

May 15th, 1891.]

Trade question involves that of the Constitutional issue, for which you are unprepared, and with which you do not even conceive yourselves to be dealing—how can I properly recommend you now to decide on Commercial Union?

This is the language of a man who sees straight, and who will not consent to be fogged or delude the people, even for what he might be tempted to call their own advantage. But when a man has set his heart on political union with the States, and sees clearly all the difficulties that are in the way, and at the same time firmly believes that Commercial Union would be advantageous, it is no wonder that he is tempted to persuade the people to take the easy step first. Though the one should involve the other he is not alarmed, because he is convinced that the other would be also advantageous. Of that he is cock-sure, and it is something to be as cock-sure of one thing "as Macaulay was of everything," according to Lord Melbourne. It may be as well to say here that the present writer is one of those who can agree neither with the extreme partisans who hold that Canada cannot live, or at any rate "live well," without free trade with the States, nor with the extreme men on the opposite side who have persuaded themselves that free trade with neighbours would be injurious. Both extremes are contradicted by the facts. At the same time, he acknowledges that he is more in sympathy with the men who hold the second position, absurd though it seems, because, if the first position were true, it must be abundantly manifest that it is not in our power to force the United States to give us what Mr. Blaine characteristically calls "the cash value" of their markets, and also that the more we clamour for that cash value, like sturdy beggars instead of self-respecting traders, the more unlikely are we to get it and the more do we enfeeble and disgrace ourselves. The present book, in its perpetual insistence on the material prosperity that union would bring, appeals far too much to the baser side of human nature. Surely the lessons that history teaches are that wealth is not the one thing indispensable to a people; that commercial prosperity may be bought at too great a price; that if wealth be gained at the cost of the slightest loss of moral power, it proves not a blessing but a curse that can never be shaken off; and that simplicity of life is not inconsistent with the highest culture any more than with the formation of the noblest character. All this no one would admit more readily than Dr. Goldwin Smith, and he would answer that in his opinion there would be no loss of moral power to Canada in consenting to a union with the States. He must admit, however, that that would depend on the paramount motives that determined the country to such a decision, and that appeals to cupidity or to fear are alike unworthy of a great writer and insulting to a great people.

In discussing this question which has been now brought before us so distinctly, it is indispensable to face all that is actually involved, and—as a great authority in morals advised—to "clear our minds of cant." Because a man is true to his own country, government and institutions, is true to his own history and his own flag, in one word because he is loyal, it is surely cant, or affectation of freedom from cant, to assume that he is, therefore, an enemy to the people of the United States. Anything more preposterous could not be put in words, and yet that is what is constantly assumed by certain writers. It is also something like cant to say that "there is no reason why the union of the two sections of the English-speaking people on this Continent should not be as free, as equal, and as honourable as the union of England and Scotland," or to speak of "a union of Canada with the American Commonwealth" like that into which Scotland entered with England," (pp. 267, 8). Such a union is not on the carpet and is totally out of the question. There is no analogy between the two cases. Scotland in consenting to the union forfeited nothing historical or sentimental and therefore no moral force, whereas Canada would forfeit everything. In the one case, there was no disruption from an Empire to which Scotland belonged and therefore no change of citizenship. Scotland remained a distinct realm and has ever since been legislated for distinctly. The two crowns had been on one head ever since she had given her King to England. Her St. Andrew's cross was blended with the cross of St. George. She retained her Presbyterian establishment and every succeeding monarch has to swear to preserve the Scottish Church. While she gave up her separate parliament she did not give up the parliamentary system. How different all these things would be in the case of Canada! It is a delusion to fancy that the great Republic could receive us save as a number of separate states, or to fancy that it would accept our monarchical, judicial, or parliamentary system, our name, our flag or our citizenship. Any party in the United States that advocated a change in the Constitution, in order to gain Canada, would be beaten by the opposite party. Not only do the politicians know that right well, but also men who, like the author, understand something of the feelings of the American people. "There is," he says, "the comparative indifference of the Southern States of the Union to an acquisition in the North. There is, moreover, a want of diplomatic power to negotiate a union. . . . If negotiations for a union were set on foot, the party out of power would of course do its best to make them miscarry, and a patriotic press would not fail to lend its aid. Every sort of susceptibility and jealousy on such occasions is wide awake," (p. 280). The democracy of the United States is too thoroughly convinced of its own superiority to the rest of the world and too sure that Canada must, in due season, fall into its mouth like a ripe plum to listen to any Treaty of Union such as that to which Scotland and Eng-

