

colony were again doomed to be crushed for a time by a ministry who had chosen as Secretary for the Colonies, Sir John Pakington, the former agent and active supporter of the obstructives of Newfoundland. The address of the Assembly to the House of Commons was kindly presented by the Right Hon. Sir William Molesworth, the indefatigable advocate of colonial rights. Nor was the Secretary for the Colonies, as we have reason to believe, unsupplied with secret despatches from the local authorities, containing fabricated statements as to the views of the people on this vital and all-absorbing question. They resorted to every expedient that self-interest, low prejudices, and unfair intrigue could devise, to defeat the people's representatives, and so far as their efforts have hitherto gone, to influence the decision of the British Government, they have been highly successful in securing the reins of power in their own hands, the offices of the Government for a favoured few, in contemning public opinion in the colony, in neglecting and actively opposing its best interests, on the questions of free trade, education, local improvements, representation, and several other important public measures.

In the autumn of last year the general elections took place in the island, and resulted in the return of a large majority in favour of the principles of self-government, who were pledged to adopt every constitutional means to secure its establishment. The resolutions of the late Assembly were again affirmed by the present House, four members only voting against them, and addresses to the Duke of Newcastle, and both Houses of Parliament were then agreed upon.

The anticipations of the Assembly on the course which the Council would likely pursue in the Session of 1853, on the Representatives' Bill, and several other Bills, were fully realised. Among the many measures passed by the Assembly last Session and rejected, or so mutilated by the Council as to cause their loss, we may mention, for the purpose of illustrating the antagonism existing between these bodies, and the hopelessness of expecting their co-operation for any general objects of legislation, the Bills introduced on the following subjects: A Bill for taking the Census of the Island, which was necessary, as no census had been taken there since 1845, to enable the Legislature to appropriate the Road and School Monies fairly among the several districts and for other purposes; a Bill for the Relief of the Poor. Owing to adverse circumstances, and the system of trade heretofore pursued in that colony, which made the operative population almost wholly dependent on a few capitalists, and consequently ill-prepared to withstand the effect of a temporary failure of their ordinary pursuits, pauperism has considerably increased within the last few years, especially among the aged and infirm. The Assembly was consequently obliged to make liberal provision for their relief, and the dispensation of the poor funds was entrusted to the Executive. So much was that trust abused, that the funds were not unfrequently spent for political purposes, and thus became a source of patronage in the hands of the Executive; the poor were wronged, and they appealed to the Assembly for protection. A Select Committee took the matter into consideration, and the Government Secretary of the Poor Board was summoned and gave evidence on the subject. It appears that some characters of bad repute were better provided for out of these funds than other persons more deserving and more destitute objects of charity; that the functions of the so-called Poor Board were only nominal, and that the head of the Executive managed its affairs as he thought fit; it has been since ascertained that a portion of these funds had been actually appropriated with his concurrence in providing him with bed and bedding for a sea voyage.

A Poor Relief Bill was then adopted by the late House, but rejected by the Council. The Assembly then voted the salary of the secretary of the Poor Board in Supply, at the rate fixed by the Executive, so as to make him in some degree independent of the undue influence of the Executive, and responsible to the Assembly for the discharge of his duty. Two attempts were made, in vain, by the Executive to expunge it from the Supply Bill, and a message was privately communicated to the opposing members, that if they persisted in retaining it in that Bill, the officer would be discharged. One of his brothers then held a seat in the Assembly, and another published a newspaper in the colony. The Executive was therefore desirous, for reasons that were quite apparent, of continuing a system which rendered that officer perfectly dependent on its will, not only for the tenure of his office, but for the amount of his salary, which had been nearly doubled within a year or two from his taking office. The Assembly refusing to recede, the officer was dismissed for no express cause, except an alleged intention of changing the system, but his brother had previously voted for responsible government. No actual change has been made in the system, except to appoint a brother-in-law of one of the Executive Council to fill the office thus vacated, and the gentleman so expelled has been appointed to an anomalous position as a member of the Board, at a reduced salary. During the last Session a Bill was again adopted by the Assembly to put a stop to these abuses, but again rejected by the Council, though strong complaints were raised against the present system, and helpless paupers have died through its inhuman operation.

Bills for declaring the prior claims of seamen and fishermen to their wages out of the estates of their hirers and employers in cases of insolvency; for the extension and improvement of the Newfoundland Savings Bank, according to the general recommendation of the trade and the public; for the encouragement of ship-building; and for the establishment of a proper jury system in the Supreme and Central Circuit Courts, met a similar fate. An alteration of the present jury law in force in those courts was strongly recommended by the able and upright chief justice of the island, from a sense of its absurd and unjust operation, for under the law as it stands, persons without any property qualification whatever, are permitted to act as grand and special jurors in questions of life, liberty, and property, while equally and