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THE POLITICAL SITUATION
IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

BY

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THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

HUMAN experience is invariably perplexing, and often contradictory, but it is never destitute of interest. Sometimes it transports us to the domain of Optimism, while at others it precipitates us to the dreary region of Pessimism; and there are intervals of doubt during which we drift on the wave of indecision into the half shadow or penumbral zone. For these sensations much depends upon the circumstances which surround one; still more inheres in the temperament of the individual. If he be sanguine in disposition, he can extract much comfort from the tragical side as he threads his way through life; if he be philosophical, he transmutes vicissitudes into psychological studies; but if he be despondent, the horizon naturally darkens at whatever point he views it. His temperament, too, is generally reproduced with photographic fidelity in his interpretation of the circumstances which surround him. It is in obedience to this sympathy that different individuals solve in various ways the phenomena of life. The enthusiast will discern the germ of everything that is auspicious in a given situation; the dejected will foreshadow from it nothing but peril; while the passive nature is too lethargic to perceive either security or peril. In no soil do we find these idiosyncrasies of temperament work with more irreconcilable disparity to facts, yet with a more faithful resemblance to their own organisations, than in history. The historian reproduces the political panorama of his time, not with that judicial calmness which should possess the impartial judge, but discoloured by the jaundiced obliquity or illuminated by the kaleidoscopic intensity of his own nature. Nothing was too severe for Macaulay to record of Impey; nothing too exalted for his panegyric on Pitt. In Croker he recognised a literary jackal; in Boswell he discovered the greatest of biographers. Bunyan was the literary mouthpiece of a divinity; while Machiaveli was the Prince of Darkness personified. And so one might continue drawing analogies which differ in degree as their authors' sense of sight differs in intensity.

But history, without the abnormal deformities of its commentators, repeats itself. We recognise in new situations old acquaintances, the excrescences of Macaulay and Hume notwithstanding. Such differences as do exist are not those of kind, but rather those of degree. We are witnessing to-day in these young colonies a repetition of what England experienced in the first half of the present century. Political parties in New South Wales are split into sections too inconsiderable to act independently, too hostile to act collectively, and too small-minded to act coalescently. There is no vital point of difference in the policy which accentuates any of these sections, but there is a vast disparity in their methods of administration. Nor does the dissension amongst parties confine itself to the rank and file of the House. There are no less than *five* gentlemen in that favoured colony at this moment who are arrayed against each other for the privilege of leading these chaotic battalions. And since it is not possible for more than one of them to enjoy that distinction, it will be instructive to examine the premisses on which they base their claims.

Lord Melbourne, it will be remembered, made a miserable burlesque of government after the accession of Queen Victoria, until Sir Robert Peel displaced him in 1841. Lord Melbourne's Government, as Mr. Greville very clearly shows, instead of being a Government with a policy, was simply a Government of departments. The Prime Minister himself was a weak and vacillating statesman, but to this must be added the unfortunate circumstance that parties were so disunited that it was impossible to initiate any policy at once vigorous and beneficial. If the Tories were desirous of promoting a promising measure the Radicals objected, while if the latter displayed any interest in new legislation the former would be sure to discourage it under threats of defeat. So that between the schism in their own ranks and the rancour of the Opposition the Government drifted along until it reached the rapids of a cataract, where, in 1841, it was wrecked.

Precisely the same situation presented itself in 1846, when Peel was beaten on the Irish Coercion Bill. Lord John Russell, it is true, had more character than Lord Melbourne; but his Cabinet and, still more, the House of Commons, was more divided against itself than in Lord Melbourne's time. Peel, through the rapid march of his great intellect, had succeeded in creating a schism in the ranks of the Tory Party. There were the Tories, or the Conservatives, as John Wilson Croker called them after the Corn

Law Repeal, and the Peelites ; while amongst the Opposition there were still the Whigs and the Radicals. There was still another party, ostensibly Conservative, but following the dual lead of Lord George Bentinck and Disraeli, the members of which were known by the name of Protectionists. This wing of the Conservative Party afterwards absorbed the old Tory Party, and numbered no less than 230 members in 1852, when Lord Derby founded his first Ministry, led by Disraeli in the Commons.

