Bill to confirm the award, I consider it a mere myth or bugbear; and it has been so often and so satisfactorily answered, that it is unnecessary to refer to it again. It was sent home with the other Bills.

Hon. Mr. DINGWELL: His honor who has just spoken is paying a very poor compliment to the Colonial Minister if he considers it was necessary to send delegates home to see if he was doing his duty. I think it was quite useless to send delegates to England.

Hon. the PRESIDENT: That was not the object of the Government in appointing the delegation. They were satisfied with the opinion of the Colonial minister; but when the address was passed, we had not the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown. However, the Report of the Commissioners is now gone to the wall, and it is of little use to discuss what benefit *might* have resulted from it. I am certainly of opinion that the award would have been a very great benefit. It would have settled this long agitated question which has retarded the prosperity of this colony for upwards of seventy years. And I am also of opinion that it was the deadly opposition that was manifested to it in this Island that prevented it from going into operation. (Attorney General and Mr. Henderson: "Hear! hear!") The very agitation of the question, from year to year, is a loss to the Colony; and as long as this violent opposition to every plan that is proposed for its settlement is kept up, it will never be settled. If the party in power when I first entered the Legislature had been more moderate in their demands, they might have escheated several Townships, and the question might have been settled long ago.

Hon. ATTORNEY GENERAL: I did not think, Mr. Chairman, that any of your honors would have risen to discuss the merits of the Award or Report of the Commissioners, as these have been so fully discussed in the Legislature on different occasions. I fancy, however, that if the Award had gone into operation, very few would be found at the present day who would say it was not a benefit. I am not desirous of going into a discussion on that point; but if it is the wish of your honors to do so, I am quite prepared to give you a speech of an hour's length upon it. I am not surprised at his honor from Prince County (Hon. Mr. Lord) saying it would be a calamity if it had gone into operation; and he is quite welcome to entertain those views, and to gain all the popularity he can by them. As to the charge against the Government of improper conduct in not forwarding the Bill to confirm the Award, that has been again and again answered in the Legislature. It was sent home with the other Bills, and sent in as good time as Bills have been since I have been in the Legislature, which may be seen by referring to a table published some time ago in one of the newspapers. There was a great outcry raised against the Award by a certain party *in this* Island; and I have always been of opinion that the opposition of that party, combined with the influence of the proprietors, was the reason that the Award was set aside. Then when the Award was set aside, and when they fancied they had discovered a very great mare's nest, in this Bill not having been sent home, as they said, in proper time, their great cry was, that that was the reason the Award was lost; thus blowing their wind from the very opposite quarter. What consistency there is in such a course, I leave to those gentlemen themselves to reconcile. When that bill was before the Legislature, I stated that I thought we were premature; but, of the two, I would rather err on the safe side. Passing that Bill at that time was the result of misunderstanding, in some degree, the interpretation of a *despatch from the* Colonial Office. Any discussion on the delegation, at the present time, would, I think, be premature.

Hon. Mr. HENDERSON: I am not anxious, Mr. Chairman, to take anything by the forelock that would stir up agitation; but taking the statements of your honors, I cannot help thinking that Lord Brougham utterred a great truth when he said "the *ins* are always wrong, and the *outs* are always right." In politics there are only ins and outs. Those in office are desirous of maintaining their position, and those in the opposition, eager to get in, miss the mark, and strike down the man of straw in the opposite direction. Now, in regard to the Bill to confirm the Award, there is one thing I recollect, —and I think the Colonial Minister's opinion is worthy of respect. His Grace says, in a despatch to His Excellency, that "he could not but feel pleased at the readiness with which the Legislature complied with what they supposed to be his wishes." This opinion, I think, should make our side of it good, though the Bill may have been passed under a misapprehension. And this opinion is worth something on the scale, as going to show the honesty of the intentions of the Government. And if both sides of the House had been of one mind, and raised their united voices for the confirmation of the award, I do think, being a part of the British Empire, we would be entitled to more respect, and the result might have been different. Even Sir Samuel Cunard felt this when he said he was bound to pay a certain respect to the standing of the delegates. I also think that the Legislature were justified in desiring something more than the *epse dixit* of the Colonial Minister, with regard to the illegality of the Award. I have no doubt but the proprietors felt that the arbitration clause would be a practical clause, and would be adapted to the circumstances of the people. On this ground I am exceedingly sorry that the award has not been confirmed, and that the prayer of the address has not been granted.

Clause 4.—Hon. Mr. McDONALD objected to this paragraph, on account of it being a reply to several paragraphs of His Excellency's speech, and thought the Committee had departed from the usual course in that particular. His honor said the paragraph contained some statements with which he could agree, and others with which he could not agree, and that, in offering any amendment, it would be likely to involve confusion.

