

DISINTEGRATING FORCES WITHIN CONFEDERATION.

A DIM, shadowy form, on which has been conferred the high-sounding but paradoxical title of Imperial Federation, has lately been conjured up by a few enthusiastic gentlemen-wizards, who are thoroughly convinced that they have summoned to their aid a veritable Genius of the Lamp invested with marvellous powers for the amelioration of the condition of the Canadian body politic. A much greater number, however, equally intelligent, are just as firmly convinced that the apparition is merely a harmless spook impotent for good to this much-doctored Dominion.

The present moment, therefore, seems very opportune for a little introspection on the part of Canadians. Are we really marching towards Federation or Separation? To the writer it seems perfectly clear that so far from the undercurrents of public opinion and public interest tending to a more intimate union of the different Provinces of the Dominion, their course has been, is, and will be slowly but surely in the direction of disintegration.

Let us examine the situation critically. From the Atlantic to the Pacific the same forces are silently at work.

British Columbia we find more interested in the affairs of California than in those of Eastern Canada. The pulse of Vancouver vibrates with San Francisco, not with Ottawa. In the North-West Territories we find a closer relationship with Dakota and Montana than with Ontario and Quebec. Coming farther east, to Manitoba, we find Winnipeg to-day more intimately connected with Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Chicago than with Toronto and Montreal. On the Atlantic seaboard, again, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are more in accord, socially and commercially, with Maine and the North-Eastern States than with their older sisters in the Dominion.

What is the lesson taught by these facts? Is it not this? We cannot in this age of education, electricity and steam, by imaginary boundary lines and arbitrary political divisions, annihilate geographical and commercial ties. The more quickly our statesmen realize this fundamental truth the more quickly will their legislation become effective.

But all the important disintegrating causes above enumerated fade into utter insignificance when brought in contrast with the forces at work in Ontario and Quebec. Look at the relative position of the two! Ontario, rapidly advancing in wealth, population, education, and political enfranchisement, the peer of any State on the globe in intelligence and diffused prosperity. Quebec, bankrupt, uneducated, a century behind in civilization and freedom, and four centuries behind in land tenure and laws. In the secret of this astounding contrast we have the proximate cause of the future dismemberment of the Dominion. What is that secret? It is undoubtedly the Treaty of Paris. Guaranteed by that treaty the enjoyment of religious and civil privileges inimical to the progress of the Province the French of Quebec are to-day the great barrier in the way of a real living union of the British North American Colonies. They form the weak link in the chain. Just as the existence of the inhuman institution of slavery in the Southern States, an institution foreign to the principles of the remainder of the Union, formed the primal and final cause of a terrible rebellion, so will the continued existence in Quebec of political and religious institutions alien to the political and religious institutions of the rest of Canada form the most potent disintegrating element within Confederation.

Can any one reasonably hope that this condition of things will not continue? By whom will it be removed? Not by the priesthood of Quebec, secure in the enjoyment of many exceptional privileges. Not by the feudal landowners of that Fourteenth Century France. Certainly not by the French Canadians themselves, servilely registering at the polls the decrees of their Jesuit masters. Will the other Provinces try to force the necessary changes? Then do they incur a mightier resistance and an immense responsibility. France would stand ready at a moment's notice to enforce the provisions of the Treaty of Paris, and support her children in America in their endeavour to maintain the French language, French traditions, French laws, and French sentiment in Quebec.

For these reasons it seems evident that so far from the time being ripe for the various members of the British Empire being more closely knit together, the time is not far distant when the further continuance of Confederation on its present lines will be, so far as Ontario is concerned, an impossibility.

If Confederation is to continue, if the various nationalities and creeds north of the United States boundary are to remain under one Government, it can only be by the relinquishment of those special and peculiar privileges possessed by the French Canadians and the placing of the Province of Quebec on an equal footing, socially, politically, religiously, and educationally, with the rest of Canada.

CARLOS.

ON THE SCARCITY OF GOOD SINGERS.