John Russell's Government was, if anything, weaker than that of Lord Melbourne. The very divided condition of parties menaced the adoption of anything like a vigorous policy. The Whig Prime Minister could never carry any important measure without the consent of Sir Robert Peel and Sir James Graham, the two leaders of the Opposition. The result of this interdependence was a period of legislative sterility. The Tories were naturally jealous of anything like vigorous reform being carried by the Whigs ; and the Whigs, decimated by schism on the one side and intense Radicalism on the other, were powerless to initiate beneficial measures. Thus, while parties were engaged in schismatic strife, the Government of England was paralysed and the country was rapidly drifting into anarchy and disorder.

The political situation in New South Wales is indeed very similar to that which confronted Englishmen in Lord John Russell's day. The student of Australian politics may find it difficult to discover a *raison d'être* for so anomalous a condition in a young country although he will find plenty of precedents to fit the situation to perfection in the records of the English *Hansard*. It is easy to understand how, in older countries, the fine lines which distinguish sections of a party deepen with the growth of history into irreconcilable differences, which finally divide what was once a solid phalanx into political sections of independent views. But it is not so easy to explain how a young country whose history is in its incipient stages finds itself travelling through all the vicissitudes which experience shows to be the heritage of older countries only.

It is clear, then, that we are rapidly making history in these energetic dependencies. Indeed, we are reproducing the situations which confronted English statesmen during the early part of the present century. A distinct advantage attaches to our being subjects of the Queen—we profit by the application of Imperial precedents. Our errors, too, are but another evidence of our growth. Formerly, our political records were barren of analogies to which

English precedents would apply; latterly, we are now and again nonplussed to find a solution by precedent for a given situation. Australia, in fact, has already experienced deadlocks the exact counterpart of which it would be impossible to reproduce in England.

The present political anomaly in New South Wales differs from its English prototypes inversely in proportion as the causes which have reproduced it, and the reasons for which it exists, are both weaker and inconsequent. In Lords Melbourne and John Russell's Government the taproots of their weakness were nourished by an irreconcilable difference as to measures. In Sir John Robertson and Mr. Dibbs case, government crumbles into chaos from the sheer weight of the intellectual power which is pressing it on every side from without. So that while it is a boon for a State to possess intellectual giants, it is a positive calamity to have too many of them. What Dickens said of the American army when he visited that country in 1868 is strictly *ad rem* of latter-day politicians in New South Wales; every soldier he met was either a general, a colonel, or a major. What the novelist inquired for and failed to discover was the rank and file which these worthies officered. In a similar way the visitor to New South Wales finds no less than five gentlemen indicated to him as actual or imminent Prime Ministers. There is, first of all, Sir Henry Parkes, whose claim to leadership on the basis of qualification no one will attempt to dispute. Then follow those of Sir John Robertson, the present Colonial Secretary; Mr. Dibbs and Mr. Abbott come in rapid succession; and Mr. Barton—the present Speaker—brings up the rear. Each of these gentlemen is followed by a phalanx of supporters varying in strength with the personal magnetism and influence exerted by its acknowledged leader.

Taking the qualifications and claims of these gentlemen in order, we have first to examine the ground upon which Sir John Robertson and his colleagues stand. The Premier himself is a veteran who has done good work in his day, work which his State will always remember him for with grateful sentiments, but who, physically and mentally, is totally unequal to the great work of reconstruction which lies before the coming leader. Had Sir John Robertson the necessary energy, which he has not, he is disqualified by education and experience to conceive remedies for the political ills from which New South Wales is at present suffering. New South Wales of to-day is no more like the colony which bore that name twenty years