Hon. ATTORNEY GENERAL said there was no necessity for answering the several paragraphs of His Excellency's speech which had been alluded to *seriatim*, as they all contained one particular proposition; and thought it would be quite as difficult to answer them seperately as by the mode which the Committee had adopted, which was not an unusual one.

Hon. Mr. LORD thought it was both unusual and unnecessary to answer two or three paragraphs of the speech by one. In the speech, allusion was made to a despatch from the Colonial Office containing certain propositions for the settlement of the land question, and that despatch had not been seen by the public generally. The Colonial Minister offered certain terms for the settlement of the land question in that despatch, which were more favourable to the tenantry in some respects than the terms offered by Sir Samuel Cunard.

MONDAY, March 21st, 1864.

(Committee on the Address in answer to His Excellency's Speech resumed)

CLAUSE 4.—Hon. Mr McDONALD: There is one part of that clause with which I do not agree—that is, the part which refers to sending the Delegates to England. I do not think the Government pursued the proper course in appointing the Delegation without consulting the Legislature. I think the Government assumed power that properly belonged to the Legislature—that is, the appropriation of funds to meet the expenses of the Delegation. But I suppose that when the despatches are laid before us will be the proper time to enter into a discussion on that subject. I move that the clause under consideration be amended, by striking out all after the word "landlord" to the word "question," and substituting the following:

"We regret that we cannot concur in the course taken by your Excellency in sending a Delegation to the Colonial Office, without first consulting with the Legislature, and submitting thereto the Despatch of the Duke of Newcastle, with his propositions for settling the differences between landlord and tenant."

Hon. Mr. DINGWELL: I will support the amendment; for I think it was quite improper—that it was a very high-handed step—for the Government to offer terms to the proprietors without consulting the Legislature. If the people had been consulted, I would say that the Government were justifiable in sending the Delegates to England. I believe the people are neither willing to accept the proposals of the Colonial Minister nor the Bill of Sir Samuel Cunard, and that shows that they should have been consulted. It may be said that the majority of the House of Assembly were consulted, and that they represent the majority of the people: but I believe the minority of the House of Assembly represent the majority of the tenants; and surely they should have been consulted on a matter of such importance to themselves.

Hon. the PRESIDENT: It is not customary for the Government to consult the minority of the Legislature on any action they may intend to take. They are responsible to the majority. And as to waiting to lay the despatch of the Colonial Minister before the Legislature, I think it would be of very little use, as it only contains suggestions by the Duke himself. They are not compulsory; and what would be the use of laying the despatch before the people until the opinion of His Grace was more definitely known, as well as that of the proprietors? The despatch is, in my opinion, a very extraordinary one. If those suggestions had been made compulsary, and had come out agreed to by the Imperial Government, they would be a basis of operation for the Government of this Island. The despatch contains some very strange arguments; for instance, the man who has been industrious, and has striven hard to meet his engagements with his landlord, would have to pay a much higher price for his land than the refractory or indolent character who would not try to pay his rent. It would be of little use to lay such a despatch before the Legislature; and as far as that is concerned, I think the Government were perfectly justifiable in sending the Delegation to England, or in using any other means they considered practicable to settle this question, which has been agitated, and which has retarded the prosperity of this Colony for upwards of seventy years. The fact is, that if the people were united, there would be some hopes of settling it; but the "ins" are against the "outs" and the "outs" against the "ins;" and as long as that is the case, it will never be settled. I am not saying this of one party more than the other. I would be happy to go with any party that would settle the question; but we do not appear to be as near to it now as we were seventy years ago. However, the Delegates have gone home and returned, and I hope good will yet result from that step. The question has been brought before the Colonial Minister in such a way as could never have been done by despatches; and I am of opinion that before this session is over some practicable mode will be offered to settle this question.

Hon. Mr DINGWELL: I quite agree with the last part of the remark of His Honor the President. I believe the interests of the tenantry are, in a great measure, sacrificed to party feeling. Neither party is free from it. When the Liberal party introduced the Land Purchase Bill, the "outs" offered the strongest opposition to it; but when they came into power themselves, they carried out the same measure. If we would throw away those party feelings, I believe we would be able to carry some measure for the relief of the tenantry. But as to sending the delegation to England, I believe we are in a worse position now than before they went. They have received no encouragement, and have only had what I may call a little brush with the proprietors, who have sent a Bill here and say: "You must pass it as we send it, or get nothing." Now, I think it is going too far to dictate to the people of this Colony in that manner, especially after the acknowledgment of Her Majesty's Government that there was a grievance to settle. I do not think it is treating the Legislature of this Colony with proper respect; but I hope both parties will unite, and endeavor to accomplish something for the relief of the tenantry, for I think we might do so if we were unanimous.

