

OTTAWA LETTER.

Sir Charles Tupper Discusses An Important Constitutional Question.

A Case Where the Laurier Government Failed to Resist An Outrage Upon a Canadian Subject.

The Case of Col. Domville and the Militia Department in the House.

John Charlton's Latest Success—Two Divisions in One Day—Mr. Bestock Vainly Opposed a C. P. R. Bill.

OTTAWA, May 9.—The most important discussion yesterday arose over a motion for the papers on which Sir Wilfrid Laurier based his statement made last year in the house of commons: "I have the authority of the Secretary for the Colonies to state that he approved of the principles on which the Governor General acted as based on the facts set forth in the letter of His Excellency to Sir Charles Tupper." This action of the governor general was his refusal to sanction the appointments made by Sir Charles Tupper's government after the election of 1896. It is a well understood rule both in this parliament and in that of Great Britain that any documents quoted or mentioned by a minister of the crown must on demand be laid on the table of the house. There is a sound basis for this principle. It is intended to provide that all members of parliament shall be on an equal footing in a discussion. If a minister were allowed to quote from papers to which none but himself had access he would have a double advantage. He could quote so much of the paper as suited his purpose and withhold the rest, while no private member could have any use of the information.

So the rule is universally adopted that the instant a minister makes use of a paper in the possession of the government it is open to any member to ask that the paper should be brought down. In fact, it is usual to lay it on the table without such a request. Sir Wilfrid Laurier has once or twice violated that rule. He has a disposition to play with the loaded dice. For instance, last year he read a despatch from Lord Strathcona, purporting to be a reply to an enquiry from the minister, and refused to bring down his own message to which it was the answer. It was believed by many members that the despatch from Ottawa contained a falsehood, and that the only way to conceal the falsehood was to hide the despatch.

On the present occasion Sir Wilfrid promises to bring down the paper as far as the rules of the Colonial office allow. This reservation, it is feared, may be intended to excuse the withholding of important despatches, under the plea that they are confidential. A despatch from which Sir Wilfrid made quotations to justify his own position in the house of commons, he too confidential for the use of other members, and if colonial rules are brought in to excuse the withholding of the papers, the rules will be the invention of Ottawa and not of Downing street.

The despatches have given a pretty full report of the discussion raised yesterday by Sir Charles Tupper. The principles laid down by the leader of the opposition that a retiring government remained for a time advisers of the crown, is in accord with the practice under all responsible governments. Actually the first instance in which such advice has been refused is the occasion of 1896. Sir Charles was able to cite instances in British history, in which numbers of appointments were made by governments after their defeat at the polls. Whether the practice is a good one or a bad one, it has been universal, and the speaker is the first representative of the crown under modern systems of government who has set himself up to establish the new method. Sir Wilfrid took the responsibility yesterday of saying that a prime minister after defeat at the polls had no right to offer advice to the crown and had no right to make appointments. This is a statement which explicitly condemns the action of the Mackenzie government, of which Sir Wilfrid Laurier was a member. As Sir Charles pointed out yesterday, Mr. Mackenzie made no less than 130 appointments after the election of 1878, in which the Mackenzie government was defeated by a two-thirds majority in the house. Among these appointments was that of Judge Taschereau to the supreme court of Canada, and that of Judge Weatherbee to the supreme court of Nova Scotia. These are only a few of the judicial appointments and others were made of great importance. Lord Dufferin, probably the ablest governor general Canada ever had, sanctioned these appointments without a word, and no one ever doubted the power of the late government to make them. Under similar circumstances the imperial government appointed a viceroy in India, created many peerages, and filled many positions on the bench. Sir Wilfrid Laurier has now announced that all this is illegal, thus condemning his own action in 1878, and even pronouncing it to be impertinent and arbitrary.

Sir Wilfrid says that Mr. Chamberlain will not agree to the publication of what he calls "the secret despatch" justifying the course of the government. Sir Charles will not be satisfied with that refusal. He says he is well acquainted with Mr. Chamberlain and believes that his views are not as Sir Wilfrid declares them to be. Sir Charles has himself carefully refrained from mentioning the matter to Mr. Chamberlain, but he

now asserts that if "the government" refuses this correspondence which "the house has a right to see," he "will feel it his duty not to rest from the agitation until he has reached a higher and more potential parliament than that which he has had the honor to address."