ago than the England of to-day is like the England of 1800. In about the same ratio has each State progressed over its former condition. Sir John Robertson imbibed his most useful experiences during that period. He may have been, and doubtless was, a very efficient public man in his day, but the sun that illuminated his early career has set, and the evening reveals only the relict of former energy—a product totally unequal to engage in the fierce conflict of future politics. We know, also, that men do not become more tractable with advancing years; so that whatever political heresies Sir John Robertson inherited have strengthened with his advancing years, until they have become indivisible from his being. But the rapid transmutation of New South Wales would extinguish Sir John Robertson's claims to leadership, were other considerations equal. At a leap she has emerged from the confines of a colony into the vast space of a vigorous State. It must not be overlooked, however, that her political metamorphosis brings with its advantages additional responsibilities. Statesmen in New South Wales are confronted to-day with issues the magnitude and perplexity of which have no precedent in its history. The inelasticity of the revenue from land, together with other deficiencies, to meet the Treasurer's estimate leaves a deficit of over a million sterling. The seriousness of the situation does not disappear with the expiring year, for it is likely to recur in the current one. At the same time the effect is increasing the present dangers, and can only be met in one way—at least one legitimate way—the remodelling of the incidence of taxation. Will anyone venture to assert that Sir John Robertson, or any member of his Cabinet, is equal to such a task? How many men are there in New South Wales, owning property in that State, who would care to submit to the fiscal delusions of Sir John Robertson and his band of amateurs?

Again, the situation does not brighten when viewed from the aspect of Land Legislation. The framing of the present Act absorbed the entire life of one Parliament. It is admitted to be, on the whole, a very fair solution of a very complex question. But, assuming it is not a wise Act, it certainly should be allowed sufficient time to develop its deficiencies or exhibit its excrescences. Yet, the very man who is administering this Act is he who for three years tried his utmost to defeat it, whose early legislation, in fact, made the present Bill a necessity. Is it reasonable to suppose that this man, unless he be a god—and Sir John Robertson's most ardent admirers have not, up

to the present, invested him with any Divine attributes—will administer the present Act with such impartiality as it requires in order to demonstrate its efficacy? Sir John Robertson, himself, has already answered this question by endeavouring to stir up an agitation on the land question at a period when at least a dozen more urgent issues are pressing for consideration. The honourable gentleman is haunted by a perpetual Land Act apparition, from which he will never be able to free himself this side of the grave.

It will not be necessary to waste much time in discussing the collective merits of Sir John Robertson's colleagues. They may be summed up in one sentence—the merits of collective incapacity. This judgment, though it may appear severe, is after all the most charitable explanation that can be given of their inimitable burlesque in parading themselves in the robes of Cabinet Ministers. If Sir John Robertson's colleagues are at once admitted to be a band of incapables, they are, by the same stroke of the pen, exonerated from the pernicious effect of their absurd deliberations on the simple plea of irresponsibility. At the same time, it will be prudent to cut them down in the spring of life, lest they should perpetrate some extravagances which may cost the State a large ransom in dignity, and its subjects large sums in gold.

What Macaulay said of the Addington Ministry is conspicuously true of this board of nonentities:—

(1) In an age pre-eminently fruitful of Parliamentary talents, a Cabinet was formed containing hardly a single man who, in Parliamentary talents, could be considered as even of the *second rate*. The most important offices in the State were bestowed on decorous and laborious mediocrity.

Earl Russell, in his *Life of C. J. Fox*, was even more outspoken than Macaulay. He pours on the heads of the incompetents the most unsparing ridicule:—

(2) To say that the Sovereign may appoint, by virtue of the prerogative, men wanting in ability or knowledge, and that the House of Commons, whatever may be the dangers of the country, is bound to support them, would be to strike at the root of our Constitution. Much, perhaps the great part, of our national policy must be left to the direction of the Executive Government. To permit that direction to remain in the hands of *silly, foolish, and empty men* would be a want of national wisdom. To call upon the Crown to place the public affairs under the guidance of men in whom the House of Commons can have confidence, is the necessary privilege of that House; to allow a certain discretion to men who enjoy that confidence, is a necessity of constitutional monarchy.

(1) 'William Pitt,' Longman's edition 423.

(2) 'Life of C. J. Fox,' by Earl Russell: III., 310.

