

SOUTH ABERDEEN ELECTION.

RESULT OF THE POLL.

MR ESSELMONT RETURNED.

G. B. ESSELMONT..... L. 3779
 RONALD M'NEILL..... U. 3412
 F. BRAMLEY..... S. & Lab. 1740

Liberal majority over Unionist candidate..... 367

RESULT OF PREVIOUS ELECTIONS.

1885.

James Bryce..... L. 4548,
 Colin Mackenzie..... C. 1455

Liberal majority..... 3093

1892.

James Bryce..... L. 3513
 J. Gordon M'Cullagh..... U. 1768
 H. H. Champion..... Lab. 991

Liberal majority over Unionist..... 1745

1895.

James Bryce..... L. 3985
 Sir David Stewart..... U. 3121

Liberal majority..... 864

1900.

James Bryce..... L. 4238
 W. C. Smith..... L. U. 3830

Liberal majority..... 408

1906.

James Bryce..... L. 6780
 W. G. Black..... U. 2532

Liberal majority..... 4448

Comparing the figures of yesterday's voting with the figures of the poll at the general election, it will be seen that Mr Esslemont polled 3001 fewer votes than did Mr Bryce, while Mr M'Neill increased the Unionist vote by 1080, the net result being to reduce the Liberal majority of last year by 4081 votes, pulling it down from 4448 to 367. Mr Bramley had 1740 votes—not by any means drawn wholly from the Liberal side—this Socialist vote contrasting with the vote of 991 given for Mr Champion in 1892—an increase of 749. The total vote was 8931, as against 9112 last year—a decrease of 181.

THE POLLING IN THE WARDS.

The following are the numbers polled in each ward in the division yesterday, with the percentage, in round numbers, of the electors who exercised the franchise:—

	No. of Voters.	Votes Polled.	Per Cent
St Nicholas	2270	1413	62
Rosemount	2694	1930	71
Rubislaw	3021	2227	73
Ferryhill	2418	1600	66
Ruthrieston	2650	1778	67
	13,053	8948	68

THE COUNTING OF THE VOTES.

Probably the stormy nature of the weather accounted in great measure for the lack of interest evinced by the public in the arrival of the ballot boxes at the Joint Town and County Hall, where the counting was to take place, but at eight o'clock a small knot of interested people assembled at the Courthouse entrance and discussed the chances of the respective candidates. About ten minutes past the hour of closing the booths, the first cab arrived with one of the Ferryhill Ward boxes, and this was followed by others in rapid succession, till, at 8.20, the last box was deposited in the counting room. The counting took place under the supervision of Sheriff Crawford, the returning officer, with Dr David Littlejohn, Sheriff Clerk, as assistant returning officer. The full number of enumerators allowed under the Act were employed. The fact that there were three candidates in the contest made the work somewhat more complicated than is the case with two candidates. The candidates' agents were present at the counting of the votes. Between nine and ten o'clock a considerable crowd of people had assembled in Union Street, while Broad Street, in front of the "Journal" and "Express" Offices, was densely packed, it having been announced that the result would be posted in the windows as soon as it was made known.

DECLARATION OF THE POLL.

The work of enumeration proceeded very expeditiously, and shortly after ten o'clock Sheriff Crawford declared the result in the Town and County Hall. Almost simultaneously, papers with the official figures were handed out to the representatives of the press, and were immediately afterwards displayed in the windows of the "Journal" Office. It was quite evident that the crowd in waiting were disappointed with the result, for there was a good deal of hissing, while not a cheer was raised.

In connection with the enumeration of the votes, it was intimated that there were 17 spoiled papers—two owing to electors having voted for more than one candidate; three because they bore writing or marks by which the voter could be identified; and twelve which were unmarked or void from uncertainty. As showing the care with which the presiding officers at the polling booths discharged their duties, it may be said that not a single paper was without the official mark.

THE NEW MEMBER.

