

THE POSITION OF THE OPPOSITION

assume so dangerous a phase, and had accordingly taken none of those precautions which might have prevented the destruction of the parliament house and its valuable contents. Indeed it would seem that the leaders of the movement against the bill had themselves no idea that the political storm which they had raised by their inflammatory harangues would become a whirlwind so entirely beyond their control. Their main object was to bring about a ministerial crisis. Sir Allan MacNab, the leader of the opposition, himself declared that he was amazed at the dangerous form which the public indignation had at last assumed. He had always been a devoted subject of the sovereign, and it is only just to say that he could under no circumstances become a rebel, but he had been carried away by his feelings and had made rash observations more than once under the belief that the bill would reward the same class of men whom he and other loyalists had fought against in Upper Canada. Whatever he felt in his heart, he and his followers must always be held as much responsible for the disturbances of 1849 as were Mackenzie and Papi-neau for those of 1837. Indeed there was this difference between them: the former were reckless, but at least they had, in the opinion of many persons, certain political grievances to redress, while the latter were simply opposing the settlement of a question which they were bound to consider fairly and impartially, if they had any respect for former