

AN ELECTIONEER'S EXPERIENCE.

Party feeling ran high. Everybody was sure the other side would sustain a crushing defeat. Everybody felt satisfied there would be an overwhelming majority—for somebody. Both parties were bound to win, for the elections were drawing nigh. It was at this juncture Jobbins rushed into my arms on St. James street laboring under great mental excitement.

"You're just the man I want. Want you to go off to-night by the 9.45 train."

"Go off? Where?"

"To speak against Buncombe. Just got a telegram from Buster. Read this."

TALKERVILLE, April, 1878.

"We want a good, strong English speaker to speak against Buncombe, at Switchem Mills to-morrow. Our chance of success depends upon it. Will pay expenses. Friends of the Party will be at the Station. Reply."

"There," said Jobbins "say you'll go."

"But what will my wife say?"

"Well now, old fellow, you don't mean to say your wife runs the Party?"

"Anyway, she has the controlling vote in my connection with it."

"Say, Ford," continued Jobbins earnestly, "we've got to carry this election, and to carry it we must work. Now I leave it to your conscience. You're a good speaker and if our man gets in, everyone will give you the credit of carrying the county."

"Well, since you put it that way I'll go. But I've got no arguments."

"Arguments!" "Who ever heard of 'arguments' in an election. Its convictions we want. Wish you succes."

The train left Bonaventure Depot about half an hour late. A clean collar, comb and brush were the only articles I could draw upon for inspiration. I wanted "points" and tried to sound the opinions of my fellow passengers.

"Don't you think, sir," I remarked to an intelligent looking person on my right, "that the act of the Lieut.-Governor was a flagrant breach of constitutional rights, and the act of a despot, fit companion only of the autocrat of all the Russias?"

"Russia arn't so easily whipped by thunder. No siree."

That man was going to New York by way of Island Pond.

I tried again and to another I said: "The Liberal Party will have such a defeat as will paralyse all their future efforts."

"Look here, mister," producing a roll of bills, "I'm a Grit and I'll bet you twenty dollars to one that the Grits'll carry the election."

I subsided for want of funds. Presently I heard somebody mention the name of Buncombe. I listened attentively.

"I hear" observed the speaker, "Buncombe's going to speak at Switchmen Mills to-morrow. He's a strong man is Buncombe. Biggest pop-gun on the stump, I'm told. Brings tears into everybody's eyes. Got a sore mouth last week by kissing a conservative baby. He'll do anything for the Party. Guess the Grits'll go in."

This news didn't strengthen my hopes and in despair I appealed to an elderly party, with a farmer-like appearance, who smoked Canadian tobacco. Cautiously approaching him I threw out a "feeler."

"Do you think, sir, the Grits are going to win this election?"

"No sir. They haven't got a show."

"My friend," I replied, "permit me to shake you by the hand. You are the first man whom I have met since I left all that is near and dear to me in Montreal who has given me a ray of hope." And we shook hands. "Yes," I continued, "this is a glorious struggle for constitutional liberty. A liberty for which thousands have fought, bled and died; a liberty which is to be weighed in the balance next week; a struggle which is to recoil upon the heads of those political despoilers of our country's honour; a fight in which any man, whose soul burns with that sparkling and scintillating flame of patriotism, would be proud to die; a struggle (for I was getting excited) on which the safety of our hearths and homes and all that is dearest and best depends."

"Why, if you arn't a stunner! That's the talk that the boys down our way like to hear. If you go on like that you'll carry the county, sure."

"I felt pleased, and gratified. Such a compliment from an entire stranger was pleasant indeed. I talked him to sleep in ten minutes and left him—snoring."

At half past two a. m. I arrived at Switchem Mills where I was to meet "the friends of the Party," as per telegram. But I didn't meet them.

Then, a new difficulty beset me the meeting was to be held seven miles from the station, which was only a way-station.

The horse and wagon being ready we started. On the way I thought I would throw out another "feeler." My driver was a native.

"Y'at'y d'la chance pour les bleus? C'que t'en penses?" (Any chance for the blues. What's your opinion?)

"Pas la miette." (None at all.)