Hon. Mr. BEER: His Honor who has just sat down tells us that he considers the terms offered in the despatch of the Colonial Minister more favourable to the tenantry than the terms sought to be obtained by the delegates; and, therefore, finds great fault with the delegation, and with the government for appointing it. On the whole, I approve of the suggestions of His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, or rather I would approve of them if they could be made obligatory on the proprietors; but in reality they amount to nothing, as the Duke evidently never intended that those suggestions should become binding in law. I gather this from His Grace's own language. In one part of the despatch he says, "*I dismiss the idea of imposing on the proprietors by law any general rate of commutation.*" Again His Grace says, alluding to this general rate of commutation, "*It is not compulsory, and may therefore be increased or diminished, in particular cases, by private agreement between landlords and tenants.*" Again: "*As these sales will not be compulsory, it is not necessary to enter upon any question as to the nature and duration of the leases.*" "It must steadily be borne in mind that, in calling upon the proprietor to relinquish his present claims, the Colony is calling upon him to sacrifice *admitted legal rights. By what inducement can he be reconciled to that sacrifice?*" All this clearly proves that the suggestions of His Grace were not intended to be binding in law. Then, I would ask, what possible good could result from any attempt to legislate upon those suggestions, when the landlord was to be at liberty to "increase or diminish" the rate of commutation at pleasure? Had the proprietors been willing to accept His Grace's suggestions, then I believe there would have been no objection to our enacting them into a compulsory law that would have been binding on the proprietors for the future. It may be reasonably asked, what could have induced His Grace to send so remarkable a despatch to this Colony? In my humble opinion, it was brought about in some thing like this way: the Award having been set aside, and His Grace being about to send a despatch on the subject, in answer to the joint address of the two branches of the Legislature passed last session, and feeling a great desire to have the question settled—taking, as I believe he does, a great interest in it—he set himself about devising some scheme of his own; and after considerable labor, and, no doubt, "much anxious consideration," he got his plan or suggestions matured, and then submitted them to the proprietors in England, who disapproved of and refused to come to any such terms. His Grace's own words are these: "*I am bound to add, that some, at least, of the landlords are not satisfied with them.*" Immediately after the arrival of His Grace's despatch on the Island, it became known here that Sir Samuel Cunard would not agree to the suggestions contained in the despatch referred to. And in my opinion, the only object His Grace could have had in view in sending that despatch to this Colony, was this: he wished to prove to our Legislature that he took an interest in the matter—that he was really anxious to settle the question. But, unfortunately, it is quite evident that the scheme could be of no benefit to the tenantry. The leader of the Opposition, in the other end of the building, may expatiate on the benefits the tenants would derive from the adoption of the Colonial Minister's suggestions, but he knows better. He well knows that no advantage could be derived from any scheme that would still leave the proprietors at liberty to "increase or diminish" the rate at pleasure. But, on the other hand, the offers or suggestions made by the delegates were to be made compulsory—that is to say, after having been agreed to by the proprietors. And bear in mind that the British Government will not confirm any enactment for the immediate benefit of the tenant, at the expense of the proprietors, without the consent of the latter. Such having been obtained, the offers made by the delegates would have been enacted into law, and would be binding on the proprietors for the future. And although the offer made by the delegates would not confer all the benefits on the tenantry that we could wish, we have good reason for believing that it is as much as can be obtained. The question then is, shall we refuse to take what we can get, because we cannot get all we are entitled to? It is well known that many tenants have, within the last twenty or thirty years, become freeholders, by paying twenty years' purchase for their lands; but the terms proposed by the delegates would give the tenants the right to buy at fifteen years' purchase, or twenty-five per cent. less. All old arrears prior to 1858, would also be wiped off, and all obligations for such arrears would be cancelled, which, together, would amount, I am credibly informed, to upwards of £40,000. Those tenants who had paid no rent since 1858 to have the privilege of purchasing at any time within twenty years, by paying sixteen years' purchase. And if the Government were to advance two-thirds of the price of such purchase, and then take security on the farms for such advance, at six per cent, I think none can deny that a large number of tenants would receive a benefit from the arrangement. Though those tenants who are perhaps most in need of relief would not be the first to obtain such relief. The most probable result to be anticipated is, that the tenants who are at all able would immediately purchase their farms; leaving the landlord with only the poorer class of tenants. Very soon the landlord would be induced to sell the balance of his lands to the Government, at a moderate rate; and the poorer class of tenants might then be placed on the same footing as the settlers on the Selkirk Estate. When the Hon. Col. Gray introduced his resolutions in the House of Assembly, five years ago, which led to the appointment of the Commission, his remarks were to the effect that the benefits sought to be obtained for the tenantry were a large remission of arrears of rent, and the right to purchase at a reasonable rate. Had we then obtained the offer of such terms as were sought for by the delegates, we would have thought them a great boon, and most gladly would they have been accepted. But the Commission raised the expectations of the people in a most extraordinary degree, and, I confess, it raised mine also. Those expectations have now, in a great measure, been disappointed, and it now remains for us to determine whether, because we cannot get the whole loaf, we will refuse to accept the half. I think it will be our wisest policy to lay hold of all that we can get, and possibly we may have an opportunity of obtaining something more at some subsequent time; but if we obstinately refuse to accept what we have good reason to believe we can obtain, it is very probable that we will get nothing at all. I think that sending the delegates to England was just what the Government should have done. It has saved, at least, from one to two years' negotiation. A great deal has, of late, been published in the opposition papers on the land question; but I ask your honors if anything better has been suggested than what the Government are striving to get. The editor of the *Examiner* has of late published eleven articles on "The Land Question," in several of which he argues that we have the "right to establish a court of escheat," and that the power was conferred upon us "by Her Majesty's cession of the crown and territorial revenues in the Island to our local Government;" but, immediately after, he stultifies himself by saying, that "it would now be inconsistent with the honor of the Imperial Government to authorize or recommend the establishment of a court of escheat in the Island." And in another part of the same article, the editor states that it would be disreputable and unjust for the Imperial Government now to direct or authorize the institution of a court of escheat in this colony. In the name of consistency, I would ask, if we have the "right" and "power to establish a court of escheat," why talk about the Imperial Government directing or authorising such a course? That editor, at least, makes a wonderful discovery, and comes out with a new platform, and tells his readers that "the most advisable course for the people to pursue for the effecting their complete emancipation from the proprietary yoke," and "the only perfectly just mode of affording redress to the colony, and of freeing the people from proprietary bondage, would be, the extinguishment of proprietary claims by a grant of the Imperial Parliament, to be apportioned among the proprietary claimants, in the same manner as for the emancipation of the slaves in the British West India Islands." Further on, he recommends that our grievances should be fully laid before the House of Commons, and says: "Happily, by this means, that full measure of justice to which they are entitled may be obtained, but certainly by no other." So the British Government, who have most positively refused, to guarantee us a loan of £150,000, are to be petitioned to make us a present of about £200,000, in order to purchase a redemption of the slaves of Prince Edward Island, and rid them from proprietary bondage; and this in direct opposition to the Duke of Newcastle's most positive assurance, in his despatch of the 11th July last, wherein he says, "I also dismiss the notion of any Imperial guaranty or advance of money." I conceive an appeal may be made to the moon with just as much chance of success. In fact, the Opposition, with the Editor before alluded to, as its most prominent member, have in reality, nothing to offer in substitution.