If you ask a supporter of Mr. Dibbs why, in the present divided state of public opinion, he should be permitted to supersede Sir Henry Parkes, he will tell you "because privately he is a better man, and publicly he is more popular." But when you touch the question of capacity, the supporter of Mr. Dibbs will frankly avow that he is not within measurable distance of Sir Henry Parkes—albeit the latter gentleman has a most offensive manner of asserting his political erudition. That Mr. Dibbs has given evidence of possessing administrative ability is admitted on all sides; but he has likewise exhibited a marvellous deficiency in tact, which is indispensable in a leader of men. The correspondence with the Bank of New South Wales, and that also with the Agent General, place the late Premier in anything but a favourable light. They show that the cast of Mr. Dibbs's mind is not sufficiently judicial for him to be entrusted with the leadership of a great State. Mr. Dibbs would make a most excellent Minister under a man who possessed the very qualifications of which he has shown himself to be destitute with such conspicuous zeal. He is rich in the qualities that prevent a man becoming a successful leader of other men; and his official poverty may be summed up in the want of that constituent so essential to the politician, 'diplomacy.' Yet Mr. Dibbs has some excellent recommendations as a Cabinet Minister. He is inscrutably honest, capable of an immense amount of work, thoroughly loyal to his colleagues, a useful speaker, and well endowed with executive ability. The masterly manner in which some of the details in the equipping of the Contingent to the Soudan were conceived and executed reflected high credit upon Mr. Dibbs's ability to deal with and execute large State transactions. That such a man would make an excellent Minister in a Cabinet led by Sir Henry Parkes goes without saying. Yet, if anyone proposed such a coalition of forces to the late Premier, he would, doubtless, take deep offence at the suggestion: and why? Primarily because on personal grounds he objects to serve with Sir Henry Parkes, and on political grounds he considers such a course would be *infra dignitatum*.

It is possible that Mr. Dibbs may not be aware that history affords ample precedents of men who were at one time engaged in almost irreconcilable strife consenting to act not only in the same Ministry, but under a leader whom they had denounced with unmeasured scorn. The case of Lord North and C. J. Fox is one in point. Nothing could exceed the vituperation with which Fox denounced the injurious and wicked policy of Lord North in regard to

the American colonies. He opposed the war with as much vehemence as did Burke. Yet in 1783 he consented to serve with Lord North in the Portland Administration. And not only did he serve with him in the same Administration, but he divided with him an office in which each was responsible for the other's delinquencies. Lord North and Fox were the two Secretaries of State, offices in those days so subtly united that one Minister could not acquit himself from the errors of the other.

If Mr. Dibbs imagines that it would be an unusual concession of dignity to act as Minister after having been Premier, let him study Lord North's career from another aspect. Lord North had been Prime Minister from 1770 to 1782, yet he did not object to act as Secretary of State under the Duke of Portland. But Mr. Dibbs may claim that Lord North was weak in character, and that he would not care to follow such an example. No such charge can be brought against Lord Sidmouth, who, if he was not a successful Prime Minister, was anything but wanting in dignity. Lord Sidmouth, who, as Henry Addington, was Speaker for eleven years, then Prime Minister for three years, finally consented to hold the Seals of Secretary of State for the Home Department in Lord Liverpool's Cabinet for nearly ten years. A little later came the case of the Duke of Wellington. The hero of Waterloo was First Lord of the Treasury from 1828 to 1830. In 1832, when Earl Grey's Reform Bill was in imminent peril of being rejected for the third time by the Lords, Charles Manners Sutton—then Speaker—was asked by his friends to form a Ministry. John Wilson Croker tells us that the Duke of Wellington said he was perfectly willing to *serve with or under* Mr. Manners Sutton, if he would endeavour to carry on the King's Government. Mr. Dibbs will not ask for any better precedents than these to satisfy himself that there is not the slightest impropriety, nor any sacrifice of dignity, in his taking office under Sir Henry Parkes.

Mr. Abbott's claims are those which next call for examination. The late Minister for Lands is the fortunate possessor of a large amount of confidence from the public of New South Wales. He starts with an advantage of which many politicians are deficient. Whatever may be Mr. Abbott's claims to ability, he cannot possibly believe himself to be possessed of sufficient experience to fill with credit the position of Colonial Secretary. In the first place, he begins stamped by his own *fiat* as egregiously wanting in diplomacy. On what grounds can Mr. Abbott justify his gratuitous breach with a

statesman with whom he will unquestionably sooner or later be called upon to act? Mr. Gladstone has taught the world how skillfully language can be employed to make the pledges of the statesman as vague as possible. Mr. Abbott has shown us in his gratuitous asseverations how clumsily a statesman can betray himself and his party into the most hopeless difficulty without the slightest reason. It would have been sufficiently embarrassing if Mr. Abbott had been driven into a corner by unavoidable questions, in his endeavour to escape from which he had betrayed himself into an injudicious confession. Nothing of the kind occurred, and Mr. Abbott stands self-convicted of a clumsy *faux pas*.

