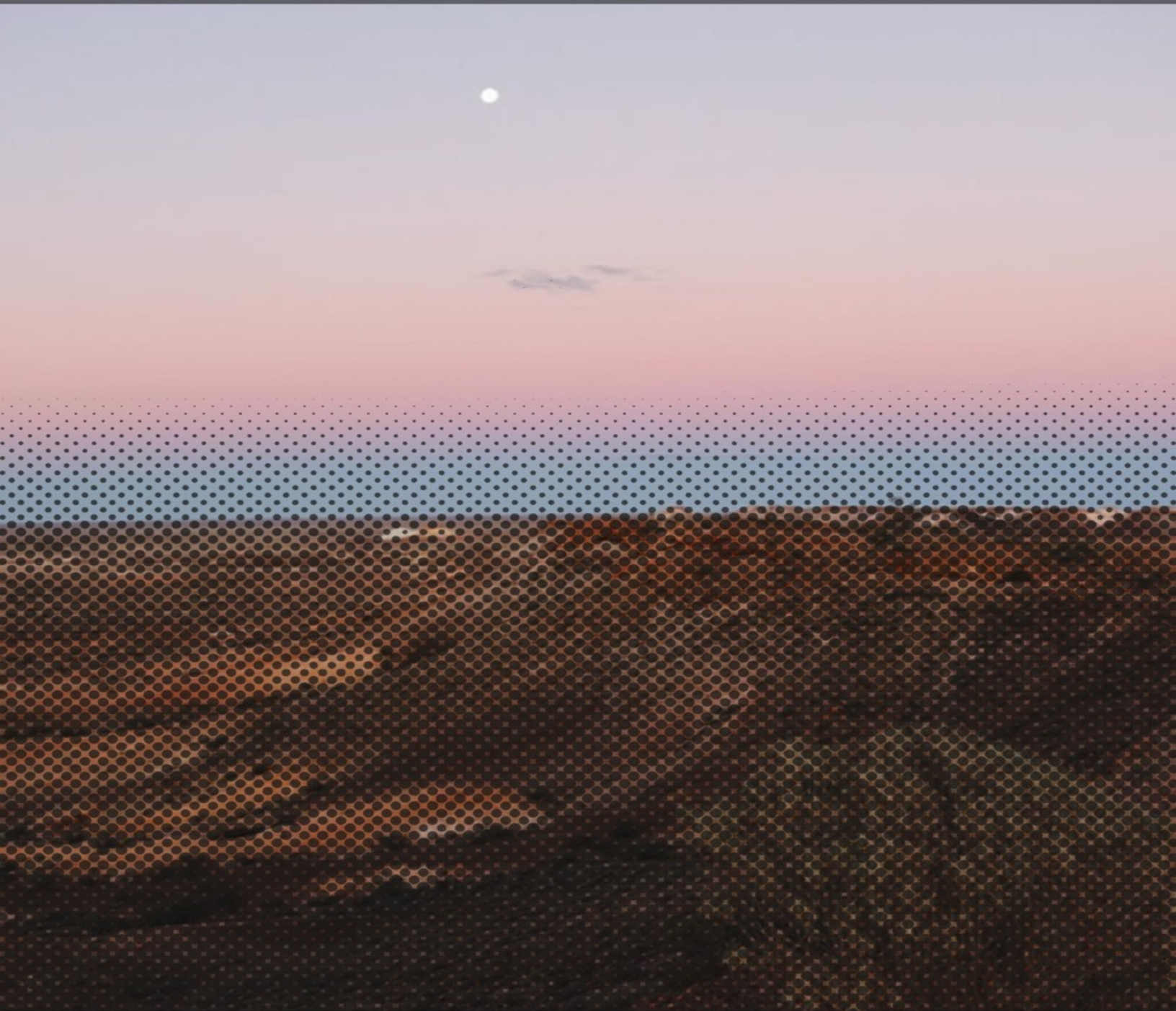


Edwin Hodder



*The History
of South Australia
Volume II.*

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CHAPTER XII.

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INTERIM ADMINISTRATION OF LIEUTENANT-COLONEL HAMLEY.

FEBRUARY 20TH, 1868—FEBRUARY 16TH, 1869.

Dissolution.—Reform and Protection.—Troublous Times.—The Northern Territory.—Public Finances.—Crisis-mongering.—The "St. George of the Land Reformers."—The "Battle of the Areas."—Review.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL Francis Gilbert Hamley, senior officer in command of her Majesty's forces (50th—Queen's Own—Regiment) in the colony at the time of Sir Dominick Daly's death, was sworn in as acting Governor on the 20th of February, 1868, and on the 20th of March he dissolved the House of Assembly by proclamation. Writs for the election of new members were issued immediately afterwards, and the elections were divided into four batches, extending from the 6th of April to the 7th of May, thus giving candidates defeated in one district ample time to seek the suffrages of another.