Hon. Mr. DINGWELL: I rise to order. His honor does not know that we have nothing to offer.

Hon. Mr. BEER: Their leading organ says the only mode is to petition the British Government, or rather the House of Commons, to relieve the tenants from proprietary bondage, and in another place he tells his readers that the question can be settled "in no other way." I shall oppose the amendment, because I believe the Government were perfectly justified in appointing the delegation.

(*To be continued*)

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS.

THE CAPTURE OF SOOCHOW—HORRIBLE CARNAGE.—An English gentleman writing from Hong-Kong, on the 14th December, states that the town was given up to pillage. He says:—"The details which have reached us are not very full, but we have learned this much—that the traitor who handed over the Imperialists had his head removed by the latter—a reward he fully deserved; and that the Footai would not allow Gordon even to enter the city after the surrender, but gave it over to his own troops for indiscriminate sack and pillage, declaring that not one of its inhabitants should live. Major Gordon, it appears, exerted himself to the utmost to save the wretched place from the terrors of Imperialist vengence, but with so little avail that he was compelled to retire to Quinsan to save his own life from the hands of his allies. A correspondent writes from the North:—"The mind refuses to picture to itself the horrors of such a scene. Soochow was five years ago the commercial metropolis of China, and its inhabitants numbered over a million. Those who have visited it recently describe it as still busy and populous. Imagine a town the size of Liverpool, defenceless and unarmed, given over to be sacked by savage soldiery, the same men who tortured our poor countrymen, Bowlby and Brabazon — men who crucify their prisoners in cold blood in their own camps, who hang women by their breasts till they die of agony or starvation. *the most unfeeling* whilst the most refined of torturers, the most relentless and unspairing of executioners. Imagine, if you can, such men let loose upon the inhabitants, with orders to spare neither man, woman, or child. No words could describe one tenth part of the horrors which ensued. Not the aggregate of all the sufferings endured by the Poles from brutal Cossacks, savage peasants, or women-whipping generals, who have brought all Europe to the brink of war, would equal the atrocities committed in the sack of this one city, taken virtually by British arms, with the assistance of her Majesty's officers, with sanction of her Majesty's Government, and with supplies from her Majesty's arsenals."—By a letter received by a private steamer from Shanghae, dated the 11th December, the above particulars relative to the massacre at Soochow are thus confirmed:—"Soochow is in an awful state, and the carnage has been something frightful. The general has gone to visit Gordon, with a view towards putting things straight." —Another private letter, dated Hong-Kong, December 14th, says:—"It appears that the rebel chiefs refused to surrender on the Footai's word that no unnecessary blood should be shed, whereupon Gordon got the Footai's promise to himself, and gave his word on which they capitulated. The Footai got in, had his troops concealed about, and when Gordon was outside, commenced a wholesale massacre—men, women, and children. Gordon heard of it, gathered a few men together—among the rest Count or Prince Wittgenstein—and broke into the place, and the scenes then witnessed were so revolting that the Prince says they all loaded and fired again on every mandarian and Imperial soldier they met. Gordon is said to have shot thirty-five buttons himself."