The commission, however of this unfortunate *contretemps* by no means destroys Mr. Abbott's prospect for coalescing with Sir Henry Parkes. True, it makes the reconciliation more difficult; but the head and front of his offending hath that extent, no more. It has already been shown in this article that history abounds with examples in which public men, after the most violent denunciation of one another, consented to act together in the same Cabinet. If it be necessary to quote another precedent to fit Mr. Abbott's case, that of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Disraeli is an exact counterpart. Lord Salisbury had declared that no circumstances could induce him to act with Mr. Disraeli; yet, shortly after this, we find him accepting the Seals of the Foreign Office. Mr. Abbott must see that, while he is altogether too inexperienced to form a lasting Government with himself as Prime Minister, he could in conjunction with Sir Henry Parkes form a Government that it would be impossible to upset. Moreover, Mr. Abbott must well know that there is the strongest justification for such an alliance. It can never be characterised as an unholy one, for the work before the next Parliament will acquit Mr. Abbott of any such charge were any one uncharitable enough to make it. The reforms urgently necessary in New South Wales are of such a character that none but a very strong Ministry can undertake them and live.

Mr. Barton's claims to leadership are doubtless based partly upon his occupying the Speaker's chair, and partly upon his being credited with the possession of a large amount of natural ability. For the sake of brevity we will concede both these claims, and admit that they equip him with the elementary qualifications of a coming man. But Mr. Barton's most ardent admirers cannot claim that the possession of these attributes alone qualify him as being the most eligible man in New

South Wales to be selected for the position of Premier. Mr. Barton is said to be fond of referring to Addington, and to have stated that a Speaker has never been known to descend from the Chair except to fill the position of Prime Minister. Admitting that this is historic, which we do, it will be interesting to examine the incidents which led to the summoning of Speakers to fill the position of Prime Minister, and the circumstances which led up to them.

There are only two instances in the history of this century in which Speakers were summoned by the Sovereign to carry on the Government. The first was that of Henry Addington, in 1801: the second was that of Charles Manners Sutton, in 1832. The second case might almost be dismissed as non-existent, since on the very night that Mr. Speaker Sutton was selected by his party to form a Government the Grey Ministry resumed office by a concession of the Waverers, led by Lord Harrowby in the House of Lords, which enabled the Reform Bill to pass its third reading without the creation of Peers. But the precedent remains in force, since the Tory party had consented to be led by Manners Sutton, supposing that the Reform Bill would be thrown out in the Lords. Evidence shall be adduced presently to show the extreme straits to which parties were reduced before they called upon Mr. Manners Sutton. In the meantime it will be instructive to examine the case of Addington.

Henry Addington—afterwards Lord Sidmouth—was the son of Dr. Addington, physician to George III. He was elected to Parliament for Devizes in 1784, and in 1790 was elected by an overwhelming majority to the Chair. After the union with Ireland in 1800, Pitt was especially anxious to guarantee its permanence by freeing the Roman Catholics from political disabilities. His interview with Lord Castlereagh, after the latter's return from Ireland, increased his anxiety, and likewise his conviction that no permanent good could accrue from the Union unless Roman Catholic disabilities were removed. Pitt unbosomed himself to George III. on this very momentous subject, and distinctly told him that he could only consent to remain his Minister upon the understanding that he should at an early date bring forward a measure to compass the emancipation of the Catholics. Unfortunately, George III. was under the impression that to consent to such an act would be a violation of his Coronation Oath, and the effect so preyed upon his mind that it

unseated his reason. Moreover, he was under the impression that he would forfeit the crown of England to the House of Savoy. "If I violate it," cried the Monarch, after hearing his Coronation Oath read for the fourth time, "I am no longer legal Sovereign of this country, but it falls to the House of Savoy!" And thus it was, to quote George III.'s own letter to Pitt on February 5, 1801, that he accepted his resignation 'with grief, but from a sense of duty,' and that he requested Henry Addington to form a Government.

