

March 5, 1873

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 5, 1873

The first session of the second Parliament of the Dominion was opened with the usual brilliant ceremonial. Never were the out-of-door influences of opening day more auspicious. The weather was perfect. Not a cloud dimmed the deep blue of our Canadian sky.

The sun shone as brightly as at midsummer, and there was just warmth enough in the atmosphere to make exercise in the open air pleasant, without taking anything away from its crisp, bracing qualities.

During the morning the unwonted bustle in the streets near to the Houses of Parliament betokened the coming event, while the flags which were flying from the main tower of the central building, and from all the principal public buildings, supplied a warm and welcome colouring to the surroundings. As the hour appointed for the ceremony approached the scene in and around Parliament square became more and more animated. Little groups of volunteers in uniform were seen hurrying past; the pathways were thronged with members going to and from the House; and as early as two o'clock, little parties of men and women had taken up their stations in what they considered as good positions from which to view the show. Gradually these parties increased in number, and some time before three o'clock the crowd assembled on the terrace and on the steps was very large indeed.

Soon the detachment of Foot Guards, under command of Captain Tilton, arrived and took up position as a guard of honour; the Ottawa Field Artillery, commanded by Capt. Stewart, came up very soon after and took their station on the square, at the same time unlimbering and making the necessary preparations for firing, with precision and celerity. As the clock was on the stroke of three the leading files of the cavalry escort, who accompanied His Excellency, appeared at the eastern gateway, and at the same instant the artillerymen opened a salute. A moment later, the cavalcade swept into the square and drove rapidly up to the main entrance of the Houses of Parliament.

Here Lord Dufferin accompanied by his secretaries, aid-de-camps and a brilliant staff, alighted and entered through the ranks of the guards who lined a pathway in the vestibule. He then proceeded to the Senate drawing room and afterwards entered the Senate Chamber and took his seat upon the throne, the staff as usual distributing themselves on either side of the dais. His Excellency was attired in the vice regal uniform, cocked hat, gold laced tunic, sword, etc. etc., and wore besides

the broad blue ribbon of the order of the Bath, the Star of the St. Michael and St. George, and several other decorations. Being seated, the Governor desired the presence of the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod.

Black Rod was in attendance, as ever, faultlessly attired, and having received His Excellency's message to the members of the House of Commons requiring their presence at the bar of the Senate Chamber, he departed, first, however, giving those three inimitable bows, the like of which are not to be seen elsewhere in the wide world. Soon he returned, followed by the Clerk, the Sergeant-at-Arms, and the members of the Commons, whereupon the Speaker of the Senate, Hon. Mr. Chauveau, in a fine clear voice, and with that admirable elocution for which he is celebrated, read the Governor's message to the Commons, requiring them to elect a Speaker and return on the following day to hear his speech from the throne.

Thus the show was completed, the members of the Lower House returned helter-skelter to their chamber, Lord Dufferin and his staff returned to their sleighs, the Guards presented arms, the band played, the cannons were fired, the crown cheered lustily, and amidst a merry uproar, His Excellency took his departure, surrounded as when he came by an escort of cavalry under command of Captain Sparks.

The gentlemen who composed the staff were: Colonel Fletcher, Governor's Secretary; Mr. J.L. Patteson, Private Secretary; Lieut. Rowan Hamilton and Lieut. Coulson A. d. C's.; Lieut.-Col. Cumberland, Provincial A. d. C.; Col. Robertson Ross, A.G.; Lieut.-Col. Powell, D.A.G.; Lieut.-Col. Macpherson, D.A.G.; Lieut.-Col. Wiley, Lieut.-Col. Brunel, Lieut.-Col. Chamberlin, C.M.G.; Lieut.-Col. Griffin, Lieut.-Col. Jackson, D.A.G.; Lieut.-Col. Ross, Guards; Major White, do.; Major Macdonald, unattached; Major Smith, B.M. Coburg; Major Worsley, G.T.R.B.; Capt. Gifford, 4th Batt.; Capt. Tilton, Guards; Capt. Vankoughnet, Guards; Surgeon Malloch, Guards; Pay Master Wickstead, Guards; Capt. Perry, Militia Staff; Lieut. Dennis, Guards; and Lieut. Griffin, Guards.

Prayers

The House was opened at 3.15 p.m. and shortly afterwards received His Excellency's message, requiring the members to attend at the Senate Chamber.