

## CONSTITUTIONALISM IN QUEBEC.

THE current week has provided for the Province of Quebec, one of those trials which are yet pending in the case of the Dominion and the Province of Nova Scotia. Our readers must already be familiar with the leading facts which have brought on that trial. Those facts, without indulging in any hair-splitting, or nice definitions of terms, may be briefly stated thus:—Lieut.-Governor Letellier peremptorily called to account and dismissed his ex-Premier, De-Bocherelle, and colleagues, averring, as his reasons for doing so, that they had failed in their duty to him and were false to the country; and he then called to his council Mr. Joly and such as he gathered together to be his colleagues, and, upon their advice, dissolved the House of Assembly.

Great and fierce has been the controversy, not only in Quebec, but throughout the Dominion, as to who has been right in this wide difference of opinion between Lieut.-Governor Letellier and his late "constitutional advisers." Unfortunately the question has been discussed less upon its own merits than in accordance with its aspect from extremely partisan points of view. Yet this is not the first time that the same question, or one the same in all essential points, has been presented, and discussed, and for the nonce decided, before the people of British North America. The action of Lieut.-Governor Letellier, on this occasion, happens, however, to be one of those courses of procedure, the rightful, or wrongful, nature of which is determined in popular estimation by the result, rather than by any essential principle which it involves. It seems to be admitted that "whatever is"—in the end—"is right." We will cite two cases only to illustrate our meaning.

In 1856, the New Brunswick Legislature passed, as a government measure, what is called a "Prohibitory Liquor Law," much to the personal disapproval of the Lieut.-Governor; and this measure at once aroused a great clamor throughout the country. To Lieutenant-Governor Manners-Sutton's hearty disapproval of the law to which he had nevertheless assented, was soon added intense disgust at finding that even many of

his ministers—by the bye, one of them, Albert Smith, is now in the Canadian Cabinet—made no scruple of swilling *his*—the Governor's—wine, at *his* table, and freely guzzled their own grog in private, whilst claiming an immensity of credit for "robbing the poor man of his beer." In view of what he believed to be the public disapproval of the bill in question, Mr. Manners-Sutton insisted upon a dissolution of the House. This, Ministers refused, and had to resign; a new cabinet was formed; the House was dissolved; an appeal was made to the country—the Governor sustained by an overwhelming majority, and the obnoxious law forthwith repealed; and Mr. Manners-Sutton's conduct met with the approval of the Home Government.

Again, in 1860, the Earl of Mulgrave, in Nova Scotia, after much fickle dallying with the question, finally refused to dissolve the House, although urged thereto by the legislative Opposition, supported by petitions bearing the names of a clear majority of the electors of Nova Scotia; because his actual ministers had a majority in the House as it then existed. The Ministers by whose advice Lord Mulgrave acted in this instance, continued to govern the province for three years; whilst his course, the very opposite of Mr. Manners-Sutton's was also approved of by the Imperial Government.

It is obvious that the Colonial Office, in Downing street, has in this, as in many other important matters, been only guided by a sort of "rule of thumb"; yet there must be some principle involved—latent, if not patent—whether Secretaries of State have discovered it, or not. Has a Lieutenant Governor any active duties at all? If he has not—if he is to be considered a mere dummy, or lay figure, the sooner we get rid of such expensive bits of useless lumber, the better. If he has any active duties, surely they must pertain to such a position as that of Mr. Manners-Sutton when he asserted himself in 1855; or that of Lord Mulgrave when he would not assert himself in 1860; or that in which Mr. Letellier avers that he has found himself in 1878. He is the bulwark—and the only one, for the Legislative Council is worse than a nonentity—between an alleged tyrannical Ministry and servile legislative majority, on the one hand, and an ostensibly oppressed people, on the other. We really cannot see any reason to doubt his right, in the abstract, to take the course pursued.

The question of Mr. LeTeller's judgment—whether he had sufficient cause for exercising the right—is a quite distant one, and one upon which there are the widest diversities of opinion. There are no fixed canons upon which we can make our way to a positive conclusion upon this point. Here the *vox populi*, although it be not the *vox Dei*, must furnish the only conclusions we can have.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR —

My feelings on learning, by your letter of the 14th, that you and others are about starting a *really independent weekly paper*, immediately brought to my recollection what the celebrated or notorious Henry Ward Beecher said of his emotions, over—I think it was the battle of Gettysburg. In the first outburst, on that occasion, of what his fellow-countrymen are fond of calling "the wildest enthusiasm," that pious declaimer felt, as he naively told an admiring world, that "it was a time for the mingling of exclamations, and he shouted—*bully halloo!*"

I am really delighted to hear of the project of which you inform me. It is high time something of the kind was attempted. A lack of candor, and of independence and manly disposition to show fair play, is a monstrous deformity of our periodical press, as we now find it. I am unprepared to cast the burden of blame for this in any particular direction. Perhaps it is owing rather to the state of society in which we live, than to any evil intent on the part of individuals connected with that press. Still, the press as a whole must be held, in a large degree, accountable for that state of society.

Our newspapers exhibit a fair amount of enterprise as news-papers—considering, that is, the sphere in which they have to operate. But they are avowedly political; and being so, they are undeniably partisan; and that means, I am sorry to say, that they are factionist. One takes every dirty advantage over an opponent because another does so. I dare say if one of these partisan writers were privately remonstrated with, he would answer by again repeating that hacknied, immoral, ungentlemanly, unmanly maxim that "all is fair in Love and War." All is not fair in Love or War. On the contrary it is in Love and in War that the highest toned principles of honor most loudly insist upon asserting themselves, and where they peremptorily challenge our unqualified admiration.

But, to go outside the line of so-called political discussions, suppose—and here I speak from somewhat sad experience—suppose I wish to address the public through any one of your Halifax journals. My subject only of general interest and not intended to laud any one, or to damage any other