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THE SESSION OF CONGRESS.

From all accounts it appears certain that the approaching Session of Congress is to be one of the most stormy that has been witnessed for many years. The subject of the surplus revenue cannot be got over without reviving those discussions, turning on sectional interests, which have been marked with so much bitterness. In abstract justice, no doubt the proceeds of the public lands ought to be made available to the public expenses. But a new agitation of the tariff would be so enormous an evil, that rather than incur it, we would acquiesce in almost any disposition of the surplus revenue from this source.

An equitable apportionment of this, among the States, presents the most obvious course of proceeding in regard to this income; but if this is impracticable the cession of the lands to the States in which they are found, would be a less evil than an attempt to re-organize the tariff. In favour of such a disposition of the lands, there is at least this argument:—That as the new States have the least to gain, and the most to lose by a tariff if the old States insist on a protective system, as absolutely essential to their interests, here is a means of restoring the proper balance between the two sections of country. In other words, as the manufacturing States receive from the general government a bounty on the products of their industry, let them in return pay the expenses of that government, by foregoing their share in the common property which belongs to the whole. We do not say that this is an equitable view of the question at issue. Independent of its other defects, it sacrifices the interests of the other States, which receive no direct benefit from the imposts, and have no public lands within their borders. The most that can be said of it, is that it is a compromise between the West and the North, and that the Middle and Southern States, so far as they have an internal industry to protect participate in its advantages.

It is devoutly to be wished, that the subject of Slavery may not be discussed during the Session. The South have declared their determination to stand by this institution, to defend it at all hazards, and to deny the right of all other sections of the country to interfere with it in any form or shape. The discussion of slavery therefore, involves the grave question of a dissolution of the Union, already looked to, by many, as ultimately inevitable, and which when it occurs, will divide the country geographically, into Slavery and Free States.—On this subject it is too evident that the two great parties cannot meet on any common ground—the abolitionists hold it a matter of conscience to extirpate slavery, the slave holders make it an article of their political creed, that its perpetuity is wise, and just and necessary.—There is no reconciling such discordant elements, and the attempt to do so will only make evident their incompatibility. As respects disunion, it is commonly said, that the South has more to fear than the North, from such an event. It may be so, but in truth, we have all a stake in maintaining the integrity of our common country; and he that strikes the first blow at this beautiful fabric, incurs a responsibility of which no one can estimate the amount or importance.

CANADIAN AFFAIRS.

The Montreal papers to Saturday, fur-

nish some local news, and of this, an advertisement for raising a Rifle Corps of 800 men, which we have extracted, is not the least curious. We trust that the constitutionalists will be able to restore themselves to their place in the constitution, without any suspicious efforts. Undoubtedly one step has been taken by Lord Gosford, which the English ministry, if it has authorized it, must sooner or later, be obliged to contradict. It is wholly impossible that one branch of the Legislature can lawfully spend at their will, under the name of Session expenses, public money which may be directed to conspiracies against the State. Such a thing is an outrage to reason and to the undoubted rights of Englishmen. They will not submit to it. Besides this, much of the conduct of Lord Gosford has been considered as partial, and we hear, even partizan like, which his position cannot admit of, without injuring that dignity and character, as representative of his Majesty and of the justice he has formally promised us. He ought to temper by the greatest discretion. He has apparently yielded a great deal too much of information, and allowed the prerogative of the Crown to be infringed in regard to commissions.—He and his advisers do not appear to have a just estimation of the danger of concession, to men who stop at nothing, and who, because a local majority, think they will be permitted to dive into all kinds of projects, against all experience. We do not altogether despair that Lord Gosford will return to constitutional measures, and that it will be impossible without certain and fixed principles, to ward off the excesses in this Colony, of the characters, who have, unfortunately, got a preponderance in the House of Assembly.

Without depriving the majority of the Assembly of the rights of other subjects all its republican, revolutionary and extraordinary projects, ought at once to be resisted, as they should have been long ago. There is no danger in doing what is lawful.

The use of any but the usual constitutional exertions, at this time we are sure, will not be encouraged by those who have at heart both national freedom, and the peace, welfare and good government of the Province.

CAPTAIN BACK'S EXPEDITION.

(From the Greenock Intelligencer, December 12.)

The first sessional meeting of the London Geographical Society commenced auspiciously on Monday, the 23d ult. with a communication from Captain Back, giving an account of the route and appearances of the country through which the Arctic Land Expedition, under that officer's command, passed from Great Slave Lake to the Polar Sea. It may be remembered that in December 1831, about two months previous to the departure of the expedition, so generously promoted by His Majesty's government and the public, to afford relief to Captain Ross and his long absent companions a paper was communicated by Captain Back, which is inserted in the Transactions of the Society, descriptive of the usual canoe route as far as the Hudson's Bay establishment at Great Slave Lake, in lat. 61 deg. 10 min., 22 sec. N., and long. 113 deg. 45 min. W. and the intended course to be pursued afterwards for the further attainment of this interesting object. The paper now

