

jubilation. The cheering was indeed a sorry spectacle, and teaches us once more that it is not the welfare of the country that always influences not a few of our public men. But readers of THE WEEK must not suppose that the Conservative politician, under similar circumstances, would be incapable of rejoicing in the destitution, and the soup-kitchens of his opponents.

DESPATCHES from Khartoum state that the dwellers on both banks of the Blue Nile have declared in favour of the False Prophet, and that communication with Sennaar has been stopped. Still more serious is the report that the Sheikh Senussi, whose influence is strong all through the Syrian desert and among the tribes about the Suez canal, has adhered to El Mahdi. If this be true it is a serious menace to Egypt.

CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

A DOUBLE feast of reason is spread by the nearly simultaneous opening of the Dominion and Ontario Sessions. At Ottawa there seems to have been rather more than the usual amount of full dress and general tinsel, though there is no reason to believe that the New Governor-General gave the word. Ever since the reign of Lord Lisgar, which was sensible and simple, the amount of tinsel has been on the increase. There has been, at the same time, a tendency to turn into a little Court that which under Lord Lisgar was the household of an English nobleman. Lord Dufferin changed, and, as his admirers think, improved the style. He it was that first talked about Vice-royalty, and opened the Vice-regal Era. No man of sense wants Sansculottic nakedness. Let us have ceremony and costume too, if you will, provided that they are symbolical and expressive of real feeling. Genuine stateliness exalts. Tinsel does the reverse; but there are many people to whom it is an unspeakable delight, and therefore, like high heels and tight lacing, it will defy censorious cavil. From Foot, and Dragoon Guards, Ottawa may advance to Beefeaters, to Equerries, to a Gold Stick. Happily Ottawa is not even the political, much less the moral, bond that connects us with the Mother Country. The real political bond, as all rational loyalists ought ever to bear in mind, is community of citizenship.

AMONG the paragraphs of the Speech from the Throne, by far the most important was that which announced the failure of the Pacific Railway Company, notwithstanding the guarantees to obtain, by the sale of its stock, money for the immediate prosecution of the work. The leader of the Opposition, swerving from the main question, on which he must feel that his own position is far from strong, fixes at once upon the Company, and accuses it of having misapplied its resources to objects beside its contract. But the Pacific Railway was to be a line from sea to sea, and it could not have fulfilled the purpose of its construction if one end of it had been left in the air. A connection with the Atlantic seaboard and winter ports was indispensable, and if the purchases and extensions against which Mr. Blake's censure is pointed, have been really ancillary to the main line, they cannot be condemned as a whole; nor is it likely that, having been made by men of excellent judgment in these matters, they will be found open to much exception in detail. It is on a much more vital point that public attention ought to be fixed. The enterprise, in the conception of which the company had no part, while for its execution they seem to have done all that could possibly be done, is disclosing its real character, and showing, by the financial difficulties which it encounters, that it is political, not commercial. It is the policy of a certain party in the Imperial country and here, by means of a vast connecting line of political and military railroads, to form the scattered and disjointed series of territories, extending from Cape Breton to Vancouver's Island, into an Anti-continental Empire antagonistic in interest and sentiment to the United States, and thus to introduce into this continent the Balance of Power, with its attendant possibility of war. There are eminent and estimable persons to whom this undertaking seems beneficent as well as patriotic. There are other persons to whom, though they question not its patriotism, it seems the reverse of beneficent, who hold that its aristocratic patrons in England, instead of introducing division and war into this continent had better try to exclude them from their own, and deprecate the expenditure, on an enormous scale, of the earnings of the people of Canada in a struggle against nature, which, if successful, will bring the people loss in the way of commercial isolation, as well as in that of military and frontier expenditure. But as to the fact that the object of the enterprise, and the line of railroad, by the construction of which the object is to be obtained, are mainly political and military, not commercial, there can be no diversity of opinion. A Commander-in-Chief truly spoke of the Pacific railway as "our great political and military road." It is the Western wing of the line of which the Inter-

