

in the petition presented by the Delegates to the House of Commons—that “of fifty-seven members returned to both Houses (Ottawa and Halifax) all but four are humble petitioners to your honourable House for the repeal of a law so universally condemned.” And so the case which the Delegates went to plead was undeniably a strong one. But it so happened that, owing to a recent change of Government, both parties in England were not only committed to the principle of Canadian Confederation, but had also been concerned in carrying it into effect. That the Delegates, under these circumstances, failed in their mission, and that Parliament refused to reopen the whole question, surprised no one. The surprise is that the Anti-confederate leaders had no policy ready to meet this contingency. The delegation seems to have been the Alpha and Omega of their ideas; and when it failed they were not a whit more ready than Mr. Howe had been six months before to answer the question—*What then?*

It is not a captious or *ex post facto* criticism to say that an answer to that question ought to have been prepared. In the event, which was so probable as to be almost inevitable, of the English Government refusing to accede to the Delegates' demands, it must have been all along obvious that some active measures must be taken, some pressure must be called into play, if Repeal was to be won.

But in truth, the answer to that question had been rendered very difficult, and the next step forward had been much hampered by the disloyal utterances and annexationist proclivities in which, from the very first, many of the rank and file had indulged, and at which the leaders had, either from sympathy or weakness, connived. Speaking now without reference to the veniality of ever holding such views, we deem that their adoption by the Anti-confederates before ever it was known if the English Government would listen to the Delegates' remonstrance,

was, in the interests of the cause they were pleading, a grave and fatal mistake. If the intention was to menace and put a pressure upon the mother country by a threat of insurrection, the menace and even the Attorney-General's solemn and affectionate words of warning were alike wasted. In the rest of the Dominion there were many Confederates as well as “Antis” who thoroughly sympathized with Nova Scotia, and heartily disapproved—especially after its failure—of the policy by which the Province had been included in the Confederation, but nine-tenths of them promptly withdrew their sympathy from a cause that seemed tainted with treason. In the Province itself, the same reason operated with no less force. There matters had gone so far, highflown and treasonable language had been used to such an extent, such grand promises had been held out, and so many had been led to believe that an appeal to arms was seriously and honestly contemplated, that, after the return of the Delegates, the leaders found that with a large proportion of their followers the next step was rebellion; and that they must go to that length or forfeit confidence. Mr. Howe distinctly stated that such was the dilemma in which he found himself. By the light of this fact, we can see why the Resolution passed by the Convention at Halifax, in September, 1868, viz., to use *every lawful means* to secure Repeal, was considered by those on the spot as a death-blow to the cause, while to those at a distance it seemed to prolong and give a proper direction to the agitation. It was a distinct repudiation of the policy of the party of action; the only section of the party that had any policy at all. If the same Resolution had been adopted in September, 1867, the results might have been very different.

Again, if Repeal and nothing short of it was aimed at, it was surely a mistake for the Nova Scotia members to present themselves at Ottawa for any other purpose than to