

A novel dramatic enterprise has lately been attracting Parisian theatre-goers. It is the presentation of pieces in which the dialogue consists entirely of signs. The idea originated with M. Victor L'Épée—a name glorious in the annals of philanthropy. Indeed, this gentleman is of the family of the illustrious Abbé, whose devotion to the cause of the deaf-mute has made his memory as immortal as it is blessed. Those who have watched the play of feature and eloquence of gesture with which the speechless can make their feelings, thoughts and wishes known to each other need not be told how susceptible the intelligent deaf-mute may be of training for the stage. The opening performance of this strange theatre was given with a play expressly prepared for the actors by one of themselves, a young man named Varenne, who joins to high literary talent an acknowledged genius for painting. "L'Amour et la Mort," as the piece is called, was well adapted to bring out in effective pantomime the strength of passion and delicate shades of sentiment which other actors express by words as well as movement. The success of the undertaking will, probably, cause the example to be followed in other countries.

### THE DUTY OF THE HOUR.

Some of our readers can, no doubt, recall the state of things that preceded the conclusion, through Lord Elgin's efforts, of the Reciprocity Treaty. They may also be able to recollect that, although that measure gave general satisfaction to the Canada of that time (Ontario and Quebec), its provisions were by no means welcome to the Maritime Provinces. Indeed, Lord Elgin, who had already been a martyr to his convictions in Western Canada, was accused by the coast population of sacrificing the interests of the fishermen to his desire to stand well with the Americans. The Reciprocity dispensation was not all halcyon, therefore, and, if only the laws had been strictly enforced on the alien fishing-boats in the years following its cessation, there was a considerable minority that would have welcomed the refusal of the Washington authorities to renew it. On the other hand, the benefits that it brought to the mass of our people were great and obvious. The aggregate of trade between British North America and the United States increased during the thirteen years of the treaty's operation from an annual average of \$14,230,763 (in the eight years previous) to \$50,339,770 in the final year. It must, of course, be remembered that the closing years of the Reciprocity régime were years of exceptional prosperity for the Canadian producer owing to the disastrous struggle in which our neighbours were involved. The sore straits to which the northern section of the Union had been reduced gave the Canadian farmer his grand opportunity. The raising of food stuffs of all kinds had been seriously interrupted across the border, and the dealers in those commodities naturally sought the most accessible foreign market, so that the united provinces were overrun by American purchasers of cattle, sheep, poultry, eggs, and other staples, while horses were bought in large numbers for army use, and Canadian cereals were in constant demand. Such a condition of things, immediately following the withdrawal of the United States from the Reciprocity agreement caused a veritable convulsion on this side of the line. To the mass of our people it came like a stroke of doom, though an elect few had made such good use of the war boom that they could defy adverse fortune. Lord Elgin, whose statesmanship, tact and strength of will had taken Washington by storm in 1854 had already been sleeping for years on the heights of Dhurmsala, and there was none to plead like him with the victorious and angry North. Perhaps even he would have failed to induce oblivion of many foolish things that had been said in the stormy interval. For, like Jeshurun, Canada had kicked lustily in the consciousness of her cosy fatness and had promised herself a leading share in the dominance of the subdivided continent. It was, nevertheless, deemed advisable to send delegates to sue with the United States Government for a renewal of the expired treaty. The mission, as clear-seeing men foresaw, proved fruitless, as

did all subsequent appeals of like purport, under whatever auspices they were made.