colonial is the Eastern wing. Nobody would call the Intercolonial a commercial line. With its annexations, it will have cost nearly forty millions: it barely pays its way; good authorities have pronounced that on the average of years it will be worked at a loss, but when the line through Megantic is opened, as in spite of all delays it must soon be, such traffic as there is will infallibly take the shorter route. But the commercial loss is faced for the sake of a political and military advantage. Nobody expects to sell the stock of the Intercolonial, any more than we expect to sell the stock of a fortress or of a park of artillery. It is the same, in a measure, with the Western continuation. The Prairie Section is commercial inasmuch as it traverses a very rich country; but in its direction it is political, and this is the justification for the so-called Monopoly Clauses, without which the company would have been in danger of being ruined by the competition of strictly commercial lines. It is also political in the speed with which it has been hurried westward in advance of the necessities of immigration, which it has scattered, when, economically, concentration was to be preferred. But the Mountain and Lake Superior sections are wholly political and military. Once more, by the failure of the Company's means, which again is the inevitable consequence of the political necessity of speed, the country is summoned, virtually, to deliberate on the question whether these unremunerative sections shall be constructed, and the political struggle against nature and the dictates of commercial interest shall be forced on. If the decision is in the affirmative, the tax-payer, and especially the tax-payer of Ontario, who bears the chief burden, must be prepared to contribute again to the prosecution of the great national enterprise. It is only by taxation that money can be raised for political and military undertakings. That the decision of Parliament will be in the affirmative is pretty certain. If there are any in the House who see the interest of the people in this matter, there is no one who will venture to defend it openly on the main issue. Mr. Blake's speeches, though they are sure to be able, will be, as they always have been, ineffective, because he avoids the main issue, and speaks with the acumen, but with the narrowness, of a great Chancery advocate, in minor points. His indictment of the Company will be unsuccessful. If the thing was to be done at all, it is being done well; and that it ought not to have been done at all is a position which Mr. Blake's record will not permit him to maintain. After much wrangling, the Company or rather the Government, whose undertaking it is, will no doubt receive such further assistance as may be required.

THE meeting of the Local House will most likely bring on a discussion respecting the Ministry of Public Education. We have now been trying the union of education with politics for ten years. The experiment was reasonable; indeed, under the circumstances of the time, inevitable; and it was tried in the person of a Minister whose appointment was entirely creditable to the Government, though latterly the soundness of his judgment has been undermined by the approaches of an insidious disease. The result is not doubtful. There is not at least within the circles of the BYSTANDER'S acquaintance one well-informed and independent friend of education who does not desire to see the union dissolved, and education once more placed beyond the influence of the party war. Partly however, it may be, for the same reasons, the Government is evidently determined to keep the system as it is, and the Government has now a sure majority of ten. Nor is it without an argument which will seem conclusive, at all events to its partisans. There is much to be said, as a matter of principle, in favour of ministerial responsibility for the expenditure of all public money; though practically no great difficulty seems to have arisen in Ontario under the old system, or to arise now under similar systems in Quebec and New Brunswick. But supposing what the friends of education most desire to be unattainable, is there not a middle course? Might we not have a Council of Public Instruction with a Parliamentary Minister of Education? In England the Parliamentary Minister for India has a council of Indian experts outside Parliament with which he gets on very well. The Minister would of course retain the current administration and the control of the estimates; he would be chairman of the council; if it were deemed necessary he might have a veto; but on legislative questions of a professional kind he would be advised, and the correctness of his decision would be guaranteed, by the council. On such a question as that of the Text Books, a council is by far the best authority; indeed it is the only authority thoroughly exempt from any suspicion of influence and intrigue. Scarcely is a new Minister appointed when we find him in personal embarrassments on this subject. The self-respect of the profession moreover is increased by the presidency of its natural chief. A Parliamentary Minister, who can seldom be thoroughly versed in the special subject, and will usually hold his office for a short period, besides having half his time engrossed by party management and electioneering, must generally have