

once the noblest and the most inspiring goal towards which the aspirations of our people could be directed, we confess that we have been often discouraged by the feebleness of the response that could be evoked from press or people to any such sentiment. The vote at the late public meeting in Montreal was but one of a number of indications which seem to us to show that our people, especially many of the more ambitious and energetic of our young men, are beginning to shake off the lethargy which has so long paralyzed our national ambition.

Why should Canadians desire national independence? Why not remain as we are, seeing that every agitation for constitutional change is more or less disturbing and dangerous? We might ask in return, why does the spirited and self-reliant son prefer to leave the paternal home and act for himself when he has attained his majority? But more practical answers are many and obvious. Some of them have been so prominently before the public for some time past that it is unnecessary to do more than allude to them. The census of 1891, with its startling revelations; the loss of one million of our best citizens, who have been forced to expatriate themselves to the United States; the depression felt in almost every department of our trade and industry; the growing unrest, manifesting itself in some quarters in a desire for political union with the United States, all forcibly suggest the necessity for a new departure. The tedious and roundabout process by which all our negotiations with the next-door neighbour, to whom we stand in so close relations in many ways, must be carried on, indicates the kind of change needed. And the almost universal feeling which has taken hold of our people that constitutional change of some kind is imminent, and which is working itself out in the various schemes for Commercial Union, Imperial Federation, Political Union, etc., affords pretty clear evidence that we have gone about as far as we can well go under our present system and that the time is near when it must be superseded by a better.

What is to be gained by Independence? It would bring us the power to make our own commercial treaties. We put this first because a betterment of the commercial and financial situation, and the consequent more rapid development of our vast resources, lie at the foundation of all national strength and progress. Theoretically we have no admiration for commercial treaties. The fullest freedom of trade amongst nations, such as will prevail in the good time coming though as yet it is unhappily in the dim future, would do away with the necessity for all such narrow and partial arrangements. But in the meantime the necessity exists, and Canada should be as free as any other country to make the best arrangements possible, looking to the welfare of her own citizens. Again, Independence would give us the national status which is one of our great needs. This would bring with it a sense of dignity and responsibility at home, and would call the attention of the world to our resources, advantages and prospects. The sense of responsibility which complete nationhood would bring is needed to develop proper self-respect and self-reliance. Every parent and school-teacher knows that there is nothing like a weight of responsibility to develop strength of character. What is true of the individual is true of the nation. So long as we are but a dependency of the Empire the tendency to rely

upon the Mother's strong arm to get us out of any difficulty into which we may blunder, or jingo statesmen in other nations may force us, is irresistible and debilitating—we might almost add, demoralizing. Can any thoughtful person doubt, moreover, that as an independent nation Canada would become a much more attractive field for immigration than she can possibly be so long as she has nothing better in the way of citizenship to offer those who choose to share her fortunes than colonialism, with all its suggestions of inferiority and subordination? Once more, an independent Canadian nationality would do more than anything else to awaken, especially in the breasts of the young and ardent, that spirit of patriotism the absence or feebleness of which is now almost the despair of the Canadian who is ambitious for his country.

But the difficulties? They are many and serious. Nothing is to be gained by belittling them. To our thinking the first and greatest are those springing from geographical barriers and from racial incongruities. It is no slight obstacle to consolidation in any form that the different provinces of which Canada is composed stretch as a narrow belt from ocean to ocean; that they are separated from each other by natural barriers which may for a long time, possibly for all time, cut off that continuity of population which might otherwise go far to counteract the divisive effect of our magnificent distances. These obstacles are not necessarily insuperable. Were we once to set ourselves in downright earnest to overcome them in order to build a nation, as did Canadians twenty-five years ago in order to build a federation, why should we be less successful? Nor should it be forgotten that precisely the same obstacles stand in the way of Imperial Federation, prolonged colonialism, and every other possible future, save perhaps Political Union, which few of our readers will admit to be as yet our "inevitable," much less our "ideal," destiny.

But we should be, we are told, incapable of defending ourselves against attack, or of protecting our commerce in all quarters of the world. As to the first, we have but one neighbour whose hostility might be feared. We know no reason to doubt the reiterated assurances of the leaders of thought and legislation in the United States that they have not the slightest desire to interfere with the right of Canada to shape her own political future. Be that as it may, the Great Republic, which has taken the initiative in inviting the other self-governing nations of this continent to enter into solemn treaty arrangements for the settlement of all future disagreements by arbitration, could hardly hesitate to enter into a similar agreement with independent Canada. As to the alleged necessity for a great fleet to protect our commerce, we simply decline to admit the existence of such necessity. Other small nations trade and prosper without large iron-clad navies. We have before pointed out that the United States for many long years, at a time too when she had a merchant marine worth moleating, found herself quite able to meet all the requirements of the situation with a war-fleet no stronger than Canada could easily maintain in ways that we have not now space to describe. Most Canadians of spirit will admit, too, that we cannot much longer preserve our self-respect without contributing in some way to the support of the British fleet, if we continue to rely upon it for protection. Hence some out-

lay of this kind is inevitable. Moreover, Canadians are not, we take it, a race of cowards, and all arguments of the class in question are simply appeals to our timidity.

But the disloyalty of it! To think of deserting the Old Land after all she has done for us! To cut ourselves adrift, too, from all the glories of British history and all our heritage in the grandest literature the world has ever known! Is it disloyalty in the grown-up son to leave his father's roof and set up for himself? Does it necessarily diminish mutual regard and affection? Does it not often rather increase them? We cannot here follow up this thought, but we hold it highly probable, if not absolutely demonstrable, that Canada as an independent nation, allied by the closest ties of heredity and intercourse with the two great Anglo-Saxon nations, and partaking as she might and ought to of the better qualities of both, might really be more serviceable both to the Mother Country and the world than she can ever be in any other capacity, at the same time that she would free the former from a source of constant anxiety and danger. The history, literature and traditions of Great Britain are the heritage of the race. Nothing can deprive us of our share in them. And what prouder position can even she aspire to than that of Mother of nations, great and free?

OTTAWA VERSUS WASHINGTON.

Time was when an interchange of courtesies between statesmen through the medium of the newspaper interviewer would have been thought too undignified to be possible. But those were times when the business of government as well as of diplomacy was held to belong to Governments and the governing classes. Seeing, therefore, that under democratic institutions the people who look to the newspapers for their information on all matters of current history are, or believe themselves to be, the real rulers of the country, we are not sure that we should too hastily condemn the method employed by Mr. Foster, the Finance Minister of Canada, and Mr. Foster, the United States Secretary of State, in thus taking the people into their confidence, with a view to making them arbiters in their disputes concerning matters of fact connected with the reciprocity conference at Washington. Seeing that no official report of the proceedings, much less of the discussions, of the Conference has been given to the public in either country, we certainly are now learning more about them than we could otherwise have hoped to discover. The pity of it is that the accounts given by the two authorities disagree in important, nay, in what many Canadians at least would regard as vital, particulars. To say nothing of the misunderstanding concerning the affair which the American members of the Conference understood to be a promise on behalf of the Canadian Government to discontinue the obnoxious discrimination against American ports in the matter of canal tolls, but which the Canadian representatives interpreted merely as a promise to consider the question—for it is possible to conceive that such a misunderstanding might innocently take place in the case of a merely conversational interchange of views—how are we to account for such glaring discrepancies as the following:

Mr. Blaine was asked as to certain conditions of a possibly wider arrangement; among others, whether the United States would in-