

PRINCE EDWARD'S ISLAND.

RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 28 February 1854;—for,

A "COPY of the SPEECH of His Excellency the LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR of PRINCE EDWARD'S ISLAND, on the Opening of the present Session of the Legislature, on the 9th day of February 1854."

Colonial Office, }
13 March 1854. }

FREDERICK PEEL.

SPEECH of His Excellency the LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR, at the opening of the Legislature, on Thursday, the 9th of February 1854.

Mr. President and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council :

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly :

I FEEL much satisfaction in now meeting the Legislature for the despatch of public business.

Some months after the general election last summer a requisition was addressed to me by several Members of the Assembly, to summon you to meet on an early day, they considering that no time should be lost, in order to exclude by legal enactment departmental officers from occupying seats in the Legislature. I did not think it expedient to accede to that request, because it occurred to me that such a departure from the usual course would have been construed into an admission on my part that evils had arisen demanding an immediate change; for one of your own statutes, passed six years ago, is in force (as it was at the time of the election), defining what are departmental offices, and it provides, "that any Member of the Assembly who shall accept of any such office of profit or emolument shall be incapable of taking or holding his seat in the General Assembly of this Island, unless re-elected after his acceptance thereof."

In regard to the Legislative Council, I do not understand why members of that body should be excluded (if such be really the intention) from participating, as they have hitherto done, in a share of the salaried or departmental offices of Government.

Three years have nearly passed away since I was instructed to introduce what is termed responsible government, in accordance with the often-repeated solicitations of many of Her Majesty's subjects here. Since that time the colony has been prospering, tranquil and contented; and, judging from my intercourse with the people, they are well entitled to the concession they asked for. If, however, they now seek for changes in the constitution, I hope they will be such as may contribute to the welfare of the community at large; for while I feel confident every favourable consideration will be given to the wishes of Her Majesty's loyal subjects, I am equally certain that no Colonial Minister, unless for very cogent reasons, will deem it expedient, at least by Imperial interference, to narrow or diminish the principles of self-government now established in this island. Since its introduction all the Acts which have been passed by the Legislature, with the exception of one (still under consideration), have received the Royal assent; a circumstance, during a period of three years' legislation, which I believe never before occurred in any North American province.