

The Examiner.

AND SEMI-WEEKLY INTELLIGENCER.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY WHEN FREE-BORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC—MAY SPEAK FREE."—MILTON'S EURIPIDES.

NEW SERIES.

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

FRIDAY, March 8.

DEBATE ON THE AMENDMENT TO THE ADDRESS.

MR. COLES'S SPEECH CONCLUDED.

In the United States, the people elected their President; and, although he was at liberty to elect his advisers, he was himself directly responsible to the people for any acts of his government which had been determined upon in pursuance of the counsel of his advisers, or with their sanction: and, should his government, in consequence of any such acts, have become unpopular, the people had it in their power to reject him, should he come forward as a candidate at the next Presidential Election. The hon. member then explained how far the principle of popular election and of responsibility to the people was carried in the United States: and, after having contrasted it with the working of the British Constitution in the hands of the Imperial Government, declared that there was a much greater degree of responsibility attached to the men constituting the Government of Great Britain, than to the Presidential Government of the United States. Should the men composing the Government of Great Britain, at any time forfeit the confidence of the House of Commons, they at once ceased to be a Government; or, if they wished to make an appeal to the people, they advised the Sovereign to dissolve the House, and their expulsion from, or establishment in power was determined by the result of the General Elections as being favourable or adverse to their policy. He would certainly prefer the responsibility of the British Government to that of the United States. The noble Secretary, he could not avoid remarking, was, he thought, the only British Minister of State, who, under a monarchical form of Government, had recommended to a British Colony the adoption of Republican principles. All that was desired by the Liberal Party was that the benefits of the British Constitution should be extended to the people of Prince Edward Island, as far as its operation would be compatible with the condition of a British Dependency. The majority of the Assembly here had no control over the Legislative Council. It was otherwise in Great Britain. There, when any Government measure was successfully carried through the House of Commons, but rejected by the House of Lords, the Administration, if bent upon carrying the measure into law, had recourse to the privilege of the Sovereign, and by procuring the advancement to their peerage of a sufficient number of men favorable to their views, to give them a majority in the Upper House, they secured the success of their measure. The occasional practice of the Imperial Government in this respect, was, on one occasion, successfully followed in New Brunswick. It was certainly true that the Despatch was very contradictory; but, on a careful perusal of the document, and a just weighing of the clashing passages contained therein, it would be found, upon the whole, favorable to the introduction of Responsible Government into the Colony. It was evident his Lordship was anxious to meet the desire of the people; and, encouraged by his sanction of their views, it seemed to him (the hon. member) that the only proper course for the House to pursue was to adopt the Resolution which he had submitted to their consideration. Were it adopted, and appended to the Address reported to the House, the sentiments of the Governor with respect to the introduction of the Responsible system would soon become known to them. Should he be adverse to its introduction, the course to be pursued by the House was evident. It was to refuse to do any business with His Excellency, to withhold the supplies, and disregarding the loss of their own pay, to put on their hats and retire to their several homes, leaving His Excellency, and his Executive Council to carry on the Government as they best could with the means at their disposal, independent of the Legislature. From acting in this manner, should their views be obstructed by His Excellency, there existed no consideration of sufficient weight to deter them. The people would suffer no greater inconvenience from the roads being left unrepaired for one year, than they would willingly submit to for principle. It was true the paupers usually relieved by annual legislative grants might feel much disappointed by the withholding of their annual relief; but he was convinced there was sufficient charity in the country to prevent their actual suffering from want. The case of those who were in the habit of contracting for the repair of roads and bridges, did not, he thought, require any consideration, since these persons were not

