

It is not our purpose to-day to discuss the wisdom, policy, or justice of the Auckland petitioners, who ask for the destruction of all the Provinces of the Colony, and the handing over of the Crown lands in Otago and Canterbury to the Central Government. But the proposition has been made, and Mr VOGEL can, if he pleases, give it effect. Will he do so? This is a very interesting, and probably a very important question. To Otago and Canterbury, at all events, there can be no doubt of its importance.

Mr VOGEL is now pledged to introduce a Bill next Session to put an end to Provinces in the North Island, to fix the Seat of Government at Wellington, and to secure by law the Crown Lands of Otago and Canterbury to these two Provinces. He will keep his pledge, no doubt. The main principle of the Bill will be death to Provincialism; the other two questions cannot be considered in any other light than that of somewhat important details. It is certain an amendment will be moved to the effect that the Provinces of both islands shall cease to exist, and that all Crown lands shall be disposed of for the general purposes of the Colony. Nor can there be a doubt as to the reception these propositions will meet with. All the members from the North Island, with hardly an exception, will vote for it; and the same may be said of the representatives of Westland, Nelson, Marlborough and Southland, with very few exceptions. The probability, then, is that it will be carried by a large majority. Is it likely that the Premier will resign office rather than accept such a decision by the House of Representatives?

If the Colony wishes to put an end to Provinces in both islands, there is no reason why Mr VOGEL, or any other politician should sacrifice himself by opposing the people, especially when the people endorse the principle of his Bill, and only differ from him on a few matters of detail. No one would, under the circumstances, expect the Premier to do otherwise than practically bow to the decision of the House of Representatives.

But granting, for the sake of argument, that all the Premier's propositions as embodied in his resolutions, are enacted into law; nevertheless Otago and Canterbury cannot hope to retain their Crown lands long. In a short time the entire interest of our Colonial debt must be paid out of ordinary revenue, and not as now, partly out of borrowed money. Will it be possible to do this without having recourse to additional taxation? It is not necessary we should answer this question. The public mind has been long since made up upon it. The tide of prosperity cannot be expected to flow for ever. We must be prepared to encounter depression sooner or later, and to find the returns from all the present sources of taxation insufficient to meet the liabilities of government. The Minister of the day will have to ask Parliament for additional means, which, if the compact of 1856 is to be maintained, can only be obtained by the imposition of new taxes, or by new loans. Is it likely that Parliament will feel itself justified in imposing new taxes or increasing the debt of the Colony, whilst two of the Provinces are in the exclusive enjoyment of a large estate, made up entirely of Crown lands. If so, then, all that can be said is that human nature has been revolutionised in New Zealand.

It appears to us that, as Colonial Treasurer, the Premier has played his cards admirably. We do not say wisely for the real interests of the colony. This is a question which we shall not now discuss; our attention is directed at present solely to the consideration of the inevitable consequences of the resolutions lately accepted by the House of Representatives; unless, indeed, the result of the general election, which it is said is near at hand, should be unfavourable to the policy they proclaim. But, as a Financier, foreseeing great pecuniary difficulties, the Premier has certainly shuffled the pack fortunately. He has so managed matters that, when he wants the money, he is certain of a majority to enable him to repeal, if necessary, his own law in reference to Crown Lands; and, in the interests of the colony, to put the Central Government in possession of these lands. Nothing appears clearer to us than that Otago and Canterbury may bid farewell to the Crown lands, if these resolutions be enacted into law. The security proposed to be given to these two provinces as to these lands is, in reality, not worth the paper on which it is written. Very many people say, so much the better for the colony at large, but most men in Otago and Canterbury think differently.

At present, we pronounce no opinion on this point;

but, we may say, the questions are very important. Great interests are at stake—political integrity and honesty, as well as good faith, are involved; and it is of the highest importance that there should be no mistake as to public opinion. A decision in accordance with this opinion may reasonably be expected to be permanent, whereas nothing is more perilous or injurious than a mistake as to the public voice, and nothing less lasting. It does appear, then, that an elector's qualification law and a re-adjustment of the representation ought to precede an appeal to the people on the Resolutions. From various quarters complaints are heard that the people are not fairly represented—that some are not represented at all—and that others are over-represented—and that many most intelligent men, admirably qualified to give an opinion on these important questions have no voice in the selection of representatives, owing to the defective state of the law. This should not be; and, if these complaints be well founded, as we think they are, certainly they should be remedied before the next general election.

It may be for the interests of the colony to put an end to provinces, and devote Crown lands to general colonial purposes, as must inevitably be the case should the Resolutions become law; but it is also necessary for the general good that legislation should be the embodiment of the real voice of the people.

THE FACTORY REGULATIONS.

THE motion brought forward in the House of Representatives by Mr. BRADSHAW, the hon. member for Wakai, for the purpose of inducing the Government—while giving every encouragement to the establishment of industries—to make adequate provision for the health of the young of both sexes. is one which must carry with it the sympathies and good wishes of all classes of the community. It may be remembered that towards the close of last session a bill was introduced by the hon. member, which ultimately became law in which the hours of female labor in workshops and factories throughout the colony were regulated; and while the measure was under discussion a promise had been made that a clause would have been added, having for its object the prevention of the overworking of boys under similar circumstances. The late stage of the Session, however, at which the measure reached the higher branch of the Legislature, and the very cogent reason that, were any alterations sought to be effected, the passage of the bill might have been endangered, prevented any effort being made to have the promised clause inserted. In bringing the matter under the attention of the House on the 30th ult., Mr. BRADSHAW gave a brief history of the several Acts passed in the mother-country with a similar view; and although it must be confessed that the monstrous abuses which made the passing of stringent regulations an absolute necessity in Great Britain, never had existence in these colonies, yet our march of progress has been such as to demand legislation in that direction. The rapidly-increasing growth of industries and factories which call into requisition the services of children of tender years, makes it a matter of obligation that the State should not only regulate the hours and manner of employment, but also to see that such laws are carried into effect. The fact which was elicited before the Children's Employment Commission of 1862, that it was "unhappily apparent to a painful degree that against no person do the children of both sexes so much require protection as against their parents," is, unfortunately, not confined to Great Britain; and we have fathers and mothers in our midst whose sense of duty to their offspring is so blunted, as to sacrifice the health and strength of their unfortunate children for a paltry pecuniary consideration. In the *Annals of British Legislation*, Mr. LONGE, in speaking of the condition of things in the potteries and brickfields, said:—"In one yard at Moxley I found a girl of twenty-four making 2000 bricks a-day, and having two girls, one fifteen and the other sixteen years of age, to carry clay and lay her bricks. These girls had to carry ten tons of clay, which she used in the day, up the slippery sides of the pit, from a depth of about ten yards, and over a distance of about seventy yards." Of course matters have not reached such a height in this colony, but it is a fact that we have boys of tender years employed at and for such hours as are calculated to undermine the health and constitution, and sow the germs of disease, leading to physical suffering and decay. The Hon. the Minister of Public Works, during the course of the debate, spoke most highly of the measure, awarding the very