The two leading questions before the electors were Land Reform and Protection. As regarded the former there were so many schemes and theories afloat, and such diversity of interpretation of them, that it was extremely difficult for electors to form an opinion as to the relative merits of any particular one. Those in favour of deferred payments for

land were believed to constitute the majority, although Dutch auction, tender, and other modes met with advocates, while a few were in favour of allowing the land question to remain *in statu quo*. The protection party, though not numerically strong, was very active and determined, but it only succeeded in returning one or two of its advocates.

The total number of candidates to fill the thirty-six places was fifty-six, twenty in excess of the number required.

The first session of the fifth Parliament was opened by the acting Governor on the 31st of July, 1868, and in his inaugural speech touching references were made to the late "good and impartial" Governor, and also to the attempt on the life of the Duke of Edinburgh at Sydney. Then followed a comprehensive sketch of the state of the colony and of the duties devolving upon the new Parliament.

The sketch included special reference to the temporary depression affecting so many of the sources of industry; to the excellent services rendered by the Committee appointed to inquire into the red rust in wheat, so disastrous to the last harvest; to Captain Cadell's roseate-hued reports of the Northern Territory, and the responsibility of Parliament in respect of the contracts entered into with the holders of land orders for the sale of land in that Territory. Of land reform he spoke but briefly, merely intimating that some modification of the existing system of disposing of waste lands would be submitted to Parliament, whereby greater facilities would be afforded to purchasers for *bona-fide* occupation. Then followed a long list of other measures of public utility.

In due course Mr. G.S. Kingston was again unanimously elected Speaker, the reply to the Address was carried in both Houses without a division, and, so far, everything promised well. But it soon became apparent that the session would not, like the previous one, pass without a change of Ministry. Within six days an attempt was made by Mr. Carr to carry a vote of censure against the Ministry on the state of affairs relating to land in the Northern Territory, but it was unsuccessful.

A number of resolutions relating to the Northern Territory were introduced by the Treasurer a few days later, dealing with—

- (1) Extension of time for selection of land.
- (2) An increased area of land (240 acres for 160) in compensation for the loss of time incurred.
- (3) A still further increase of 320 acres instead of 160 in cases where land-order holders would survey land, not yet surveyed, at their own expense at any time within fifteen years.
- (4) Land-order holders of 160 acres to be at liberty to purchase an additional 240 acres of surveyed country land at five shillings per acre, to be selected within five years, or 320 acres of unsurveyed country land at three shillings and ninepence per acre, to be surveyed at their own cost within ten years.
- (5) Repayment of the sum originally paid to any land-order holder unwilling to accept any of the foregoing offers.

The House of Assembly agreed to the extension of time, to an increased area being given, and that steps should be taken to survey the land without any unnecessary delay.

On the 3rd of September the Treasurer in his budget speech drew rather a gloomy picture of the state of public finances, the deficiency in the revenue for the previous three years amounting to £500,000, which deficiency was ascribed mainly to the drought in the north, the red rust in wheat, and the consequent falling off in the sales of land and in the customs receipts.

A fortnight later Mr. Glyde, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, introduced the Government scheme for the reform of the land system generally.

"Land Reform", now in the fourth year of its existence, was a kind of reaction from the Squatting Agitation of 1864. It is not necessary to chronicle the details of the Government scheme as, the resolutions in which they were couched being rejected, the Ministry resigned. Mr. Alexander Hay and Mr. William Townsend both failing to form a Cabinet, the task was undertaken by Mr. John Hart, who succeeded. The new Ministry met on the 6th of October, and resigned on the 8th, when the Hon. H. Ayers had an innings. But it only lasted till the 23rd. Then the acting Governor was advised to prorogue Parliament with a view to an immediate dissolution of the House of Assembly. This catastrophe was, however, averted, and a new Ministry was formed by the Hon. H.B.T. Strangways, who attempted the task of reconciling the rival parties and stamping out the mass of confusion which would soon have overwhelmed not only land reform but all other legislation.

