

THE WEEK:

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

OUR trouble in the North-West has assumed very serious dimensions, nor can its limits yet be fixed. How many men has Riel with him? Is he provided with supplies and ammunition? Will the Indians join the insurrection? Will there be an irruption of Half-Breeds or desperadoes from Montana? These are questions which, as we write, are being gradually answered by events amidst the usual cloud of panic rumours and conjectures. At this moment it appears as if the Indian rising would, at all events, be confined to one or two tribes. The best spirit has been manifested by the country, and we have every reason to confide in the military men who are in command. It is to be hoped that they will receive the hearty and unstinted support of Parliament and the Government. Let faction, if possible, sleep for one hour, and let the flag which was presented to the Toronto Volunteers on their route by the lady of the leader of the Opposition be the symbol of a union to last so long as the country is in danger. When the rebellion is quelled and the North-West is safe there will be time to inquire into the causes of our misfortune and to ascertain on whom the blame rests for the neglect of the Half-Breed claims. That the Half-Breed claims have been neglected there is too much reason to believe, and this ought to be borne in mind as soon as the insurgents show themselves disposed to submission. Their leader is unfortunately a man whom Party has already snatched from the hands of Justice, and who has now so completely shut the gates of mercy on himself that if his spirit prevails the Half-Breeds will hold out with the resolution of despair.

THAT the Fenians have, as they declare, had something to do with the rebellion in the North-West, is likely enough; to give England trouble in every quarter just now is their cue, and they happen to have a good deal of money in hand: for once it is not unreasonable to attach some importance to their boasts. But that they will take advantage of the absence of our gallant defenders to make a descent on Toronto or Kingston, though the thought has not unnaturally occurred to some, is in the last degree improbable. They could not fit out an expedition unobserved, and the present Secretary of State at Washington may be trusted honourably to uphold law without fear of anybody's vote. Yet it may be doubted whether as wealthy a city as Toronto, and one which offers such a prize to the spoiler ought, in times when Fenianism or filibustering of any kind is abroad, to be left so defenceless as it is on its lake front. It is easy, we believe, to strengthen the bows of an ordinary vessel so as to enable her to carry a gun on her deck: the Confederate privateer *Florida* was an instance of it; and a vessel with a single gun might lay Toronto under contribution. Would it not be more prudent, if treaties permit, to have a floating defence of some kind? The suggestion that a small home guard of old soldiers should be formed seems also to deserve consideration.

MR. FRASER, a member of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, introduced a resolution in favour of the secession of that Province from the Confederation. The Government interposed with an amendment pledging the Legislature to wait the result of the application now before the Ottawa Cabinet for "better terms;" the implication being that if the demand of the Province be refused, there will be no objection to Mr. Fraser's resolution passing. Nova Scotia was unfairly dragged into the Union without her consent and against her wishes; but this wrong she has since practically condoned, once by accepting for herself "better terms," and for a series of years has acted her part as a member of the Confederation. A resolution such as Mr. Fraser moved is ineffectual for any other purpose than to raise a discussion of the position of the Province in the Union. Secession means the breaking-up of Confederation, and this cannot be done by the voice of a Province; it could only be done by the united consent of the Dominion. Government organs, however, which treat the movement with contempt and propose to buy the members of the Legislature who took part in it for fifty cents apiece, are under a most serious delusion. Of the genuineness and prevalence of discontent there can be no doubt whatever.

IN spite of ominous appearances, we could not believe that there would be war between England and Russia. Necessity for such a war there can be none. The two empires, that of England in Southern and that of Russia in Central and Northern Asia, are not rivals; each has its own field; nor is there anything to prevent their subsisting in peace with an independent Afghanistan between them. This is not merely a reasonable view of the question; it is a view which must commend itself, and always has commended itself, to every sane mind on either side. Diplomacy, therefore, has nothing insurmountable to encounter in its efforts to maintain the peace. No doubt there is in Russia a military party which is eager to move forward and thinks it sees its opportunity, the hands of England being full and Ireland in a disturbed state; nor can we wonder at this, England having, under the wise guidance of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Lytton, herself invaded the neutral zone. If the pretence of seeking a "scientific frontier" is valid on the one side, it cannot be disallowed on the other. On the part of Russia, we must remember, resentment mingles with ambition. But for the Czar personally or his political councillors to set the world on fire would be sheer madness. They must know that havoc would in the end give a fresh impetus to revolution. It is true that finance does not so much cripple a half-civilized and uncommercial power. Russia, recking little of her credit, would cease to pay her foreign bondholders, raise men by conscription, bread for them by requisition, and