

Speech at opening the Session.

S P E E C H :

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

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

1.—Since the Legislature last met, a General Election has taken place in this Colony, and I am happy to meet the Council and the Members of the new House of Assembly convened to-day for the despatch of public business.

2.—At the opening of the Session of 1859, I alluded to the important question of the Fisheries, and, at its closing, the community were made aware of the course which Her Majesty's Government had adopted, by agreeing, in conjunction with the French Government, to appoint a mixed commission equally composed of two from each nation, "to enquire into the state of facts as regards the local operation of the Treaties conferring on French subjects rights of Fishery on the coasts of this Island, and, more particularly to ascertain in what respects, and to what extent, the treaty stipulations may have been disregarded on either side," One of these Commissioners was Commodore Dunlop, and the other one on the part of Newfoundland, was the Honorable Mr. Kent, he being nominated by the Colony, and that nomination confirmed by the Secretary of State.

3.—The duties of the Commissioners recently ceased, and, I believe Commodore Dunlop and Mr. Kent have made their Report to Her Majesty's Government.

4.—I am not aware of the conclusions which the gallant officer and his honorable colleague have arrived at, nor do I know whether the Marquis de Montaignac and Count Gobineau have made their report to the Government of France ; but, in the meantime and pending negotiations on this very important question, I have no doubt that the ships of both nations will be instructed to act as they did last year, with a view to prevent any dispute between French and English subjects during the next fishing season.

5.—In regard to a permanent settlement of the Fishery Question, I may venture, I hope, to express an opinion that I think the fishermen of Newfoundland need not be under any apprehension, but that the rights which they possess by existing treaties will be duly cared for, and I need not remind them and the people of the Colony, that assurances were given to them, early in 1857, by high authority, that these rights would not be disturbed unless with the sanction of their own Legislature, and that, also, necessarily requiring an Act of the Imperial