There had been six weeks of "crisis-mongering", and the real work of the country had again been trifled with by party strife. Each Ministry had propounded a Land Bill, no two of

which were in any respect identical, and in each debate the difficulty of the situation had become more and more complicated. But on the 5th of November, Mr. Strangways—"the St. George of the Land Reformers", as the Register dubbed him—announced to the House of Assembly the Policy of the new Ministry. With regard to the Northern Territory, it was similar to that of its predecessors; it was their intention to raise £40,000 for the purpose of continuing the survey of that country, and for the carrying out of the provisions of the Northern Territory Act. On the land question he stated that the proposed plan was to sell land by auction as at present, but that the payment might be made in cash, or partly cash, and credit for the remainder. In the latter case, the deposit was to be twenty per cent., which was to be considered as four years' interest paid in advance, and four years more was to be allowed for the payment of the principal. The area taken up by any one person was not to exceed 640 acres, and the transfer of the land was not to be allowed except in cases of death or insolvency. Certain improvements were to be made upon the land, and provision was made as to its occupation. The price was not to be lower than £1 per acre, and land put up at a higher price would be reduced month by month until it came down to £1 per acre, and if not taken up at that price it would be sold by auction. Safeguards were to be adopted to prevent fraud in the auction-room, and means adopted to enable *bona-fide* purchasers to obtain the land. In the event of there being more than one applicant the matter was to be decided by lot. Agricultural areas were to be proclaimed

from time to time after a plan of such areas had been laid before both Houses of Parliament for fourteen days.

The plan propounded met with fairly general approval in the House of Assembly, and a Committee was appointed to prepare a New Waste Lands Bill embodying the scheme.

This Bill occupied much attention, and "the Battle of the Areas" was warmly contested, but after the reassembling of Parliament on the 8th of January, 1869, the Bill was specially sent up to the Council. There, twenty-eight amendments were made and sent down to the House of Assembly. Two of them affected the vital principle of the Bill, and the Assembly, accepting the twenty-six, stood firm with regard to the other two. A deadlock again seemed inevitable, but it was averted by a conference appointed by both Houses.

The Land Bill was finally disposed of on the 29th of January, 1869, and on the 30th Parliament was prorogued, the session closing without the dissolution which more than once threatened the House of Assembly.

In less than a month after Parliament was prorogued, the new Governor, Sir James Fergusson, arrived, and relieved Colonel Hamley of his onerous duties.

Without aiming at anything beyond his sphere, Colonel Hamley did much in the colony by which he will be long remembered. His term of office was marked by many serious difficulties successfully overcome, and by grave dangers wisely averted.

In a review of his administration it was said, "The patient sincerity and ingenuousness of the man preserved him from the wiles and snares of statecraft. The independence and dignity of the soldier supplied the place of Colonial Office

reputation. In spite of all the drawbacks at the outset of his administration. Colonel Hamley soon produced the impression that he desired to thoroughly understand and to faithfully discharge his functions. He showed that he wished to do his duty without overdoing it. His limited political experience was not, as it might have been in the case of less sterling men, cloaked by any false dignity. He honestly accepted the position his predecessor bequeathed to him. He frankly adopted the constitutional advice which circumstances had provided for him. Genuine and unpretending, his twelve months' yule can be commended without suspicion of flattery. Nor has it been an uneventful administration. It comprised all the most important vice-regal functions. It gave us a new parliament; it brought us safely through three ministerial crises; it opened and closed one of the most remarkable sessions in the annals of our legislation; it added to our statute-book some vital measures; it witnessed the commencement of a recovery from severe commercial depression; it maintained, without any ostentation or false pretence, a cheerful social tone in the community; it drew around its personal centre a circle of friends which will break up in sorrow, and be long held in grateful remembrance."

CHAPTER XIII.

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ADMINISTRATION OF SIR JAMES FERGUSSON, BART.

FEBRUARY 16TH, 1869—DECEMBER, 1872.

Brilliant Career.—Second Visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh.—Arrival of New Governor.—Palmerston, the New Settlement in Northern Territory.—Mr. G.W. Goyder and his Survey Party.—Appeal to the Privy Council.—Parliamentary Procedure in Adelaide.—Elections.—A Land Bill.—Dissolution.—Education and Bible Reading.—A Question of Precedence.—Finances.—Public Debt of the Colony.—The Transcontinental Telegraph.—Mr. C. Todd.—A Gigantic Undertaking.—Horse Expresses.—Completion of Telegraph from Port Darwin to Port Augusta.—Bonuses and Banquets.—Honours.—Speeches. "Disintegration of the Empire."—Gold Mining in Northern Territory.—Explorations.—Mr. John Forrest.—Colonel Warburton.—Gosse.—Giles.—Higher Education.—Prince Alfred Sailors' Home.—Bushmen's Club.—New Industries.—Progress in Buildings.—Valedictory Address of Governor.

SIR JAMES FERGUSSON, Bart., of Kilkerran, in Ayrshire, son of Sir Charles Dalrymple Fergusson, was born in Edinburgh in 1832. His mother was a daughter of the Right Hon. David Boyle, Lord Justice General of Scotland.