land agreed. Every letter or leading article on this side of the line in favour of union deepens these natural convictions or delusions of the democracy of the States, and it may therefore be said that the Canadian advocates of Continental Union are its most scientific opponents. Three things we would be called upon to sacrifice at the outset. In the first place, our citizenship. Ceasing to be British, we would become citizens of an alien, possibly a hostile, nation. The adjectives are not ours. The first is borrowed from an article by a Bystander, in the *Canadian Monthly*, July, 1872, in which the following sentence occurs: "The identity of language veils the fact that the people of the United States have become, under the influence of different institutions, and from the infusion of foreign elements, at least as alien to the British as any other foreign nation." The second is from the highest political authority in Ontario. Is it wonderful that the very suggestion of a sacrifice unparalleled in history should crimson the faces of people who do not pretend to be fishy-blooded? This implies no disparagement, on our part, of the American people. On the contrary, we heartily subscribe to what is said with regard to community of citizenship, in the section on Imperial Federation. "There is no apparent reason why, among all the states of our race, there should not be community of citizenship, so that a citizen of any one of the nations might take up the rights of a citizen in any one of the others at once upon his change of domicile, and without the process of naturalization. This would be political unity of no inconsiderable kind without diplomatic liabilities, or the strain, which surely no one can think free from peril, of political centralization," (p. 266). The objections to such a proposal would not come from Britain, Canada or Australia. Even as it is, there is nothing offensive in the British oath of allegiance. The throwing away by us of our British citizenship would however be a strange introduction to this proposed bringing in of a wider franchise. In the second place, we would have to sacrifice our country. To be a Canadian now is to be something more than a Nova Scotian or an Ontarian. It is simply not true that "no inhabitant of Nova Scotia or New Brunswick calls himself a Canadian," (p. 213). To-day there came to hand, as if on purpose to supply an emphatic answer to the allegation, the *Dalhousie College Gazette* for April, the journal published by the students of the principal university in Nova Scotia. Here is a sample of the anti-Canadian sentiment which is attributed to the Maritime Provinces. In an article which might be headed, like a well-known essay of Mr. Lowell's, "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners," and specially directed against the insolence of some American editors, the writer remarks: "The American editor thinks no doubt that Canadian veins run ice-water instead of blood. . . . He is mistaken. . . . After all, the poor editor is to be pitied. The Irish vote, the 'boss,' and the labour organization do not permit him to say positively that his soul is his own. We Canadians do not know this, unless we have lived across the lines. . . . For Canadians, for students, who are by nature lovers of ideals, what nobler dream can there be than a country of our own? One Canada, from the mountains to the sea, from the prairies to the great lakes—Quebec, our Wales—a people sprung from the sifted yeomanry of England, Scotland and Ireland, a country where pure laws are sternly administered, where education is evenly diffused throughout all ranks and classes, where religion beats in the national life-blood—is not this possibility grand enough to live and die for? We are an English people. . . . We cannot degenerate. This stern climate breeds only a hardy race; its rigours forever preclude the possibility of less sturdy generations. It is only with great thoughts that we can build a great nation."

So the article runs, and after reading it I ask myself, what am I to think of Dr. Goldwin Smith's confident declaration that "no inhabitant of Nova Scotia calls himself a Canadian?" Yes, "we Canadians," to use the phrase of young Nova Scotia, set out in 1867 to make a country, and to make it on British lines because we were all British to begin with. In our inspiring work of nation-building, mistakes no doubt have been committed. Where is the man, outside of the editorial sanctum, who has never blundered? Where the nation that has never been led astray? But we have always felt that the country would survive in spite of the mistakes into which politicians might drift. In 1867, anti-confederates pointed out that the proposed Dominion consisted of four divisions that could not be united together by railways and each of which was intended by nature to be a mere appendage to a corresponding State or section to the South. There was a measure of truth in this. But the people would not listen. Instinctively they understood that every nation must be ready to pay a price, must be willing to transcend difficulties in order to realize itself, to maintain its independence, to secure for itself a distinctive future. They said, let us rise up and build. So, they added to their unequalled system of internal navigation from the Straits of Belleisle up into the centre of the continent, an unparalleled railway system along lines where engineers and scientific men had declared that railways could not be built. And now, when the difficulties have been overcome, when every part of our confederacy is linked together by bands of the best steel, when magnificent dry docks have been built at Halifax and Vancouver, when our coasts and rivers and lakes have been lighted with hundreds of lighthouses: now, when—after incredible toil and expense and faith on the part of, comparatively speaking, a handful of people