TERRIBLE ACCIDENT IN SPRINGFIELD.—The city of Springfield was startled on Wednesday afternoon by the sound of a double explosion, which proved to be caused by the blowing up of the cartridge factory of C. D. Leet & Co., on Market street. About forty hands, mostly girls, were employed in the building where the accident occurred and a very large number were more or less injured. Three were so badly burned that they died before night, and a number more were reported in a critical condition. Many had their clothes burned entirely off, and still more were injured by leaping from the third story windows upon neighbouring roofs or even into the streets, as all three flights of stairs were demolished by one of the explosions. Some whose cloths were set on fire ran shrieking through the streets, enveloped in flame, and altogether the scene was one of horror not easily imagined. There were many instances of the noblest heroism, men rushing fearlessly into the burning building to remove kegs of powder and prevent still more explosions. The proprietoss of the shop are deemed highly censurable for carelessness, the effects of which have long been manifested in minor accidents, and which has culminated in this tragic catastrophe.

FIRE AND LOSS OF LIFE AT TRACADIE, N.S.—The Antigonish *Casket* gives particulars of a melancholy occurrence which took place at Little Tracadie on the morning of Friday last. About 2 o'clock the house of Mr. Samuel Kinney was discovered to be on fire, and Mr. K. was awakened by the crackling of the flames and the presence of dense smoke in his bed-room. He told his wife to take their youngest child and proceed with it to the nearest neighbour's; and having, as he supposed, secured the safety of the other inmates, he returned, endeavouring to save portions of his property. To his horror he shortly heard a cry in one of the front rooms, and rushing in, found his youngest child, which he removed, but failed to see anything of his wife. The next morning her charred bones were found in the ruins. It is supposed that after leaving the house she returned in order to save some of the property, but was suffocated in the attempt. By this calamity six young and helpless children are left destitute of a mother's care.—*Halifax Acadian Recorder.*

AMERICAN AFFAIRS.

The Washington correspondent of the N. Y. *World* writes the following to that paper:

The most striking and unexpected piece of southern news I have to-day to record is the intelligence that the rebels are now contemplating the project of an invasion of the North, and of re-enacting on a larger scale the onward movement which resulted in the double repulse of Antietam and Gettysburg, and crippled their resources in men and transportation for two successive campaigns. This project is, of course, still in its incipient state, and will not reach its maturity until it has been thoroughly canvassed and adopted by the managers of the rebellion. But that it is making rapid strides and engrossing every day more and more the attention of the people, is a fact which even the most superficial observer will not dare to question. The motives which provoked the resurrection of a scheme which every southerner thought to have been forever buried under the thirty thousand soldiers who fell at Gettysburg are numerous. Among the masses they originate in the hatred of the Yankees and in the disreputable wish to retaliate upon the North the kind of warfare waged against the South by the Union armies. Among the southern officers they spring from a sentiment of self-esteem and wounded vanity, which make them long for the opportunity of proving their military superiority, not only at home but on Northern battle-fields; while among the chiefs of the nation the desire of invading the North, although by no means certain, is attributed to strategical consideration, if not to political reasons of the highest order.

Should the President of the Confederacy yield to the entreaties of his friends, and an invasion of the North be resolved upon, the plan to be followed in the execution of that project would not, as heretofore, be limited to the invasion of a single point of our frontier, but would embrace a whole system of operations by which four states would be either threatened or invaded.

What still adds to the plausibility of this plan, which I believe to be now under consideration of the military authorities of Richmond, is the strong desire manifested in all classes of Southern society to see the extreme South relieved from the pressure of the northern armies. This part of the South is now the agricultural and manufacturing district of the Confederacy. In it are produced the food which supports its armies, and the cloth which covers it. There is not a farm, a garden, or a plantation which has not been devoted to the cultivation of cereals, not a house which has not its loom, handcards and spinning wheel. Hence the desire of the rebels to remove from that precious spot all menaces of danger. It is their hope that by hurling Longstreet's corps against the North, he will be followed there by most of the troops located in the South: that Sherman, McPherson, and Hurlbut would follow his track, free the extreme South from their presence, and operate a thorough revolution in the military occupation of the Southern States.