Sir James was educated at Rugby and Oxford, and was destined for a military career. His first commission was lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards, and his first active service was in the Crimean War. He was present at the Battle of the Alma, and at Inkerman narrowly escaped with his life. Ordered in the thick of the fight to drive back some Russians who were trying to take the Grenadier Guards' sand-bag battery, he successfully carried out the order, but was shot in the wrist in the course of the engagement. The wound did not prevent him from continuing to perform his duties. When the news of the death at Inkerman of Colonel Hunter Blair, M.P. for Ayrshire, was received the Ayrshire

friends of Sir James gave him a peculiar proof of their regard by returning him in his stead.

Next year he returned home a captain and M.P. Having decided for St. Stephen's, he sold out, and entered Parliament as a Conservative. He received the Crimean medal with three clasps, as well as the Turkish medal. After two years' experience, Lord Palmerston sent him back to his constituents on the famous Conspiracy Bill. The general election of 1857 was a decisive struggle between the new Conservatives and the new Liberals, between Derby and Palmerston. It took a Liberal turn in Ayrshire, and Sir James Fergusson lost his seat. He was already a deputy-lieutenant of the county, and when the Earl of Eglinton became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1858 he appointed Sir James one of the Special Commission of Lieutenancy for Ayrshire and lieutenant-colonel of the Ayrshire Militia. Towards the end of 1859 he had another chance of contesting his old seat, and won it. In 1866 Lord Derby recognized his talents by giving him the Under Secretaryship for India, and in the following year he was transferred to the Home Office, a good beginning on the official ladder for a comparatively young politician. He left the Home Office in 1868 to rule in South Australia.

Monday, the 15th of February, 1869, was one of the most notable days in the annals of the colony, as it witnessed the arrival of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh on a second visit, of Sir James Fergusson the now Governor, and of the English mail—the latter always an important event notwithstanding its frequent recurrence.

Early in the morning the West Terrace signal station announced the arrival of the *Galatea*, and, as if by magic, the streets were gay with flags and other decorations long before business men came into the city. It was a quiet and simple reception, though none the less hearty, that was given to the Prince, the emphatic injunctions of the Home Secretary that no public demonstration should take place, being strictly respected. At twelve o'clock the Prince, accompanied by the acting Governor, Colonel Hamley, drove up to Government House, an immense crowd, for South Australia, having assembled in the streets to give him welcome.

Only a few hours after the Prince had taken up his quarters at Government House, a steamer was signalled coming up the Gulf, which proved to be the English mail steamer, with Sir James and Lady Edith Fergusson on board. Again excitement burst forth; telegrams were flashed to all the suburbs, and towards evening thousands assembled to welcome the new Governor.

Next day a grand function was held in the Town Hall, when Colonel Hamley retired from the interim administration of the Government, the new Governor took the usual oaths, and the Duke of Edinburgh graced the proceedings with his presence. Never before had a swearing-in created so much excitement in South Australia. Thousands of citizens and hundreds of ladies were able to witness the whole of the proceedings without inconvenience, and the really splendid Town Hall in which the ceremony took place presented to the Governor one of the best evidences of civic progress. Enthusiasm reached its

height when the Duke of Edinburgh and Sir James Fergusson entered in company, and were received by the Mayor, the acting Governor, and the "officers of state." The formalities were gone through amid much cheering.

The Prince only remained in the colony for five or six days, during which time he laid the foundation stone of the Prince Alfred Sailors' Home at Port Adelaide, and attended a ball, the races, and other diversions of royalty, and did not appear to enjoy himself any the less on account of state ceremonial being dispensed with. On the 20th of February the *Galatea* steamed down the Gulf on her way to Melbourne.

At the time when Sir James Fergusson entered upon his duties, many important events occupied the public mind.

After the recall of Mr. B.T. Finniss, Government Resident, from the Northern Territory * and the rosy-hued report of Captain Cadell as to sites for settlement in the neighbourhood of the Gulf of Carpentaria, it became urgently necessary to take strong and active measures to fix upon a site and to complete the surveys. Already the London "selectors" of land were in league together, and were making demands upon the South Australian Government for the return of their money.

[* See vol. i. p. 380.]

Early in 1869, therefore, Mr. G.W. Goyder, Surveyor-General of the province, was sent out by the Government with a strong and well-appointed party, to complete the survey with all possible despatch, and to select a site for the first township. His instructions were elastic, and absolute confidence was reposed in him. No better man could

possibly have been selected for the task. Difficulties which had baffled his predecessors vanished before him; he and the whole of his staff worked together with hearty good will and without dissension of any kind, and it was generally acknowledged that "had Mr. Goyder been sent out in the first instance the colony would have been saved the shameful disasters which attended the first attempts to settle the Northern Territory, and the large sums of moneys which they cost, and which were extravagantly wasted in the most reckless way."

