

uencies through the late electoral contests; the Reformers, who support the finding of the arbitrators, contending that that finding should be, and was intended to be, "final and conclusive," the Conservatives, on the other hand, maintaining that the decision could only be made valid by act of the Federal Parliament, some of them even going so far as to say that the declaration of the awarders was of no more value than so much waste paper. Mr. Mowat and his party, who stoutly maintained the validity of the award, declared through the election campaign that Sir John Macdonald was well aware that the finding was good and binding, but that dominated by the influence of the French *Bleus*, who were jealous of the growing importance of Ontario, he dared not admit his own convictions; while the Conservatives charged the Reformers with trampling underfoot the common sense of constitutional law, and with stirring up race enmities and inter-provincial strife, for party interests. However true or false may have been the allegations on either side, the decision of the arbitrators remained a dead letter, the territory in dispute being in the meantime claimed by both Ontario and Manitoba. It is not necessary to recount the recent disgraceful occurrences at Rat Portage, a place in the debatable land, where Ontario officials engaged in carrying out the instructions of their Government were seized by officials of the Manitoba Government, carried off, and locked in prison at Winnipeg. Call it by whatever name you will, this clashing of authority and violent seizure, was, so far as it went, an act of inter-provincial civil war, and a most disheartening example to that unity and mutual good-will which are the first essentials of a nation's well-being. It was therefore with a general sigh of relief that the public read the other day that the Governments of Ontario and Manitoba had decided to make mutual concessions, that the Federal Government, whose premier is declared to have dictated the course of Manitoba, had given its consent to the compact, and that the whole case was to be referred to the Imperial Privy Council for final settlement. Against the custom of submitting questions of a complex local nature like this to outside and disinterested arbitration we have nothing to say, and Canadian history furnishes examples where such reference was expedient and successful; but we do most emphatically enter our protest against thus running to England with every little provincial dispute about which the proper institutions in our own country must be competent to know much better than any tribunal in Great Britain. Such a custom degrades us by undermining self-reliance, and cultivating dependence upon the judgment of others, while it dwarfs and depreciates us in the eyes of the Mother Country.

CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

THE mist has cleared away from the battle-field of party in England, and we see the armies drawn out for the coming conflict. A moment of the most critical importance in the political history of the Mother Country is drawing near. It is evident that in the general election now impending the leader of the Radical party, Mr. Chamberlain, intends to secure victory by an alliance with the Irish Home Rulers. He has openly thrown himself into the arms of Mr. Parnell by consulting him in regard to an appointment; he has spoken of the Irish members in the most flattering terms; he has stepped in front of the Cabinet to advocate, in language verging upon violence, a change in the Irish Franchise which would bring a great accession of strength to the party of Disunion. He had evidently become very sanguine as well as extremely eager; but within the last few days he has met with a reverse. Hostility to the Union and to England is popular only with the very limited number of Englishmen who want revolution before all things. Mr. Chamberlain did not venture to submit the Irish question even to his Convention at Leeds. His policy was silence about the Union while he courted the favour of the Irish leaders and strengthened his alliance with them in other ways. But the success of this strategy depended on the reticence and moderation of Mr. Parnell. At the Dublin banquet Mr. Parnell cast reticence and moderation to the winds. Putting aside the agrarian question, or touching on it only to palliate the crimes of the League, and saying nothing about any redress of grievances to be obtained by constitutional means, he gave expression without restraint to his political feelings and intentions, avowed in the most defiant manner his enmity to England and showed beyond the possibility of doubt that his aim was the dismemberment of the United Kingdom. The pointed omission of the Queen's name from the list of toasts was obviously intended, not as a personal insult to Her Majesty, but as a declaration of rebellion. Mr. Parnell has exigencies of his own which do not exactly square with those of his would-be ally; he is under the necessity of keeping agitation at the boiling point, lest he should lose the supplies, the bulk of which comes from the most violent section of the party. He is also, like other Irish leaders, in constant danger of forfeit-

ing his leadership by moderation and of being supplanted by some more dynamic rival. After this explosion, however, the position of his friend in England becomes embarrassing, and Mr. Chamberlain must begin to fear that even in his faithful Birmingham some rebellious pulse of British patriotism may be felt.

