

by the gentlemen who then sat on this side of the House. And why should we hesitate when great questions arise, questions that not only deal with our present happiness and prosperity, and our present political aims and affiliations, but also with the happiness and prosperity of those who are to come after us, and as to whose future we are naturally anxious? Why should it be that under any system of government by civilized people, in civilized countries, that any legislative body, apparently representing the people, should hold its hands and refrain from and decline to consider a subject like this, which is of the greatest possible importance to its constituents?

“THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.”

This subject, Sir, is one of remarkable importance, and the most remarkable and indisputable feature in it is this: We have the head of a great nation, of a contiguous people, so to speak, with whom we have many associations, and with whom we have memories of a pleasant nature, as well as some not quite so pleasant—we have this distinguished gentleman, the head of that nation, declaring publicly—what? That he desires and thinks it would be a good thing to have reciprocity in dealing commercially between these two nations; that he thinks that would commend itself to the common sense of the people of the United States and Canada? No, Mr. Speaker, but he starts off with the statement that “The people of Canada are at the parting of the ways!” (Applause). A remarkable utterance, whether made to an individual or to a nation, whether made to an individual or to a nation or a community, large or small. The remarkable portion of it is that the utterance, the wording of which I have just indicated, the peculiarity of meaning which everybody must associate with it, forms the key to the desire and intention of that distinguished man, and you cannot divorce the two, you cannot separate one from the other. It is all very well to say that the gentleman did not mean this or that, all very well to say that other distinguished gentlemen who have declared openly for annexation were joking. Why do they joke? Why, I say, did the President of the United States use the language which I have just described? Why should that statement be made, Mr. Speaker, about Canada and the people of Canada? Who gave authority for such a statement? Who brings to us the news that here in this country, where happiness and prosperity abound, where there is an abiding faith and determination in our future as a nation within the borders of the British Empire—