Mr. Thomas Meagher lives on the River St. Clare, on the Canadian side. Last August he was in a boat on that river with some eggs and cherries. An American officer named Avery assumed that Mr. Meagher was smuggling these goods into the United States. With the help of another man he captured Meagher in Canadian waters, handcuffed him, took him across to the other side of the river, carried him to a hotel, where he tied him to a bedpost and kept him a day and a night. After this he was carried to jail and looked up with common criminals. In the hotel he exhibited as a trophy, numbers of people having been brought to the bedroom door and invited to look at him. After he had been in prison for a week representations to Washington affected his release. Now Mr. Cowan, one of the members for Essex, supported by Mr. Clancy, conservative member for Bothwell, and other representatives from that locality, urge that the Canadian government should demand reparation. No doubt the demand will be made, but Mr. Clancy is of the opinion that the Canadian government has been acting in this matter with uncommon deliberation.

Of course if Meagher had been guilty of smuggling, which he says he was not, it would have been still a gross outrage for a United States officer to come into Canada and carry him off. Mr. Clancy is of the opinion that the department of justice need not have waited nine months until some member of parliament brought the subject up, before demanding reparation. Mr. Cowan, the government supporter, on whose motion the discussion took place, justifies the government for doing nothing up to this point. He says that Mr. Mills could not be expected to take any action for damages until Mr. Meagher himself had requested it, and that the minister for papers was the first step in the transaction. This is a loyal defence, but it does not convey to the Canadian mind a full sense of the power of the Canadian government to protect the people from outrage at the hands of foreigners, but is not a personal matter altogether, but a national affair, and the government of Canada, not in the interests particularly of Thomas Meagher, but in support of the dignity of the nation, should have taken action at once and caused reparation and an apology to be given. Even if Mr. Meagher should never say a word about it, the rights of Canada ought to be vindicated, and it ought to be made clear at once that United States officers are not to be allowed to invade this country and carry off Canadian citizens. Certainly a motion for papers is not necessary, as the government have already the papers which Mr. Cowan asked for. The documents may be necessary for the instruction of the house, but not for the information of the government.

OTTAWA, May 10.—We have had four hours of Mr. Blair on the new Drummond deal as now proposed, and very little more is known of the result of the operation on the Montreal extension during the last year than was known before Mr. Blair spoke. Previous to the speech many motions for returns had been made and numerous questions placed on the order paper. No returns were brought down in response to the motions and the questions were at answer, but no answers had been given. Mr. Powell had asked for a statement of the receipts from the various stations on the Drummond line, which statements are made up at the audit office in Moncton. He has not been able to get this return. Questions were asked as to the total receipts of that part of the railway and the expenditure, but no answers have been given. The minister of railways in this condition of affairs, without having brought down the contract which he had asked the house to authorize, rose to move the house into committee on the resolution to purchase the road.

Sir Charles and Mr. Foster protested against the opening of the discussion until the house was in possession of full information. Sir Wilfrid proposed that Mr. Blair be allowed to make his statement, after which those who wanted more information could renew the request for a postponement. After some further discussion Speaker Edgar decided that the resolution to go into committee was before the house, that Mr. Blair, Sir Charles Tupper and Mr. Foster had spoken to it, and therefore could say nothing more. Objection was taken to this ruling on the ground that the discussion was merely preliminary, but as the Speaker held to it, Mr. Taylor moved the adjournment, which gave everybody another chance. Sir Charles Tupper spoke for over an hour in a cursory review of Mr. Blair's career as minister of railways, and more particularly of the habit he had of bringing in measures without furnishing the house with information, and without even procuring information for himself. Two years ago, when Mr. Blair brought in his first Drummond bill, he did not seem to know anything about it, and the same phenomenon was observed when he introduced the Yukon bill last year.

Sir Charles went on to speak of the original project of paying over two million dollars for a road that had been hawked about the country for less than half the price, and criticized Mr. Blair's general scheme of trying to efface the Canadian Pacific railway by carrying freight 250 miles for nothing. In order to accomplish that Mr. Blair was making large expenditures on capital account, and was making great use of them in local elections. Sir Richard Cartwright had spoken of the maritime provinces as "a nest of boodlers." This statement Mr. Blair was attempting to justify. Sir Richard here interposed with the remark that he only referred to Nova Scotia when he made the accusation. Sir Charles thereupon

suggested that the present government was determined to give it a wider application and was acting the part of a patent incubator to hatch out all the boodlers there might be in the nest. Sir Charles then gave a summary of the performances of Mr. Blair and Mr. Fielding in using domination patronage to assist at local elections in their respective provinces. The speaker occasionally ventured the opinion that Sir Charles Tupper was wandering from the scene, but Sir Charles pleasantly discussed the matter with the speaker, who thus contributed his share towards the postponement of Mr. Blair's oration.

