

Bismarck. There may be a Conference or a Congress, but it will do nothing that shall be binding on all, or either, of the parties; and at any hour war may be declared. It is a great disaster that general European peace should be put at risk by such a man as the Earl of Beaconsfield, who is neither a first rate politician nor even an ordinary patriot, but a seeker of self-glory. He and Prince Bismarck have more need of watching than Russia.

QUEBEC POLITICS.

An earthquake has gone rending through our Provincial mudpool, and things are in a general state of confusion. By the publication of correspondence, explanations, &c., we now know for certain that the Lieutenant-Governor did most incontinently dismiss the DeBoucherville Government—that Government commanding a majority of the votes in the House. The Constitutional bugbear was set up at once, and some friends of good order seem as if afraid that the universe is about to collapse. Some men, old in politics, are taking advantage of the opportunity of retiring from public life—others are emerging from a well-deserved obscurity and declare themselves willing to spend and be spent in the interests of their friends. The daily papers lead the combat, those which have no arguments at command using strong language instead—hoping that the public will not make an effort to discriminate. Let lovers of order keep calm: Ottawa and Heaven will see to it that the Province is cared for.

But there is great danger of this confusion becoming for a time worse confounded. By one party the whole issue is made to turn on the Constitution question. A false issue as we think, altogether. That the act of the Lieutenant-Governor in dismissing the Government was ill-timed and unwise, we have no doubt, but that he was well within his rights we are assured. Had the Government been defeated in the House there would have been no occasion for the Lieutenant-Governor's interference. It is only over the majority that he can be called upon to exercise the rights of the crown. And to say that now the question is to be carried before the public for decision as to whether he was constitutionally right or wrong is to raise a false issue. The Lieutenant-Governor is answerable to the Dominion Parliament; and the Government there, has been, and is, sustained by the majority of voters in the country. The Dominion Parliament should settle the Constitutional question—and it will be found that Sir Francis Hincks is strictly correct in his judgment—that the Lieutenant-Governor had the right to do as he has done.

What the voters of the Province of Quebec have before them is the twofold question of men and measures. As to the *men* they are well before us. By the exercise of an exceeding great charity the public may feel well toward some of them, indifferently toward others of them, and nothing at all about the rest of them. As to *measures* who can say what they are? M. Joly is pledged to carry out certain schemes for retrenchment in matters of expenditure, and there is a vague notion abroad that he will be opposed to the general Ultramontane policy of the late Government. But a careful perusal of his political history gives small assurance on that score. There is no record of his great deeds or great efforts in that direction. That the Railway bill, and the Tax bill will be dropped there can be no doubt. But the De Boucherville party will do that if returned to power. Those bills are lost whatever the issue of the elections may be. But what other bills may we look for? What changes will be attempted, or reforms inaugurated? We are told M. De Boucherville will not be the Premier of the Government again if the Conservatives are sent back to power. Then who will? And how do they propose to do the Provincial financing in the future? What guarantee have the people that some new bill for taxation will not be introduced as absurd as the last? There are many ways of playing the fool—the late Government found out most of them and walked therein. But more may yet be discovered by an ingenious Conservative. We do not know that the Liberal will do any better, but they are as yet untried, so there is room for faith and hope as far as they are concerned. They deserve a trial.

But the voters should be careful not be drawn off the right track by false scents. The blundering of the Lieutenant-Governor has furnished the Conservative party with a fine election cry. There is great scope for eloquence when a man has to plead the cause of the British Constitution, and a great temptation to make an *ad captandum* speech. But the past of the De Boucherville party must not be forgotten. They may try to sever themselves from what they have done when in place and power, asking to be regarded simply as the patriotic upholders of the Constitution; but their past is on record, and should be remembered. The issue is between the two parties, and not between the late Government and the Lieutenant-Governor; and from such an able man as Mr. Kerr, for example, we have a right to look for some well-defined policy. Liberal and Conservative are simply names, meaning nothing as to real politics in this Province, and opposition to the De Boucherville party need have no significance whatever in regard to Dominion politics.

SCIENCE AND THE EXODUS.*

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I.—THE RED SEA TO REPHIDIM.

(Continued.)