In November, 1869, Mr. Goyder returned to Adelaide after completing the survey of the required quantity of land within the stipulated time. He reported the discovery of a tract of country containing about a million acres of fair average quality, most of it suited to the growth of tropical products, and the whole well grassed and watered. He had surveyed 665,866 acres of land, being 165,000 acres more than the original quantity ordered. He reported the healthiness of the place, having lost only one of his party through sickness.

In addition to the principal township (Palmerston) at Port Darwin, containing 999 half-acre allotments, Mr. Goyder laid out three other towns, in sizes varying from 207 to 335 half-acre allotments.

When the land was surveyed a number of the English land-order holders declined to make their selections, and subsequently brought an action against the Government for the return of the purchase-money and interest thereon. They obtained a verdict in their favour in the Supreme Court of the colony on the plea that the Government had failed to

fulfil the contract within the time specified in the regulations for the sale of the land. The Government considered that inasmuch as the delay had been mainly occasioned by the land-order holders themselves, who disapproved of the locality first selected, and at whose request another site had been selected to meet their wishes, the case should be submitted to the Privy Council. To the surprise of the colonists, when the case came on for hearing, upon appeal to this high tribunal, the judgment of the Supreme Court was upheld, and the colony sustained a serious loss in having to refund the purchase money with interest.**

[** See p. 51.]

In March, 1870, Captain Bloomfield Douglas, R.N., was appointed Government Resident in the Northern Territory, and in May of the same year the first ballot for land took place, although, of course, those who had decided to take legal proceedings for the return of the purchase-money did not exercise their right on this occasion.

The history of Parliamentary procedure during the administration of Sir James Fergusson is, to a large extent, a repetition of the same kind of scenes, incidents, crises, and changes of Ministry which had marked previous administrations. It will be well perhaps in this place to glance at the whole period covered, and to chronicle some of its leading characteristics.

On the 30th of July, 1869, the second session of the fifth Parliament met. In his opening speech the new Governor said—

"It is with deep interest and satisfaction that I meet you for the first time in Parliament since my assumption of the

Government of this important province, to which her Majesty has been graciously pleased to appoint me. I desire to assure you that I shall cordially co-operate with you, the representatives of the people, in devising measures calculated to increase the prosperity of the colony, and to promote the welfare of all classes of the community."

He then proceeded to touch upon the main topics of the times—the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh in restored health; the opening for traffic of the Strathalbyn and Middleton Railway, and the state of the railway works in progress; the communication he had made to the Governor of India, pointing out the facilities afforded by the new settlement in the north for providing suitable horses for the Indian army; the reduction of tariff in telegraph charges; the discovery of gold in the North, etc. The address was well received, and the reply to it was carried in both Houses without a division, and strange to say, with scarcely any expressions of hostility to the Strangways Ministry. This augured well for the session, but the hopes thus created were short-lived. On the 21st of September the Treasurer's budget dealt with retrenchment and increased taxation, and after that ministerial crises and threatenings of crises came thick and fast. There was a strong feeling against additional taxation both in and out of Parliament, and, considering the depressed state of commerce in the colony at that time, it was highly inexpedient that the suggestion should have been made. The course the Government was prepared to adopt was to retrench as far as possible, and only to increase taxation if it became absolutely necessary to meet

the public expenditure after this retrenchment had taken place.

But the Ministry found it exceedingly difficult to carry their estimates; the Opposition insisting on repeated alterations, the greater part of the items had to be contested line by line, and in many instances the members of the Government found themselves in a minority. Such an unsatisfactory mode of conducting the business of the country, involving an inordinate waste of time, came at length to be regarded as a burlesque on responsible government.

It was in vain that all the members of the House of Assembly, except the Ministry and the Speaker, held meetings to discuss the situation. Nothing practical was done throughout the session, and on the 21st of December the House adjourned.

The reassembling of Parliament on the 4th of January, 1870, was signalized by a vote of censure on the Government, which was lost; but a renewed attempt was made to dislodge the Ministry on the 25th of January, and at length the Governor was informed by his Ministers that they "desired to appeal from the Parliament to the people", and begged that, so soon as the state of business would allow, his Excellency would dissolve Parliament for the purpose of remitting to the constituents the questions that had been at issue.