On the motion to adjourn Mr. Blair made a rather furious attack upon Sir Charles and what he calls his "sorry exhibition." He thought Sir Charles' followers must regard him with sorrow and shame, and Mr. Blair expressed deep sorrow over the degeneracy of the orator who was wandering from the scene, but Sir Charles pleasantly discussed the matter with the speaker, who thus contributed his share towards the postponement of Mr. Blair's oration.

After a general discussion to show how good a railway manager he was, the minister of railways went on to say that the Intercolonial balance would be better this year than ever before. Mr. Powell interposed a remark that the local freight rates were higher, which Mr. Blair promptly denied. Presently the minister admitted that a new classification of hay freight and of freights on wood was made by Mr. Harris, which had the effect of increasing the charges. But most of these changes had been cancelled, and he believed that in some cases the excess charge had been returned.

"That is so," said Mr. Foster. "Several repayments were made just on the eve of the late provincial election." Mr. Blair suggested some doubt as to this, but Mr. Foster said "I know it is true, and you know it too." The minister then went on to give returns. He admitted last year's deficit to be \$200,000, which included four months' rental paid to the Grand Trunk and Drummond county company. The deficit the previous year had been \$50,000, and Mr. Blair went into an elaborate explanation to show the causes of the increase. It was entirely due, he said, to the fact that he had made the annual repairs and maintenance expenditure in the spring of 1898 instead of postponing it until after the end of the fiscal year. The late government had been in the habit of doing this work after the first of July, and Mr. Blair had done the same in the year 1897. He made the repairs for the next year before July 1898, so that the maintenance charges for that fiscal year had been doubled, as he had done two years' work in one. In this way Mr. Blair figured out that the year ending June 30 had been loaded with at least \$150,000 extra expenses. From this we may judge that the deficit would only have been \$50,000 for that year if the extra charge had not been incurred.

He came then to the actual comparison between the returns from the Intercolonial as extended to Montreal and the Intercolonial as terminating at Quebec. During the eight months from the 1st of July, 1897, to the 1st of March, 1898, the deficit on the railway was \$71,000. Mr. Blair said that this whole eight months was for the Intercolonial terminating at Chaudiere.

Mr. Blair compared this with the return for the eight months ending March of this year, during which whole period the extension to Montreal was in operation. In this period there was no deficit but a surplus of \$584 after the Grand Trunk and Drummond county rentals were paid. Mr. Blair thus figures out that there is a gain of \$71,584 through the operation of the leased road for eight months.

But here we are confronted with the minister's previous calculation as to extra expenditures for maintenance. As stated above, Mr. Blair explained that in the first eight months of this year he made a large expenditure which he was not called upon to make in the corresponding eight months of this year, seeing that he had done it in the previous spring. Mr. Blair did not make clear what these summer and autumn expenditures amounted to, but as the total expenditure of the 13 months was \$150,000 in excess of what it ought to be we may assume that the summer part must have been responsible for close on to \$100,000. The whole question, whether the Drummond addition was unprofitable or not, depends apparently upon the adjustment of this expenditure. Mr. Blair finds that he is \$71,000 better off than in the same period last year, and expects to carry this favorable balance on to the end of the 12 months. If he does he will be \$106,000 ahead of last year. But he says himself that last year's management was charged with extra expenditure amounting to at least \$150,000. If that is so there will be a short-coming of some \$44,000 in the current year as compared with the last year of the Intercolonial without the Montreal extension.

But the great defect in the minister's argument seems to be a failure to show how much the better showing or worse showing, whichever it may be, is due to the Montreal extension. He keeps no separate account, and no statement made by him showed how the ordinary business of the road, apart from this addition, compared with previous years. Briefly, Mr. Blair's statement is that the road makes \$71,000 better showing than it did without the extension, and therefore the extension is to be credited with the result. But the Canadian Pacific railway and the Grand Trunk railway without any Drummond addition have shown still larger proportionate increases in their earnings.

