

OPINIONS OF THE LONDON PRESS ON CANADIAN AFFAIRS.

We give below the opinions of two of the leading papers in England on the recent disturbances in Canada, as they will show our readers in what light the subject is viewed in Great Britain.

(From the London Times.)

The Canadian Tories have given us another touch of their quality. They have proved their abhorrence of tumult and sedition by pelting her Majesty's representative with rotten eggs, and burning down the House of Assembly. We are not in the least surprised at it. It does not alter our estimate of the party, of its temper, of its wisdom, or of its power. It only adds the last testimony wanting to the value of the liberal constitution we have fortunately given to Canada. Riot, insult, and conflagration are the acts of a party which despairs of attaining its end by peaceful and ordinary methods. The conduct of the Canadian Tories, now for many months, has been quite in character with this brilliant finale. A month since the steamer brought us an account of Sir Allan M'Nab, with a dozen or two brother legislators, diving in public, drinking destruction, both of body and soul, to the Governor-General's responsible advisers, and standing in a balcony after dinner to see the chief of them burnt in effigy before the windows. In England we have only one opinion of such proceedings. Lord Stanley is a warm and rather reckless politician; but if his lordship invited a party of friends to dine and see Lord John or Sir Robert burnt in effigy in St. James's square, we should conclude that he thought his chances of power somewhat desperate, and was, in fact, taking it out in revenge. This is the case of Sir Allan M'Nab and his associates. They are now a despicable minority. Low as they are in numerical strength, for they barely count a quarter of the Legislative Assembly, they are still lower in character and fortune. With all their jobs laid bare to noon-day, their characters blasted, and their fortunes ruined; with the doors of office closed against them, and incapable of honest employment, they have no alternative but to throw things into confusion, if they can, and make everybody else as miserable as themselves.

We have no wish to give these desperadoes a greater share in this last crowning outrage than facts fully justify, for there are many modes and degrees of participation in crime. Perhaps they have no more to do with the burning of the House of Assembly than Lord George Gordon had with the destruction of the Roman Catholic chapels and Newgate. The experience of this country shows that very lamentable events, of apparent political significance, may arise on a very short notice, and by very casual instruments. In the Nottingham and Bristol riots, the mob being then and there assembled, finding themselves in force, perceiving that there were leaders, and hearing a cry, rushed at five minutes' notice to acts which they probably had not dreamt of before. Of course, they outstripped the vigilance of the authorities as much as they did their own senses. Once in the work, they knew not where to stop. At Montreal, we trust, it was not worse. We trust there was nothing organized in the destruction, though the cutting of the gas-pipes looks rather like plan. The mob was convened and excited at a mass meeting. Thence, as by sudden impulse, it rushed to the House of Assembly. From breaking windows to effecting an entrance, and from that to firing the building, are easy transitions. Unfortunately a temporary wooden gallery adjoined the house, for the stationary department. Two or three years back there was a similar combination of combustible materials in our own Westminster-hall, and prudent people shook their heads at it. The papers once flung about and a candle applied, ten minutes and a high wind put the matter beyond human control. The garrison marched up with all speed, and arrived in time to see a splendid conflagration, with the usual crowd of delighted spectators. They fired neither into the edifice nor the crowd, and in fact, could do nothing. The firemen played upon the adjoining buildings, which was their wisest course. We have forgotten the police, who mustered sixty strong under two constables, and kept order on the ground. When everything was over, the authorities, the military, and the police were all on the *qui vive*; the soldiers were marched to and fro; suspected parties were apprehended and marched off to gaol; and when the post left order triumphed at Montreal.

Nothing is so easy as a surprise, nothing so worthless when there are no means of following it up, and nothing so wicked when there is no solid advantage in prospect. Why, one man might have set that house on fire, and it is said that one man actually did. Under ordinary circumstances, it is impossible to guard against a surprise. We remember another House of Assembly in North America, situated fifty miles within land, in the heart of twenty states and ten millions of men. One fine day a handful of men, about as large as the Montreal mob, sailed up a bay, landed, marched through some woods, fought a smart action, walked up to a city, passed a quiet night, and the next day burned or blew up all the buildings of the capital, marched back as merrily as they came, got to their ships, and sailed further, where they fared worse. It was all a mere piece of mischief, unworthy of the name of war, doing nothing but exasperate the people and widen the breach, and proving nothing but that it was impossible for us to hold a single inland position in the enemy's country for more than twenty-four hours. Such a feat is calculated to diminish our surprise both at the folly and the success of the Montreal conflagration.

