

discontent and lost hope would then probably pass over the country, and bring to the surface an annexation party; but it is idle to speculate on what appears, as matters are now, the most unlikely thing to happen. Whatever may be said by pessimistic writers like Mr. Goldwin Smith, success has so far, on the whole, crowned the efforts of Canadian statesmen to consolidate the confederation, and there is no reason to fear that their hope of seeing new and prosperous provinces stretching as far as the Pacific Ocean will not be realized during the next twenty or thirty years, as long as the mass of the people continue to be animated by that spirit of enterprise and national ambition which has hitherto characterized their efforts.

But during some months past a fruitful discussion has grown up on another question of vast import. With the view, as they say, of preventing the disintegration of the Empire, a league of thoughtful men has been formed in England, with branches in Canada and the other dependencies, with the avowed object of fully discussing the whole question of Imperial Federation, in the hope that the result will be the development of some practical scheme of union or federation on a basis which will preserve all the institutions of local government enjoyed by the dependencies, and at the same time enable all sections of the Empire to combine more satisfactorily for certain common purposes with the Parent State, than seems possible under existing circumstances. So far as the discussion has gone, there is a great diversity of opinion, and no one has been able to offer a scheme which is likely to prove workable. So far the whole question has not come out of the range of mere theoretical discussion. We may, however, come to the following conclusions, when we sum up the opinions of prominent public men and of the press so far as they have been expressed:—

1. That the Canadians will accept no scheme which may in any way whatever weaken the admirable system of federal government and of provincial freedom which Canada now possesses under her present constitution.

2. That Canadians hesitate to entrust the arrangement of her financial or fiscal policy to any parliamentary body in which her representation will be necessarily small, and her influence consequently insignificant.

3. That a million and more French-Canadian people look suspiciously on a scheme of federation which may curtail their privileges, and bring them under the control of an Imperial Parliament, in which their peculiar interests may be jeopardized, and their identity as a distinct race eventually lost.

These objections are believed by not a few persons to stand for