

OTTAWA LETTER.

The Facts of the West Huron Election Enquiry.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier Was Slow to Act in the Transvaal Affair.

The Late Sir James Edgar—A Seed Grain Mystery in Mr. Sifton's Department.

OTTAWA, Aug. 1.—It was frequently remarked in the early part of the session that the speaker had not long to live. This view was forced upon members by his look of weariness, and by the extreme pallor of the speaker's face...

The late speaker came to his office with a determination to give the best that was in him to his duties. His dignified and courtly bearing, his regard for the amenities of public life and a certain unobtrusive insistence upon the forms of procedure were characteristic of his habits of mind and rules of conduct...

Before he came to the speakership Sir James Edgar was one of the best known of the liberal members of the house. When Mr. Charlton designated him "an unscrupulous machine politician" he did not use the word "machine" in the Prestonian sense...

While Sir James Edgar was skilful in effecting compromises like this and was always a strenuous combatant for his party, as was shown by his taking the lead in the charges against Sir Adolphe Caron, he also gave his mind to larger issues...

per the torient of surrounding constituents.

Twice yesterday the government and the opposition side joined in a hearty and unanimous declaration. Once was on the occasion of the announcement of the speaker's death, when the short and impressive addresses of the premier and Mr. Foster expressed the feelings of their respective parties...

The other occasion was when both sides joined in what amounted to a demonstration in favor of the Uitlanders in the Transvaal. It is a long way from Kruger's territory to the banks of the Ottawa, but distance is nothing when members of the press, British family are moved by intelligence that an injury is done to their comrades in any part of the world...

Between the morning and the evening harmony there was a little period of storm. Several hours were spent in discussing an item of \$2,000 for providing seed grain to some half-breeds somewhere to the far north-west of Edmonton. There is not so much objection to the issue of grain as there is to the vagueness of the ministers' explanations on the matter...

The examination of Col. Donville before the public accounts committee awakened little or no interest. It was necessary for him to clear himself, and he could before the session closed, and so he made his statement. The purport of it is that the caretaker of the 8th Hussars, Major Wedderburn, had a claim for \$60 a year for rent of an armory, during five years previous to 1891...

The trouble with this explanation is that it doesn't explain. Setting aside altogether the question of the claim of \$60 a year, the fact is that the department of militia did not pay \$300 on this basis. The armory belonged to Milton Barnes and the rent was paid to him by Major Wedderburn out of the cases of arms allowance year by year...

If the auditor general had been a different kind of man there would have been no more about it. No one would have seen the account, but the officers, and they would have supposed that the money went straight through Col. Donville's hands to Mr. Milton Barnes. But this auditor general has curiosity, and when the cheque was returned he perceived that the money had not been drawn by Milton Barnes...

OTTAWA, Aug. 1.—When the house adjourned Monday evening there appeared to be a fair chance that Mr. Bain would be the next speaker. In the evening the ministers met together in small caucuses and before they went to bed, or very early in the morning, the conclusion was reached. Mr. Bain is considered acceptable, but he would not be as good a speaker as Mr. Ellis, who is quicker and keener, equally fair and has more of the qualities that are essential to the position...

Quite early yesterday forenoon Mr. Ellis disappeared from Ottawa, taking the train for Western Ontario. He probably knew before he went away that Mr. Bain was to be speaker, for Mr. Borden called for his absence...

There was an animated discussion over contracts for militia clothing. Mr. Borden called for tenders for Montreal, one from Shorey & Co. and the other from Mr. Workman. The Shorey firm is a large manufacturer of militia clothing, and the Workman firm is a contractor for the government...

Mr. Borden explained that the contract was given to the highest tenderer because Mr. Shorey declined to accept the anti-sweating condition. The clause provides that in a clothing contract for the government the work shall not be farmed out, but shall be done by the contractors on their own premises...

This explanation had a plausibility, but Mr. Bergeron had certain facts bearing upon the question. He produced a bundle of affidavits certifying that the signers had been making militia clothing for the Workman firm. One of the affidavits stated that a great number of trousers, and also a large number of coats, and also a number of shirts, were made by the contractor...

Then Mr. Borden had another explanation. He said the work was required at once, and he had given leave to the contractor to depart slightly from the conditions. Mr. Borden's statement government supporter from Laval, in whose constituency much of this work is done, testified that there were no insidious conditions, and that the families who did the work were exceedingly respectable. At this stage Mr. Mulock, who is the author of the anti-sweating clause, came forward as a friend of the working man, denouncing the opposition with great fury for supporting the system of farming out contracts at starvation rates...

