

# PROFESSOR FOSTER'S SPEECH

—ON THE—

CANADA PACIFIC RAILWAY RESOLUTIONS. DELIVERED IN THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 12TH OF FEBRUARY, 1884.

MR. FOSTER—Mr. Speaker, I think the House will fully appreciate the difficult circumstances which surround me in attempting to speak upon this question. I think I feel as deeply as any hon. member opposite feels the importance of this question, the importance of the issues which are involved, and of the consequences which will result from our decision. I also feel that the subject presented to us is, in its main points, exceedingly simple; its salient points are but few, and these have been so thoroughly discussed by the strongest minds in this House, on both sides of it—and that is a compliment to the hon. member who has just sat down, which I am glad to make—that it leaves me very little chance with the exception of going over most of the ground which has been travelled before. We had, in the first place the very lucid and very strong statement by the Minister of Railways dealing with this whole matter. Following him, we had an equally strong and equally long statement by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, placing his side of the question before the House. Then, Sir, he was followed by the hon. member for Richmond and Wolfe (Mr. Ives), who in a temperate, well digested and lengthy speech, in which I thought I detected something of a malicious spirit as if he intended to dig into all sides of this question and thoroughly exhaust every possible calculation so as to try the ingenuity of those who might be so unfortunate as to come after him. When that hon. gentleman concluded the House was treated to a speech on this question by another hon. member who, in his

CLEVER, STRIKING AND ROLICKING WAY,

finding there was not much to hit in the question itself, struck right and left as each idea seemed to come out of the experience or incidents of the past. Then we had a comparatively short but remarkably able and patriotic speech by the hon. member for Cardwell (Mr. White), who dealt with the question not only to the amusement and interest of the House, but also to the edification of the country. I must not omit to state that the hon. gentleman was followed by the hon. member for L'Islet (Mr. Casgrain), who with his massive figures and logical presentation of facts made that same remarkable impression upon the House which he almost always makes upon it when he addresses it, and contributed his quota to the elucidation of this great subject. Then the House was treated to an hour or two hours disquisition by the hon. member for King's (Mr. Woodworth), not King's, New Brunswick, but King's, Nova Scotia, for whom I have somewhat of a fellow feeling,

because we represent constituencies of the same name if not exactly of the same character. That hon. member laid the heavy hand of contribution upon all history, modern and profane, upon philosophy, moral and otherwise, and exhausted the poets, both sacred, ancient and modern; and now, Sir, we have listened to the elaborate and vigorous and strongly put, if not altogether argumentative and pertinent arguments of the hon. member for Queen's P. E. I., (Mr. Davies). Sir, I was a little amused, I am still a little amused; he began by complaining very much that other hon. members had not the remarkable power of concentration which he always exhibits, of omitting all outside issues and centralising his great power and strong reasoning upon the only issue before the House and the country. He complained very much that some other hon. members had taken up the time of the House in speaking a long time on topics

OUTSIDE OF THE POINT AT ISSUE,

and yet by the clock which faces me he spent one hour and five minutes before he came to the point at all, when he announced that he was going to give strong and cogent reasons why this proposal should not be looked upon with favor by the House. Sir, the hon. gentleman had fault to find with the hon. member for King's, N. S., because he commenced at Jerusalem and ended at Longfellow's "Ship of State." I could not help feeling, before the hon. gentleman had spent an hour or an hour and a quarter in getting to the point, that it was better to begin at Jerusalem and end at the "Ship of State," than to begin nowhere and end at the same place. The hon. gentleman started out with a vigorous attack upon the malignity displayed by this side of the House, and then with remarkable truthfulness he turned round to his own side of the House and administered to it a full slap on the forehead when he pronounced that malignity, a reciprocal malignity. We do not talk of reciprocity between members of the same family; we talk of reciprocity as a means of communication between members of different families and different nations; consequently, if this malignity which he declares has been shown by hon. members on this side of the House is reciprocal malignity, his own side, by his own admission, must have as large a share as we have. The hon. gentleman talked a little while about Conservative want of patriotism, and then in a very dark and mysterious but remarkably knowing way he hinted that if the hon. member for South Huron (Sir Richard Cartwright) only wished he could give the House very interesting information as to some