

THE INDEPENDENCE OF CANADA.

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Sir,—

In England it is the custom for public men to seize the occasion of great gatherings of the people to address them upon public affairs. I humbly invoke that custom and your kind forbearance while I address to you some observations upon what I consider the great question of the day. I made some remarks in the same sense in Parliament at its last session, and was honoured with a good deal of unfriendly criticism, and I am sure you will forgive me, if I improve the first favourable occasion for restating my opinions with some arguments in their support. I may promise that there is neither disloyalty nor indecency in bringing to your notice, a subject, which deeply interests this country—which has been discussed both in our own and in the British Parliament—and generally by the Press in both countries—and which I firmly believe is the necessary complement of the great scheme of confederation we have accomplished. It is true that in my humble way, I opposed that scheme in great part, because I was timid about the early assumption of sovereignty, which I thought I foresaw, then, must follow. I stated in my place in Parliament, after the coalition of '64, that confederation, if it should really prove, what its promoters pretended, an antidote to annexation, was the first step towards the independence of the country. But opposition was useless, for confederation was the policy of the Empire; and Imperial influence is always too powerful for Colonial dissent. I have accepted the situation in its fullest sense, as faithfully and loyally as if I had originally promoted it. But, the first step having been taken, I see dangers in delay, and I believe it is expedient to take measures for the severance of our present relations to the Empire. This is a momentous step and requires grave consideration. It must create differences of opinion and the broadest tolerance should be accorded to discussion. I propose to speak candidly and dispassionately. I have no party battles to fight nor personal preferences to gratify. Holding strong opinions as to the future of this country, I submit them frankly for the verdict of my countrymen. Sooner or later the weight of opinion—the majority, must rule. I am prepared to accept the decision and loyally abide by its consequences. Such service as I can render will be cheerfully rendered, whether

my country remains a province or becomes an Independent State. And I profess and feel profound respect for those who honestly dread the great change we are discussing. Foremost among the barriers to our progress towards a nationality, is that noble sentiment of loyalty to the British Crown, which has so generally and so happily subsisted among the great masses of our people. Can we forget our noble Queen? Can we dissociate ourselves from the glories and the traditions of the Empire? British Citizenship is no idle word, and what could we create for ourselves to surpass it? For a century the affectionate colonial eye has rested from afar upon the British Throne, as the centre of power, protection and glory. We have venerated the Old Land, with a far off colonial adoration,—we have borrowed her thoughts, leaned upon her opinion, and conscious of the plenitude of her effulgence, we have been proud to shine through her reflected light. England has been the land of our dreams; even distance lent her enchantment and Englishmen to us were a superior race. We have been proud of the Old Flag; not indeed, feeling under it, an equality with the Sea Kings, but assured of its protection, in the listless life of dependence which colonists lead. We knew if great danger should threaten, that Flag would float over us; stayed by an arm stronger than ours, which we could not control; and that ours would be neither the duty nor the glory of upholding it. But dependence begets trust; and to confide in a generous people is to admire and love them. Can all this trustfulness, this affection and loyalty be torn ruthlessly away? It deserves at least respect and tender treatment. But it might not be wise to jeopardize the great future of our young country, for the sake of even so noble a sentiment, as the Hindoo widow sacrificed her life upon the funeral pile. Governments in our time, are ordained for the happiness and the prosperity of the people, and if it can be shown that the virtues of selfreliance and national Manhood—habits of original thought—a condition of equality with the nations of the earth—an immense preponderance of material advantage may be safely and permanently secured by a friendly change in our relations to the Empire; perhaps loyalty to the Dominion might come to overshadow the wide-spread sentiment of loyalty to the crown. The