scattered over half a continent—we have succeeded in building our nation's house, it is coolly proposed that we should break it into fragments as if it were a card castle and as if the putting of it together had been merely a bit of child's play on the part of grown babies! How can anyone fancy that such a thing is possible! In the third place, we would have to sacrifice our Constitution. It is true that Canada is described as "A Federal Republic after the American model, though with certain modifications derived partly from the British source," (p. 157). The description would mislead if we did not study the following thirty pages, where the fact that our Constitution is essentially different from the American is indicated, point after point. It is Parliamentary, after the British model which has been imitated by every other free country, whereas "The framers of the American Constitution were full of Montesquieu's false notion about the necessity of entirely separating the executive from the legislative." A sovereign authority above the Provinces gave them certain powers, whereas the framers of the American Constitution were forced to content themselves with such powers for the Central Government as a number of Sovereign States were willing to concede. It would take too long to go over the points of difference, one by one, and to show the superiority of our system in every particular, save in the matter of subsidies to the Provinces. Neither is it necessary, for the point at present insisted on is that every nation must make or rather work out its own Constitution in the course of its history. Its Constitution is not a coat to be thrown aside for a neighbour's, but the very body which the inner life has gathered round it from the past and the present. This outward form can be slowly changed by development to meet the changing environment and the growth of ideas, but it cannot be exchanged for another by revolution without grievous—perhaps irreparable—hurt to the nation's life.

This bare enumeration of what Canada would have to surrender in order to unite with the Republic is sufficient to make us wonder that anyone could fancy such a thing to be within the bounds of possibility. What counterbalancing gains are mentioned? First, commercial development. This is the one strong point that is made. That "the near market must, as a rule, be the best," seems to most men plain as daylight. But that a nation should sell itself for this is inconceivable. The author points out "that Canadian society in general is sound, and that power in regard to the ordinary concerns of life is in the hands, not of politicians, but of the chiefs of commerce and industry, of judges and lawyers, of the clergy, and of the leaders of public opinion." Such a community is not likely to be destitute of self-respect. Those chiefs, too, are not like the politicians, who are declared to be afraid to speak. Nine-tenths of them would be in favour of the freest interchange with their neighbours on honourable terms; but, is there a chief of any of the classes named who has expressed himself as willing to go farther? "Security for peace and immunity from war taxation" is also counted a gain, but for various reasons that need not be pressed. It can hardly be said to be true, while the United States pension fund keeps growing at its present luxuriant rate. Another gain that appeals to Christian sentiment is mentioned. "Those who scan the future without prejudice must see that the political fortunes of the Continent are embarked in the great Republic, and that Canada will best promote her own ultimate interests by contributing without unnecessary delay all that she has in the way of political character and force towards the saving of the main chance and the fulfilment of the common hope. The native American element, in which the tradition of self-government resides, is hard pressed by the foreign element untrained to self-government, and stands in need of the reinforcement which the entrance of Canada into the Union would bring it." There is something in this, and I wish to admit it frankly and to acknowledge the force with which it is put. It gives no pleasure to any sane man to hear of a threatened war of races in the South, or of anarchism in Chicago, or of any other evil force threatening American civilization. But, it is clear that no moral contribution which we could bring to the Republic would ever amount to anything if we commenced by being false to ourselves or to that Empire, which is the great power representing liberty, peace, righteousness and commercial freedom to all lands; still less, if it could be said that we were prompted to union by the hope of securing the "cash value" of the Republic's markets or by a political cowardice and indolence that sought to escape the trouble of settling our own internal difficulties. It is hardly needed to ask what the United States would gain by union, for they profess to need nothing that we could supply. It seems, however, that we could serve the Mother Country by performing the "happy-despatch." "Admitted into the councils of their own Continent, and exercising their fair share of influence there, Canadians would render the Mother Country the best of all services, and the only service in their power, by neutralizing the votes of her enemies. Unprovoked hostility on the part of the American Republic to Great Britain would then become impossible. It is now unlikely, but not impossible, since there is no wickedness which may not possibly be committed by demagogism pandering to Irish hatred," (p. 269). In other words, "demagogism pandering to Irish hatred" would be appeased by being fed. As well try to appease a tiger by giving it blood. Canadians would divide between the two great parties, and there would still be demagogism and the solid vote. It would exult that it had driven the British flag from this Continent. That would