

CANADIAN POLITICS.

[From the Scotsman.]

STATE OF AFFAIRS IN CANADA.

We announced in our last that the Canadian House of Assembly had been dissolved. The Address in reply to Lord Gosford's Message, which led to this step, will be found in another column. The Message will be found in the *Scotsman* of the 16th inst. We shall take a survey of the contents of this Address, which is a document of considerable importance.

For the last four years the House of Assembly had stopped that portion of the annual supplies which was appropriated to the payment of the judges and civil officers. The 8th resolution passed by Parliament last session, arms Lord Gosford with power to pay them out of British funds in the mean time, the amount under the special Act of British Parliament, unless the Colonial Legislature grant the money, and prevent this strong exercise of imperial authority. On this point the Address refuses all concession. It declares that the stoppage of the supplies is founded on principles recognised by the Constitution as the means of obtaining the redress of numerous grievances the province has long laboured under; that these grievances are acknowledged, and should have been removed before such extreme measures were resorted to; and that they can only regard these measures "as an attack upon the property of the people and upon the most sacred rights of the House, as constituting a serious obstacle to the arrangement of the existing difficulties, and as tending to weaken the ties which bind the colony to the mother country."

Finding that the partial stopping of the supplies did not compel the Government to succumb, the House of Assembly last year put a stop to the whole public business, by refusing to exercise its legislative functions. This also is boldly justified. The House of Assembly resolved "to suspend its deliberations," because "it could not, with advantage to the country, enter into the labours and incur the expenses of a regular session in conjunction with the present Legislative Council, whose anterior proceedings breathed nothing but factious opposition to the wishes, wants, and interests of the people." The people of Britain have some reason to sympathize in this plea. The Legislative Council is the Canadian house of Lords; and were the Commons of Britain disposed to net on the principles of the House of Assembly, they might well decline to incur the expenses of a regular session, in conjunction with a body "whose anterior proceedings breathed nothing but a factious opposition to the wishes, wants, and interests of the people!" They profess to be astonished that the British Parliament, after admitting that the Legislative Council is not so constituted as to enjoy public confidence, and doing nothing to remedy the evil, should conjoin with this "an imperative demand for supplies." They hold that "the supplies are granted by the Commons solely in consideration of their entire confidence in the Government; and this confidence cannot exist while the Government leaves untouched a legislative body which it openly acknowledges not to possess the confidence of the public." We must explain, however, that Lord Gosford informed the House in his Message, that the reform of the Legislative Council would have been carried into effect, if the King's death, and the consequence dissolution of parliament, had not interrupted the public business.

They affect to believe that the British Parliament, in passing the resolutions, had acted on "a forced interpretation" of the language used by the Assembly, in declaring its deter-

mination to suspend its deliberations. They mean, we suppose, to repel the idea, that they aim at a separation of the colony from the mother country. The only condition they insist on, as essential to the restoration of harmony, is the establishment of an elective Legislative Council. At all events, they hold that the reforms contemplated by Ministers in the constitution of the Council, must first be made known, before the House of Assembly can consent to resume its deliberations. National pride has been the source of half the wars which have desolated the world; and here we have the pride of the colony marshalled against the pride of the mother country. Grant the Civil List, says the one party, and you shall then have reforms. Let us first see your reforms, the other replies, and we will then consider the Civil List. It is not impossible that the bayonet may by-and-by be unsheathed to decide who shall make the first concession!

On considering all the circumstances, they find themselves under the painful necessity of adhering to the determination come to last session, of suspending their deliberations until the reforms promised (and that of the Legislative Council above all) are consummated."

In his reply, Lord Gosford expresses his deep regret that the House of Assembly had made the resumption of its legislative duties contingent on a condition which the British Government had solemnly declared it was inexpedient to grant. The House was immediately prorogued, and dissolved a few days afterwards.

We suspend a full discussion of the subject until we have some further details. In the mean time it may be proper to put the reader in possession of a few statistical facts. Lower Canada had 511,000 inhabitants in 1831. Of these 400,000 were Catholics, composed perhaps of 20,000 Irish and 380,000 French. The population must now amount to 650,000, of whom perhaps 450,000 are French. The proportions of the two races has an important bearing on the questions now agitated, but we want precise data for its determination.

