

I am for the best interests of Canada, and because I claim the right as a Canadian to decide the destinies of my country according to its highest interests. But while I am listening intently to the proposition of my imperialist friend, another steps forward and says: "But I am prepared to show that the best interests of Canada will be subserved by an independent national existence. True, the sentiment lies in that direction. We have a great heritage and are fast developing a deep-seated national pride. To us Canada is the dearest name among the nations of the earth. Let us have faith and courage and facing the awful responsibilities of to-day, bequeath to our children a country worthy of their love and bright with glorious promise. To quote the stirring words of Roberts:

"How long the indolence, ere thou dare  
Achieve thy destiny, seize thy fame,—  
Ere our proud eyes behold thee bear  
A nation's franchise, nation's name?"

Here, then, I have two distinct propositions presented to my consideration. Both appeal to the instincts of patriotism, and alike inflame the imagination. Both present features well worthy of serious reflection from the standpoint of material interest. How can I or any other Canadian upon whom will be imposed the responsibility of ultimately deciding the question, reach an intelligent and wise decision unless the fullest latitude be given to the discussion of the relative merits of both? And what is the use of discussion at all if there be some occult, mysterious and overshadowing obligation to Great Britain which renders it dishonorable for me and my fellow Canadians to exercise our judgment and make a free choice?

As between Imperial Federation and Independence there are, after all, few rational beings in Canada who will question the right of the Canadian people to fairly discuss and freely decide. A few gushing loyalists may

rave, but the innate common sense of the Canadian people will decide once and for all that the Canadian people are free to choose their own destiny. But there is one step farther to go before we have cleared the ground for a fair discussion of the question.

After my Imperial Federation friend has dazzled me with his pictures of a united empire, and my Canada first friend has influenced me with the glories of an independent national life, yet a third steps forward and claims my attention. What is his message? Let him speak, and give him respectful audience: "Why need we seek alliances with European countries," he says, "when we have the full outlines of a most perfect civilization on our own continent? Why do you seek to impose upon Canadians the burden of maintaining a standing army simply to take a hand in the selfish game of European diplomacy? Beside us on this continent is a nation that within the compass of a little more than a century has outstripped in population, in accumulated wealth and internal resources the greatest of European nations. She stands without a rival in industrial progress. Every citizen is a wage-earner and a producer, while every nation in Europe is supporting hundreds of thousands of men in idleness so far as productive returns are concerned, solely as a national police, and a necessary safeguard against invasion and conquest. In America standing armies are needless, because we are not concerned in the wastes and burdens which afflict the military-ridden nations of modern Europe. Beside us and sharing the continent with us is a nation speaking the same language, sprung from the same race, and animated by the same impulses as ourselves. The United States was once a colony like ourselves and derived its origin from the same cradle. With its enormous pro-