What we would emphasize just now, however, is that, although the refusal of our neighbours to revive the treaty bore hard on thousands of our people and was a severe strain on the endurance of the provinces as a whole, and although the policy of exclusion was accompanied by more than menaces from a nation the ruling element of which was flushed with recent conquest and not loth to turn to account the unexhausted remnant of its military force, Canada did not prove recreant to her past, but, like a young giant, felt her thews and sinews, and, conscious of a reserve of strength theretofore unutilized, rose to her feet and stood for all the world to see, a marvel of sturdy but undeveloped nationhood. In fact, the ending of the Reciprocity Treaty was a blessing in disguise. It aroused Canada from her sleep of dependent security, a sluggish inglorious sleep, death-like save for the mutterings of troubled dreams, the nightmare suggestions of old-world feuds. Such an awakening must have come some time, if Canada were not destined (as happily she was not) to be captured (as wily Secretary Seward had planned long before) in her unconsciousness. And when it came, it was just as well that it should be thorough, unmistakable, not to be ignored or evaded by any feint of continued somnolence. The reality to which Canada was awakened in 1866 was something to which the generation of to-day has become so accustomed that it requires some exercise of the historic imagination to gain the assurance that it could ever have been hidden from the view of statesmen or people. Canadians who have grown to maturity during the last quarter century would, indeed, find it very difficult to raise from the dead the Canada of the Union régime. The change that has taken place is not only sweeping but full of curious details, due to the shiftings, intrusions, gaps and upheavals that attend every revolution, whether violent or legislative. Doubtless there were or are merchants who forty years ago carried on in this city a business which neither they nor their successors will ever, as to volume, see repeated. Those were the days of small things for Canada as a whole, but for them they were the heyday of prosperity. We might go farther back and bethink us of the style in which the magnates of the fur-trade lived at the dawn of this century. With all our progress no such banqueting goes on to-day as tourists have recorded of the princely homes of those old fur-kings. When the Prince of Wales was fêted at Isle Dorval in 1860, that dispensation, which ruled an expanse as large nearly as Rome's empire, was still a power in the land, though its days were numbered. Sir George Simpson was "the last of the barons." One of our most attractive writers has given a sort of fictitious prestige to the old Downing Street régime, and there were obstinate sticklers for provincial isolation. The federal union (though wrought by leaders of both great parties) was not secured without a struggle. There were those who clung to the intercolonial tariff, but even those who grew rich on the system would hardly venture to ask for its restoration. British North America was destined to grow into a great Dominion, but in its development, as in every development, the growing pains affected some parts of the body politic more than others. The cessation of Reciprocity was a critical stage in our history, but it was surmounted with results advantageous to Canada as a whole. Banks Bill, Fenian Raid, Alaska Purchase, predictions of disaster, appeals to local jealousies, attempts to spread disloyalty, to embitter our relations with the Mother Country, to attach disgrace to the position of colonists, to deepen our fears of Imperial complications, all proved unavailing. In fact, what Secretary Seward had declared years before was fulfilled to the letter—Canada was not to be forced by threats to forswear her allegiance. If in the first shock of disappointment those who felt most keenly the removal of a prop on which they had relied were disposed to base surrender, the moment of weakness soon passed and men of every political opinion united to fight the battle of Canadian independence. Solidarity was a new

idea to provinces that had lived in isolation, almost in hostility, and, as the cessation of Reciprocity did not affect them all alike, so all were not equally ready for the remedy of confederation. But it was destined to come to pass, and some of the sturdiest champions of new Canada came from among the would-be dissentients. One by one the barriers to Canadian union disappeared, and, though the recovery of the equilibrium which the annulment of the treaty had disturbed was slow and painful in some localities, new outlets for trade were obtained, a stimulus was given to native manufactures, and a fresh impulse to the development of resources, the extent and value of which we are even now only beginning to realize.

The crisis which we have now reached is not more serious than that which we had to meet twenty-five years ago, and we are certainly not worse prepared for it than we were then. Moreover, we needed the fresh lesson, perhaps. It is as well that we should know our true position and take the stand once for all that it necessitates. Years ago Lord Elgin reproached a section of the Canadian people for the pettishness with which, on all occasions of real or imagined grievance, whether arising out of administration or the nature of things, they began to mutter annexation, instead of setting themselves manfully to better their condition by their own efforts. Much of such talk, he said, was mere bravado; much of it simple thoughtlessness. In any case it is a recreancy of which a self-respecting community should be ashamed. The time has come when the folly of looking beyond ourselves for help out of our difficulties must be recognized. Looking around us to-day at the nations of the world, how many of them are more favoured than this Dominion of ours in the gifts of nature, in the boon of liberty, in popular institutions, in opportunities of every kind for self-development and national progress! Because our neighbours refuse to aid us in our task of self-advancement, must we, therefore, despair of the future? On the contrary, now is the time to strain every nerve in order to show that we can live and flourish without their assistance. The world is open to us. No country is more blessed with natural wealth than ours, and of our surplus products there are many communities that require a share. But we must seek them out and impress them with the advantage of dealing with us. What we have done in England with our cheese is an illustration of what can be accomplished in many other directions as well. The West Indies are eager to trade with us, but we must not wait to be coaxed to sell to them. Our cereals, our vegetables, our cheese, butter, poultry, eggs, our furniture, our hardware, our larger live stock, our dressed meats, our fisheries, our forests, our wood-working industries, our agricultural implements, and a long enumeration of other fabrics and articles have never yet been placed upon outside markets, east and west and south, with the tireless energy and persuasive skill that have, in so many cases, won success, even in apparently hopeless quarters, for our neighbours. There is not a month which does not bring to light—most often through some wondering stranger—undeveloped raw material that could be turned to various profitable account if only the requisite enterprise, ingenuity and perseverance were applied to it. This is true of every kingdom of nature throughout the vast imperial domain which is our heritage on this continent. How frequently have strangers with capital, in quest of new fields for its investment, marched conquering into Canada and made fortunes for themselves in districts where we had never noticed anything out of the common! What Canada really wants is to be aroused to a sense of doing her duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call her. Fortunes are lying at our doors all around us, awaiting realization. Canada possesses millions upon millions' worth of the world's wealth in her generous soil, her still unexhausted forests, her priceless mines, her unparalleled life-abounding waters. To let these sources of wealth lie undeveloped is to defraud mankind. A people with such an inheritance ought to be rich and great and a blessing to other nations, and so will Canada be if she is only true to herself.