Mr. Foster made some invidious remarks at the expense of Mr. Mulock's de-augmentation. He told the postmaster general that this humbug and bluster of his would not deceive anybody. It was hardly worth while for the minister to stand up defending the anti-sweating law when they themselves were breaking it in order that one of their own friends might improperly get a few thousands out of a contract. This was a clear case of giving the contract to the highest tenderer...

derer by imposing a swindling condition made applicable to all the tenderers except the favorite, who was exempt from it. The government which connived at this plunder of the people's money could hardly escape by claiming to be the friends of the working men.

Then Mr. Blair came to the rescue with an affidavit of Mr. Workman dated January 11th. This affidavit stated that the contract to the government was signed January 9th. Now the goods farmed out were produced last autumn, and therefore, said Mr. Blair, they were not made under this contract. The minister of railways proceeded to lecture the opposition for failing to see that their criticism did not apply to the contract at all...

Then he was shown that the tenders were called for last August, that the tender was accepted the same month, the contract was entered into in September, and thousands of dollars' worth of goods supplied under its terms. The formal signing took place in January, and before that the work had been going on under it and the number of the contract was the number of the Shorey firm. Mr. Blair had been misled by a hasty glance at the first lines in the paper, and had burst in on the house with his argument without having read the document which he was beginning to ridicule him for his unfortunate intervention he growled out some very ill-natured remarks and subsided.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier came in later and added his contribution to the embarrassment of the minister of militia and the postmaster general. The premier did not know that Mr. Mulock had been saying. He did not know what Mr. Borden had struggled to explain. He had not even read the anti-sweating clause of the contract which resulted in an advantage of \$200 a month to one of his political friends, but he took up the discussion with the remark that he thought he could explain the position to the satisfaction of the whole country...

Then it was found that fourteen ballots were initiated in ink, whereas only two or three were initiated in pencil. It was shown that one or two were initiated in ink by the returning officer in the morning, but finding that the ink spread, he used a pencil instead. Therefore two ink initiated ballots might go on, and the remaining fourteen differ in thickness of paper, in the pattern of the paper, in the size of the ballot, from all the others...

Speaking of military matters, Col. Donville last night took a fling at Gen. Hutton. The relations appear to be strained between the colonel and the general, at least on the colonel's side, and the colonel intended to reply to the house this morning. He is going to spend twenty million a year if he kept on. Col. Donville does not believe in galloping over the country in military manoeuvres. He does not believe in the "army" of the present sense that it is now developed. He denounces Gen. Hutton in all his ways and means, and particularly his "noisy militarism"...

Great work was done in the privileges committee yesterday by Mr. Powell. The member for Westmorland has had in charge the examination of the ballots and the establishment of proof from this evidence. It was he who brought out in the examination of Returning Officer Cummings the differences between the 14 "bogus ballots" and the others, and the fact that the spurious ones were marked in ink while the others were marked in pencil. For several days Dr. Russell has been bending his energies in the attempt to show that the discrepancy of the ballots can be properly accounted for. Yesterday he had Dan, McMillan of Goderich, politician, poet, journalist, and contractor for Paris, on the stand. This witness testified that he made the ballots and that it was purely accidental that they were of different shapes. Also he explained how he used this paper first, but completed the job with thicker paper. It appears from his evidence that the counting of ballots in the printing office was done in a happy-go-lucky sort of way. He was asked to print 6150, but printed 6000. The surplus he produced in court. He did not think any others were made at his office for private circulation, but an examination showed that the bunched which he made up and numbered contained anywhere from seven to twenty more ballots than the number written on the back of the bunch, so that the ballot box stuffers had ample material for their purpose.

But what Mr. Russell failed to show Mr. Powell proved. Mr. Borden and he have long known that there were

at least four different kinds of paper employed in making these ballots. They knew that there had been an attempt to explain this, but all the explanation did not show how the ballot could be of one kind and the stub of another. Professor Russell had not thought of this possibility until it was established by evidence which cannot be shaken.

There is an instrument used by paper makers called a micrometer. It measures with delicacy and inflexible accuracy the thickness of a sheet of paper. Mr. Powell summoned from Eddy's mills the expert who uses this instrument in his business and set him to work measuring. It is found that Mr. McMillan printed ballots on at least three kinds of paper. One kind is two one thousandths of an inch, one kind is three one thousandths and one kind is four one thousandths of an inch in thickness. The kind sent to the poll at No. 4 Colborne was the thinnest of all, two one thousandths of an inch. The unused ballots are all of that class; they remain attached to the pad from which the others are torn, and the stubs from which the used ballots are torn are all of the same thickness. Now it is found that the fourteen suspicious ballots are all of another thickness, showing that they were not torn off this pad but came from some other source. But the returning officer has sworn that all the ballots given out by him were torn from the pad, and the number torn off exactly with the number found in the box. It follows that these fourteen were smuggled in and that fourteen others were smuggled out. How it was done and by whom is not established.

