

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JUNE 1, 1886.

A HOPEFUL CROWD.

Most sensible and respectable people in Manitoba have for the past two years at least felt thoroughly ashamed of the collection of brawlers yecept the Local Legislature. Few people outside of their own immediate friends and hangers on would be astonished at any display of dishonesty, caddishness or rowdiness they might make, and the unseemly brawl on the floor of the House on Wednesday night after the adjournment only brings to the surface the latent characteristics of the hopeful crowd. The quiet, peaceable tax payers of the province must feel amused as well as outraged, as in their mind's eye they beheld the ponderous figure of Premier Norquay dancing around and sawing the air with his bear-like paws with all the wild excitement of a pugilistic pupil in his first mill, or they may admire the bravery and self-sacrifice of the "membah" for Birtle as he hugged and held the member from Portage from attacking his ponderous political chief. The whole affair was a screaming farce, had it taken place in Ned McKeown's sparring hall, instead of the Legislative Hall of the Province of Manitoba. And here, by the way, we beg Ned's pardon for associating him with such a disreputable scuffle.

A year or so ago THE COMMERCIAL endeavored to size up the financial standing of our hopeful gang of legislators, when they were legislating to place the majority of their number beyond the reach of the sheriff, a work they accomplished in the most complete manner. It is well they have not another session to run without having to appeal to the voters of the province, or, in all probability, they would finish up their personal protective legislation by passing an act which would place them as thoroughly beyond the reach of the policeman and the police magistrate as they now are beyond the sheriffs. The squabble referred to, although it took place after the House adjourned for the night, was only the result of the rowdy-like wrangle which was intended for a debate on the public accounts, and which immediately preceded the adjournment. The Premier evidently did not like the rather free criticism by

some members upon his rather eccentric manipulation of the public funds, some of which criticisms may have been out of place from the benches of the House. His slanderous assertion about his opponents being absconded defaulters from other countries was certainly inexcusable as well as unjustifiable, and in any legislative house outside of the bear garden where Manitoba is misrepresented would have brought down the discipline of the Speaker. When the big dog barks angrily, all the little curs within hearing employ their yelping powers in imitating him, and so we find it with our hopeful legislators. The greatest nonentity of a ministerial echo in the Government's following felt free to abuse opponents or any one who displeased him after hearing his chief descend to slanderous abuse such as a costermonger would think over before uttering. After all the vials of abuse had been poured out, if the half-dozen or so of honest, solvent men in the house had been out of it, we question if the whole torrent would flow over the limits of actual truth, or that the real character of the majority was made one whit blacker than it really is.

As the last session of this rabble called a legislature is about at an end, people could afford to smile at their bravling, were the characters and reputations of better men outside the House not assailed. Thus we have the member for Birtle traducing the reputation of one of the first business men of the Northwest, and taking the cur-like style of so doing while sheltered from consequences by the privileges of the House.

This member, or we should say "membah" for Birtle is a genuine specimen of the sheriff-proof Manitoba legislator, and one of the useful and truculent henchmen of Premier Norquay. He is a mighty man in his own estimation, and is credited with boasting that he owed more money than any man in Manitoba possessed. He has certainly more unsatisfied judgments hanging over his head than any man in Manitoba can pay, and almost at any time during the past three years an enterprising man could have purchased for a trifle enough of his marked checks (marked no funds, we mean) to paper the inside of an immigrant's trunk. Mr. Leacock, as this "membah" for Birtle is named, is a man void of small ideas, and in defending his political chief he took occasion to refer to Mr. J. H. Ashdown,

the business man he slandered, as "a petty tinsmith, with a great admiration for the 'almighty dollar'." The "membah" has certainly a contempt for the glittering coin, and an easy carelessness about how he treats it. At one time he drove around with the most pretentious equipage in Manitoba, the horses in which some say were never paid for. Tradesmen's bills the "membah" never troubled about, and as to applying the "almighty dollar" toward paying any of them, that was beneath him. He paid everything he did pay as a rule by cheque, and was not particular as to what bank the cheque was on. Some of those he patronized still keep these checks as fond remembrances of his lordly liberality. The "membah" can patronize and drawl with all the insipidity of a Daudreary, only his is not the natural drawl of the educated and languid English gentleman, but the clumsy imitation of the vulgar snob. We need not wonder that the "membah" has such a contempt for Mr. Ashdown, a man who has all his life prospered by industry and punctillious honesty, and is now one of the first business men of Manitoba and the heaviest employer of labor in the Province. Such miserable plebian traits of character are certainly only worthy of the contempt of such lordly natures as that of the "membah" for Birtle.

The "membah" has a great admiration for military men, and in comparing Mr. Ashdown with Lieut.-Col. McKeand, lavishes his toady like taffy on the latter, who with that unassuming manner peculiar to the gallant commander of the 90th, winces under the dose, for it has a taint of the hand-licking of a fawning mangey spaniel, sycophantic enough on its part, but loathsome to the recipient of its intended favors.

But the "membah" for Birtle can well afford to look down upon such plebian trash as Mr. Ashdown. The latter has only risen from a tinsmith's bench to a leading commercial position and now "looks the whole world in the face," much the same as Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith." But the "membah" can boast of a noble lineage of which a prize pig at a provincial exhibition might well feel proud. In figuring out this wonderful heraldic line he throws around crusaders, earls and other notables of the middle ages as freely as he has his worthless bank cheques during the past three years. We must not wonder then that he pictures