You will see by what precedes that the rebels are by no means showing either relaxation, lack of means, or despondency. They may be deficient in provisions and clothing, but if they are they act as if they lived in the midst of plenty. They may be wanting in arms and in munitions of war, but if their supplies are scanty they certainly do not show it. Their men, white and black, are well fed, well clothed and well armed; and as to their railroads and rolling stock, which some people represent as being in a dilapidated condition, the fact that they are building new railroads in Georgia and in North Carolina is sufficient to confute this assertion, and to prove that the rebels are provided with all the resoures necessary to a protracted defensive warfare.

CORRESPONDENCE.

[FOR THE EXAMINER.]

TENANT MEETING AT LOT 19.

In accordance with previous arrangement and notice, a general meeting of the resident tenants and others of Lot 19 and adjacent settlements was held in the School Room, Kensington, on the afternoon of Tuesday the 29th ult., for the purpose of taking into consideration matters in connection with the Land Question. Wm. B. Tuplin, Esqr., being called to the chair, the following resolutions were severally proposed, seconded, and adopted unanimously, with the exception of some two or three dissenting voices to the third and fourth:

Resolved, 1st. That the unparralleled nature of the Land Tenure, and the agitation arising therefrom, has tended greatly to retard the improvement of this Island.

2nd. That the whole question is now in a very much worse position than it was when entered upon by the present Government.

3rd. That in view of the whole action of the leaders of the Government, in connection with the Award of the Commissioners and the Delegation, the conviction is forced upon this meeting that it *is not, nor ever was*, their intention to attempt to effect a settlement of the Land question in any way that would materially benefit the tenantry, but only to place the very doubtful titles of the several Proprietors beyond the possibility of future question.

4th. That the terms of settlement suggested by the Duke of Newcastle, in his Despatch, No. 24, of the 11th July last, are more liberal, and much better calculated to enfranchise the lands of Prince Edward Island than are the terms proposed in the Commissioners' Award, in the propositions of the Delegates, or in the Bill of Sir Samuel Cunard

5th. That a Bill judiciously framed, based on the suggestions of the Duke of Newcastle, would carry with it the influence of the Imperial Government, and would, therefore, necessarily be acceded to by the proprietors, and would be perhaps the most effectual means *now within our reach* of setting forever at rest that long vexed question on terms that would in any wise benefit the tenantry of this Island.

6th. That this meeting do urge upon our Legislature the fearful impropriety of accepting a settlement on the terms proposed in the Bill of Sir Samuel Cunard, or of confirming said Bill by legislative enactment, it being only calculated to rivit more firmly the chains of tenant bondage in which the people of this Island have been so long held.

7th. That should the Legislature persist in passing the Bill of Sir Samuel Cunard, it will become their duty, as it is the privilege of this people, to unite with their brethren throughout the Island in causing to be laid at the foot of the throne a petition praying Her Majesty to withhold her assent to a Bill which is so thoroughly calculated in its every feature to become destructive of the best interests of a portion of Her Majesty's loyal subjects, the tenantry of Prince Edward Island.

8th. That the tenants on Lot 19 being desirous of making a fair proposition to the proprietors, do express their willingness to pay Twelve shillings and Sixpence per acre for their land, with a gradual decrease according to quantity and location; all arrears of rent being cancelled up to the year 1860, with the privilege of a term of six years to fulfill their contract.

Those resolutions, while severally under consideration, elicited considerable discussion, especially the eighth, or last, which is an amendment to, or, perhaps, more properly speaking, an extract from a somewhat lengthy resolution introduced by some of the supporters of the Government, which, among other things, contained some sentiments relative to the Bill of Sir Samuel Cunard, somewhat similar in import to the sixth resolution previously passed, hence unnecessary; and some other matter deemed objectionable by the meeting—when it was found necessary to curtail it to its present form to meet their views.

The general feeling exhibited throughout the meeting was dissatisfaction with the present state of the Land Question, strong opposition to the Bill of Sir Samuel Cunard, and an ardent desire on the part of the whole people to see the question finally settled in some way that would afford some reasonable prospect of eventually releasing them from the rent-paying system. Upwards of 200 electors were supposed to be present.

It having been ordered, on motion, that a report of the proceedings of the meeting be sent to the *Islander* and *Examiner* for publication, and a vote of thanks passed to the chairman, the meeting dispersed.

H. S. MACNUTT, Sec'y *pro. tem.*

TO THE HON. E. WHELAN, EDITOR OF THE EXAMINER.

SIR,—My letter to the Tenants of P. E. Island (containing as it did, some strictures on Mr. Coles' letter to the Tenantry,) was particularly intended to give correct information to my own constituents, some of whom—after reading Mr. Coles' letter—were complaining of the supposed non-publication of the Duke of Newcastle's Despatch of July last. I felt anxious that they should know the whole truth in the matter.