dependent upon the gains arising from their contracts for the maintenance of themselves and families. In fine, added the hon. member, it was his opinion that, should the House feel themselves compelled to pursue the line of conduct which he had just indicated, they would be received in their several localities with demonstrations of confidence and respect, instead of being annoyed by the murmurs of discontent. The people of the Colony well understood, from long endurance, the nature of their grievances, and were sufficiently intelligent and well-informed to be able to comprehend what form of British Government was best calculated to afford them relief; and on every account which could render a British Dependency entitled to the most favorable and kindest consideration of the Government of the Parent State,—loyalty, obedience to the laws, preservation of social order, and observance of moral and religious obligations,—were the people of Prince Edward Island, to adopt the language of the noble Secretary, "entitled to the acknowledgement made by him to the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, at the outset of the arrangement for the change of Government in that Colony: 'That it could not be too distinctly acknowledged that it is neither possible nor desirable to carry on the Government of any of the British Provinces of North America in opposition to the opinion of the inhabitants.'" Then, said the hon. member, after so full an admission that the people of the Colony were fully entitled to the complete establishment in the Colony of self-government, and to all the social and political advantages to be derived from it, was it not the duty of their faithful Representatives in the Legislature, to make every exertion in their power to obtain for them full measures of justice, and waiving all personal or selfish considerations, to assume that attitude, with respect to the existing Colonial Government, which could alone bring to an issue the momentous question then pending between the people of Prince Edward Island and the Imperial Government. The hon. member then observed, that he understood the members of the Legislative Council were divided amongst themselves on the question of Responsible Government: a part being in favor of it, and a part opposed to it. This, although in that body there might not be a majority in favour of the views of the majority of the House of Assembly, could not but strengthen the hands of the latter. He was, however, sorry that the whole of that body did not perceive that, by joining with the Liberal Party, they would secure to themselves a just share of all the advantages which would result to the people at large, by throwing open the way to places of honour and emolument to the free competition of merit and ability. The hon. member then observed that it was due to himself to say that, much as he desired and insisted upon the reconstruction of the Executive Council upon liberal principles, it was only to the political, and not to the private, character of some of its members that he entertained any objections. Apart from their political bias, he knew them to be men of much real worth. In conclusion, he then observed that the amendment proposed to the Address to His Excellency was couched in moderate and respectful language; and that, if His Excellency knew, and was disposed to acquit himself of his duty to the people whose chief magistrate he was, he would readily adopt every constitutional means of action in his power, to facilitate the adoption of that system of British Government so much desired by the people. But, indeed, he was inclined to hope for liberal action on the part of His Excellency; both on account of the opinion which prevailed amongst the public, that he was in possession of private instructions from the noble Colonial Secretary to yield to the wishes of the people, should the majority of the lately elected Representatives firmly and unitedly insist upon a compliance therewith; and also from a consideration of the fact, that His Excellency, before the General Election, might have filled up the vacancies in the Legislative Council with anti-liberals, had he thought proper to do so, without subjecting himself to justifiable censure for such exercise of his privilege. He had also had it in his power to do the same thing, if so disposed, since the issue of the General Election had shown him that the majority of the new House were liberals; but, in that case, he thought His Excellency had perceived that, in doing so, he would subject himself to the strongest censure here, and perhaps also draw down upon himself a rebuke from the noble Secretary for the Colonies. His Excellency had, therefore, he (the hon. member) thought, wisely deferred the filling up of those vacancies. The hon. member, after a few other observations, which the want of newspaper accommodation compels the Reporter to omit, concluded by saying that

if the British Government thought they could carry on the Government of the Colony, with no other resources than those afforded by the Crown Revenues, they had his full permission to try the experiment. He had, for the present, done his duty, and should it afterwards appear necessary to go farther, he would not hesitate to proceed. Then, MR. HAVILAND having explained that neither the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General, nor the Clerk of the Crown had memorialized the Imperial Government on the subject of services and salary, the House was adjourned.

AFTERNOON SITTING.

FRIDAY, 8th March.

Mr. COLES—with reference to what he had advanced in the morning, in support of the amendment to the Address in answer to His Excellency's Speech, which he had submitted to the consideration of the House—observed that he might easily have gone much further, but was withheld from so doing in consequence of the hour of adjournment being arrived. Should any opposition be made to his motion, he would be found prepared to meet that opposition by the allegation of new facts and the adducing of new arguments in support of his motion; but, otherwise, he would rest satisfied with what he had already advanced. After a little delay Mr. Speaker was about to put the question, but was prevented from so doing by the rising of Mr. POPE to speak to the question. The honorable member expressed himself to the following effect. Before the question should be put, he was desirous to offer two or three observations, although perhaps it was scarcely worth while to do so; but having been one of the Committee appointed to prepare the draft of the Address then under consideration, he wished to be understood as having reserved to himself the right of supporting any amendment that might be moved in the House having reference to the Despatch laid before it. It had not appeared to him to be the most suitable mode of urging upon His Excellency the necessity which existed for the introduction of Responsible Government into this Colony, to make the Reply to his Speech the vehicle by which to convey to him the views of the majority of the House with respect to that great and important question, as the reply of the Imperial Government to the Address of the late House had not been entered upon according to parliamentary usage, the Address in reply ought to be a mere echo to the Speech; but, in the present instance, the departure from such usage was, in a great measure, if not altogether, justified by the unusual course which had been taken by His Excellency, in sending down to the House a Despatch immediately after the delivery of his Speech to the Legislature, and, consequently, before the Assembly could have had any opportunity to prepare an Address in reply: thus prematurely urging upon their notice and consideration the subject matter of that Despatch. The mistaken policy of the Government had induced them to send down the Despatch of Earl Grey, of 27th December last, touching the question now at issue between the Imperial Government and the people of this Colony, with a view, most likely, to perplex and discourage those members of the House who stood engaged to use every constitutional endeavour for the establishment of Responsible Government in the Colony; and, by that unprecedented step the Government had forced upon the House the extreme measure which, in accordance with the Resolution submitted by the honorable member for Queen's County, the majority were, he believed, prepared to adopt. If his advice in the last Session had been taken, such a course as the Assembly were now likely to pursue would not have been found necessary. The rights of the people were as fully and clearly defined by the Constitution as were those of the Sovereign; and, in assertion of their well-understood and undeniable rights, their Representatives in Parliament assembled were fully warranted, in having recourse to the extreme measure of withholding the annual supplies, when their endeavours, by constitutional means, to effect a needful beneficial reform, whether in the Government or Legislature, or in both, was obstinately resisted by the Administration; and that without justly subjecting themselves to any charge or suspicion of disloyalty or disaffection. It was his wish to have assured His Excellency of the readiness of the House to make provision, by permanent law, for such a Civil List as would ensure the due performance of certain public duties, which were should have been conceded to the Colony such measure of justice as that prayed for in the Address of the Assembly to Her Majesty in 1847, as that which had been granted to the people of Nova Scotia. Many measures had been tried long enough