We never spoke another word during that trip. I was the only man in that bleak and rutty region who had any regard for the "blues."

At four o'clock a. m. we reached Mr. Blank's house. Upon awakening at 9 o'clock the friends of the Party wanted to see me. Having breakfasted I received the deputation at the only hotel in the neighborhood. The reception cost me \$1.10 for the first interview. The "friends" then began to grow colloquial upon the situation and even went so far to suggest some experimental evidence of my oratorical abilities in the way of a rehearsal.

The time came for the meeting, and I hit upon a happy expedient to convince the people how utterly Buncombe had misrepresented the issue. There were about sixty persons present of whom not more than a dozen had votes. This magnificent and intelligent meeting was called to order and Buncombe commenced his oration. He opened out by appealing to their intelligence and concluded by working upon their ignorance. He showed the hideousness of the De Boucherville Government in the most appalling light; he pictured the probability of that audience having to face the \$150,000 of taxation which would be caused by the exodus of the Montreal brokers, should the Stamp Act become law. He was opposed to School Inspection, because it would not advance education; he scouted the idea of Stipendiary Magistrates living on the fat of the land, at the expense of the people and he played the deuce generally. Fact after fact was disposed of; blue books were read; speeches were quoted and he only stopped from mere exhaustion. The most astonishing portion of his speech was that it contained nine parts of fiction to one part of truth. In short it was a magnificent mixture of ginger beer with a seidleitz powder thrown in.

My turn now came and to use a homely phrase "I went" for Buncombe. My speech was not long but it was to the point. This is what I said.

"In addressing the free and independent electors of this enlightened constituency I only regret that I have not the gift of presenting to you a few simple truths with that degree of eloquence which has marked the highly wrought fictions of my opponent. (I don't suppose there was a man in the room beside the speakers who knew what a "fiction" was, bless their simple souls). One would imagine that he was addressing a Montreal jury rather than an impartial and intelligent audience. He has not only evaded the issue but he has wrought upon your feelings by telling you that you will have to pay the burden of taxation should the stamp Bill become Law. Gentlemen, you are intelligent men, some of you men of property and I appeal to your common sense when I venture the belief that if anyone of you could get a contract for 10,000 cords of wood to-morrow you'd gladly and willingly pay the stamp for the sake of the profit you would make out of the transaction. But gentlemen the CONSTITUTIONAL issue is the true issue whatever that may mean. It is upon this issue you are to decide the election. Your forefathers fought, bled and died for liberty, but you prefer enjoying that liberty without any of these inconveniences. Large estates were confiscated, property was depreciated—and a general commercial depression prevailed throughout the country when that constitutional question was fought on many an English battle field. It was fought in the House of Commons; it was fought out at Runnymede; and it is hard to say where it was *not* fought, and the result you now enjoy to-day in the peaceful possession of your homes and liberties in this thriving back woods portion of the Province. (This produced a decided cheer) Gentlemen, will you give up these liberties? Will you renounce all that your ancestors fought to gain? Will you permit your homes to become desecrated; your liberty endangered and your happiness wrecked by an truculent Ministry? (Very emphatic cheering) Gentlemen, I opine most of you are not insured. If not—insure now—for I can tell you, should the Joly Government obtain power you will not know when you will be turned adrift on the cruel, cold, wide, world, without a roof to cover you or yours". Therefore, I say become insured, whether it be on the "ten year plan," whether it be upon that principle in which policy holders are delusively supposed to share in the profits, it is not necessary here to enlarge upon. But if you have any regard for your live's *insure, ere it be too late*. Gentlemen, my oponent has read from several books to prove the truth of his assertions; he has read from newspapers; from pamphlets and from reports. Truly, this is adding insult to injury, it is an insult to your intelligence; an outrage on your common sense for I have yet to learn, gentlemen, (here I raised my voice)—I have yet to learn that there is half a dozen people among you *who can read*. Such tactics are worthy only of the blind partisans of a hireling Ministry, but I venture to assert that you will at the poll resent the insults that have been heaped upon you this day.

The closing remark "brought down the house" and the county was saved.