

The British North American Provinces, the main object of the War.

There were many things which, in and out of Congress, were grievously misunderstood in the United States. The loyalty of the British North American Provinces was misunderstood when the political seers of Congress asserted, with that vehement asseveration and implicit faith which are often found to bear an inverse proportion to truth and information, that those Colonies were ripe for defection. The power of Great Britain, hampered as she was by the mortal struggle with her European foe, was greatly misunderstood, when a member in Congress expressed apparently the expectations of the majority in the utterance of the appalling prediction,—“We shall drive the British from our continent;” and the ability of the United States to cope with such an adversary was considerably overrated by wiser heads than another Congress orator possessed who delivered himself of this truly magnificent bombast,—“The Falls of Niagara could be resisted with as much success as the American people, when they should be called into action!” But amid all this deplorable misapprehension, there was one point which was not misunderstood,—THE VALUE OF THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN PROVINCES TO THE BRITISH CROWN. That point, both inside Congress and outside, was fully comprehended; and what was said in regard to it was no more than the truth. “These Provinces,” said Mr. Porter, the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations, “were not only immensely valuable in themselves, but almost indispensable to the existence of Great Britain, cut off as she now is, in a great measure, from the North of Europe. He had been credibly informed that the exports from Quebec, only, amounted during the last year (1810) to near six millions of dollars, and most of these, too, in articles of the first necessity,—in ship timber and in provisions for the support of her fleets and armies.” “The conquest of Canada,” wrote the Weekly Register, about the same time, “will be of the highest importance to us in distressing our enemy; in cutting off his supplies of provisions and naval stores for his West India Colonies and home demand. There is no place from whence she

can supply the mighty void that would be occasioned by the loss of this country, as well in his exports as imports. It would operate upon him with a double force: it would deprive him of a vast quantity of indispensable materials, as well as of food, and close an extensive market for his manufactures. Canada and Nova Scotia, if not fully conquered immediately, may be rendered useless to him in a few weeks. Without them, and particularly the latter, he cannot maintain those terrible fleets on our coast that we are threatened with, or bridge our harbours with frigates, admitting he may have no use for them to defend his own shores; for he will not have a dockyard, fitting the purposes of his navy, within 3,000 miles of us.” The great worth of these possessions was, at the time of which we are writing, and is now, well known to politicians in the United States. Whilst the war-spirit was raging, the democrats thought it distressing, intolerable that the British flag should be proudly waving, on their very borders, over so choice a tract of territory; the rescue from monarchical rule of such a land, by nature so favoured, in position so conveniently situated for annexation, was to be resolutely attempted,—it was like taking the Holy City out of the hands of the infidels, and was eminently worthy of all the exuberant patriotism, and the blind sacrifice, and the furious effort of a republican crusade. The British North American Provinces were coveted; coveted most ardently, for their own sake, and for the anticipated gratification of extirpating from the continent every vestige of kingly government. The ardour of the cupidity can scarcely excite surprise, where the object was so valuable, and the appropriation deemed so easy,—everything having been previously settled by the democrats to their perfect satisfaction,—in a manner the most easy and comfortable that can be imagined,—as to the political purpose which the British Colonies were to serve, when blessed with the privilege of incorporation with the United States. “I am willing,” was the magnanimous declaration of Mr. Grundy, of Tennessee, “to receive the Canadians as adopted brethren; it will have beneficial political effects; it will preserve the equili-