My letter was entirely of a political nature, having no reference to anything of a personal or private character. Mr. Coles, in his reply, has thought proper again to rehash the old story that he brought against me on the hustings before an immense assemblage from all parts of Queen's County on a Nomination Day, more than ten years since. Suffice it to say that the accusation was then and there answered and explained to the satisfaction of hundreds, if not thousands of my fellow colonists.

I shall not follow the example set by Mr. Coles, believing it to be a bad cause that requires bolstering up by matter so foreign to the question in hand.

Your publishing these few lines in your paper of to-day, will much oblige

Yours respectfully,
GEORGE BEER.

Charlottetown, April 11, 1864.

The Examiner.

Charlottetown, April 11, 1864.

PROCEEDINGS IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

THE business of the Session has been progressing steadily in the House of Assembly during the past week. Numerous petitions have been presented, nearly all referring to local claims and objects, and several private Bills have been advanced through some of their respective stages. Such of those Bills as have any relation to public interests, together with the debates which occurred respecting them, will receive due attention from our Reporter in his customary Notes of the discussions in the House of Assembly.

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the time of the House was chiefly occupied in debate on the despatches relative to the Land Question and the rejection of the Orange Incorporation Bill. As regards the first the ground which had been previously traversed in the debate on the address, in answer to the Governor's Speech, was gone over again by members on both sides of the House—the Government party contended that the Delegates were entitled to the unqualified approval of the House for the manner in which they had conducted their negotiations with the Colonial Office; and a resolution to that effect was proposed by the leader of the Government, and of course carried. The Minority, on the other hand, showed that the Government had betrayed the interests of the tenantry in all their proceedings on the Land Question, as well in respect to the Land Commission as to the Delegation; and clearly proved that the proposals made by the Duke of Newcastle to the Government of this Island in his despatch of the 11th July, were far more favorable to the tenantry than the terms proposed by the Delegates. The Government party had their own way in the division. Not one of them swerved from the Proprietary Cause. The whole of them advocated the 15 and 16 years' purchase scheme. We are rejoiced to be able to add that the Liberal minority were firmly united in their opposition to that measure.

The debate on the Orange Bill, which occupied the evening of Thursday and the greater part of Friday, was caused by some resolutions submitted by Mr. Secretary Pope, complaining of the conduct of the Duke of Newcastle in not submitting for the Queen's assent the Bill passed last year for the incorporation of Orange Lodges in this Island. The Government party declared, as well in their speeches as in their resolutions, that the rejection of the Bill was an infringement on the constitutional rights of the Legislature of the Colony. The Opposition ably supported the opposite side of the question, and contended that there was no infringement of constitutional rights in the rejection of a Bill to incorporate an institution which was discountenanced in all the Colonies—which was under the displeasure of the Crown and Parliament of Great Britain—which was only calculated to lead to social disunion and to disturbances of the public peace; and which had been so eminently disloyal as even to have contemplated the removal of Her present Majesty from the throne of Great Britain. Members in the Opposition supported this view of the case by the *strongest* arguments and the clearest historical facts; and a resolution was proposed by Mr. Whelan, in which the main propositions of the Colonial Secretary's resolutions were controverted. The amendment was negatived in the usual party way—the twelve Liberals voting for it, and only fifteen of the Government party having been present to oppose it — thus giving them a majority of only three.

NEARLY a month has passed since the Session of the Legislature commenced, and the public are still in doubt and darkness as to the course the Government will pursue in reference to the Land Question. They are pledged to bring forward some measure on that question—distinctly pledged by the Governor's Speech at the opening of the Session—but under particularly strong obligations to the people to do so, on account of their repeated promises to settle the question, and the failure of all their previous attempts in that direction. In the absence, however, of any Government measure, so far, it may be safely inferred from the speeches of members and supporters of the Administration in the Assembly, that the tenantry have nothing at all to expect from any plan of settlement that may be proposed by the Government.

