

28th January, 1858.

FOURTH SESSION, SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 21st VICTORIA.

The House of Assembly having withdrawn His Excellency was pleased to retire.

A copy of His Excellency's Speech having been left with the House, it was read by the Clerk, and is as follows :—

Mr. President, and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council :

Mr. Speaker, and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly :

His Excellency's Speech
on opening the Session.

I have called you together at the season of the year which, I understand, is most convenient for you to assemble for the despatch of public business. I am very happy to meet the Legislative Council and House of Assembly of Newfoundland, for the first time ; and, it will afford me great satisfaction to co-operate with you in promoting the best interests of the people of this fine Colony.

At the beginning of the last year, considerable alarm prevailed on the subject of the proposed new Fishery Convention with France ; that alarm soon subsided, for shortly after the Prorogation of the Assembly, it was announced to my Predecessor, by the Colonial Minister, that “ the proposals contained in that Convention having been unequivocally refused by the Colony, they would, of course, fall to the ground ; ” and, he was authorized to give such assurance as he might think proper, “ that the consent of the community of Newfoundland was regarded by Her Majesty's Government as the essential preliminary to any modification of their territorial or maritime rights.”

The question, therefore, of granting any new fishing privileges, without the consent of the community, seems to be set at rest ; but, it must not be forgotten that fishermen belonging to two powerful nations already possess rights of fishery which they periodically exercise on the coasts of Newfoundland ; and they, as subjects of France, and citizens of the United States, enjoy these rights by existing Treaties, some of them of long duration ; indeed, the first one entered into was in the year 1713 ; the dates of the other French Treaties are 1763, 1783, and the “ Treaty of Paris ” in 1814. Those entered into with America were 1818, and the more recent