This announcement called forth some very strong expressions of disapprobation from two or three leading members of the Opposition, and especially from the Hon. T. Reynolds, who considered, with others, that a chance should

have been given to members of the existing Parliament to form another Ministry before resorting to the extreme measure of dissolution. The members of the Legislative Council gave expression to their disapproval in a strong resolution, which was carried by a majority of eight.

But Sir James Fergusson was not to be moved, and he determined to dissolve the Parliament in accordance with the recommendation of his advisers. The whole session had been wasted in petty squabbling and place-hunting, and in proroguing Parliament on the 25th of February with a view to dissolution, he said he took this step "to enable the people to express in the mode presented by the Constitution their opinion upon the state of public affairs, a step rendered necessary by the difficulties experienced in carrying on the public business of the country, as indicated by the fact that within a period of less than a year and a half four successive administrations had failed to retain the confidence of the House of Assembly."

The financial policy of the Government had been of such an unsatisfactory character, that not only had the Ministry to go into their brief recess without an Appropriation Bill, but even a Supply Bill could not be obtained, which would carry them on beyond the end of March.

Shortly after the prorogation Sir James Fergusson left the colony on a visit to Victoria, but returned to Adelaide early in May, Colonel James Harwood Rocke, 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment, having been sworn in as Administrator of the Government during his absence.

At the elections about sixty candidates offered themselves, being twenty-four in excess of the number

required. When the results were announced, lovers of change were gratified to know that a very material alteration had taken place in the personnel of the new Parliament, thus giving hope of a better state of things by breaking up the parties who had worked either with or against the Ministry. But to the horror of the constituencies, it was found that when the new Ministry was formed, it was so constituted that it could not stand for a week, much less for a session. It was thought by many that the wire-pullers had been guilty of a practical joke, so incongruous were the selections.

When the new Parliament met for business on the 27th of May, the Governor, in his opening speech, alluded to the most important topics engaging public attention; touched upon the serious falling off in the revenue, owing to bad harvests and slowness of the sale of waste lands; the prospect of telegraphic communication with Europe at an early date; the intelligence that certain holders of land orders in England had instituted proceedings in the courts of law for the recovery of sums of money paid by them in respect of land in the Northern Territory, which action the South Australian Government had taken steps to defend.

The programme for the session presented by the Ministry was by no means lacking in measures, but it was more than doubtful whether, in the late elections, the people had returned the right men to carry them out.

On the first day of the session it became evident that the Council was no more in favour of the new than of the old Ministry, while in the House of Assembly an emphatic vote settled the question.

This crushing defeat the Premier (Mr. Strangways) partly anticipated, and stated that he understood "that at a caucus meeting held the day before, twenty-four or twenty-five members had arranged to eject the Ministry without any knowledge of what measures they proposed to submit. A fixed determination was arrived at entirely irrespective of the public questions the Government intended submitting, and such a course of action was entirely without precedent."

So the Strangways Ministry resigned (May 28th), and on the 31st the new occupants of the Treasury Bench shadowed forth their policy.

The first decisive action of the Hart Ministry was with reference to the construction of the overland telegraph to Port Darwin—an action, as we shall see hereafter, fraught with far-reaching consequences, and which stands out in the history of the colony as among the most important in the proceedings of Parliament. But it must always be remembered that it was to their predecessors—the Strangways Ministry—that the honour of initiating the scheme is due.

The next large question was the amendment of the Land Laws—a rock upon which many Ministries had split. The Government put forth a series of propositions, upon which several amendments were moved in committee, but they were ultimately carried, and a Bill based upon them was in due course introduced, but after much discussion, many amendments, and about a hundred and fifty divisions, it was thrown out in the Assembly by the casting vote of the Speaker.

So soon as the fate of the Land Bill was finally sealed, a short Bill was introduced to amend Strangways' Act in two or three important particulars. The new Bill provided that ten per cent., instead of twenty per cent., should be payable at the time of making the purchase; at the end of three years a further payment of ten per cent., and these two payments together were to be deemed a complete compliance with the terms of the Act so far as regarded the payment of interest. Another clause dispensed with the laying of a description of agricultural areas before Parliament fourteen days prior to the proclamation of the said areas, and another clause provided that, in lieu of the periods of not less than one month nor more than three months during which the lands were to be open for selection, the periods should be seven days and one month respectively.

This Bill was passed through all its stages in the Assembly on the 12th of January, 1871, in less than an hour and a half, and on the next day the Council passed it, without any alteration, just prior to the prorogation.

No fewer than nineteen Bills were introduced during this fruitless session and not passed. Retrenchment in the expenses of Government occupied much of the time and attention of Parliament to little effect, but the consideration given to fiscal matters led to several alterations in the tariff. That an increase in the revenue was absolutely necessary may be inferred from the fact that Parliament reluctantly sanctioned a loan of £100,000 to meet current expenditure.