The members of the expedition select the vicinity of Suez as the place of the crossing of the Israelites, in preference to the basin of the Bitter Lakes, as suggested by Mr. Poole and M. DeLesseps and by the engineers of the Suez canal, and to the wider part of the gulf further down, as held traditionally by the Arabs and supported by some of the older authorities. The requirements of the narrative accord best with this medium view, which has been accepted by most modern travellers. It is to be observed that the point of crossing below Suez would imply a journey of five miles through the bed of the sea in one night, which would be impossible for so great a host so encumbered, while the width of the Gulf at Suez is only about one mile. The first camp in the desert would thus be around the small oasis which surrounds the well known "Wells of Moses"—*Ayun Mousa*, accepted traditionally in all ages as the initial point of the desert journey. Here the Israelites rested after the passage of the sea, with its terrific accompaniments of wind and rain, almost paralleled, according to the explorers, at this day, by the wild storms of north-east wind which occasionally draw down this gulf. Here they could rejoice in their deliverance, and sing that song of Moses which still holds its place in literature as the most wonderful contemporary ode commemorative of a national deliverance.

Mr. E. H. Palmer, one of the party, in his work "The Desert of the Exodus," refers to some of the questions as to the place of crossing, and remarks that as the Israelites were commanded not to go by the desert route to Palestine, but to double around the end of the Gulf of Suez, then probably longer than now; and as they were followed by the Egyptians too rapidly to allow them to round the head of the Gulf, they would be compelled either to take to the water, or to fall into the hands of their enemies. Further, it is conceivable that the strong north-east wind occurring with an ebb tide, may have laid bare one of the sand banks crossing the head of the Gulf forming a road for the people, while the water on both sides protected their flanks as a wall of defence. A change of wind to the west immediately following their passage would bring back the waters on their enemies; and that this change actually took place is shown by the fact, stated in Exodus, that the bodies of the Egyptians were cast up on the east side of the sea, which could only have taken place with a west wind.

From the Wells of Moses the Israelites, if they intended to go to Sinai, had but one course open to them, and this accompanied with many difficulties. Before them and nearly parallel with the coast, runs that precipitous wall of rocks which forms the edge of the great desert table-land in the centre of the peninsula, the Badiet et Tih, or Desert of the Wanderings. The escarpment of the Tih consists of nearly horizontal beds of limestone, of the Cretaceous period, or of the same geological age with the chalk and greensand of England, or the greensands of New Jersey, and which spreads over a great area in Arabia, resting on an older sandstone, to be subsequently mentioned, and capped in places by later limestones of eocene age, the nummulitic limestones. These are all marine formations, and they yield in most places a dry barren soil with many flints, of which there are great numbers in the limestones. From this wall the district in which the Israelites had entered probably derives its Scriptural name of Wilderness of Shur, or of the wall. The great escarpment thus designated not only presented an obstacle to the direct route to the eastward, but the desert above it was no doubt occupied by formidable bands of Amalekites. Hence we find the Israelites turning to the south, along the plain between the Shur and the sea.

"As the Israelites leaving *Ayun Mousa* turned their faces southward, away from the land of their bondage and the scene of their great deliverance, they must have gazed on the same features which now strike the eye of the traveller on his way from Suez to Jebel Musa, for the general aspect of the desert can have altered little. On their left would be the long level range of Er Rahah, an unbroken wall, except where the triple peak of Jebel Bisher breaks the monotony of the outline; in front, the terraced plain several miles broad sloping gently down to the bright blue sea, and beyond the sea to their right the picturesque line of cliffs on one point of which the name of Ras Atakah (Mount of Deliverance) still lingers."

But in this wilderness of Shur, the faith of the people must have met with a sore trial. Accustomed to the abundant water and verdure of Egypt, they now had to march three days without water; and, however warned by the experience of Moses in this desert in his earlier life, as to the necessity of carrying supplies of the precious liquid from the wells they had left, their sufferings must have been intense. When at length, foot-sore and consumed with thirst, they reached the springs of Marah, probably those known at present as Ain Hawwarah, or those a little farther on at Wady Amarah, they found the water bitter and unpalatable, being impregnated with carbonate of soda and other salts. It is little wonder that they murmured, and that Moses was instructed to work a miracle for their relief. This miracle of sweetening the waters by throwing into them a tree, is one of the most remarkable chemical miracles on record, inasmuch as soda is one of the last possible bases to be precipitated from water by any known means. It is amusing to notice the expedients by which learned and well-meaning writers have endeavored to explain the sweetening of the waters by natural agencies. One informs us that branches thrown into saline waters cause the salts to be deposited on them and removed from the water, apparently not knowing that this implies a state of saturation of the water with saline matter altogether incompatible with potability. Another naively says that the Arabs at present know of no means of sweetening the waters, which is not wonderful since it would puzzle any chemist in the world to do so, or even to suggest a means by which it might be done. This miracle, small though it appears, is less explicable by natural agencies than the crossing of the Red Sea or the bringing water

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