

sort of stuff of which he is made. All the great heroes of the world were commonplace persons enough three hundred and sixty-four days of the year. But the moral fibre of a man is occasionally revealed by some incident, perhaps great and perhaps small, and these revelations determine his whole history. The commonplace person, in charge of a newspaper in Mr. Howe's place, would have easily fixed up the matter. A carefully-worded apology would have been prepared and negotiated through a solicitor, and the difficulty would have been safely tided over. But Joseph Howe was made of stuff that could not tolerate this method. He has himself described the circumstances of his trial, and his narration will be interesting:—

"I went to two or three lawyers in succession, showed them the Attorney-General's notice of trial, and asked them if the case could be successfully defended? The answer was, No: there was no doubt that the letter was a libel: that I must make my peace, or submit to fine and imprisonment. I asked them to lend me their books, gathered an armful, threw myself on a sofa, and read libel law for a week. By that time I had convinced myself that they were wrong, and that there was a good defence, if the case were properly presented to the court and jury. Another week was spent in selecting and arranging the facts and public documents on which I relied. I did not get through before a late hour of the evening before the trial, having only had time to write and commit to memory the two opening paragraphs of the speech. All the rest was to be improvised as I went along. I was very tired, but took a walk with Mrs. Howe, telling her, as we strolled to Fort Massy, that if I could only get out of my head what I had got into it the magistrates could not get a verdict. I was hopeful of the case, but fearful of breaking down from the novelty

of the situation and from want of practice. I slept soundly, and went at it in the morning, still harassed with doubts and fears, which passed off, however, as I became conscious that I was commanding the attention of the court and jury. I was much cheered when I saw the tears rolling down one old gentleman's cheek. I thought he would not convict me if he could help it. I scarcely expected a unanimous verdict as two or three of the jurors were connections, more or less remote, of some of the justices, but thought they would not agree. The lawyers were all very civil, but laughed at me a good deal, quoting the old maxim, that 'he who pleads his own case has a fool for a client.' But the laugh was against them when all was over."

On the day of the trial he had to face a stern and vigorous judge—the Chief Justice—an able and accomplished Attorney-General. The Court House was crowded, because public interest in Halifax was aroused to the fullest extent. It was the harbinger of the great struggle for popular government which was to follow. After publication had been admitted and the libel put in, Mr. Howe rose to address the jury on his own behalf. Far from being awed or oppressed by his surroundings, after a short time he launched forth into a most searching and caustic arraignment of the whole bench of magistrates. He held them up to laughter and scorn. Instead of taking the defensive, and pleading for mercy, he took an aggressive line, and delivered the most merciless exposé of municipal rottenness ever heard. His masterly speech occupied six and a-quarter hours in delivery, and completely took Halifax by storm. Here was a new power which the community had never dreamed of.

Fortunately this speech has been preserved, and although Mr. Howe's speeches for thirty or forty years following this were models of classical