A charge of inconsistency has been brought against us in the Legislature and in the *Islander*, on the assumed ground that in August last we opposed the propositions contained in the Duke's despatch of the 11th July, 1863, and that now in 1864 we are favourable to them. The charge is very erroneous. We readily admit that in August last we objected to the terms of the Duke's despatch, because, as we contended then, and contend yet, they did not come up to the promises made to the tenantry by the Government from the *time they assumed the direction of affairs in* 1859 down to the Session of 1863. They were certainly by no means comparable to the terms on which the several large estates purchased under the provisions of the Land Purchase [illegible] conveyed into small freeholds. We [illegible] that that Bill should be th[illegible] settlement. We cannot see on [illegible] just and honest reasoning the [illegible] parts of the Island should be[illegible] joyment of privileges agreed [illegible] other parts. We are [illegible] has been practically [illegible] cases in which purc[illegible] and that proprietors could not be [illegible] with their estates on the terms wh[illegible]. This is true to some extent. But we are not sticklers, to the furthest degree, for the non-compulsory principle in a matter of this kind. If we say that there shall be no compulsion in bringing the proprietors to a sense of the obligations which they owe to the people of this ill-used country, then we affirm that they are to have their own way in all matters relating to the leasehold tenure. The Government party object to the Duke's proposals, because, as they say, they were not intended to be compulsory, — they are, therefore, we are told, worthless. Will the Government party venture to assert that they intend to pursue an opposite course? Is there any reason to suppose that there is the slightest intention on their part to resort to compulsory legislation? We believe there is not. But assuming that they have a right to use compulsion—and their objection to the Duke's proposals is equivalent to an assertion of their claim to the right—we ask, why not put this principle of compulsion in practice with the view of giving a more general operation to the provisions of the Land *Purchase Bill*? Why not say to the *proprietors*—"We have purchased the Earl of Selkirk's estate for 3s. 4d. an acre. We consider that as the standard value of large estates. We will give you the same price. If you do not accept our offer, we shall have recourse to other legislation, and you must expect no support from us in your contentions with the tenantry." It is quite clear that if the Government were animated by the determination to bring the proprietors to task — if they had the will they would, in course of time, find the way to use such pressure on the proprietary body as would COMPEL them to sell on terms no less favourable than those given to the settlers on the Selkirk estate.

As regards our present apparent approval of the proposals made by the Duke of Newcastle, our position can be very easily and briefly explained. We do not, in fact, now, any more than last summer, approve of the terms offered by His Grace; but when we are called upon to institute a comparison between them and the proposals made by the Delegates, and the proposals made by Sir Samuel Cunard in his beautiful Bill, which the Delegates brought out for our admiration—we say unhesitatingly that the Duke's proposals are vastly better than the others. In a majority of cases throughout the Island, they would have required the payment of only *eight years purchase* to secure the freehold of a farm—in very many cases only twelve years' purchase; and in no case higher than sixteen years' purchase; while, on the contrary, the proposals of the Delegates did not contemplate a lower price than fifteen and sixteen years purchase. The nonsense about the Duke's proposals not being "compulsory," will not impose upon any one. The Delegates made proposals to which certain proprietors subscribed—others did not subscribe to them. The latter certainly could not be bound by the Delegates' proposals. They appear to be *unwilling to abolish* the leasehold tenure on any terms. The consenting proprietors had the prospect of getting terms so extravagantly high, that we suppose they had not the conscience to refuse them. We know very well that some of those consenting proprietors have frequently sold to poor tenants the freeholds of their farms, with ample time for payment, at a much lower price than the Delegates offered for their estates in the gross. It is then a mere delusion to say that the Duke's offer is not binding or compulsory, and not, on that account, to be compared in value to the offer of the Delegates. The offer of the Delegates would be binding only on those proprietors who readily agreed to it — (this is a queer sort of compulsion) — and who by that offer were guaranteed a price for their estates nearly five times higher than was paid for the Selkirk property. We think that such proprietors might be *compelled to sell* on their own terms without much difficulty.

NOTES OF THE SESSION.

No. 4.

Despatch, dated Downing Street, 12th February, 1851, addressed to Sir Alexander Bannerman, when he was about to assume the Government of Prince Edward Island.

The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition having—in reply to different hon. members on the Government side of the House, who assumed that both he and his hon. colleagues in the Administration formed by him, on the introduction of Responsible Government, had a perfect knowledge of the existence of the Despatch above indicated, commonly termed "*The Bloody Despatch*," and had, in fact, as a Government, agreed to act in strict conformity with the suggestions it contained — distinctly stated that he had been wholly ignorant of the existence of the despatch until sometime after the Government, of which he was the Leader, had been formed; and that, therefore, it was quite impossible that he and his colleagues could, on their acceptance of office, have agreed to be bound by it in any way,—the Hon. the Leader of the Government took occasion to observe, "That it was a governing principle with him never to dispute the word of any man or to refuse to believe what he might assert, unless he had sufficient reason to know that his word was not to be relied on; therefore, as the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition had twice or thrice distinctly denied his having had any knowledge of the Despatch in question until sometime after the formation of the Government of which he was the Leader, he (the Hon. Col. Gray) was bound to believe that what he had stated respecting his ignorance of it at the time when he entered upon his office of Premier, was quite correct. Had he, however, with respect to any Governor, been in such a position as that which, at the time adverted to, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition occupied under Lieut. Governor Sir Alexander Bannerman, and had a despatch, such as that in question—a despatch in which the fundamental principles of the Government of which he had been constituted the Premier were