Mr. Chamberlain denies the existence of any dissension in the Cabinet. We know to what such denials amount. They are deemed legitimate so long as the dissension is short of an actual split. Lord Beaconsfield showed by his practice that he deemed them legitimate even after the tender of a resignation. The misgivings intimated the other day by Lord Hartington on the question of the Irish Franchise present a marked contrast to the eager and excited declamations of Mr. Chamberlain. The secrets of the British Cabinet are faithfully kept, and any pretended reports of its deliberations may be confidently set down as fictions. But British statesmen do not live in seclusion; and society must be strangely mistaken with regard to the political sentiments of Lords Granville, Spencer, Derby, Hartington, Selborne, and Carlingford if the general policy of those statesmen is not widely different from that of Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke. That Mr. Gladstone will, by the exercise of his supreme authority, succeed in constraining the two sections to acquiesce in a common course of action is more than likely; that if left to themselves they would go different ways may be regarded as morally certain. Even their present cohesion is largely due to the profound unwisdom of the leader of the Opposition. Sir Robert Peel, were he now at the head of the Conservative party, would, we may be sure, do his best to gather within its pale all who were united by fear of Dismemberment, socialism and revolution. But Lord Salisbury, an incarnation in his public character of the narrowness and arrogance of caste, does his utmost by his reckless and insolent harangues to repel from his standard all but the members and followers of a Tory aristocracy which is now in the last stage of weakness. Those Whigs and moderate Liberals in a junction with whom lies his only hope of forming a force strong enough to cope with the forces of political or social revolution, are the special butts of his invective and satire. Nor do his ill-starred efforts fail of effect, for his literary and oratorical talents, which are of a very high order, and his remarkable faculty of giving his gibes a pointed form, make his indiscretions tell. Compared with him, his feeble and derided partner, who has not the power of making any impression at all, is a pillar of the falling State. Among the many dangerous features of the situation, not the least dangerous is the hopeless weakness of the Conservative Opposition.

The practical upshot is the dictatorship of Mr. Gladstone, in whose breast are now the issues of the political future. If the greatest Parliamentary genius and the widest range of Parliamentary experience combined with the loftiest morality and the most varied culture, were sufficient guarantees for absolute wisdom in the treatment of all political questions, there would be no room for the slightest misgiving. But there are strong and weak points in every statesman, as well as in every horse: Pitt was almost imbecile as a war minister, and Chatham's home policy was a blank. Mr. Gladstone is seventy-four; and though his mind is wonderfully, as his body is miraculously, young, for his years, he must be a prodigy, indeed, if he can as readily as in his earlier days admit the new lights of experience and discard at once a cherished policy which events have condemned. Moreover he has been long a king; and to the king's as to the old man's ear unlimited approbation is apt to be grateful and remonstrance unwelcome, as the crafty courtier knows too well. Even in his prime this illustrious man would have been better fitted to deal with almost any situation than with the present: in dealing with the present situation, a man full of coarse practical vigour like Palmerston would always have been his superior, though far his inferior in other respects. While full of refined sensibility, he is, perhaps, a little wanting in more commonplace emotions; at least the unutterable disgrace of allowing innocent men and women to be butchered by scores, or kept in daily fear of their lives by lawless terrorists, merely for obeying the laws of the land, did not seem to make on him the impression which it made on others till the butchery reached the circle of his own family. Of Ireland and its people, unfortunately, he has seen hardly anything, and it is from others, and chiefly from men imbued with fantastic notions of Tribal right, or extreme agrarian theorists, that he has derived the impressions upon which his policy is founded. Never, it is believed, in the series of his brilliant speeches has he dwelt on that which all whose opinion is most worth hearing pronounce to be the main root of the evil—the reckless and thriftless multiplication of the peasantry on a soil which cannot possibly maintain them. But when he has once adopted a policy, no matter on what ground, it is his nature thoroughly to identify himself with it, and, becoming doubly wedded to it by defending it in debate, he so dresses it up with his marvellous eloquence as to make it