

in enterprise and self-reliance, and that the day might come when our noble and widespread sentiments of loyalty to the Crown might be merged and intensified into loyalty to the Dominion. I showed how this important change was only a second and necessary step in the drama of Confederation; and how happily it would solve for us great commercial and political problems. I spoke to you then, as I always speak and feel, in a spirit of warm attachment to England, and admiration for her noble institutions. I argued that, drifting as we were in the dangerous currents of uncertain speculation, we were ripening every day, for the already overgrown territories of our neighbours; and that Independence, if it could be successfully negotiated with proper trade relations and the cordial good will of England and America, would multiply the chances of our peaceful and autonomous future. I showed that we were following the lead of the most eminent publicists and statesmen of England in opening a discussion so important; and I declared we did so, only as citizens of the Empire, having loyal regard for its best interests, and that if it could be shown that England deprecated the change, or was averse to our Independence, our lips would be sealed, and we should seek only such changes and ameliorations as could be found within the power and jurisdiction of the realm. Then, I discussed other possible changes, the proposed Colonial Council, the reorganization of the Empire, with Colonial representation in the Imperial Parliament, perhaps in a doubting, but certainly in no hostile spirit,—and from it all I deduced this conclusion, that the Colonial state is one of tutelage merely,—that it must sooner or later give way to the exercise of ampler powers,—and that he who would perpetuate the connection, must devise a system to obviate all conflicts of interests, political or commercial—must make the Colonial subject in his political relations to the Empire, the equal of the Imperial islander, and must provide that no permanent commercial disabilities grow out of the system he maintains. I stated further that my political friends were in no way responsible for my views. So much it was my duty to say, for some of my dearest friends were uneasy listeners to my plain speaking. But all this I told you in a speculative mood—I was an orator and an essayist, but not a politician. I sought to promote discussion, but not agitation; to excite thought and diffuse intelligence; and, moreover, I wanted to establish in the face of the world that no party disability

hung over the discussion of these great constitutional changes. I am a Liberal “dyed in the wool”—but I thought the platform of my party was wide enough to hold me, alongside of my more cautious and Conservative colleagues. In England the Liberal party embraces and tolerates all the differences between Gladstone and Bright, and I thought, in this country, it might embrace the more Conservative reformers, and, at the same time, tolerate one of Bright’s humble admirers. This question of Independence is not a party question, but it is common to all parties. Sir Alexander Gait is a Conservative leader, and the most brilliant man on his side of the House. The *Toronto Guardian*, the *Quebec Chronicle* and the *London Free Press* all lean towards Independence, and they are all Conservative journals. In Parliament last session an attempt was made to ostracise those holding these opinions, but the success of those who undertook the task is not likely to encourage repetitions. I have seen no cause to regret the discussion I humbly promoted. My Zollverein resolutions in Parliament would have commanded over thirty votes in a House which was said to be unanimously against us, and in the British Parliament when the subject came up in the debate on Mr. Torrens’ motion, though Lord Bury and Sir Charles Dilke flippantly disposed of us as Annexationists, taking their cue from the absurd falsehoods of our Tory press, there were found men to defend us, and quoting from the speech I made to you to prove the loyalty and reasonableness of our views. As to our independent future and concomitant free intercourse, the almost universal voice of the American press was friendly and satisfied, and it is not too much to say that in President Grant’s message of last year his friendly disposition towards an independent nationality here was broadly stated.

But my purpose to-night is not to address you upon speculative, but on pressing and practical questions, and respect for some of my friends, who are your guests, and who do not share my views, would have induced me to keep silence on this subject, but that I know you would wish to hear that my opinions are unchanged, and that they would kindly pardon this summary statement. At any rate, passing events are so full of significance that our speculations may be outstripped and our destiny hastened by forces which we have not foreseen and are powerless to control. I think it was John Bright who, in one of his great orations, noticed the difficulty of choosing