

THE BULLFROG.

*Nec sumit aut ponit securus,
Arbitrio popularis aura.—Her.*

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THE GENERAL POST OFFICE.

In MACAULAY'S essay upon WARREN HASTINGS, the position of the Nabob of Bengal is thus described: "There was still a Nabob of Bengal, who stood to the English rulers of his Country in the same relation in which Augustulus stood to Odoacer, or the last Merovingians to Charles Martel and Pepin. He lived at Moorshedabad, surrounded by princely magnificence. He was approached with outward marks of reverence, and his name was used in public instruments.—"But in the government of the country he had less real share than the youngest writer or cadet in the Company's service." Leaving princely magnificence out of the question, and making due allowance for the difference of position between the head of our Government and such men as Pepin and Odoacer, it would seem that the POST MASTER GENERAL of Nova Scotia has no more real share in the Government of the General Post Office than had REZA KHAN in the Government of Bengal. This is, however, the fault of our political system rather than of any individual public officer. When we obtained that inestimable boon, Responsible Government, we took good care to improve upon those old country principles which were unsuited to the inhabitants of a free country on this side of the Atlantic.—Those stupid, oppressed Englishmen, whose constitution we condescended to import, are silly enough to fancy that each department of the public service can be worked efficiently under one or more responsible persons, and that any Government interference with such responsible person, or persons, must inevitably be attended with detriment to the public service. We are wiser in this Province, and know full well that unless the head of the Government for the time being is also the head of every public department, nothing can possibly go right. There was clearly nothing to be gained from the creation of an Upper and Lower House, Speaker, Black Rod, &c., unless our leading politicians duly asserted their rights to control all around them. No liberal minded Colonial statesmen could be supposed to rest content with such limited patronage as is vested in the hands of British statesmen. It is not enough that the head of a Nova Scotian ministry should be allowed to nominate the heads of sundry departments—he must also assume the control of each department as a legitimate requisite of his office. The wisdom of this arrangement must be apparent to everyone unbiassed by the prejudices of the old world. The head of a ministry must necessarily be a sensible man, whereas the head of an Institution, such as the General Post Office, may be merely a careful man of business, well versed in the details of his department. Narrow minded individuals may argue, that a man who had passed many years of his life in looking after the interests of one particular branch of the public service, would probably better understand the requirements of that particular service than one whose life had been devoted to the study of general politics. Any such argument is manifestly absurd, inasmuch as the interests of any one public department are as nothing compared to the interests of the community at large. The Government, representing as it does the greatest men of the popular party for the time being, is of course justified in providing for its supporters without any reference whatever to the well working

of any particular department of the public service. We are well aware that this doctrine finds no favor in the Mother Country, but then it must be remembered that this is a young Country, and that Nova Scotians are apt to resent, as a sneer, any notice of their shortcomings. We, therefore, maintain, that the old Country system of politics is altogether faulty, whereas our political system is in all respects faultless. But this, after all, is merely an assertion, and if we fail to establish our position, it will be from lack of argument rather than lack of faith.

The POST MASTER GENERAL, being very properly deprived of all control over the appointment or dismissal of his subordinates, whether in town or country, cannot fairly be held responsible for the efficiency or non-efficiency of the postal department. This is as it should be; a Post Office official having interest with the Government of the day should of course be allowed to set the so-called POST MASTER GENERAL at open defiance. The public may at times complain, and assert itself the only sufferer, but, be it remembered, this is a free Country, and the mere assumption of rank is eminently distasteful to those honest Conservatives who introduced Universal Suffrage. Rank forsooth! the POST MASTER GENERAL is a nobody, so long as his clerks are friends of a Government affecting Lords and Commons. But this system of Government interference in small matters is occasionally productive of something seemingly akin to unfairness towards individuals. About a year ago, it so happened that two clerks were appointed to the Post Office under circumstances very peculiar indeed—even for a free Country. With little or no experience of the duties required of them, they yet found themselves in the receipt of precisely the same salaries as those paid to clerks who had worked assiduously in the Postal department for several years. Two young men who had served in the Post Office for four years at a low salary, were in a moment cut out by two elderly gentlemen whose chief recommendation for post office employ was their unfitness for employment anywhere else. These ancient clerks were nominated, not by the POST MASTER GENERAL, but by Provincial statesmen who were of course much better acquainted with the requirements of the Post Office than Mr. WOODGATE could fairly be supposed to be. We may here remark that the life of a clerk in the General Post Office is by no means an easy one. He works on an average sixty hours per week, for the same salary awarded clerks in other public offices where the work extends over a period of only thirty-six hours. For the Post Office clerk there is no vacation, no holiday, but almost continuous work for a pittance miserably small. Unlike those employed in other public departments, the Post Office clerks work chiefly by night, and are consequently subjected during the winter months to additional expense in their home consumption of oil and fuel. A glance at the working hours of a single week will convince any reasonable man that the Post Office clerks are underpaid. Let us take the week ending 11th Feb. 1865. Monday, 2 P.M. to 11 P.M.; Tuesday, 4.45 A.M. to 2 P.M.; Wednesday, 2 P.M. to 10.30 P.M.; Thursday, 5 A.M., to 3 P.M. and 6 P.M. to 7 A.M.; Friday, 11 A.M. to 11 P.M.; Saturday, 5 A.M. to 2 P.M. If work like this does not entitle the Post Office clerks to a higher rate of pay than clerks elsewhere em-