Mr George Birnie Esslemont, who has been returned as the Liberal member for South Aberdeen, is the eldest son of the late Mr Peter Esslemont, a former Lord Provost of Aberdeen who was Liberal member of Parliament for East Aberdeenshire from 1886 till 1892. The new member of Parliament was born in 1860, and on completing his education at the Grammar School in 1876 joined the business of which his late father was then partner—the firm of Esslemont and Macintosh, wholesale and retail drapery warehouses and manufacturers. After gaining experience in the various departments, Mr Esslemont represented the firm throughout the north of Scotland for a few years. He was admitted a partner in 1885, and since that date has been specially identified with the wholesale branch of the business. For over thirty years he has been connected with the Aberdeen Liberal Association, and in recognition of his services to the cause of Liberalism in the city, was elected, in 1900, president of the association, in succession to Mr John Leith. Mr Esslemont was also for many years a conspicuous figure in the ranks of the Aberdeen Junior Liberal Association, of which he was its first vice-president, and which was merged, on the death of Professor Minto, into the Aberdeen Liberal Association. In addition to the work which he rendered in local political circles, Mr Esslemont lent his services in neighbouring constituencies, and took part in contests in East Aberdeenshire, West Aberdeenshire, Banffshire, Kincardineshire, and the Elgin Burghs.

He has all along been keenly interested in the municipal, educational, and social questions of his native city, and has done excellent work in that connection. He entered the Town Council in 1898 as representative of Rubislaw Ward, and was in due course elected a magistrate, from which office he retired in November last, although still remaining a member of the Council. Throughout his municipal career Mr Esslemont took a firm and ready grasp of the numerous questions coming before the Town Council, and was prominently identified with many important schemes. He was specially interested in public health matters, and did a deal of useful work in connection with the proposed establishment of a public slaughter-house. Before entering the Town Council he was a member of the Aberdeen School Board, on which he served for a term of years. Mr Esslemont associated himself with practically all the public institutions in the city, and his services were much valued.

He is a manager and member of the session of Belmont Street United Free Church, and takes an active interest in the work of the congregation.

REPORTS FROM THE POLLING BOOTHS.

The weather throughout yesterday was exceedingly cold and stormy. At the five polling stations throughout the constituency great activity was displayed by the supporters of the respective candidates, who were out in full strength. Mr M'Neill and Mr Esslemont had the assistance of numerous vehicles of all sorts and sizes, including several motor cars, the Socialist-Labour party having very little assistance of this kind, although a large body of canvassers were working enthusiastically for the cause. The supporters of the three candidates wore the party colours in the shape of ribbon rosettes; and there was an abundance of election literature, posters, hand-bills, and cards enjoining the electors to vote for this candidate or the other, and setting forth in bold letters, shortly and concisely, the virtues of their own particular party and the offences of their opponents. A large number of sandwichmen found temporary employment in parading the streets with huge posters.

FEMALE SUFFRAGISTS AND THE ELECTION.

The advocates of the votes for women, who had been conducting a systematic campaign directed against the Liberal candidate, were also very much in evidence, and were actively engaged in distributing literature in support of the propaganda, while sandwichmen perambulated the streets in the vicinity of the polling stations exhibiting posters condemning the Liberal Government, and asking the electors not to send a new Liberal member to the House of Commons to support a Government which depends upon mounted police for protection from unarmed women.

SPECULATION AS TO THE RESULT.

Notwithstanding the huge majority obtained by Mr Bryce at the general election last year, the situation of the parties was such that there was ample room for speculation as to the probable result of the poll. Very few electors in the division expressed confidence as to the probable position of the Liberal and Unionist candidates. There appeared to be general expectation that Mr Bramley would be at the bottom of the poll, although the Socialists and Labour men claimed that the canvass of the constituency showed that a large vote would be recorded for their candidate, some of them putting it as high as from 1500 to 2000. The factors at work operating to the disadvantage of the Liberal candidate, coupled with the strength of their own candidate and the favourable impression he made in the constituency during the contest, raised the hopes of the Unionist party in the division to a high pitch, and the consequence was that they worked with unbounded enthusiasm, and with an energy which was certainly not surpassed by their opponents.

In the course of the day the candidates made a round of the polling stations, and appeared to be satisfied with the reports supplied to them of the progress of the poll.

UNIONISTS AND THE BAGPIPES.

The enthusiasm of the Unionists was kept up, not only by cheering reports from the polling stations, but also by the stirring strains of the bagpipes. Marching up and down Union Street in front of the Music Hall in the afternoon was a piper, who blew his loudest in support of the Unionist candidate. From his pipes streamed blue and white ribbons, the colours of the party, and on the piper's back was a card with "Vote for M'Neill" in bold blue letters. This innovation of the bagpipes in electioneering created great amusement, and one patriotic Unionist was overheard to remark as he entered the polling station, "The pipes never skirl in a fight without a victory."

