

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH CANADA?

A FORMIDABLE insurrection in Lower Canada presents to this country the afflictive prospect of another war with its Colonies. The principal facts of the insurrection, and of the deplorable bloodshed which has already taken place, and the important debate on the subject in the House of Commons, on Friday, December 22, will be found reported at considerable length in the newspapers. We request the calm and thoughtful attention of our readers to the facts we shall state, and the considerations we shall present to them, on this deeply important and difficult subject.

The mention of a rebellion in any part of her Majesty's dominions, suggests immediately to loyal Englishmen the idea that it must be put down by force. Such is evidently the intention of her Majesty's Ministers; and, as far as we can perceive, such is the impulse of both Whigs and Tories in Parliament,—of most of the newspapers representing those parties, and of a considerable and influential portion of the public. Not a doubt seems to be expressed in many quarters, that the "insulted majesty" of the country must be vindicated, and the troublesome and violent Canadians coerced by the sword.

If the American revolution had never occurred, our feelings and opinions might possibly have been the same. But with the terrible lesson presented by that shameful portion of our history strongly before us, we feel that the determination to *subdue* Canada ought not to be taken without the gravest deliberation.

We need not inform our readers that we supported the resolutions proposed by Ministers in the early part of the present year, refusing the demands of the Canadian House of Assembly, for such a change in their Constitution as would have clearly amounted to independence; and authorising the Government to take out of the Canadian Exchequer the sums requisite to pay the judicial and other officers of Government, from whom the House of Assembly had withheld their salaries for more than three years. Whether we were right or wrong in supporting this course, is of little consequence. If wrong, we should not hesitate for a moment to acknowledge it. We acted under the impression, that the demand of an *elective* council (or Upper House of Legislature) in Canada, was a *disguised* demand of *independence*: that it would have deprived her Majesty of all real power and support in that country; and we thought then, and think still, that it would be far better to release the Canadians entirely from our dominion, than to keep the *name* and the *expense* of sovereignty without the *substance*. But as independence was not then asked for, we thought the demand of an elective council fraudulent, and that it ought to be resisted. That resistance, however, and the seizing of the public revenues of the Canadians without the sanction of the House of Assembly (which sanction is required by the Canadian Constitution, given by Parliament in 1791), have led the people of Lower Canada to take up arms, and to fight openly for independence, as the only safeguard of their liberties. Thus the question is changed—the mask is dropped—the Canadians now demand openly what before they demanded only in disguise; and the question is put fairly and broadly before the British Parliament and people—*Shall Great Britain consent to the independence of Canada?* To this question we are not prepared to give a negative.

We doubt the *right* of England to coerce the Canadians. We doubt her *power* to do it. We more than doubt the *advantage* of holding Canada under military subjugation.

Let us briefly sketch the history of Canada. It was settled as a French colony in the year 1604, and continued for nearly a century and a half annexed to France. In 1759, during the Seven Years War, England gained possession of