

Those who opposed misrule, attempted to introduce economy and reform in the government, or exposed jobbery or misappropriation of the public money, were marked and hunted down. Alien and sedition laws were enacted. Though freedom of speech was the parliamentary right of members of assembly, it was imprudent to hint at corruption, or to assert the truth that members were bribed by large grants of land. He who was so bold as to make the charge or to demand a committee of investigation was summarily expelled. In 1816, a sheriff dared to vote "the opposition ticket" at an election; he was at once dismissed. He subsequently established a newspaper; exposed abuses, was prosecuted, acquitted, became popular, and was elected to the assembly, where having used his "privilege" rather freely, he was thrust into prison, his paper was seized, and though he served as a volunteer in the war of 1812, was ultimately driven from the province.

The case of Robert Gourlay illustrates more clearly the tyranny of those days. He emigrated from Scotland in 1817, with a view to settle in Canada with his family and to promote emigration to that province. He addressed the landholders for information; sent circulars among the people and eventually invited a convention of delegates to promote his views. The Executive needlessly became alarmed, charged him with seditious purposes, and ordered his arrest. He was tried and acquitted; again accused of treasonable practices, he was re-arrested, and after spending some time in jail was ordered to quit the province, and on refusing, was tried for disobeying *an ex post facto* "Act for preventing seditious meetings in the Province," and forcibly thrust out of the country; all because he desired to obtain and publish information which would encourage emigration to the province.

Such was the government of Upper Canada, when the Honorable Barnabas Bidwell, father of the subject of this memoir, was returned as a reformer to the Assembly from the county of Lennox and Addington in 1821. He was a Presbyterian, a man of considerable ability, eloquent, and a firm advocate of civil and religious liberty.

Mr. Barnabas Bidwell, though a native of Massachusetts, was a British subject, having been born before 1776. He remained however in the United States until 1811, as already stated. His independence of action and outspoken condemnation of the abuses that prevailed in the government evoked a spirit of hostility against him among the oligarchy, who resolved to get rid of him at all hazards. Consequently he was expelled by a majority of one vote—seventeen yeas to sixteen nays, on the ground that he was an alien. This arbitrary proceeding only aroused a determined spirit of opposition, which thereafter never succumbed, and which though repeatedly circumvented and defeated, yet finally buried the oligarchy and the "Family Compact" in a common ruin:

"For Freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won."

In this instance "Freedom's battle" was transferred literally from father to son, for the sturdy yeomanry of Lennox and Addington resenting the affront to the father, brought forward the son, Marshall S. Bidwell, as a candidate for the vacant seat. But the victory was not to be easily achieved. The returning officer or inspector of elections