THE UNIONIST AND THE SOCIALIST.

Early in the afternoon Mr and Mrs M'Neill visited the Music Hall, and there they met, and were introduced to, Mr Bramley. The champions of Unionism and Socialism respectively conversed together for some time, and, judging by their laughter seemed to be exchanging jokes to their mutual satisfaction. The contrast between the two candidates was striking, Mr M'Neill standing more than 12 inches higher than his opponent; and the interesting group attracted a good deal of attention from passers-by.

ST NICHOLAS.

The officials at the Music Hall Building, where the St Nicholas Ward polling place was situated, stated that the morning was comparatively quiet, and as the forenoon advanced there was no increased activity, so far as actual voters were concerned. After midday, however, a fairly large number of working men visited the booths, and towards two o'clock there was a large influx of business men, bringing the total vote at two o'clock up to 445, while by five o'clock this figure was increased to 690. Here, as in the other wards, there was a heavy poll between five and seven o'clock.

ROSEMOUNT.

At Skene Square School—the polling place for the Rosemount district—voting was not brisk in the early part of the day, and by half-past ten o'clock only about 200 voters had recorded their votes. There was a fair display of literature, chiefly on the side of the Liberal candidate, who had bills displayed on the boards of a number of sandwichmen asking the electors to "Vote for G. B. and support C. B., and to vote for the Liberal candidate for the securing of a number of desirable reforms. The Labour candidate also had sandwichmen parading the streets in the vicinity of the polling-booth, asking the electors to support Mr Bramley, the Socialist and Labour candidate. In the course of the forenoon Mr and Mrs M'Neill visited the polling-station, where they met with a hearty reception. Mr M'Neill expressed satisfaction at the way in which the arrangements for his candidature were being carried out.

RUBISLAW.

Many business men in the west end of the city took the opportunity of recording their votes at the hall of Carden Place United Free Church on their way to business in the morning, and by about ten o'clock between 300 and 400 electors had recorded their votes. The presence of a few sandwichmen was all that indicated that an election was taking place. It was expected that a good many would poll in this ward in the course of the forenoon when the weather was bright, and that turned out to be the case. Between twelve and one o'clock especially, polling was brisk, and at one o'clock over 700 had voted, the total being further augmented during the dinner hour of a number of workmen.

Mr Ronald M'Neill and Mrs M'Neill visited the polling-station in the course of the forenoon, and spoke a few words of encouragement to the workers who were assisting in promoting the return of the Unionist candidate. At this ward more than any other in the city motor-cars were called in requisition by both the Unionist and Liberal candidates to bring voters to the poll.

FERRYHILL.

At the Bon-Accord Congregational Church Hall there was a steady stream of voters, and the officials in all five sections were kept busy. There were numerous agents at the entrance of the polling booth distributing literature, and the different representatives expressed themselves as well satisfied with the numbers coming forward. From mid-day to two o'clock was a busy period, nearly 200 voters passing through the sections during that interval, while in the course of the afternoon there was also a continuous flow to the booth, although the numbers were not so great.

RUTHRIESTON.

The electors of this ward recorded their votes in Ashley Road Public School. It was evident that the election had roused much interest in this ward. From the time the booths were opened until ten o'clock there was a constant stream of voters, mostly business men on their way to the city. The electors on entering the polling place were handed an abundant supply of election literature from the supporters of each of the candidates. One could not turn into Ashley Road, from Great Western Road, without being confronted with placards urging the electors to vote for Mr Ronald M'Neill, and thus secure more work for the workers. For honesty in politics the electors were requested to vote for Mr M'Neill. Mr Bramley claimed the support of the working men, because it was the Labour party that gave them the Trades Disputes Bill. Another of Mr Bramley's placards read—"Canvass returns show great Labour majority. File it on, and vote for Bramley, the winning candidate." Mr Esslemont's supporters claimed that their candidate was to reform the House of Lords. Another Liberal placard read—"Vote for G.B., and also C.B." Sandwichmen paraded the thoroughfares in the vicinity of the school. Mr M'Neill and Mr Esslemont had committee rooms in the vicinity of the school.