The minority which is making all this commotion is nothing more or less than the old "family compact" turned out of doors, and become by this time rather out at elbows, and ravenously hungry. The M'Nabs, the Sewells, the Boultons, the Robinsons, and the Fentons, who divided all the offices in Church and state, in the tribunals, in the bank, in the Canada Company, and every other public establishment between them, who made

a majority in the Legislative Council, and who had actually granted the greater part of Upper Canada to themselves, their fathers, their infant children, their consins and connexions to the remotest degree, have worked out that once productive mine. They have now changed places with the unfortunates whom they used to tread upon, except that they now enjoy the common benefit of a responsible Government and a real Legislature. Their situation in Canada is pretty much that of the Conservatives in this country, but that the Conservatives are not oppressed by the memory of such crimes as those of the colonial oligarchy. This is not a war of races. The British are a large majority of the population; whereas the malcontents are a decided minority. In another column our readers will find the votes of the Assembly on the 27th and 28th ult., upon the address to the Governor-General, and the amendment moved to that address. We have before us an analysis of the division on the first amendment, which was the strongest vote on both sides. The total number that voted was 63, of whom 46 were for Government, and 17 against. Of the 46 for Government there were 22 French Canadians from Lower Canada, 6 British from Lower Canada, and 18 British from Upper Canada. The minority against the address consisted of 11 British from Upper Canada, 5 British from Lower Canada, and one French Canadian (the Republican, Papineau). Government, therefore, had a majority of all classes; a majority of the British, all the French except one, who might well be spared, a majority from Upper Canada, and a majority from Lower Canada, the aggregate majority being overwhelming. It must be considered too that in this division the factious minority had used all its arts to divide the Legislature and win apparent support. They did not venture to propose an amendment censuring the Governor-General, or showing ever so slight a sympathy with the rioters. Yet their affected moderation was unavailing, and they were entirely beaten, as we have shown, by a majority of all classes.

It is seldom easy, and it is wholly unnecessary, to describe a political quarrel in a few words. The Rebellion Losses Bill is the merest pretence. Our readers are doubtless aware that it is not a bill for indemnifying rebels, but a bill for indemnifying, to a very limited extent, any persons that may have suffered by the destruction of their property in the rebellion; and the only grievances in the bill does not, because it cannot, expressly exclude every body who took part in the rebellion. We believe the sore point of the affair is, that after the rebellion the loyalists, who are fond of *autos da fe*, wantonly burned the premises of disaffected persons, who will now prefer a claim for that gratuitous damage. This, however, is nothing but the spark which has been used to fire the magazine. The most exclusive element in that magazine is exclusion from office, and from the distribution of land grants,—a trial to which the pot-loyalty of M'Nab and his associates is manifestly unequal. Canada, too, in common with other colonies, in common with England and with all Europe, is suffering great commercial depression. It is no longer allowed to tax the industry of the mother-country through the operation of protective duties; and, while exposed to free trade on this side, it is rebuffed with prohibitive duties by the neighboring Union. There has been a depreciation in all Canadian property, somewhat similar to what we experience in railway shares and other speculative investments. Annexation is an idea of growing familiarity. At Montreal a "British League" has been formed, which, under a pretence of an extravagant loyalty, composes a political capital out of all the Tory grievances, commercial depression, free trade the denomination of an alien race, and every other imaginable ill. It shows stronger sympathies with the republican statesmen than with the loyal Frenchman, and is evidently disposed to leave Victoria for Gen. Taylor, if the latter will give a better price for Canadian produce. But enough for the day is the evil thereof. While it is permitted, we will leave the question of annexation. It existed before the present quarrel and is wholly independent of it. When it comes in earnest, we trust this country will be prepared to decide it with humanity, firmness, and discretion.

(From the London Morning Chronicle.)

The disastrous intelligence from Canada which we published yesterday in a second edition, and of which further particulars will be found in our columns this morning, confirms but too faithfully the views that we have taken from the outset with respect to the gravity of the question lately under discussion. That "war of races" which Ministers even now affect to treat with scornful incredulity—and yet perhaps, after all, it is not afflictation—has actually commenced, with a signal and unexampled outburst of popular passion; and although we are glad to perceive that the latest accounts contain nothing to show that further acts of violence might be immediately looked for, it is inconceivable that we can have yet seen either the last or the worst consequences of that monstrous policy which has been adopted by the representative of the British Crown in Canada, and which her Majesty's Government are evidently determined to make their own. Neither historical analogy nor moral probability will allow us to believe that so portentous an outrage as the sacking and burning of a Parliament House by a mob can be the conclusion, as well as the commencement, of a civil war.

