

any great benefit to the people would result from a change of Administration, while, on the other hand, it would probably be no less difficult to show any good reason why the leaders of the Opposition, if given power, might not be expected to show an equally good record at the end of a term of office.

From across the ocean the rumours of early dissolution of Parliament wax louder and louder. The question is now evidently one of a few months at most, possibly only of weeks or days. The possibility of defeat must hover like an ugly spectre continually before the minds of the Government and their supporters. No doubt they would greatly prefer to have at least the three great measures now before Parliament: the Budget, the Registration Bill and the Welsh Disestablishment Act, carried through the Commons and either confirmed or rejected by the Lords, before going before the people for their verdict. Whether they will be able to accomplish their purpose with regard even to the first is becoming doubtful. In their extremity the revolt of the Parnellites must be as vexatious as it is inexplicable on ordinary principles. The sincerity of this little band of recalcitrant Irish in their desire for Home Rule can hardly be doubted. They cannot fail to see that the Radicals have brought it measurably nearer to them than it has ever been before. Most persons will be disposed to add, "or than it is likely to be again for many years, if a Tory Government comes into power." The Parnellites may or they may not be reckoning without their host, but their conduct is hard to understand, save on the assumption of a belief on their part that they can obtain what they want more speedily from a Conservative than from a Liberal Administration.

The assertion that the British Cabinet has resolved to make the question of the survival of the House of Lords, as at present constituted, the first plank in their programme, if forced to appeal to the country, is made with so much confidence that one hesitates to discredit it, yet, in view of the situation, as it appears in the light of the best information available on this side of the ocean, it certainly lacks credibility. Notwithstanding the various attempts which have been made to enkindle the popular wrath to the degree necessary to insure the success of such a movement, we know no facts which can be accepted as evidence of the existence of such a state of feeling. That a strong vote in favour of the amendment or abolition of the Upper House could be had, no one can doubt. But that the popular resentment is so deep and widespread as to make it a safe reliance on which to base an appeal to the whole electorate is a different matter. Should the Ministry prove strong enough to pass the measures mentioned above and should these

be rejected, as it is taken for granted they will be, by the Lords, before the dissolution, the case would be different. Few can carefully study the signs of the times in England without being convinced that some radical changes in the constitution of the Upper House, and in its relations to the representative chamber, are inevitable in the near future. The question is one of time only. But that the time is at hand already is far from evident. Perhaps some new light may be thrown on the question at the anti-Lords Conference which is to take place at Leeds a few weeks hence, should dissolution be delayed so long. Meanwhile we can only wait and watch.

#### THE COMING COLONIAL CONFERENCE.

The Intercolonial Conference which is shortly to assemble at Ottawa is, probably, unique in the history of the world. We are safe in saying that never before did delegates, representative of colonies of the same empire, drawn by the power of a common allegiance and blood, come together from opposite sides of the earth to deliberate about matters of common interest, and to seek to develop closer relations in trade and possibly in government. The reason, or at least one sufficient reason, why this is a new thing under the sun, is clear. Never before had any empire colonies in regions so far removed from the common centre of authority. Moreover, never had even Imperial Rome, the great colonizing nation of antiquity, colonies in which the spirit of self-government was so fully developed, with the full sanction and sympathy of the Mother State as to make such a conference possible, or to give it a meaning, had it been possible. The approaching meeting, if successfully carried out, may therefore fairly claim to have put at fault Solomon's somewhat cynical maxim in respect to the lack of originality and novelty in the world. It will, at least, be the exception which proves the rule. Further, though this may be an advantage rather than the opposite, no one will be able to quote a precedent, either of success or failure. For once, it cannot be claimed that history has an example for the guidance of the wise men who may assemble.

Even those who may be most sceptical with regard to the possibilities of success, in the shape of any important compact as the result of the Conference, can hardly refrain from hoping that nothing may occur to prevent a full representation and an exhaustive discussion of matters of mutual interest. The conception is certainly a large one, and one which deserves success, if success is possible. Everybody must have been glad to see the announcement, the other day, that Cape Colony has, after all, found it possible to send representatives. If delegates are present from all the colonies and confer together freely and frankly for a few days, even should no way be made

clear for positive agreements or practical movements for the furtherance of intercolonial trade, which is, we suppose, the question which will occupy the foremost place in the deliberations, the advantage of closer mutual acquaintance, of giving and receiving information with regard to each other's institutions and methods, and of facing and discussing the great unsolved problems of the future, which are to a large degree the same for each of the chief colonies, will more than compensate for all the trouble and expense involved. Even to have contemplated and have grappled with a grand and patriotic project, though it should be only to find the difficulties for the present insurmountable, will have been a stimulating and broadening exercise.

Speaking of "success," we can hear the practical man exclaim, "What do you mean by success? Suppose that the Conference attains every result hoped for by its most sanguine promoters, what will be the result?" This leads us to remember that, so far as we are aware, the Conference has no clear-cut programme whose lines its members are bound to follow. It is probably better so. At the first of what may prove to be a series of such conferences, it is wise that the widest latitude of discussion should be permitted. Important thoughts may be thrown out and important points suggested in the course of a free and easy discussion, which would not have presented themselves had the business in hand been confined to definite questions or proposals to which definite answers were expected. At the best the delegates will not be plenipotentiaries, and can do no more than formulate some more or less clearly outlined policy for the approval of their respective legislatures.

It may be reasonably expected that two important movements already projected will receive material aid and impetus from this Conference, that in favour of closer trade relations between the Eastern and the Western colonies, and that for the construction of the Pacific submarine cable. The two formidable difficulties in the way of the first, that arising from the "most favoured nation" clauses in British treaties with other nations, and that consequent on the various and widely differing trade policies of the Australian colonies, will no doubt receive the fullest and most careful consideration. Whether, in regard to the first, any way out can be found, it is hard to say. The outlook can hardly be said to be hopeful. But in any case there is the alternative of giving to all the world the benefit of any mutual concessions which may be seen to be for the advantage of the colonies concerned. In the opinion of many it will be no disadvantage to any of the colonies immediately concerned should the desired freedom of commerce extend not only to the sister colonies but to other nations. Let us hope that at any rate one early outcome of the Conference will be the giving of its deathblow to the narrow and unsisterly