As to whether the bargain was a prudent one. Of course the minister did not deny that the original bargain to pay \$44,000 for the road was equivalent to the payment of \$2,000,000 in cash. That is the calculation of the government's own actuary, on the basis of the government's latest loan. But Mr. Blair says that the original scheme allowed the company 4 per cent. interest, which was not extravagant. For though the government could borrow money at less than 4 per cent., a railroad company could not do so. This would seem to be a reason why the government should not pay interest to the company at the company's borrowing rates, but should pay to other creditors at the government's borrowing rates. Mr. Blair did not see it in that light. He remarked that when the bargain was made, Grand Trunk four per cent. bonds were selling at only 85. It was true that a few months later they went up to par, which changed the state of affairs. A smile illuminated the face of some of the members when this remark was made, and they recalled how much the Grand Trunk's great bargain with Mr. Blair had done to increase the value of its bonds. While the minister commended the first arrangement to pay the rental instead of the capital sum, he now concludes that the other way is better, and so proposes the change.

Mr. Blair's inference, even if the facts showed a better balance, is, to say the least, a rather careless one. There is reason to believe that the amount of traffic carried on other parts of the line was much greater than some other years, and the bargain is after all relatively so small that it is difficult to draw conclusions from it. For instance, Mr. Haggart was able to show an improvement of \$900,000 in one year in the balance of the Intercolonial. If he had taken over the Drummond road in that year he might have claimed the whole result as springing out of that operation.

It is of some interest to give a comparison of the operations of nine months ending April, 1898, with the operations of nine months ending April, 1899. According to a return brought down after Mr. Blair's speech yesterday, the earnings of the Intercolonial in the first period were \$2,346,524, and during the second period \$2,805,518. The expenses increased from \$2,311,704 to \$2,700,715. According to these figures, which take in nine months instead of the eight included by Mr. Blair, the balance in favor of the road increased from \$35,820 to \$105,000. From this must be taken the nine months share of the \$150,000 extra expenses in the first year which Mr. Blair has escaped in the second year. Worked out this way, there is a substantial shortage.

The minister energetically defended his department from the charge of cooking the accounts. He declares that the capital charges have been made on the same basis as under the late administration, that the rolling stock and maintenance has been kept out of current expenses, at least to the previous standard, and that his balance is in every way as reliable as those declared by Mr. Haggart.

And yet Mr. Blair looks for better things in the future. Not having much in the way of a surplus to show up to date, he promises a big balance in favor of the road in time to come. All the surpluses ever made will be added together, and the surplus which he will have when the end of this year is reached. Before returns are in for the whole year, this parliament will probably be prorogued, and even if Mr. Blair's predictions are not fulfilled the critics will not be here in the house to point out his mistakes.

The minister of railways devoted a large amount of heated oratory to a condemnation of the late government's arrangement with the Canadian Pacific for traffic between St. John and Halifax. This agreement he described as "monstrous and improvident." He knew of nothing so bad in the whole history of railway management. Of course Mr. Blair was not foolish enough to repeat the statement made by some of his organs that the C. P. R. had free running rights over the road, but he made the statement that the Intercolonial officers were prevented from canvassing for freight for the government line in preference to the Canadian Pacific line. The Canadian Pacific officers were allowed to canvass the maritime provinces for business for their road, but Intercolonial men could not solicit freight for the Intercolonial road in competition with the C. P. R.

Mr. Haggart assured the minister that the contract provided for no such thing. It held the Intercolonial officers to neutrality between the Grand Trunk and the Canadian Pacific. They could collect all the freight they liked for the Intercolonial, but they were not allowed to influence shippers in deciding whether the Grand Trunk or the Canadian Pacific should have the freight after it left the Intercolonial. Mr. Blair replied that this amounts to the same thing because the Intercolonial has a long haul on goods delivered to the Grand Trunk, and canvassing for the Grand Trunk in Intercolonial territory is canvassing for the Grand Trunk itself. One would suppose that the truth of this opinion would depend upon the locality where the freight originated. There is a considerable part of the Intercolonial which is nearer the Grand Trunk than it is the C. P. R.

As to passengers, Mr. Blair points out that the Intercolonial gets \$16 for every man it carries by its own route to Montreal, and only \$6 if the passenger goes by way of the C. P. R. and St. John. Therefore he holds that it is highly improper for the government to stand neutral and allow the passengers to go by way of where they please. Again it may be remarked that the Intercolonial got considerably less than \$6 when the road terminated at Chaudiere at the time that Sir John A. Macdonald made the agreement.

Mr. Blair ignores these considerations. He now asserts that a great deal of revenue is lost by establishing and maintaining the train connecting the C. P. R. at St. John with the Intercolonial, and if one may gather anything from the minister's declaration he intends in future to make it inconvenient as possible for travellers to pass from Montreal to Halifax or from Halifax to Montreal by way of St. John. There is no doubt that by the removal of these connecting trains the minister may be able to hamper traffic by the shortest route to a considerable extent. The convenience of passengers who may prefer the direct route of travel or may have a desire to see St. John is apparently no part of the consideration.

