

31st January, 1854.

SECOND SESSION, FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 17TH OF VICTORIA.

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His Excellency's Speech.

*Mr. President and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's Council :—*

*Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly :—*

The duty of addressing you on your again meeting for the dispatch of public business devolves upon me under circumstances which, while they demand our hearty acknowledgments to Almighty God for mercies bestowed and calamities averted, are not without alloy. While other countries have been sorely visited we have mercifully enjoyed health and tranquillity : on the other hand, a renewed visitation with unmitigated severity of the potato disease in all parts of the Island, and the failure of the Fishery in many localities, have been followed by great distress among a large portion of our labouring population.

In closing the last Session of the Legislature, I expressed the hope that it would not be necessary for me, on our re-assembling, to make a further appeal to your liberality on behalf of the labouring population ; but the great and continued prevalence of distress arising from the causes to which I have adverted, aggravated moreover by the failure of the Electric Telegraph Company, rendered absolutely necessary the advance of a large amount in excess of the grant for the relief of the poor. I shall cause to be laid before you the details of this extra expenditure ; and I rely upon your indemnifying me for an outlay, under all the circumstances of it, so unavoidable.

I am glad to be enabled to inform you that the Revenue has exceeded the estimate made of its probable amount.

I shall direct to be laid before you Copies of Despatches on several matters which formed the subject of addresses passed during the last Session. From one of them you will learn that Her Majesty's Government declined to guarantee the repayment of the loan of £50,000 requested by you for the construction of Main Lines of Road.

I have the satisfaction of being able to inform you, in reply to your Address on the subject, that Her Majesty's Government will carefully maintain our Rights of Fishery consistently with a faithful observance of the Treaties with Foreign Powers.

To every country is assigned by Providence its peculiar productions, which may be interchanged among men for their mutual benefit. Although the Climate of this Colony is such that no available product is raised from the soil for export, yet we are more than compensated by the advantageous position of our shores for