

POLITICAL ADDRESS.

Mr Fraser At
The Theatre Royal.

A full house greeted the member for Napier, Mr A. L. D. Fraser, at the Theatre Royal last evening, when he addressed his constituents on the political questions of the day. The dress circle was reserved for ladies and their escorts, and the interest taken by the former in politics was evident by the very large attendance. A novel feature of the meeting was undoubtedly the introduction of music, the Frivolity Orchestra playing one selection before the proceedings opened and another whilst Mr Fraser had a brief rest.

The chair was taken by the Mayor (Mr John McVay), who expressed his pleasure at being asked to preside. It should be very gratifying to Mr Fraser, he said, to see such a large audience assembled to hear him speak, especially when it was considered that there were no stirring political questions on the board. Mr Fraser would, he had no doubt, give a very interesting resumé of the work of the past session of Parliament, and would take the electors into his confidence as to his proposed line of action during the session now close at hand. It was not necessary to bespeak for their member a fair and impartial hearing; that was always given by Napier audiences, and he had no doubt that Mr Fraser would be pleased with his reception.

Mr Fraser, who was received with loud applause and cheers, at the outset of his speech said he thought it was his duty to congratulate Mr McVay on his first appearance as Mayor of Napier at a political meeting. (Applause.) He would ask them to do the same by the Mayor as they had done for him (the speaker) eighteen months ago, to bury the past and sink all vindictiveness, acknowledging that he would at all times conscientiously and thoroughly do his duty. (Applause.) Mr Fraser went on to refer to the very excellent services rendered to the borough by Mr G. H. Swan during his fifteen years of office, and read a telegram announcing that Mr Seddon had appointed him a Justice of the Peace.

THE MUSIC.

The speaker then apologised for the introduction of music into the programme. He wanted the audience to clearly understand that it was not an innovator. (Laughter.) He looked upon it that the political feeling in Hawke's Bay, as well as in other parts of the colony, was dead compared to what it was a few years ago, and that meeting was intended to be more of a homely gathering than anything else; hence the music. He would not have taken this step during an election contest. Shakespeare or some other ancient mariner had said that music charms the savage breast, and therefore such a departure might, if made at election times, have brought him (Mr Fraser) within the scope of the Corrupt Practices Act. (Laughter.) In apologising for not having properly prepared his speech the speaker said that owing to the illness of the Hon. James Carroll he had had to undertake a great deal of the Native Minister's work in connection with arranging for the reception of the Duke and Duchess of York at Rotorua and had been kept busy night and day.

POLITICAL FEELING.

When he was returned as member for Napier he was told that he would regret it, that the people were vindictive and that he would not have the proverbial

THE LATE MR WALKER.

Mr Fraser then referred to the death of Mr R. T. Walker, highly eulogising the deceased gentleman's journalistic ability and unflinching courtesy. Although opposed to him (the speaker) in politics Mr Walker never descended to hitting "below the belt," and after the last session showed the spirit of a fair and impartial journalist when he wrote "whatever our political feelings are we are not ashamed of the member for Napier." (Applause.)

IMPRESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT.

Proceeding to give his impressions of Parliament, Mr Fraser said he sometimes thought it a nice place to be in and at others a very nice place to emigrate from. No one without actual experience could really comprehend the work of a member. During last session they averaged over nine hours a day, commencing at 10 in the morning with committee work and finishing at all hours; yet he had found that Parliament had its fascinations and attractions. Some persons were in the habit of railing at Parliament, but he had found that with one or two exceptions the present representatives were a really estimable and intellectual body of men, and all the talk about the decadence of Parliament was absolute nonsense. He went to the House strongly opposed to stonewalling, but when the question came under analysis it was found impossible to do without it. If a private bill of a useless or objectionable character were brought down by a member the only way to block it was by stonewalling. It was not a bit of use moving amendments. In two or three instances he (Mr Fraser) had found it necessary to stonewall the Government and in one instance he and a small party compelled the Government to give in. It was the only chance of frustrating any legislation which a member considered to be against the interests of the colony.