It was rather surprising at the end of all this outburst of wild declamation against the bargain with the C. P. R. to hear Mr. Blair admit that it is still in force. The term expired at the end of last June, and the arrangement has been continued more than ten months and still goes on, in spite of its monstrous character. However, Mr. Blair announces that he is either going to mend it or end it at some future time, the date of which he does not mention.

And lastly, Mr. Blair rather surprised

ed the house by stating that he never expected to make much money out of the extension to Montreal during the first year. It took more than one year to get the machine into active operation. This declaration turned the memory of members back to the language used by the minister of railways almost exactly two years ago in introducing his first and ill-fated Drummond Railway Bill. In that sanguine speech he said:

"It is estimated that the gross earnings for the year after the extension to Montreal will be \$3,885,000, and the working expenses \$3,363,000. In other words, the gentlemen who are responsible for the management of the Intercolonial, and who have advised me in this regard, estimate that there will be a surplus of \$522,000 in the first year's operation of the Intercolonial extended to Montreal. 'New I deduct from the earnings 'stated the \$210,000 rental and get a net surplus of \$310,000 as a result of carrying out this policy of extension.'"

Such were the promises. What of the fulfilment? During the four months from March to July included in the last fiscal year the deficit was large. During the eight months from last July to March of this year Mr. Blair claims a surplus of less than \$400. Altogether, instead of \$300,000 surplus there is a deficiency. We now understand why Mr. Blair has discovered that he did not expect a surplus the first year.

OTTAWA, May 11.—Following the rather spirited but prolonged introductory discussion of the Drummond railway scheme came a quiet private members' day, which closed with a big ball at Rideau, leaving the house rather thin in the evening. An episode of some interest was the introduction of Mr. Comstock, who appeared from Brockville, and a retinue of several hundred attendants. Mr. Comstock does not appear to be a man who would awaken wild enthusiasm or acquire a spontaneous following such as attended him on this occasion. But Brockville is situated at a neat excursion distance from the capital, and the demonstration was made a pleasure trip as well as a political affair, as was shown by the fact that more than half of the delegation were ladies. The excursionists wore red badges on which were conspicuous the plain features of the speaker, and the man who has acquired a few millions in manufacturing to the ill of the body physical and now in his sedate old age is giving his attention to political diseases.

Perhaps it is hardly fair to say that Mr. Comstock is only beginning his political career, seeing that he has been elected on many previous occasions. It is said that there is now a very close connection between his accumulated wealth and his recent success in the Brockville campaign. It was a quiet and unimportant looking personage who appeared in front of the speaker while the galleries were crowded on many previous occasions. It is said that the speaker burst into bilious cheers. There were responses from the gallery which caused a horrified expression to appear on the face of the sergeant-at-arms and the learned clerk of the commons to begin a vigorous search for a president. It is a fiction that nobody occupies the gallery. If a member of parliament should chance to see a stranger there and mention the fact to the speaker everybody would be turned out at once. Sir Charles Tupper had his eye on the gay and festive Brockvilleans, but made no remark, and it was the speaker himself, who, after the episode was over, volunteered a statement. Of course he did not say it to the people in the galleries, because he was bound not to see them, but he remarked to the house that any person who was in the gallery was there entirely on sufferance, and that no applause or demonstration whatever was allowed from these upper areas. Two years ago when the Queen's jubilee address was passed, followed by singing God Save the Queen, the people in the gallery joined in the music, but the speaker on that occasion was joining in the song and failed to hear the singing in the galleries. It is said that only once since confederation have the galleries been cleared, and that was not on account of anything that occurred there, but because of occurrences in the house which were not considered appropriate to make public.

Col. Domville has for some time filled a considerable space in the order paper with notices of questions and motions for papers relating to the command and proceedings of the militia. He wanted to know about twenty things in respect to a transfer of stores of the regiment to Col. Markham last November, and his questions suggested that the transfer was improperly made. The minister of militia had the matter stand over from day to day, but when Col. Domville pressed the question yesterday he got his answer. Apparently yesterday he was not in the gallery, for it informed Col. Domville that the transfer was made on the highest military authority. Again, when Mr. Morrison, acting for Col. Domville, made some enquiries as to whether Col. Domville had re-

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