

FENIAN PRISONERS SENTENCED TO DEATH.

COL. Robert Bloss Lynch and Rev J McMahon, have been tried, found guilty, and sentenced to undergo the extreme penalty of the law on the 13th of next month. They have both denied over and over again that they had anything whatever to do with the Fenian organization. Lynch claimed to have been in Canada simply as a reporter for a newspaper and McMahon, a Roman Catholic priest, said that the Fenians had compelled him to accompany them. Now, the Fenians, in all parts of the United States, as soon as they heard of the condemnation of these men, held meetings violently denunciatory of the Canadian authorities, and threatening all sorts of retaliatory measures, in case their sentences were carried out. If the men are not Fenians, why need the brotherhood take up their cause with so much clamour? If on the other hand, they were, as was proven on their trials, Fenians, aiding and abetting in the invasion of Canada, then are their sentences most just, and they are guilty without a single excuse to palliate their criminal conduct. As to the threats of the centres and circles, they are no more formidable now than they were in June last, nor is it likely that our Government will be weak enough to give a moment's thought as to what vengeance the worthy brotherhood may vow. Indeed, it is almost certain, that were the Government disposed to deal leniently with them from any motives whatsoever whether of mercy or policy, they will now not interfere, but simply let the law take its course and the death penalty be inflicted. All that the windy threatenings of the Fenians can possibly accomplish is to fasten more securely the fatal noose round the necks of their comrades and put it completely out of the power of the Government to exercise the prerogative of clemency in any way. They dare not yield to threats and they could hardly show clemency without at least coming under the strong imputation of having so yielded.

PROSPECTS OF CONFEDERATION.

AS the time draws near when our Canadian Delegates start for England to take part in the final Conference on Confederation, more interest is being taken in the question. Several circumstances have tended to give importance to the approaching meeting. First of all, a new Government has been installed in England; a new Colonial Minister has arisen at the Colonial Office, and whether his views are entirely in accord with Mr Cardwell, his predecessor, remains to be seen. Then there is the delay which has taken place in the final negotiations—the Maritime Province Delegates waiting for months the departure of our Ministers. This delay is said to have improved the good temper of Messrs. Tilley, Tupper, and their associates, and were it not that the Canadian Government can plead the danger there lately existed of a Fenian attack upon the Province their dilatory conduct would be exceedingly reprehensible. And last, but not least, there is the opposition of Mr. Joseph Howe and the other Anti-Union Delegates from Nova Scotia, whose active opposition—which, it is said, will be kept up even during the Conference meetings—add greatly to the interest with which the final result is looked forward to.

There is no denying the fact that the efforts of Mr. Howe in opposition to Confederation, have been partially successful. Mr. Howe is undeniably an able man, and the pamphlet which he published is an exceedingly plausible production. Together with his oral communications, it has gained to the side of disunion, some leading Journalists who ought not to have been led away by the very shallow sophistry in which Mr. Howe's brochure abounds. We have not the slightest fears, however, that the Statesmen of England, either Conservative, Whig or Radical, will turn their backs upon a measure fraught with such beneficial consequences to British America, and so earnestly desired by the great majority of its people. They may listen attentively to the arguments advanced by Mr. Howe—they may desire to conciliate him and his friends—but a very cursory glance at the question must show them that Union is conceived both in the interests of the Colonies and of the Mother Country, and that the bitter diatribes indulged in against it are but the futile surgings of disappointed ambition.

Very amusing is it to observe, that Mr. Howe bases his opposition to Confederation largely upon dislike of Canada and the Canadians. By his account, we are a dreadful set of people! Our country is indefensible, and over head and ears in debt; our people are Annexation seekers, opponents of free trade, and

dear knows what all else. We have said this attack on Canada is amusing, but it is only amusing as a harmless display of misguided ignorance and impudence. We have too much respect for our people to give respectability to Mr. Howe's rhodomontade by answering it at length—the best answer being the words of Mr. Joseph Howe himself, who has repeatedly declared it to be “the dream of his youth” to bring about just such a Union with Canada as he now so consistently opposes. It is painful to see a man whose past record has been so creditable, staining his old age by opposing a measure to the advocacy of which his youth and earlier manhood were devoted; but it is doubly so to find that he has to descend to imaginary grievances, seasoned with abuse, as arguments to justify his inconsistency. We in Canada have not approached Confederation in a jealous, sectional spirit. We have entered upon our crusade of deprecation of the Sister Provinces; we have not enquired who would gain most or gain least by the measure. But surely it is the climax of impudence and injustice for Mr. Howe to speak of Canada as wishing to fatten herself on the spoils of its country. Such a charge is exceedingly rich when the relative wealth of the two countries is considered—when it is a fact that the entries of imports and exports at the port of a single Canadian city are greatly larger than for all Nova Scotia put together. Canada is undeniably a wealthier country than the other parties to Confederation, and although we may owe somewhat more, we have better public works to show for it, and are better able to pay it. Besides this, ample satisfaction has been given in the Quebec resolutions for any difference in indebtedness—a fact which ought of itself to have long ago silenced the impertinences of Mr. Howe and others regarding the point in question.