DISSATISFIED MEMBERS.

There were in the House two or three members who were very dissatisfied and "agin the Government" on everything. There was no real Opposition now; that party was as extinct as the moa, and he believed a large price had been offered by the British Government to secure specimens as curiosities for the museum. (Laughter.) But there were a few who really elected themselves as the Opposition. These were the honourable members for Wellington City (Messrs Hutcheson and Atkinson) and Mr Pirani. (A voice: The three tailors of Tooley street.) Both Hutcheson and Pirani—he was not speaking personally for he was indebted to them in many ways—were disappointed politicians. They expected that at the very earliest opportunity they would be elevated to the Ministry, and finding their hopes not realised at once set up a bastard Opposition of three, and of no service to the colony or themselves. Quoting from Mr Hutcheson's recent speech in Wellington, in which he said that Ministers stuffed members with their iniquitous legislation, and Mr Atkinson's statement that the whole policy of the Government comprised a whip, purse, pledge, and bunch of carrots, Mr Fraser said that if these were the best arguments to be found against the Government they were not worth consideration.

THE OPPOSITION LEADER.

Mr Hutcheson had devoted the greater part of an hour and a-half speech to vilifying Captain Russell, saying that instead of being in the House and opposing the Government he had sneaked home to bed. He (Mr Fraser) held no brief for Captain Russell, but he was a man he respected and admired, and one upon

himself, that the price was a fair one and that the money was paid. That system was carried on to 1894, when the Government stopped it and said "We are going to stop private Europeans purchasing native land and will buy it ourselves." That would have been perfectly fair if the terms and conditions had been the same as those of the Lands for Settlement Act, a proper valuation being made, but what the Government now had the power to do was to say to the native owner "We are going to take your land, and so-and-so is the price of it." He knew of large tracts having been thus taken for 3s or 4s per acre for which he could have got £2 or £3. In speaking of this matter in the House he had described the Premier as the greatest robber of native lands the country had ever seen. The Government might now purchase at their own price, and there were not the same conditions as before 1894, which, as he had said, provided that every native owner should be left sufficient to maintain him and that the price should be a fair one. The Maori had now to take what he could get, and if he were a drinking man and a follower of the totalisator he would soon be without an acre or a shilling. But the case was even worse with the unfortunate minors. Previous to 1894 the moneys to which minors would be entitled when of age were paid into the hands of the Public Trustee on their behalf, but since then the moneys were paid to Maori trustees, perhaps to be recklessly squandered, and thus the luckless minors might grow up without a penny to their name. He asked his hearers if they now wondered at his opposition to the Government on this question. (Cries of No, and applause.) Another native measure he had opposed was the contemptible one known as the act to provide for land administration by native boards, an act which was a travesty on legislation and a disgrace to any British colony.

MAHUTA AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

It had been introduced for nothing else but to pander to the so-called King Mahuta, who the Government now found out not to be the sixteen marble they took him to be. (Laughter.) Heaven only knew where his Kingdom was. He had arrived in Wellington with a brass band and some hundreds of followers, and for a few weeks there had been such a fuss that people wondered whether it was the Duke that had come. There was nothing in the man, he had not the brains of a sucking turkey—(laughter)—and yet he had absolutely exploited the Hon. R. J. Seddon. The Act was passed for this Mahuta, to enable him and his immediate followers to get someone else's land included in their area, so that they might play the important parts of chief robbers. (Laughter.) And now Mahuta would have nothing to do with the matter, because he could not get sufficient land into his area. He (Mr Fraser) had spoken last session on this subject but had not been listened to; but he felt sure he would be listened to next session. In the matter of native land purchase the great object was to see that justice was done to the Maoris, with whom the Europeans were in legal partnership in holding the colony. (Applause.)

CROWN TENANTS REBATE BILL.

