

We are in a prairie country towards the latter end of November, when our work is at last brought to an abrupt conclusion by a blizzard which rages for several days. Work is out of the question; travelling is out of the question; there is only one thing left to do,—stay tight and snug in our tents and wait until it stops. Then follows a journey through the deep snow to the nearest town, which we reach after four days. We pitch our tents on the outskirts of the town, and the horses who have been having plenty of hard work on short rations attack a small haystack which has been deposited in the camp for their special benefit and which they do not leave until it is level with the ground. Soon after the faithful creatures are left to the friendly care of a rancher to be fed and cared for until early the following spring, when the party will once more take to the fields.

The members of the party are then paid off, and thus once more thrown upon civilization with its feather beds, linen collars and other conventions to which they have for so long been strangers.

A STIRRING EPISODE FOR CIVIL SERVANTS.

“Black Wednesday” in Victoria, Australia, in 1878.

The Australian State of Victoria had, and still has in a certain degree, a House of Lords, that is, of landowners, and thirty years ago had a constitutional struggle almost exactly parallel to that which is now taking place in Great Britain. And thereby hangs a tale that is of interest to civil servants.

When the colony of Victoria received the gift of self-government, it was thought necessary to provide a check on the people's representatives by the establishment of a Second Chamber approaching as

nearly as possible in character the British House of Lords. As there was no hereditary aristocracy in the colony, the landowning class, the ‘squattocracy,’ was chosen as a substitute. According to it was laid down that no one should be eligible to sit in the Legislative Council unless in the possession of freehold estate in the colony worth not less than £5,000, or £500 annual value, while £1,000 or £100 annual value was to be the qualification for electors.

These amounts, however, were gradually reduced. They were half at the time of the episode of which we write, in 1877. Sir Graham Berry was Premier in 1877, and he decided to introduce a bill for the payment of members of the Lower House. The bill passed the Assembly, but was rejected by the Council by a large majority. Berry then included the grant (£18,000) in the Appropriation Bill, intending to provide the money as an ordinary form of expenditure. But the landowning House did not alter its attitude of hostility, and on the 13th of December, 1877, formally ‘laid aside’ the Appropriation Bill.

Berry's next step was to pass a resolution in the Assembly ‘that all votes passed in Committee of Supply become legally available for expenditure immediately the resolutions are agreed to by the Assembly.’ A decision of the Law Courts, however, went against the Government, who were therefore unable to enforce their demands.

Government was now at a standstill. There was no money to pay the civil service, but rather than give way Berry decided to throw on the Council the whole onus of paralyzing the business of the country. Thus it came to pass that on the 18th January, 1878, the day ever since remembered as ‘Black Wednesday,’ Berry dismissed all the heads of departments, judges, police magistrates, coroners, and Crown prosecutors, as well as a number of other public servants. Property values