

or 800,000 strong, to be commanded by an American General lately returned from Mexico, and of 50,000 Irish ready to march into Canada from the States at a minute's notice. A meeting at Montreal, that was to have overturned the British Empire, was dispersed by a timely thunder shower. The chief agitator was an American citizen, and Lord Elgin says: "I am of opinion that proceedings of this description on the part of a citizen of another country are not to be tolerated; and although there is an indisposition in certain quarters to drive things to an extremity, I think I shall succeed in having him arrested, unless he takes himself off speedily."

A great addition had been made to the Irish difficulty, and to the difficulties of government generally at the outset of Lord Elgin's administration, by the fearful tide of starving and plague-stricken immigrants poured upon our shores by the Irish famine of 1847. It fell to the lot of the Governor-General, on this occasion, to press on the attention of the Home Government—what it was by no means quick in perceiving—the heaviness of the burden cast on Canada, and her just claims at all events to reimbursement of the expenses she had incurred. A good deal of argument seems to have been required to disabuse the Colonial Secretary of the impression that Canada was necessarily the gainer by the inroad of 100,000 destitute, sick and suffering people, whose course through the eastern portion of our country was strewn with dead, while the survivors were for some time an intolerable burden to the west. The Governor-General bears emphatic testimony to the exertions made by the colonists, and the forbearance and good feeling shown by them under the trial.

The main root of political discontent, in Lord Elgin's opinion, was commercial depression, and the infallible remedy for the political discontent, and the danger attendant on it, was the restoration of prosper-

ity. He held the commercial evils under which Canada was at that time labouring, to be directly chargeable on Imperial legislation. Peel's Free Trade measure of 1846 had driven the whole of the produce down New York channels, robbing Canada of her canal dues, ruining at once mill-owners, forwarders, and merchants, making property unsaleable, and reducing the Government to the payment of its officers in debentures. "What makes it more serious is, that all the prosperity of which Canada is thus robbed is transplanted to the other side of the lines, as if to make Canadians feel more bitterly how much kinder England is to the children who desert her than to those who remain faithful. For I care not whether you be a Protectionist or a Free Trader, it is the inconsistency of Imperial legislation, and not the adoption of one policy rather than another, which is the bane of the Colonies. I believe that the conviction that they would be better off if they were annexed, is almost universal among the commercial classes at present, and the peaceful condition of the Provinces under all the circumstances of the time, is, I must confess, often a matter of great astonishment to myself." If the lot of the colonist in commercial respects continued to present an unfavourable contrast to that of the people on the other side of the line, Lord Elgin felt that the inevitable result must be a tendency to annexation. Perhaps, he a little underrated the countervailing action of the moral forces. The strength of the national sentiment among Canadians he could not estimate, for it had not then come into existence.

His wish was not to return to Protection, but to obtain Reciprocity of Trade with the United States, to which he attached what our experience since the suspension of Reciprocity has proved to be an exaggerated importance. To negotiate the Reciprocity Treaty he went himself to Washington. It was his first essay in diplomacy, but he had all the qualifications of manner and address