The House of Assembly consists of eighty three members, who are chosen for a period of four years. The electors consist, we think, of all the holders of real property, and these may be estimated at one-ninth of the population, or 70,000. Complaints are made, however, that the representation is unequally distributed, no provisions being made to increase the members for newer districts as the population grows, and that in consequence the French inhabitants, who occupy the older districts, have an undue share in the representation. Since the system of lavishing grants of land on favourites ceased, the Government can have no great influence; and the new elections will therefore most probably express pretty fairly the opinions of the people.

Our impression is, that all the matters in dispute between Lower Canada and the mother country will be easily adjusted, except that relating to the Legislative Council. In dealing with the question much depends on a point which, so far as we know, is not yet clearly settled; namely, whether the dominant party in the Assembly is purely a French party, or whether it is simply a Liberal party. If the former, the introduction of an elective Council would take away the only steady barrier against the abuse of power, and enable it to injure or oppress the English settlers. In this case, it would be the duty of the Government to resist the proposed innovation. If it is a Liberal party composed of both races, and if new elections, fairly conducted, prove that the mass of the colonists consider the change indispensable, it may be necessary to concede it. The question does not however, seem so simple to us as it does to many. It is true the

American States have elective Upper Chambers; but Canada is not an independent State: it is a colony, which has been nursed and protected by the mother country at a great expense, and may well submit to some restraint for the advantages, it has reaped from the connection. This does not authorise Britain to inflict bad government upon it; but it justifies her in retaining such influence in the management of its affairs, as shall protect her fair interests in its concerns from invasion. An Upper Chamber, filled by Royal nomination with native Canadians of Liberal views, but sincere friends to British connection, is one means (It may be the only means) of accomplishing this object. Its power be it remembered is nearly negative. It can pass no law, impose no tax, but acts simply as a check on the proceedings of the other House. With an Upper Chamber, such as the present Minister would appoint, and its freely chosen House of Assembly, we firmly believe that Canada would have a much better Government than the mother country now enjoys, or is likely to enjoy for many years. The colonial constitution might, in our opinion, have subsisted if the Tories had not brought odium upon it, by picking the Legislative Council from men of their own creed, haters of popular principles, and sworn foes to improvement. It may be, that the irritation and distrust thus generated, are too strong for palliatives. If so, we trust Ministers will promptly concede an Elective Council. It would be wiser to declare the colony independent at once, than to keep it in subjection by the sword.

[The following article, from the *London Globe*, may be deemed appropriate enough at the present juncture in this Province; it shows that the people of England are alive to their interests, and Nova-Scotians should follow in their wake.—BEE.]

NECESSITY OF LIBERALIZING THE COUNTY MAGISTRACY.

We have on former occasions spoken of the sort of monopoly of every local and organized power in the counties, by that party who have not yet done celebrating their recent successes in those quarters, and wreaking their vengeance for every independent vote. We do say it is high time for a Liberal Government to break every link within its reach in the chain of that undue domination which has been suffered to take root through the length and breadth of their land, and to push its ramifications far and wide, wherever there were fears or hope to be worked on within the sphere of its influence.

An opportunity will soon present itself, which should not be allowed to be lost, of infusing Liberal principles into the local government of the counties. All commissions of the peace expire within six months from the demise of the crown; and it is customary, as many of our readers are already aware, to issue the commission on such occasions to a number of new persons. The present Lord-Lieutenant, however, for the most part, being Tories, it is easy to anticipate what sort of lists they are likely to send up for the Chancellor to make his election from in renewing or recruiting the old appointments. Unless, therefore, the Liberals in the several counties also take the field, and that speedily, with their recommendations, the Government will have no choice, in the great bulk of instances, but to make the appointments on those presented by their party opponents. The links of Tory sway in the counties will be thus newly riveted; and the ministers of a Sovereign in whom the notion are delighted to recognise the principles which placed—and may they long keep