Now we have this state of things: In this Colborne poll the usual majority for the liberals is about 8.

The conservative scrutineers had not counted the ballots, but the government should have a majority of 12. The grit scrutineers swear that they counted on a majority of eight. The actual vote recorded was 68 for Holmes and only 30 for McLean, a majority which astonished every voter at the poll.

Since then 43 voters have made statutory declaration that they voted for McLean. Two of these are ill, but the help of the ballots which were produced. A number of bogus ballots were found to be in his box with his initials on them, and a case of fraud was made so strong that even supporters of the government could not ignore it. Then Mr. Borden was allowed to call his electors.

But here he was met with dilatory proceedings. Hour after hour was spent in questioning that could have no other purpose than to kill time. There was evident organized effort for this purpose. When after two or three days it was shown that Mr. Borden was going to make his case it was again taken out of his hands. The grit majority in the committee compelled him to stop and start in an examination of a new lot of officials whom the government party had brought down from Huron without any subpoenas.

Yet he did get in 41 of the electors and thus proved that at least 11 ballots cast for McLean had been stolen and an equal number smuggled in for Holmes. All this was done while Mr. Borden had to fight for even a chance to carry on the enquiry at all.

The privileges committee includes over 40 members, and requires 23 for a quorum. Some of the original members are dead. Several are ill. Some are out of the country. Several are away from the city. If every man within reach could be got every day probably not much over a quorum would be there. Among the members of the government who belong to this committee are the premier, Sir Louis Davies, Mr. Blair, Mr. Mulock, Mr. Sifton and Mr. Fitzpatrick. Nearly all these ministers and a number of their supporters remain away, so that it has been found impossible to keep up the quorum, especially when another committee and the house are in session. This being the case, Mr. Borden at an early stage asked that the quorum be reduced to 10 in order that the hearing of evidence might go on. As the evidence is all printed officially, it would be an easy matter for 10 members, all lawyers, to carry on the examination, especially as it is mostly conducted by two or three. It is sufficient to say that Mr. Borden's application was refused, as was also the proposition that 15 should be taken as a quorum.

Such are the operations of the machine, and the chief machinist, who was the man in charge, has been appointed superintendent of agencies at \$3,000 a year, and is supposed to be in Finland. S. D. S.

OTTAWA, Aug. 3.—There are two scandals in connection with the West Huron election. One is the series of frauds connected with the election itself. The other is the scandalous way in which the government and its supporters are trying to hide the facts and prevent a successful investigation. From time to time an account has been given of the damaging evidence obtained. A little attention may now be devoted to the proof of complicity after the facts, which seems to exist here at Ottawa.

At the beginning Sir Wilfrid, speaking in the house, assured the country that the government would assist in the enquiry and that all offenders would if possible be punished. From the day that this declaration was made until the present moment the government, by its ministers and its supporters, has used every method and artifice known to parliamentary practice to head off the enquiry and prevent the disclosure of the truth. The work of obstruction began the very first day that the committee met, and it has never stopped. When Mr. Borden presented declarations to show that more votes were cast for McLean than were counted for him, it was objected that the voters themselves should be brought here. When 51 of them were brought to swear that they voted for McLean, but 49 of them were counted, Sir Louis Davies and Mr. Russell became suddenly convinced that the secrecy of the ballot must be maintained. No matter whether ballot boxes had been stuffed with bogus votes, whether the votes actually cast had been stolen and destroyed, whether the rights of the voter had been taken from him at every turn by a gang of swindlers employed by officials by the government, the respect for the secrecy of the ballot was so great in the mind of Dr. Russell that he was not willing to



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allow a man to tell how he voted when he wanted to do so, when the man was complaining that his vote was stolen away from him. For very shame the ministers and their supporters were obliged to yield this point to some extent. They consented to this evidence in as far as should be established a presumptive case by the evidence of the returning officers themselves. That is to say, if the returning officers could convict themselves, Sir Louis Davies and Mr. Russell would consent to whether they would allow the electors to be called to confirm the conviction. Mr. Borden, who has conducted the case with singular ability and great moderation, who has never lost his temper, who has made the most of the few opportunities which he has been able to wrest from a hostile majority, was obliged to allow the case to be taken out of his hands and to examine the accused officials. He did not do it without an appeal to the committee in which the ministers were sustained by a straight party vote.

Then a thing happened which the ministers did not expect. Under the clever examination of Mr. Powell the deputy returning officer from the Colborne poll did convict himself, with the help of the ballots which were produced. A number of bogus ballots were found to be in his box with his initials on them, and a case of fraud was made so strong that even supporters of the government could not ignore it. Then Mr. Borden was allowed to call his electors.

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Other steps have been taken to burke the enquiry. The officials by the government, the respect for the secrecy of the ballot was so great in the mind of Dr. Russell that he was not willing to