In February, 1871, the Hon. H.B.T. Strangways, who for several years had occupied a prominent place in the

Legislature, and had been responsible for many of the changes in the Ministry, bade farewell to the colony.

When the second session of the sixth Parliament was opened by the Governor on the 28th of July, the Land Bill furnished material for animated discussion during several weeks.

Shortly after it was taken out of committee in the House of Assembly Mr. J.P. Boucaut moved "that this House is dissatisfied with the present Ministry." Whereupon Mr. Hart and his colleagues tendered their resignations, and Mr. Boucaut was sent for; but as he declined to accept the responsibility, Mr. H. Ayers, and afterwards Mr. A. Blyth, were communicated with. They found that it was impossible, with parties almost equally balanced, to form a strong Government, and the Governor was advised to dissolve the Parliament—advice which he accepted.

Again an appeal was made to him by both Houses not to dissolve Parliament, but to dismiss his advisers, and again the appeal was refused, and on the 23rd of November Parliament was prorogued with a view to dissolution.

Not only was the Land Bill again sacrificed, but the onward progress of an important Education Bill was stopped by the dissolution. It provided for a new board of nine members to be empowered to establish and support three classes of schools. Normal, National, and District; to provide sound secular instruction based on the Christian religion and morals, apart from all theological and controversial difficulties on discipline or doctrine. No denominational catechism was to be used, nor any attempt made to influence or disturb the tenets of any religious sect, but the

school-houses might be used for religious instruction before or after the usual school hours.

The Bill had only passed through its preliminary stages in the House of Assembly, when an attempt was made to exclude the reading of the Bible in the Board schools, and, strange as it appeared to many, the movement was supported by a considerable number of ministers of religion. The great mass of the people, however, considered that the Bible was not to be banished by legislative enactment, and a monster meeting was held at White's Rooms to discuss the matter. Resolutions were passed in favour of retaining the reading of the Bible in the public schools, and petitions in accordance with the resolutions were signed by upwards of 25,000 persons, and presented to both Houses of the Legislature. The secular party, of course, organized a counter meeting, their petition for the exclusion of the Bible only being signed by the chairman on behalf of the meeting. It was in some respects fortunate for the Ministry that a dissolution was at hand, for at that time the religious difficulty would have taxed their utmost ingenuity to surmount.

A small matter in itself, but one that seemed to call for settlement, was under discussion about this time. A question of precedence arose in the days when Sir Richard MacDonnell was Governor, and when the people were still smarting from the effects of the great Church and State controversy. The matter was referred to the Duke of Newcastle, who replied that the Governor "ought to determine questions of precedence, and should proceed by analogy to the rules in the mother country." There the

matter dropped, but it was revived again in 1871, during the administration of Sir James Fergusson, who gave the place to the Anglican Bishop prescribed by the regulations.

"The two Houses disapproved of such recognition of ecclesiastical functionaries, and passed a Bill 'to provide for the regulation of precedence in South Australia', which the Governor reserved. Lord Kimberley announced that it could not be allowed, inasmuch as it encroached upon prerogative, and that the Queen could not be advised to deprive individuals, such as the dignitaries excluded by the Bill, of any precedence to which they were entitled. An address prayed the Queen (1872) to remove the grievance felt by the inhabitants at the precedence over ministers of other denominations ascribed to the two bishops. Meantime, the bishop of the Church of England, Dr. Short, offered to give up the precedence to which he was entitled. The Secretary of State promised that in future no dignitary of any religious persuasion should have precedence assigned to him in the colony by the Crown, and directed the Governor to inform the bishop that her Majesty fully appreciated his disinterested conduct in offering to waive the precedence attributed to him." * It must not be supposed that because of obstruction in Parliament the progress of the colony was at a standstill. On the contrary there were many important movements brought to a successful issue. For example, in September, 1871, representatives were sent from South Australia to attend the Intercolonial Conference at Melbourne, at which the border duties and the ocean postal question were to form leading subjects for consideration. A satisfactory

arrangement was made with regard to river-borne goods to New South Wales, and it was agreed that ocean steamers should call at Glenelg on their outward and inward passages to take and land the South Australian mails to and from Europe. This secured the long-sought-for right of having letters delivered at the door without extra cost; it provided means of sending duplicate despatches via San Francisco, and would thus in all probability anticipate the arrival of the following Suez mail by nearly, if not fully, a week; it kept the colony clear of complications with the Cape and Torres Straits routes, and all these advantages were gained for a sum considerably less than had been previously paid. As a matter of fact it ensured increased facilities for the transmission not only of news and letters, but of passengers and merchandise, and at the same time effected a saving of £6000 or £7000 a year.