under our consideration gives the result of Captain Back's observations, after leaving Fort Resolution, during his late journey; but though many of the gallant captain's details in the outset, are exceedingly interesting in a geographical point of view we are fearful that the description might tire the general reader; so we pass on northward till we find our intrepid countrymen at the selected spot of their winter quarters, viz., Fort Reliance lat. 62 deg. 45 min. 29 sec., North, long 109 deg. 9 min. 39 sec., West; a position preferred not only from being the eastern extremity of Great Slave Lake, but also from having been represented as abounding in animals and fish, and calculated accordingly to support a large party; which indeed, was verified for a limited period; but very early after the setting in of the frost both supplies failed—the former going very far away, and the latter merely frequenting that part during the time of spawning, most likely from the absence of the many trout and pike found in such numbers further west that where the water discoloured by the muddy deposits from the Slave River is less clear, and possibly more favourable for their feeding. On several occasions the spawn of the white fish was found in the intestine of the trout. The rocks enclosing this part are very like those already passed, but more acclivitous, with some trees of a stunted growth, and with little vegetation beyond moss; many indeed attain considerable altitude, rising successively in rounded forms, so smooth and steep, as scarcely to admit of a resting place for the winter's snow. The small, the deep intervening valleys, are generally swampy, and produce a long coarse grass, or are choked up with moss covered debris, or other large fragments of rocks. The sandy soil, where the house was erected, was about three miles broad, and hemmed in on the east and west by two rivers that respectively ran along the base of parallel ranges of gigantic hills, varying in height, but barren and difficult of access. Immediately to the north of the Fort, the country is mountainous, consisting, for the greater part, of a coarse granite, in which red felspar and large plates of mica are conspicuous, though sometimes veins of very white quartz traverse them. The ascent towards the part called "the Barren Lands" may be taken at fourteen hundred feet from the house, the Indians reported that at all seasons, summer and winter, a high and dense column of smoke was seen to issue, from a deep cavern, which had never been examined by any of their tribe, who conjectured it to be the abode of some "manto" or evil spirit, and therefore could not be induced to approach too near, lest such intrusion should rouse its anger, and misfortune should befall them. Aware how liable these people are to exaggerate any unusual appearance to which the aid of superstition has been added by their forefathers, little attention was given to their narrative; but when two men of the expedition, remarkable for acuteness of observation, verified it, so far as they could judge from a distance, Captain Back thought it necessary to go himself, when the smoke alluded to was discovered to be caused by a noble fall, which hurled its foaming waters into a chasm of 400 feet, and sent up the vapoury column which had deceived so many. It was March when the Captain visited it, and the falling spray had frozen against the high and perpendicular face of the rocks

from which overhanging masses of ice of a bright green and a pale blue colour with pendant icicles, gave it the character and semblance of a towering iceberg. After our party left these quarters they proceeded in their route northward, crossing lakes and rivers of most unpronounceable names until they arrived at Point Turnagain. The progress of the expedition was arrested solely by comparatively small drift ice, and a continuation of heavy gales, which packed it against the western shore; but to the east there was no obstacle of any description to prevent them sailing wherever it might have led which according to authorities on the subject, is to Al-Kor-Lee. From the existence of a strong westerly current, together with the appearance of drift-wood, and other favourable signs, Captain Back deems it highly probable that a passage exists to the south of Boothia altogether; and it is certain that there is one to the north of it. A single vessel properly fitted, with the means of constructing boats might easily winter at Repulse bay; and by crossing to Al-Kor-Lee in the spring, parties could be sent right and left to complete the survey of what remains to be done in Regent's inlet; while one or two vessels if it were thought desirable, could sail round Boothia by Barrow's Straits, and striking down the continent of America, make further observations about the magnetic pole, and unite the line of coast to Point Turnagain. In the event of a favourable season, the ships might even push on for Behring's Straits, nor would even this be attended with more than common hazard since by keeping them from the shore and trusting them to the ice, innumerable detentions, together with many dangers, would be avoided, with the important chance and almost certainty of getting into "lanes of water."

BOSTON, Dec. 24.

A Committee of investigation appointed to discover the origin of the fire, have reported, after diligent enquiry, that it was accidental, and probably occasioned by the bursting of a gas pipe, and the distribution of the gas until it came in contact with the coals in a stove or grate of the store in which it originated. The news of the conflagration excited very great sensation at Washington and there was no doubt that Congress would make an appropriation or loan to the city, sufficient for its immediate necessity. The United States Bank is to loan the Insurance Companies 2,000,000 dollars, receiving a transfer of mortgage to the same amount. The Secretary of the Treasury has assumed the responsibility of directing the United States Attorney to suspend proceedings on such Custom House Bonds as may be reported to him unpaid, in consequence of the derangement of mercantile business. It is estimated that the catastrophe has thrown out of present employment nearly 3000 clerks, porters, cartmen, &c., &c.—many of them with families to support, and no dependence but their daily earnings. 10,000 dollars worth of goods were discovered on Saturday night by one of the New York Aldermen, concealed in two houses.—The fire-proof iron chests have acquired a bad odor. There was not an instance in which books or papers were preserved by them without injury. The Journal of Commerce says it is astonishing to see in how many instances preparations are already making to rebuild on the site of the fire.