There were other matters in connection with which he had voted against the Government. He had not, he repeated, been a dumb dog and the Government had appreciated him for it. One of these measures was the Crown Tenants' Rebate Bill, which when introduced provided that every Crown tenant, whether he wanted it or not, should have a 10 per cent rebate on his rent.

bed of roses, but he could conscientiously say that if every member of the House in New Zealand experienced the same appreciation, kindness, and thoughtfulness as he had received during the past eighteen months their positions were undoubtedly beds of roses. (Applause.) He had received encouragement from every quarter, and many of those who had been his political opponents at the last election had since expressed to him their appreciation of what he had done.

AN IMPORTANT EPOCH.

The last eighteen months had been an important epoch in the political history and the world's history. If they would let their minds wander back over that period they would remember the great events that had occurred in connection with the colony and the Empire, and he would say there were few men who had been in Parliament throughout their lives who had had the experience and education that the last eighteen months had afforded. The Empire was then just on the eve of the South African war, and since then to this new colony, born but yesterday, the great British Empire had been proud to hold out its hand and say "Come and help." The people rose to it and helped, and when the Premier sent the first troops of any colony to the seat of war he raised New Zealand to such a position that hereafter it would be one of the brightest diamonds in the British crown. (Applause.) It had been the means of giving the colony a splendid advertisement. Previously New Zealand was regarded at Home and by the world generally merely as an island adjacent to Australia, separated by a narrow strip of water that could be crossed by a footbridge—(laughter)—but the manner in which the New Zealanders had borne themselves on the field of battle had proved to the world that this colony would yet become important. Lord Roberts had personally testified to the very valuable services rendered by the representatives of this colony, and what better credentials could they have? Whatever the cost of sending the contingents the money had been well spent to the credit of the colony. Though Hawke's Bay had been called Conservative, slow, un-sympathetic, and cold, when roused the settlers were some of the finest men in New Zealand, as evidenced by the magnificent manner in which they subscribed to the More Men Fund. (Applause.) The returns showed that this province was only beaten by Canterbury by a small sum for first place. Mr Fraser then made feeling reference to the heroes who had sacrificed their lives for the Empire's cause, and said they had raised for themselves a white, pure monument, that would be far more lasting than any bronze memorial the people could erect.

THE LATE QUEEN.

From this Mr Fraser proceeded to refer to the great and irreparable loss Britain had sustained by the death of Queen Victoria, briefly touching upon the great work she had been called upon to do at the early age of seventeen years. When she ascended the throne, he said, England was on the verge of disintegration owing to the immoral conduct of those at the head of affairs, yet she, a young girl, had taken her place and so wielded her influence for good that the Court was purified and placed on a firm basis. She made the Empire a great power, and left on record in history indisputable evidence of what the influence of woman is capable of doing. Though her Majesty was dead she still lived, for her influence and the great good she had done for the Empire would never die; she would for ever live in the hearts of the people, and her good works would always exercise a beneficial influence over humanity and Christianity.

whose career for the past 20 years there was no stain or mark of discredit, political or otherwise, and when any man said that, instead of attending to his duty in the House he had sneaked home to bed, the statement was discreditable, dishonorable and untrue. It would be remembered that before the session Captain Russell was dangerously ill, that for a time he was not allowed to speak, and that shortly afterwards came the saddest news a man could hear, the news that his son had died at sea. These misfortunes had broken his heart for a time, and yet men such as those to whom reference had been made said he went home and neglected the business of the country. God help such men; he (Mr Fraser) would not have them on his side. (Applause.)

NOT A DUMB DOG.

During the election at which he was returned it had been said that he would be one of those dumb dogs that were no good to their constituencies, and, further, that he would simply be as potter's clay in the hands of Richard John Seddon. He had denied this on the platform, had said that he would do what he considered right, and had told the people no matter what shade of politics was theirs he considered that he represented them individually and collectively. He wanted to tell them, without a shade of vanity, that he had carried out his pledges. (Applause.) He had had occasion to speak and vote against the Government, thinking then and still that he was justified in doing so. He wanted to say that the man who told them that members were coerced by whip, bribe, scourge or a bunch of carrots—and probably like another animal he was an authority on carrots—(laughter)—made a statement that was, to use plain English—a deliberate lie. He had spoken and voted against the Government and no undue influence had been brought to bear on him, or, as far as he had heard, on any other man. (Applause.)

