

THE WEEK:

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE political cyclone in England is over, though the air is still full of the angry wailings which arise from the disappointed spirits of the storm. To the astonishment of both the parties and of the world, Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury are seen concocting a Redistribution scheme together, while Bradlaugh howls. A way of retreat has been opened to the Lords, and for the present their doom is averted, though their institution has received a shock from which it is not likely to recover. But the practical victory remains with the Liberals, since the Franchise Bill is to pass. It was to the Franchise Bill that the Lords really objected, and had good reason to object. When the labourer learns to use his power, which it will probably take him some time to do, the electoral balance in the counties will be changed and the influence of the landlords will be greatly diminished. Redistribution, though not unimportant, is a secondary question, and the absence of that part of the measure, though it formed a very plausible ground for the resistance of the Peers, was not the moving cause of it. Lord Salisbury's policy evidently was to force a Dissolution, by which he would almost certainly have gained some seats in the present state of the Irish and Egyptian questions. In this he has been baffled by the prudence or timidity of his followers and by the influences brought to bear in favour of compromise. There is bitterness, as might be expected, between the Radical and the Liberal sections of Mr. Gladstone's party; but, it is very unlikely that the Radicals will proceed to extremities. It is most improbable, let secessionists say what they may, that Mr. Chamberlain will resign. He must be too well aware of the advantage of his position in the Cabinet and of the hold which, when Mr. Gladstone departs, it will give him on the future. That crisis seems to be at hand; for it appears that Mr. Gladstone is worn out at last. It is not unlikely that when his controlling hand and his immense personal ascendancy are withdrawn the incipient breach between the two sections of his party may widen into a complete separation.

SIR JOHN MACDONALD'S speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet was made the most of by the reporter for the Associated Press. In the English papers the report is very short, and has a less formidable look. A wish for some form of Imperial Federation is expressed, but the speaker did not conceal his preference for a federation in which the element of dependence would be subordinated to the conditions of an alliance. When the confederation which we now possess was under discussion Sir John said something of the same kind. The "auxiliary kingdoms" are found in the original report as well as the cablegram; they are reduced to two, Canada and Australia, and they appear more as allies than dependents. From this description, it is difficult to realize their precise form, but they could hardly be other than new kingdoms under an English protectorate. But though this seems to be the natural interpretation, the obvious

meaning of the words may probably be explained away, and we may be told that something quite different was intended, or that nothing at all was meant. The only fact of any positive significance in this utterance is that Sir John Macdonald, fresh from interviews with the British Government, revives the tentative style of remark, common when Canadian Confederation was under way, about actual or qualified independence. But that this revival, at this particular time, is a pregnant fact which presages a change in the country's destiny few would be bold enough to guarantee. The speech is an enigma, and until explained by events an enigma it must remain.

ANYONE who fondly fancied that in reading "Longfellow's Evangeline" he was perusing history must now, if he be honest, part with the illusion, however cherished it may have been. Parkman, by marshalling the hitherto hidden facts, has broken the spell which imparted a supposed historic character to a narrative which sins with more than the ordinary poetic license against the truth of history. The *New York Nation* recommends to its readers to prefer the fiction to the fact, "to read Longfellow and let Parkman be forgotten for the time"; and Mr. Philip H. Smith, writing in the same journal, asks the American people to reject Mr. Parkman's story as unfounded. People who prefer fiction to fact will probably take the advice; but by all who have any regard for the truth of history the advice will be rejected. Longfellow founded his poem on the Abbé Raynal's "Histoire Philosophique et Historique de deux Indes," a work full of errors on the events which led up to the deportation of the Acadians. A conquered people, the Acadians refused to take the oath of allegiance without conditions which it was impossible for the conquerors to make; they intrigued with the French authorities, and pretended to be afraid of the Indians, whom they were egging on to assume a menacing attitude, and, if opportunity offered, to join them in rising against the British Government. All, or nearly all, of this was known before Parkman wrote; but it was probably not known to Longfellow at the time "Evangeline" was written. Haliburton, in his "History of Nova Scotia," faithfully copied Raynal, appropriating, by the serviceable aid of Justamond's translation, whole passages without acknowledgment and with the alteration of only a few words. When he wrote, the "Archives of Nova Scotia," published a few years ago were probably not accessible; and as the representative of a constituency in which there were many Acadian voters to be conciliated, he was under a strong temptation to perpetuate the disguise which Raynal had thrown over the facts. Parkman, with the industry which he usually exerts in the collection of materials for his historic works, added to a free expenditure of money, obtained possession of five hundred pages of MS. relating the Acadian story, from the Archives of the Marine and Colonies at Paris. Mr. Philip H. Smith, not knowing that these documents existed, and alleging that they had been destroyed by the English, undertook to confound Parkman by an appeal to the "Archives of Nova Scotia." The attempt, it need scarcely be said, failed. Deportation, however harsh it may sound, and harsh it really must have been, was a necessity. It was the only means by which England, after exhausting every other expedient, could find safety in Nova Scotia, or the adjoining colonies of New England be assured of peace. The measure was in the interest of the progenitors of the present generation of New England, and was ardently desired by them. The concomitants of deportation could not by any rose-water process be made pleasant; but that they were not heightened by wanton acts of cruelty is a conviction which future readers of the history will owe to the industry and the impartiality of Francis Parkman, the American historian.

NEVER at any former period were the French Canadians so intent upon carrying out systematic plans of colonization as at present. They are pushing far northward in the direction of Hudson's Bay, and are half inclined to look westward for new fields to conquer. With them colonization is a national movement on a predetermined plan, in which the village and the church never fail to find a place. When left to move into the depths of the wilderness as individuals, they become hunters and fraternize