

that useful gentleman will be as efficient as his oratory and bodily presence, is very doubtful. Certain it is, however, that the new Parliament's first attention must be devoted to reform. Even the *Times*, which has long denounced agitation on the subject as useless, now declares (trimmingly—as usual) its readiness to assist the reformers. Should Lord Palmerston die to-morrow, there can be little doubt that Mr. Gladstone would be his successor.

The production of Meyerbeer's last grand Opera the "Africaine" is awaited with extreme interest both in Paris and London. It is said that at a recent rehearsal at the former city, the orchestra were so carried away by the beauties of a certain scena, that they dropped their fiddles for enthusiasm, and expressed their approval by long and boisterous applause.

Extracts.

CANADIAN CLOUDS.

(Spectator, 15th April.)

There must be something underneath all this Canadian business not yet fully understood in this country. The programme is breaking down in every direction. The original idea was that the British Colonies of America, conscious of national aspirations, but amazed, if not disgusted, by the changes in the neighbouring republic, would endeavour to found a new nationality of their own. That nationality, at first protected by Great Britain and afterwards strictly allied with her, would be to North America much such a country as Russia is to Europe, cold perhaps, and comparatively poor, but with a hardy population, a separate, and on the whole a great national life. There will probably be in a few years some eight millions of Canadians, and eight millions of men sprung from English parents, and speaking most of them the English language, who would it was thought constitute a nation unlikely to be beguiled into union with any other State, and exceedingly dangerous to attack. Such a nation even at first could maintain a moderate army or man a reserve fleet, and come to some definite agreement with the mother country upon the subject of external defence. The plan seemed to march excellently well. The delegates of the different Provinces met in meetings, secret and therefore confidential, accepted the plan in principle, agreed to certain details, effected compromises upon certain others, and in the end unanimously signed a constitution which, though imperfect upon one point, was received in England with a sort of rapture of applause. The entire Press spoke well of it. Every member of Parliament who has opened his lips has praised it. The Queen was advised to accept it, if not with cordiality, at least with heartiness. Mr. Cardwell poured out his soul in a despatch full of the softest praise. It was understood that an Act converting the sketch of a constitution into law would be passed this session, and all Englishmen congratulated the "Acadians" on their choice between their only two alternatives—a separate national existence, and absorption into the somewhat heavily taxed and ambitious Union. The Ministers assuring the world that the Canadians being desirous of remaining within the Empire, Her Majesty's Government intended to fight for them, and even proposed a grant of money not indeed sufficient to fortify Canada, but ample to find comfortable quarters for that British sentry whose legal existence in Canada or anywhere else pledges the whole power of the Empire to defend him. After three separate debates, in which the most extreme views on both sides were openly discussed, the House of Commons endorsed by a vote of seven to one the Ministerial promise, and journalists of all parties affirmed with the full assent of the nation that Great Britain rather than abandon Canada, if she wished not to be abandoned, would risk a serious war.

The prospect has been very speedily overcast, or, as some of our Radical friends would say, has very rapidly brightened. The Confederation scheme, which was an integral part of the plan, the colonies not being a nation unless united by some federal bond, though approved by England, framed by local delegates, and accepted by almost every governing man in the colonies, proved not to be to the popular taste. The Government of New Brunswick appealed to the people, and the people, whose delegates had accepted the Constitution, elected out of forty-one members thirty pledged to reject it. The Nova Scotians then

drew back and proposed a separate union of the maritime provinces, the population of Prince Edward's Island are known to be only restrained by their leaders from following the same course, and the Montreal papers now give the following as the true state of affairs:—Two colonies out of five have resolved to reject the scheme, a third will only yield on social compulsion, in Lower Canada the masses are opposed, and in Upper Canada the feeling in favour of it is rapidly dying away. We should have thought these statements were partly exaggerations, dictated by dislike of Mr. Brown, the Anglo-Saxon advocate of the scheme, but that it is evident the vote of Parliament for the fortification of Quebec, with its attendant demand for Canadian outlay on defences, has been received with profound irritation. Mr. McDonald, member of the Cabinet, from his place in Parliament affected to consider the telegram a blunder, a cypher having been omitted from the vote. Mr. Galt stated positively that the quarter of a million voted by Canada for armaments would only be raised on the strength of the British guarantee,—a phrase which in the existing circumstances of Canada is a mere euphuism for a loan without interest,—and the bulk of the people are represented as dangerously excited. The conference which was to have been held with the British Government has been broken off, three of the four Ministers chosen having declined to attend, and the fourth, Mr. Cartier, agreeing only in order that he may plead the claims of the French Canadians. The telegraph reports that the "annexationist" feeling, the desire, that is, for annexation to the United States as the easiest solution of many questions, has broken out again and—in short the programme has apparently gone to pieces.

What does it all mean? Is it possible the assertion of those who distrust the colonies is true, and that the colonists are perfectly willing to belong to Great Britain as long as Great Britain will protect them, but not willing if they are to be asked to help in protecting themselves? In that case the sooner they come to a distinct understanding as to the worth of the alliance the better for them and for the world, for without it they will most indubitably find themselves some day left in the lurch. Great Britain is perfectly willing to fight for the Canadians as if they were residents of Cornwall, but then they must exert themselves as the people of Cornwall would, pay taxes as high, submit if the matter comes to a straggle of life and death to a conscription, or, as we call it, a "ballot militia law" as severe as would be enforced in any English county. If they are not prepared for this they had better go at once, for exactly in proportion as their zeal slackens so will that of this country. Or is it that the colonies are simply trying to play the old game, and endeavouring to extort better terms from this country by threats of secession if their terms are refused? If they are, they are guilty of a political anachronism fatal to the reputation of their leaders for practical statesmanship. It is the deliberate opinion of the best political thinkers and the most influential Cabinet Ministers in this country that the time has arrived when the dependence of the Anglo-Saxon colonies must either cease, or merge in an alliance to be arranged by clear and carefully-observed diplomatic agreement. Upon the whole, and with one or two reserves, they prefer the latter course, so much prefer it that they are willing to undergo the risk of war and the certainty of very considerable expenses for defence, rather than adopt the safe but, as they consider, dishonourable expedient of cutting the colonies loose. But the preference is dependent entirely upon the readiness of the colonies to do all in their power to maintain the connection, and any threat of departure will be received with a serene "God speed you," not, it may be wholly unmixt with pleasure. If the Canadians, or New Brunswickers, or Nova Scotians, deliberately prefer, and show that they prefer, the high taxation and free national life of the United States to the lower taxation and subordinate national life of a State allied with Great Britain there is nothing more to be said. We shall not fight them for expressing that preference, and most assuredly we shall not attempt to bribe them. They have only to express their will by a Parliamentary vote, taken of course after an appeal to the people *ad hoc*, and this journal, for example, which almost alone among Liberal journals has pleaded for the value of their alliance, will acknowledge at once their right to independence, and the Parliamentary majority will be swifter still. We have earned the right to be heard by these American colonists, and we tell them distinctly that any pretension to dictate terms to the mother country is in the present state of opinion simply preposterous,—that they have before them two alternatives, to form themselves into a nation in strict alliance with Great Britain, but with separate armaments, taxation, and expenditure, or to go free whither their energy or their

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