THE NATIVE QUESTION.

One of the questions upon which he had opposed the Government was their native policy, and as he had been asked to explain his position in connection therewith he would do so. The native legislation of the present Government began in 1854, and by the Act then passed no one could purchase native land but the Government. To go back to 1862-63 the Government had the presumptive right under the Treaty of Waitangi to purchase native land, but this not only caused quarrels and dissatisfaction but also bloodshed. The Government of the Crown motion brought down a measure waiving their right under the Treaty, but as it was a question involving the constitution the consent of her late Majesty had to be asked, and was given. From 1863 till 1881 the natives could deal with the lands as they liked, and no doubt during that time many Maoris were indiscriminately robbed. His first contention was that once the Government had, with the Royal consent, waived their rights under the Treaty, they had no right, in 1894, to resume those rights without again obtaining the assent of the Crown. He ventured to say that had the natives the means and inclination to properly oppose the Government their action would be found to have been illegal. Once having waived their right, the Government's powers under the Treaty were gone. In 1891 an Act was passed which was a wonderful improvement on the previous legislation. Under that Act Europeans could purchase land from the natives, but all transactions had to come before an official known as a fraud commissioner, whose duty it was to see that the Maori wishing to sell would have sufficient left to maintain

him as unjust. He might be a Crown tenant struggling and starving while another was rich and prosperous, yet both would have been granted the same rebate. He thought the Government should see that each case should be dealt with according to its circumstances and according to the discretion of proper officials. He had stayed up all night to gain that end, and he had gained it. He had fought against the Government when he had thought them wrong—and he would continue to do so—and this was one instance. (Applause.)

WOMEN'S DISABILITIES BILL.

The measure entitled the Women's Disabilities Bill was not introduced by the Government but by the member for Riccarton, Mr Russell. It passed its second reading, got into committee, and was rather seriously treated. He had not wanted to speak on it, as he looked upon the proposal with contempt, but he was forced to do so, and, whether what he said had any effect or not, he was glad to say the bill found its way into its proper place, the waste-paper basket. A gentleman well known in Hawke's Bay was a great supporter of the bill, he referred to Mr Hornsby. That gentleman had said he felt he had a great mission before him, that he should support the bill, and that he was so nervous in carrying out his mission that his knees knocked together—(laughter)—and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. These remarks were quotations from Mr Hornsby's speech. They could all imagine how serious the matter was when Mr Hornsby's knees knocked together. (Laughter.) As to that gentleman's tongue, perhaps instead of it cleaving to the roof of his mouth it was in the side of his cheek. It was a bill intended to enable women to sit in Parliament, and whenever such a bill was brought before the House he would do his best to have it thrown out. His opinion was that woman's rights and mission was to be man's helper and rear their children. As Thomas Bracken had so beautifully expressed it:

It's woman's sacred right—and this
To her by God is given—
To teach the lisping little ones
The password into Heaven
No joy man knows on earth or nith
The mother's bliss compare
When, listening with the angel choir,
She hears her child's first prayer.

—(Applause.)

THE FORTY POUNDS STEAL.

Mr Fraser then proceeded to deal with what the papers had called "the £40 steal," and said it was exceedingly strange that honorable members who had spoken on the matter in addresses to their constituents had not furnished the real explanation of the affair. Next session there would be brought before the House two important questions, proposals to increase members' salaries and to extend the term of Parliament to five years instead of three. He had already made up his mind as to how he would vote, and if spared to take his seat would support both. As to the £40 steal he proposed making a breach of confidence by divulging what took place at a caucus. At this caucus Mr Seddon stated that he proposed to bring down a bill increasing the Ministers' salaries and he wished to hear what the party had to say. The consensus of opinion was that it was a very proper thing. No pressure was brought to bear on members as to how they should vote. Then a prominent member of the South Island rose and pointed out to the Premier the heavy tax placed on members by reason of postal and telegraph charges, that whereas telegrams to Ministers were allowed to pass free, messages on public business to private members and replies

(Continued on Page 7.)