Lord Sidmouth was a man of undoubted ability, yet his biographer, Dean Pellew, shows him to have been little less than a failure as Prime Minister. He filled the Speaker's chair for eleven years before he was chosen Prime Minister. Upon his elevation to the position of leader, Lord Stanhope, in his 'Life of Pitt,' says:—"For eleven years he occupied the Chair of the House of Commons to better public advantage than any Speaker since Onslow." When the vote of thanks was moved on February 16, 1801, Mr. Pitt said:—

(1) The right honourable gentleman has already filled one situation of great importance with the most distinguished ability, and this is the surest augur of his services in another exalted situation.

But after a year of office, Pitt's espousal of Addington's fitness changed into hostile censure upon his incapacity. He characterised the second Addington Budget (1802) as being 'founded on the grossest of errors,' and estimated his miscalculation as comprehending the enormous sum of £2,800,000 per annum.

Fox, in his reply to Pitt, said what was true of Addington, and what would apply with singular force to Mr. Barton:—

A man, however, may be an excellent chairman of this House, as the late Speaker undoubtedly was, without being exactly qualified for the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Macauley's description of Addington might have been drawn *mutatis nominibus*, for Mr. Barton:—

(2) He was universally admitted to have been the best Speaker that had sat in that chair since the retirement of Onslow. But nature had not bestowed on him very vigorous faculties; and the highly respectable situation which he had long occupied with honour had rather unfitted than fitted him for the discharge of his new duties.

Lord John Russell is even more severe on Addington than is Macauley. In his 'Life of C. J. Fox,' he discharges his contempt in his characteristic style.

(1) Stanhope's 'Life of Pitt,' II., 397.

(2) 'William Pitt,' Longmans' Edition, 424.

In the opinion of Fox, Lord Grenville and Pitt alike [says Lord Russell], Mr. Addington was incapable of conducting public affairs wisely and successfully. The offer of the Speakership of the House of Lords to Mr. Addington was a sufficient proof of Pitt's opinion on this head.

But why call upon Mr. Barton at all when so many more eligible men are available? Very good reasons were adduced for calling upon Mr. Speaker Addington and Mr. Speaker Sutton to form Ministries in 1801 and 1832, which have no analogy in New South Wales. In the first instance, all the public men in whom George III. had any confidence had either committed themselves, or the direction of their sympathies was known concerning the Catholic disabilities. The Speaker, from his position, was the only man who was untrammelled by pledges, and who could, without forfeiting public confidence and his own honour, form a Ministry which would conform to the prejudices of the King. The situation was a very grave one. It was impossible for Pitt to recant, and George III. hated Fox so cordially that he never would have consented to his carrying on his Government.

The case of Manners Sutton was equally unique. The Reform Bill had twice passed the Commons, and twice been rejected by the Lords. Peel was invited by William IV. to form a Tory Ministry. But his previous declarations utterly precluded his leading a Government on the basis of Reform. Yet he knew that a Reform Measure was not only indispensable to the peace of the country, but inevitable. He writes to Mr. Croker on May 12, 1832:—

(1) I foresee that a Bill of Reform, including everything that is really important and really dangerous in the present Bill, must pass. For me individually to take the conduct of such a Bill—to assume the responsibility of the consequences which I have predicted as the inevitable result of such a Bill—would be, in my opinion, *personal degradation to myself*.

Peel consequently declined, and advised the King to send for the Duke of Wellington. The Duke, although he had vehemently denounced the necessity for any Reform, said he would do his best to preserve the Monarchy. It was entirely due to his zeal to serve his master, and to the unselfishness of his nature to sacrifice himself that the Duke of Wellington ever entertained the idea of forming a Government to carry out the doctrine of Reform. But his friends

(1) 'Croker Papers'. II., 180.