[* Rusden's "History of Australia", vol. iii.]

At the time of the dissolution the financial position of the colony was in anything but a satisfactory state, the Treasurer, in his budget of the 17th of October, having reported that there was an estimated deficiency of from £70,000 to £80,000. It is true the year had commenced with a deficit of £100,000, but it was anticipated that not only would this be cleared off, but the annual expenditure kept within the revenue. The fact was becoming apparent that the evil effects of large loans were being felt—the amount of the bonded debt to be redeemed during the year being £34,000, and the year's interest on the debt no less than £113,958. But for this extra expenditure of about £148,000, which had yielded little to the revenue, though most of the

loans were for professedly reproductive public works, the financial position of the colony would have been decidedly healthy.

The elections took place in December, and on the 19th of January, 1872, the seventh Parliament was opened by Sir James Fergusson, Sir G-. S. Kingston being for the fifth time appointed Speaker of the House of Assembly without opposition.

The session commenced stormily; each House expressed strong dissatisfaction at the recent unnecessary dissolution of the House of Assembly, which had greatly delayed the despatch of public business. The Ministry interpreting this as a direct censure on themselves, of course sent in their resignations forthwith (January 24).

A new Ministry was soon in office, and from the reception they met with in both Houses, it was patent that the arrangements made had not given satisfaction. They dragged on for a week or two in a half-hearted fashion, and then came the inevitable "want of confidence" motion, and so the "intolerable nonsense"—as a Minister of the day expressed it— went on.

On the 5th of March both Houses adjourned, and by this temporary respite from hostilities another series of crises, if not another dissolution, was averted.

Parliament reassembled on the 9th of April, apparently in better humour. Even the Treasurer's financial statement was well received, although he announced that the deficiency at the end of the year was estimated at over £94,000, and he proposed to issue £100,000 worth of exchequer bills,

bearing four and a half per cent. interest, which he considered preferable to floating a loan for the amount.

A Land bill, a Scrub Lands Bill, and a Northern Territory Bill were introduced, and met with varying success until August, when both Houses adjourned until September, the Governor in the mean time paying a second visit to Melbourne.

A few days after the reassembling of Parliament, the Treasurer (Hon. J.H. Barrow) delivered his financial statement for the year 1873, which did not show a very satisfactory state of things. The total estimated income (including proceeds of land sales, £170,000) was only £749,150, and the total of expenditure (including the redemption of £3400 of bonds) was £752,827.

The Treasurer's speech was followed by a scheme for consolidating the public debt of the colony, and a Bill was introduced to raise £3,000,000 at four per cent., in addition to funding the £2,000,000 of bonds already issued, but as the assumed price of the new four per cent. bonds was £90, the actual indebtedness of the colony would be considerably in excess of the amount nominally borrowed. The matter was referred to a select committee, who recommended a postponement of its consideration.

The labours of another long and fruitless session came to a close on the 30th of November, when a curious incident occurred. When the Sergeant-at-Arms appeared at the Bar of the House of Assembly and intimated that the Governor was awaiting the attendance of the members of that House, the Speaker was not in receipt of certain Bills affecting the revenue which should have been sent in usual course, and

which he considered it his duty to present, whereupon a discussion ensued, and lasted long after the Sergeant had given his call. After waiting some time in the Council Chamber the Governor withdrew, and in the mean time a very lively scene occurred in the Assembly. On the motion of one of the members the doors were locked to signify that the Sergeant-at-Arms was not to be received till the Assembly was ready to attend to his message. Some members then loudly asserted and insisted on the rights and privileges of Mr. Speaker being upheld, while others suggested that the matter should be dealt with when the House again met. Finding that the discussion was likely to be prolonged, some members proceeded to the Council Chamber before the Speaker, instead of accompanying him, and one or two, as if to complete the fiasco, returned and forced one of the doors that was locked, scattering the glass in fragments on the floor. They were understood to hold that the Speaker should have taken the sense of the House before ordering the doors to be locked in the face of the Governor's messenger. The whole matter was a question of privilege, but it was an awkward time to discuss it, as it presented the appearance of an act of discourtesy. Although the Governor was kept waiting some considerable time, he delivered his prorogation speech with perfect equanimity, as though nothing unusual had happened.

During the long session thus brought to a close, no fewer than twenty-five Bills that were introduced were either not proceeded with or were rejected at various stages. The barrenness of the protracted session was solely due to the struggle for possession of the ministerial benches, the