For all details of the occurrence which afford so dismal a commentary on the Elgin and Grey policy in Canada, and on the recent ministerial assurances that "the excitement was abating," we refer the reader to accounts elsewhere published. We willingly content ourselves here with the briefest possible notice of events which to loyal subjects of the Crown can dwell upon without indignation and shame. The Rebellion Losses Compensation Bill has received the assent of the Governor-General, and is now (provisionally) the law of Canada, but the half of legislation which witnessed the consummation of that iniquitous project is a heap of ruins. The same mail which brings her Majesty's Government Lord Elgin's first official communication respecting that bill,

also informs them that, in consequence of it and instantaneously on its passing the Parliament House of our chief colonial dependency has been burned to the ground—all the archives and records of the two United Provinces destroyed—and the Queen's viceroy himself insulted and attacked in the public streets of his own capital.—His Prime Minister's private residence has likewise been gutted of all its contents and burned, and several members of his Government have been severely maltreated. Legislators proceeding to a *pro tempore* place of meeting under military escort, but not secured thereby against gross outrage; state prisoners released in a tright; a partisan constabulary armed one hour at the bidding or a panic fear, and disarmed the next at the dictation of a mob—complete, for the present, the picture of popular violence and official fatuity.

This seems incredible—yet it ought not in the least to surprise us, all things considered. The utter want of any sort of preparation for the crisis is, after all, only an extreme instance of that amazing ignorance of the state of popular feeling which Lord Elgin and her Majesty's Government have manifested from the first. We perceive that Sir Allan M'Nab (who, by the way, honourably distinguished himself by endeavoring, at the imminent risk of his life, to rescue a portion of the parliamentary library from conflagration) strongly censured the Governor, at the next day's sitting of the Assembly, for "not having made due military preparations, for which there was ample time, and by which the public property might have been saved." We are not sure, however, that this censure is altogether reasonable. Why should Lord Elgin have made "due military preparations—or preparations of any kind—for a contingency of which he would not foresee the possibility, and which he does not seem even to have thought worth speculating upon (if we are to judge from the reiterated official tale of "abating excitement") in his private letters to the Queen's Ministers? It took him totally by surprise. He had heard much, but believed nothing, of the passionate indignation that would be excited among a loyal British population by the exhibition of French ascendancy in its worst and most offensive form—that of a tax for compensating rebels against the British Crown. When startled out of his lethargic security by seeing the seat of Government and legislature in a smoking ruin, he did what weak men will do when frightened—he resorted to an expedient of reckless and almost criminal violence, without, however, having the courage to persist in it. Nothing but the rashness of panic terror can even palliate his device of arming a French constabulary force—in other words, organising a partisan soldiery.

We shall wait with deep solicitude the further issues of this most painful and perilous business. In the meanwhile it is at least satisfactory to perceive that the insulted loyalty of the British population of Canada was, at the date of the latest accounts, seeking expression in legitimate and constitutional methods, which is, we suppose, what Lord Grey means by "tranquility being restored." Their leaders were making every exertion to preserve the public peace from renewed infraction, and crowded meetings had been held at Montreal, Toronto, Kingston, and other places, for the purpose of petitioning the Queen to recall Lord Elgin—a prayer which, if any other man than Lord Grey were her Majesty's responsible Secretary for the Colonies, would be granted before it was uttered. For, whatever else it may be right to do, or to undo, in the state of things which the Governor-General's fatuous blindness has produced, it is certain that this is right. Even though the Rebellion Losses Compensation Bill were actually a just and legitimate measure in itself, he is not the man to be trusted with the peace of Canada and the integrity of the British dominions in North America. Neither the honour of the British crown nor the interests of the British empire and people can be safe, for one hour, in the keeping of a viceroy, whose administration will be immortalised in history, by the (quite unexpected) conflagration of a Parliament House, and the (entirely unforeseen) insurgency of a province.

THE FAMINE IN IRELAND.

The Protestant rector of Ballinrobe thus addresses Lord John Russell on this subject:—

"I will not, my lord, dwell at present upon the painful subject of the workhouse, as the evil has gone far to correct itself, the inmates having died off in awful numbers, and more liberal supplies being now remitted for the current weekly expenses—alas! that these supplies should have been withheld so long. I would, however, fix your lordship's deepest attention upon the appalling fact, that we have, even at best, to encounter three months more of sore, sore famine, and bear it in mind my lord, the three worst months of the year, in point of home supply—and this, with 27,000 of our population in the Ballinrobe union, on out-door relief, while the remaining 68,000, minus the thousands already lost, are all, with very few exceptions indeed, barely trying to hold on through the dread crisis! The all-engrossing questions with every one, gentle and simple, are these—"What in the name of Heaven, is to become of us? What are we to do? The country is gone!" We must thus again and again strive to arouse you, my lord; for it is not possible that you or the English people can be fully conscious of, or alive to the true state of things in the west of Ireland. I grant that there may be, nay, that there is, much of imposition, but surely there cannot be any in this—that here are the people dropping dead of utter want all around in every direction, night and day, and can we suppose for a moment, that the astounding fact is believed when we see no really vigorous, and united movement, except through private benevolence, to stay the progress of death! It is poor consolation to an already more than half-starved wretch to say to him "Go and break stones, no matter how unprofitable, for that is the sole test of our destitution, and if the contractor does not disappoint, you shall get for your eight or ten hours' labour one pound of Indian meal, which costs one penny, but we cannot give you fuel or clothing."