saw the dreadful embarrassment in which it would involve him. It was at this juncture that they came to his rescue, and suggested that the Duke should resign his commission back to the King, and advise him to send for the Speaker. Manners Sutton, like Addington, had not committed himself to either side of the question. He could with perfect propriety form a Tory Government which would embrace the constituent parts of the Reform Bill. The Speaker, therefore, accepted the responsibility, and was to have met at Apsley House, when the House rose, to discuss with the Duke and Peel the composition of his Ministry. The very same evening, however, the debate took a turn in the House of Commons, which capsized the Tory arrangements. Baring made a speech, in which he characterised the resignation of the Whigs as a 'great calamity,' and said "if they would consent to return and carry the Bill, as it now seemed they might do without swamping the House of Lords, he, for one, would not consent to form an Administration to replace them." This sudden change of front caused the debate to be adjourned, and the next day Earl Grey was sent for, and his Ministry resumed office.

The political situation in New South Wales has presented no analogy to the two crises enumerated above. Whatever Mr. Barton's merits may be, it is to be hoped that they are not of so evanescent a character as to evaporate before experience shall have made him as eligible as it made the claims of older and more experienced men in the present House more conspicuous. That these claims have already eclipsed whatever pretensions Mr. Barton may have put forth as Speaker is absolutely acknowledged by most men whose position entitles their opinions to the slightest weight.

The claims of Sir Henry Parkes have been purposely withheld until those of his competitors may have been examined. It will be seen that, with all his faults, and I doubt not that they are legion, Sir Henry Parkes is the only public man whose experience entitles him to demand from the people their mandate to form a Government that will bring the State through her present difficulties into a condition of prosperity and security. At the same time it would be idle to counsel the formation of a Government of which Sir Henry Parkes should be *ipso facto* the Government itself. Such a Government would carry in it the seeds of dissolution from the hour of its birth. The member for St. Leonards has, in one way or another, forfeited a large amount of the public confidence he once enjoyed. The present writer does not find it necessary to recapitulate the nature of these *laches*. They are referred to merely to confirm the postulate that

only by a union with a man like Mr. Abbott, in whom public confidence is complete, could Sir Henry Parkes form a permanent Government. If a Coalition Government were formed, in which Mr. Dibbs could have a seat, it would make its claims to public confidence all the stronger. One thing is very clear, that the present Government is a disgrace to the country. Its sheer incapacity at a time when the State wants advice from its best minds is a living scandal. How applicable are the remarks Mr. Francis made in 1803, when reviewing the condition of the country under the Addington Ministry, to Sir John Robertson's colleagues and New South Wales:—

In this awful situation, whether I advert to some who are present, or to others who are absent, the melancholy and astonishing fact is that, from the Councils and Government of the country, at such a moment as this, *all the eminent abilities of England are excluded.* In fair weather, a moderate share of skill may be sufficient. In the storm that seems to be coming, other pilots should be provided.

No description could better fit the present situation of New South Wales than these very apposite remarks of Mr. Francis. The situation of New South Wales, while not imperilled by exhausting and costly wars, is none the less 'awful.' Australia is essentially an industrial country depending for its prosperity on the skilful development of its natural resources. When we see these being impoverished on the one hand, and its industries paralysed on the other, by the imbecility of a political compact that calls itself Government, it is time to realise the gravity of the situation, which is little less than 'awful.' Public men should arouse themselves to action. The dividing lines, which are principally of a personal character, should be effaced. A compact comprehending the good of the whole people should be formed. Heroism is one of the finest traits of public life, but it cannot exist where selfishness prevails so largely. Mr. Abbott and Mr. Dibbs should cast their eyes upon the pages of history to justify any sacrifices they may be called upon to make. When Pitt formed his second Administration in 1804 he did what no selfish statesman could have done, and what really cost him his life. To gratify the personal prejudices of the King, he consented to pass over the claims of Fox and the Grenvilles. The result was that this capable Minister was deprived of the most able talent that was then available, and overwork bore him to a premature grave. The public of New South Wales do not ask Mr.

Abbott or Mr. Dibbs to make so great a sacrifice. All that is demanded of the former is to allow his loyalty for his country to extinguish his individual prejudices and predispose him to enter a Cabinet that will live and govern with wisdom. As for Mr. Dibbs, if he cannot accept with grace a place in the new Coalition, he can at least withdraw with dignity, and induce his followers to support the incoming Government.





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