

and her peace and prosperity are objects of highest solicitude to us. No! we need no change of system. We are not cramped, dwarfed or checked in our highest and truest development by our British connection. Any ideal we have as a nation may have its freest scope, so great is the liberty given us by Great Britain. Instead of being kept in leading strings, we are treated as a wellnigh grown-up daughter, the companion rather than the helpless child of our august mother across the sea. Our highest Canadian aspiration may be gratified under our present condition. If we have infelicities, and shortcomings and defects in our affairs they are matters we ourselves may remedy,

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves."

That all this is no fool's paradise or optimist's dream may be proved by looking somewhat more in detail at our condition, and at the events of the quarter-century which has just closed.

OUR VIRTUAL INDEPENDENCE.

Until the last fifty years a system of government prevailed in all the British dependencies, which is now known as the "old colonial system." This system made the governor an autocrat, and disregarded the rights of the people. It is beside the mark to point us as British colonists of to-day to the "old colony days" of the United States a hundred and more years ago, with the Stamp act and Boston riots, and the tyranny of George III., "at whose door," says Green, "lies wholly the shame of the darkest hour of English history." It is useless to remind us of the disregard of popular rights shown by stern old Lord Dalhousie, when he dismissed Papineau, though chosen speaker by the Lower Canadian assembly, and then prorogued the recalcitrant house. It does not ruffle us to speak of Sir Francis Bond Head and his sublime disregard for popular rights, for Sir Francis so severely strained the good old idea of absolute government that it gave way, never to be restored among us.

Responsible government as the new ideal of the British colonial system was called, was introduced more than fifty years ago, and as the late Mr. Todd said, "it has become the policy of the Imperial government to withdraw from any interference with colonial legislation and administration in matters of local concern." In the new instructions given by the Imperial government on the coming of Lord Lorne to Canada in 1878 the governor-general is made a thorough exponent in Canada of the principles of the limited monarchy in England.

The great consideration shown to Canada by the Imperial government is seen in the making of treaties with foreign powers. During the greater part of the history of the Dominion Great Britain has appointed prominent Canadians to act in cases where Canada was concerned. In 1871 Sir John Macdonald was high

commissioner in the negotiations for the Washington treaty; in 1874 Hon. George Brown was appointed a commissioner, in company with the British minister, to deal with the United States on matters of trade; in 1879 Sir Alexander Galt acted as negotiator in framing a treaty with France and Spain; while in 1893 the Canadian premier, Sir John Thompson, was a commissioner at Paris on the Bering Sea case. It may be said that Canada now has a voice in all treaties in which she is concerned.

Her high commissioner at London has important functions in representing Canadian interests there, and Canada certainly has a virtual independence, united with all the advantages that come from being under the shadow of the Union Jack.

THE LARGER CANADA.

As we look back over the quarter of a century just past we plainly see that Canada's national life has been greatly strengthened by the great enterprises in which she has been engaged. A quarter of a century ago we were four millions of people, somewhat divided, largely unacquainted with one another, and with little prestige, soon to be engaged in a task as great as piling Pelion on Ossa. To undertake the work of opening up and governing the vast extent of country formerly held as a fur-trader's preserve by the Hudson's Bay company, to pledge their honor and resources for the large expenditure necessary to build a railway—the Intercolonial—to connect the inland provinces with those on the seaboard, and then to unite all the provinces from ocean to ocean by a transcontinental railway, were enterprises worthy of the Titans, which might have ruined the older provinces, but which were entered upon and accomplished with great courage and enthusiasm.

And yet it was these very perilous undertakings that made Canada what she is to-day. Note the business of the Dominion parliament and read the reports of public affairs, and it will be seen that a large proportion of all proposed and done during the quarter-century relates to the Northwest. The four original provinces of the Dominion had not sufficient scope to inspire national hope, but the thought that we have a territory more extensive than that of the United States, that we have a country whose shores are laved by the two great oceans of the earth, that there is a possibility under present conditions of building up a North American Scythia—a Scythia founded on the principles of freedom, peace and humanity, is a conception and a dream to give any people nerve, and to draw out the highest effort and the noblest hope.

Hopeless as the task seemed to the pessimists of 1881, the great necessity of a transcontinental railway became in less than ten years an accomplished fact.