

terms of the contract. It has degenerated into a mere vulgar party fight—a political contest in which each party hopes to win some advantage over the other.

This is to be regretted, for such a gigantic undertaking should be considered apart from all political passion and prejudice. It is questionable whether a greater scheme was ever laid before a people—it is certain that so stupendous a work was never before undertaken by four millions of people since the world began. The thing has no parallel in history. But the people of their own free will determined upon it, and have acquiesced in what governments have done toward it until now. Many of us contended that it would be madness and ruin to build the road across the Rocky Mountains into British Columbia—we said that the rash promises made to that colony ought to be broken at the cost of a money indemnity, and that we should content ourselves by opening up the fertile belt only. But our voices were not heard. The Liberal party in power had no policy in the matter, and blundered on in a bewildering fashion. Too late, it took a sensible stand against the British Columbia craze, and now scolds and argues in vain.

Then came the question, shall it be built by the Government or by a company? The general opinion was in favour of a company. Sir John Macdonald had a reasonable hope at one time that some great English house or houses would take the matter in hand, but in this he was in a great measure disappointed. But that is no ground for public dissatisfaction. Barings and Brasseys could have been held to the bargain no better than the present Syndicate? The members of the Syndicate are honourable men of great experience and wealth. But they are business men, and have undertaken this, not in patriotic mood, but as a business matter. They do not intend to waste their money for the honour and glory of building the Pacific Railway; if they had not seen some prospect of return for the use of their money, and for the inevitable risk, they would have kept out of it—at least it is fair to suppose that they would have done.

So far as the Syndicate is concerned, we must remember that the gentlemen forming it had, in a fashion, to stand in the shoes of the Government. The Government had an idea what it would cost the country to build the road, and the Syndicate had to come to figures approximating to those of the Government. In those figures no account was taken of duties, taxation and such like things. A great deal has been made of the fact that the Syndicate will not pay duty on steel rails and other stuff to be imported for building the road, but those who make complaint seem to forget that at the present time there is no duty on those things. The Syndicate simply asks that the Government shall secure it against the possibility of Parliament putting a duty on steel rails and a few other things. This is only reasonable, for suppose the Government should be changed—no improbable thing—it would have the power to put a thirty or even fifty per cent. duty on the stuff imported by the Syndicate and ruin every member of it. And the Government, if owning the road, would certainly protect itself against the construction of any competing line, and would reserve to itself the control of any branch lines connected with it. If Government were building the line it would have to let the work out in contracts, some great and some small; and if some of the contracts were to be paid for in lands instead of money it is reasonable to suppose that the contractors having to settle the land would stipulate for good lands in convenient blocks. All this the Syndicate has done—it has asked for the privileges Government would have reserved to itself, or given to smaller contractors if the Syndicate had not undertaken the work.

The talk about land monopolies in the Northwest is as yet very meaningless. Canada requires population; we have millions of acres of good land we could afford to give away. The Syndicate undertakes to settle 25,000,000 acres, and every farmer settled increases the wealth of the country. The operations of the Syndicate will make the Government lands more valuable and in that way will benefit the public.

As to the Government it may be said that a small contract to build a few miles of road could hardly be drawn up so that public criticism would have no fault to find and suggestions to make. Already we have had much talk of corruption and jobbery and all things bad, and the Mackenzie Government was not always wise and pure in all it did. Is it to be expected then, that this gigantic scheme involving so much land and money and time can be drawn up in such a shape as to defy criticism? It would be a miracle if it were satisfactory to all parties. Mr. Disraeli used to declare that he was on the side of the angels—although I think since he has been an Earl he has changed his company, but Sir John Macdonald has never claimed to have any help from beings higher in knowledge than mortals can be. Undoubtedly the terms of the contract are open to criticism, and probably some of them require modification, but there is no occasion for the groans of despair we hear from the Liberal Press.

The question for the people is this: Has a reasonably fair bargain been made? We are told that we are sold to the Syndicate—that a great monopoly is being created, and so on, but what it concerns us to know is whether the Government could do it cheaper, and whether a company monopoly is any worse than a Government monopoly? Those who know the working of party governments will say that such a monopoly in the hands of any government would ruin the country by debauching it completely. What jobberies there would be! what crimonations of ministers and demands for commissions of enquiry! Suppose the Liberal party now should succeed in upsetting the Government and the contract together—not a likely thing—how should we stand? Why—with a new government having to build the road itself, and a war of contractors. Some blunder or worse thing would happen in a year or two which would change public opinion, and the Conservatives would return to office. All this would mean conflicting policies—a game of battle-door and shuttle-cock—and the people having to pay for it all.

Two or three things are certain. If the contract be carried out we know what we have to pay. The contract has not been a matter of political jobbery, for the main portion of the members of the Syndicate are not members of the Conservative party—Mr. Blake was careful to point that out. But the Syndicate does not know how much money it will cost to carry out the contract. It is not to base judgment on guessing to say, that one hundred and ten millions of dollars in money and land will not build the projected Pacific Railway.

I conceived the unhappy idea of giving a lecture on "England and Ireland," in which I told the naked truth—to the effect that the native Irish have been treated by the English Government pretty much as the Red Indian has been treated by the Government of America. I told the story of Cromwell in Ireland and the Act of Settlement; the abuse heaped upon me on that account has only come a little short of moral assault and battery. Some newspapers have been savage in their criticism, and some anonymous correspondents have been savager. They have taken no heed of the sound advice I gave to Irishmen acent the present state of affairs, but because I ventured to condemn Cromwell's conduct in Ireland they have ventured to abuse me without stint. Well, here are some other opinions.

Thus Hallam:—

"This (the suppression of the rebellion) was achieved by Cromwell and his powerful army after several years, with such bloodshed and rigour that, in the opinion of Lord Clarendon, the sufferings of that nation, from the outset of the rebellion to its close, have never been surpassed but by those of the Jews in their destruction by Titus."

Thus Lecky:—

"The sieges of Drogheda and Wexford, however, and the massacres that accompanied them, deserve to rank in horror with the most atrocious exploits of Tilly, or Wallenstein, and they made the name of Cromwell eternally hated in Ireland. At Drogheda there had been no pretence of a massacre, and a large proportion of the garrison were English. According to Carte the officers of Cromwell's army promised quarter to such as would lay down their arms, but when they had done so, and the place was in their power, Cromwell gave orders that no quarter should be given.