Whatever may be the feeling in certain quarters in Great Britain, no British Minister could think of accepting Mr. Howe's dictum before the advice of the gentlemen who represent the Nova Scotian people. The Parliaments of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, have deliberately declared for Union. Newfoundland is also favourable, and even Prince Edward Island has signified its willingness to give in its adhesion, provided the Federal Government undertakes to reform its land system. The constitutional course for Lord Cairnmarvon to take, is to recommend the House of Commons to carry out the wishes of the delegates about to meet in London, and there cannot be any doubt but that he will do it. The only real difficulty which could obstruct the path of Confederation, would be differences between the delegates themselves. There may be some modifications required in the Quebec resolutions, but we feel convinced they will only refer to minor points. So far as the people of Canada are concerned, they are against making any further concessions. The feeling is strong that Canada has already yielded her full share to secure a measure which is quite a much in the interests of the other Provinces as herself, and that no further sacrifices should be made. We do not believe, however, that any very material changes will be demanded of any of the Colonies, but that, on the contrary, the deliberations of the London Conference will be of the most agreeable and satisfactory character.

The present prospects of Confederation are, then, by no means unsatisfactory. There is every reason to believe that Mr. Howe's success is of a very partial and temporary character, caused more by the unavoidable delay which has arisen from the non-arrival of the Canadian delegates than the weight attached to the Anti-union arguments. The Conference of delegates will certainly decide on the amended Constitution before Christmas, and the House of Commons will meet by February, when the Bill for the Union of British North America will be pushed rapidly through. By April or May at furthest, the Colonial Secretary will be in a position to notify the different Colonies officially; then will follow elections for the local and general Legislatures, and our grand Confederation will be ushered in amid joy and rejoicing.

CHEAP FUEL.

ONE of the most important questions that can arise for a country like Canada, where winter reigns supreme for from four to six months out of the twelve, is that of affording a cheap means of providing the heat actually necessary to existence. We have hardly any data on which to base a calculation of the yearly cost to the country of the fuel consumed, but we may approximate to its cost in some measure. Making due

allowance, on the one hand, for those fortunate localities where cordwood can be had for the cutting and hauling, and where the cost may be set as low as \$2 per cord, and also taking into consideration, on the other hand, the large quantities of wood (or coal at an equivalent valuation) consumed in cities at six, seven, and even eight dollars per cord, we think the average cost of fuel may be taken at \$4.50, which, in all probability, is below rather than above the mark. Now, let us say that there are four hundred thousand families in Canada, burning at the rate of twelve cords per annum, (and this, too, is a low estimate, when allowance has been made for the fuel used for steam purposes, and in warming churches, stores, warehouses, &c., &c.) and the consumption of fuel will represent a total cost of \$21,600,000, or not far from double the entire expenses of carrying on the Government of the country. It will, therefore, at once be seen how great is the economic importance of endeavouring to provide fuel at the lowest possible cost, as well as of using that fuel in the most profitable way. Every invention which will tend to secure economy, either in cost or consumption, will increase by so much the wealth of the country, in setting free for other productive purposes, capital and labour now employed in the cutting and carrying to market of wood, and in the importation of coal.

One description of fuel, hitherto unused, though not exactly unknown in Canada, is peat. Several experiments have been made in past years, and unsuccessful attempts to introduce it into general use, but at last it seems a mode of preparing it for market well and cheaply has been discovered, and if only a sufficient quantity can be supplied to meet the demand, one mode of economizing fuel will have been obtained.

We lately referred to the trial by the Grand Trunk Railway, with very satisfactory results, of some of Mr. Hodges' prepared peat, and we now purpose giving a condensed description of the manner in which it is manufactured.

Mr. Hodges' works are situated at Bulstrode, on the Three Rivers and Athabaska branch of the Grand Trunk Railway, where he owns upwards of 20,000 acres, including a large quantity of bog suitable for fuel purposes. The peat is cut by machinery placed on a large scow, and worked by a steam engine. This turns two shafts, having ends resembling great railway wheels, with a cutting blade projecting beyond the rim for a third or fourth of the circumference, and the inner part forming a screw like that of an auger. These revolving screws hauled forward against the edge of the peat by a windlass on the scow, cut their way two inches at a time. The peat thus dug is carried upward on an endless band fitted with buckets into a hopper, and thence along a trough at right angles to the long diameter of the scow, being cut and stirred into pulp on the way by a series of arms or knives on a revolving shaft, and cast out upon a peat bed. The peat thus cut has been found to contain about eighty-five per cent. of water, and evaporation has been found to be the cheapest way of getting rid of this large proportion of water. Accordingly a peat bed has been prepared in the following manner on a large scale. First the small dead trees which cover the surface had to be cleared off the place to be worked. Next, the surface of moss and matted roots and dwarf shrub had to be skinned off the surface of the cutting to be made. With this latter stuff and the top of the peat, an embankment a little over two feet high was made on one side of the proposed cutting. Then the top network of moss, roots, &c., was torn up for a width of about thirty feet behind the embankment, and at every nine feet a little drain was cut at right angles to the proposed canal six to nine inches at top by nothing at the bottom, the depth of the blade of the spade. Over these drains the network of leaves, &c., was laid in two thicknesses, reversed; a couple of deals at the back, held up by stakes, supported the peat on the side not embanked, and into this trough or bed the pulped peat was poured from the machine. Nothing could be more perfect than this little system of drainage for letting a goodly share of the surplus water from beneath back into the cut, while the sun evaporated the water from the surface. Thus, for about a mile, is laid out a bed of peat 35 feet wide by two feet deep, as the result of a few weeks' active operations.

The shrinkage, of course, is very great, and by drainage and evaporation, the two feet of pulp sink to 2½ or three inches, or less than one-eighth of its original bulk. After evaporation has gone on for some time a crust forms on the top of the bed, and when this is sufficiently strong to bear the weight of a man.