THAT at the present day there exists a scarcity of good singers utterly disproportionate to the number of voices which are to be found is, I think, a self-evident proposition an explanation of which may be interesting. It would be untrue to say that at the present day there are no great singers. Vocal phenomena have always existed, but there is no reasonable proportion between the number of naturally good voices and those capable of using them. The possession of a beautiful voice by no means pre-supposes on the part of its owner skill to display it. A Stradivarius or Guarnerius violin which, in the hands of a Paganini, Wieniawski or Sarasate might bewitch and hold captive the world, becomes mute and voiceless in the hands of one lacking the requisite skill to use it.

The first reason why the number of good singers is not more plentiful is the too often carelessness (or worse) of many *soi-disant* vocal professors. The human voice is the most susceptible to injury of all instruments, and the most difficult to cultivate. The singer has to combine in himself both instrument and performer, and as the loss would be irreparable should his organ sustain serious injury, it is imperative that both its culture and care should be most carefully considered. The first thing necessary to the successful training of the voice is that its proper character shall be understood. Voices differ as much in character and *timbre* as faces, and the master should, whilst developing a voice to its fullest capacity, endeavour to preserve its particular individuality as well. The number of registers and the methods of production being more complex in the female voice than in that of the male, it is doubly imperative that female students should thoroughly understand this, as their voices will never otherwise be properly "placed." No greater or more injurious mistake can be made than to suppose it is the compass of a voice which determines its character and should regulate its cultivation. A baritone may occasionally possess higher notes than some tenors; but to treat and train his voice as a tenor would only result in failure, since he would be practising too much on the upper notes of the *voce mista*, the very part in his particular case which would require the most careful treatment in order to fit it for future exertions. The number of voices which are constantly spoiled through their true character being misunderstood is very great. Whilst on this point it may be wise to say how very injudicious it is for an amateur to select vocal music simply because it is within the compass of his or her voice. This is only one thing to be considered. As every quality of voice has a distinct character and beauty of its own, a good composer first of all considers the *tessitura* of the organ he is writing for in order to produce his effects. An *aria di bravura* written very effectively for a light soprano may sound quite the reverse when transposed and sung by a mezzo-soprano or contralto.

Over-training is another and frequent explanation of a ruined voice, especially in the cases of young persons intended for an artistic career. Over-training is due, in nine cases out of ten, to unskilful teaching. No two voices are exactly alike any more than any two blades of grass, and one secret of the success of a good teacher is that, whilst his fundamental principles remain the same he varies his details according to the exigencies of the case. There are some voices, principally the graver kind of men's, from which by a certain course of treatment all roughness and coarseness of tone can be eliminated, and the voice rendered velvety and flexible. But to adopt the same method to one possessing a light and delicate tenor or soprano would be to completely extinguish it. A strong and robust hungry man would be materially benefited by a good dinner; but to administer the same quantity and quality of food to an invalid approaching convalescence might be to destroy all hopes of recovery. A few appropriate exercises practised in a particular manner, with a teacher whose trained ear warns him of the time when fatigue of the vocal cords commences, may so strengthen and develop the voice as to render it capable of bearing the fatigue of heavier work.

Another cause why good singers are not more plentiful is that whilst any one wishing to acquire any degree of perfection on the piano, violin, or any orchestral instrument, will devote several hours daily to the practice of technical exercises and studies in order to acquire a perfect *mécanique*, yet the average vocal student is often impatient if, at the end of a few months' exercises, he is not allowed to commence the study of some scena or aria, which might be very suitable for a finished vocalist, but totally unfitted for a beginner. Too much time can scarcely be devoted to properly "placing" or "fixing" the voice and acquiring the proper method of breathing, so as to have perfect control and management of the breath, before proceeding to the study of agility. The "placing" of a voice may indeed be said the making of the instrument; "*l'agilità*," the art of playing upon it. A story is told of the once celebrated singer Caffarelli: Caffarelli,