

counted in the opposing candidate. A protest was entered, and after an able defence of his rights by Mr. Bidwell, at the bar of the House, the return was set aside, and a new election ordered. Thereupon the returning officer refused to receive any votes for Mr. Bidwell, on the ground of his being an alien as the son of his father. Another protest followed and the election was again set aside. Finally young Mr. Bidwell was triumphantly returned to Parliament for the county of Lennox and Addington in August, 1824, and took his seat in the Assembly the following January without further opposition.

These rejections of both father and son were caused by mere partisan feeling, for there was no law on the subject; and so high did this feeling run, that after the expulsion of Barnabas Bidwell, an act was passed making natives of the United States ineligible to seats in the Upper Canada Legislature. This statute however proved so injurious to Canadian interests, that it was repealed in 1824, and a previous residence of seven years was substituted as a qualification for membership.

In 1825, for the first time since the organization of the province, the opponents of the high Tory oligarchy had a majority in the House of Assembly. Mr. Bidwell at once became their leader. The new party called "The Reformers" aimed at making the government responsible to the House of Assembly, precisely as it is to the House of Commons in England, and not to the Governor and Council—the Executive Authority—as the oligarchy had done.

Mr. Bidwell was, perhaps, the strongest man in his party, during his entire career in Canada. Calm, cautious, courteous, high principled, well informed, and ever ready, he had no rival in debate and no superior as a presiding officer. He was chosen speaker in 1829, again in 1835, and held this office in 1836, when Sir Francis Bond Head assumed the government of Upper Canada.

During this period he had a large and lucrative practice at the Bar, won by eminent ability, close application and high moral principle.

He had married happily, had been blessed with children, was beloved by his friends, respected by all, and enjoyed the confidence of the public.

Such was the position of Mr. Bidwell when Sir Francis Head arrived at Toronto as governor in 1836. The new governor, though appointed by the Whig government of Lord Melbourne, proved a bitter Tory. He was a retired half-pay major who had written two or three gossipy books of travel, and was a poor law commissioner of his native county of Kent, the only civil office he had ever held prior to his appointment to Upper Canada. Of Canada, its history, people, politics, and resources, he was, to use his own language, "*grossly ignorant*."*

Among the first who called upon him was Mr. Speaker Bidwell, the acknowledged leader of the reformers. Sir Francis told him plainly that he was an inexperienced man, but would deal honestly towards the country, and resolutely correct the grievances of the province, and taking up the report of those grievances by William Lyon MacKenzie

* See his own "Narrative," published after his return to England. This work, and the "Life of Lord Sydenham" who was subsequently "Governor-General of Canada," and the official correspondence with the Home authorities contained in each, give a vivid idea of the state of Canada referred to in this sketch.