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THE BRITISH COLUMBIAN'S DISPUTE.



[*Pall Mall Gazette*, Sept. 22.]

The issues of the controversy between the Dominion of Canada and British Columbia have been made sufficiently plain to the public; nor is there any reason to doubt that their gravity has been fully appreciated by the Colonial Office. At the same time it is evident that the Imperial Government can only proceed with great caution in urging the Canadians to carry out their pledge to the Pacific Settlements. The Act of Union of 1867 placed the Dominion in something like the position of an independent Power, and Canadian politicians are not slow to assert their right to shape a policy of their own. Only a few months ago Mr. Mackenzie, the Premier of the Dominion, in addressing his constituents at Sarnia, went out of his way to assert with great clearness and emphasis the advancement of Canadian pretensions. He said:—"One of our early struggles in this country was to get Canadian affairs managed by Canadians, and not to have a Colonial Office or a Colonial Secretary undertaking to dictate through an irresponsible Council in Canada what laws should be enacted or what policy should be adopted. That has all been gained, and so far as the management of our own internal affairs is concerned there is nothing left in dispute." And he went on to claim for the Ottawa Government a similar independence in the practical if not the formal conduct of negotiations with the United States, should any difficulties arise between the Dominion and its neighbors. This part of policy Mr. Mackenzie asserts, "does not concern any other portion of the British public;" and he hints that interference on the part of the mother country would be sharply resented. If we apply the principles and the sentiments on which Mr. Mackenzie rests his case to the British Columbia controversy, it is easy to perceive the obstacles to direct Imperial action for securing the rights of the Pacific colonists are very formidable. The Act of Union speaks of "Terms and conditions" of Confederation, but does not provide any machinery for enforcing the performance of those terms and conditions against the will of the Executive Government of the Dominion and of the majority in the Ottawa Parliament. Moreover, those agreements generally have reference to expenditure of money; and appropriations to meet this expenditure must be granted in the usual way by the House of Commons. Even in this country, where the Government is in direct relations with the Legislature the latter might refuse to provide the means for carrying out a public contract, and the former could only appeal to the honor of the nation at large to wipe away the stain of such a breach of faith. But the Imperial Government dealing with a colonial Parliament, has no possibility of

