

The National Idea in Periodicals

THE confederation of the four provinces forming the Dominion of Canada was the consequence of many years of struggle towards political union. There existed at the same time a desire to express national aims and ideas in other than political form and this desire found journalistic fulfilment when "The Nation" was published in Toronto. The first number was issued on April 2, 1874, at 66 Church Street, and the prospectus shows the ideals of the new weekly.

"The Nation," an independent weekly newspaper devoted to National politics, National culture and National progress.

"The time appears to have arrived when an appeal may be made with confidence to those who prefer the

"controverted elections," and "thoroughly non-committal" is a phrase that even yet properly describes the Vice-Regal speech.

This bit of political gossip, in connection with the rumour that Sir John Macdonald was about to resign as Leader of the Opposition, is of interest: "Sir John voluntarily resigns, on the ground or plea of ill-health. * * * Whether his retirement will be more than temporary—it would be useless now to conjecture; for that will depend on circumstances which no one can foresee." The "retirement" took place just seventeen years later, when Sir John A. Macdonald, after long service as Premier, died in the midst of his work.

The stormy days of the first Riel rebellion are recalled in this paragraph; "Louis Riel, the member elect for Provencher, Manitoba, over whose head is hanging the charge of being concerned in the murder of Thomas Scott, made his appearance at Ottawa on Monday, and took the oath and signed the roll in the Clerk's office. * * * The temerity of Riel appearing at Ottawa and entering the Parliament buildings, under the circumstances, has created a strong feeling of indignation throughout Ontario, and steps have been taken to secure his arrest, independent of the warrant in possession of Attorney-General Clarke."

In the literary notes the reader is informed that the enthusiastic youth of Glasgow University are clamouring for Emerson as Lord Rector in the room of Mr. Disraeli. A despatch from the "Daily Telegraph" announces: "The remains of Dr. Livingstone were embarked on the steamer at Aden on the 23rd ult., and are now on their way to England."

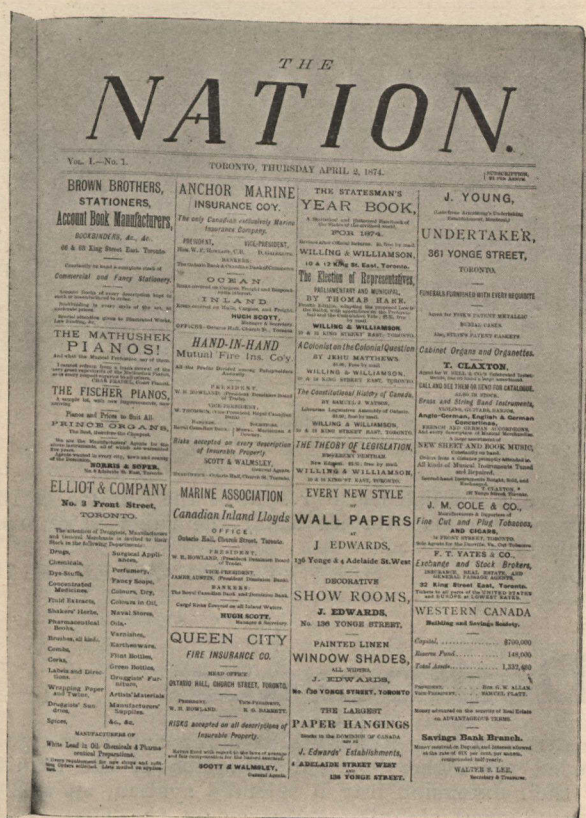
The social news from England includes an account of the reception accorded the Duchess of Edinburgh, on which occasion Queen Victoria's costume, instead of being unrelieved black, was distinguished by such touches of color as mauve and white daisies in her bonnet and a mauve parasol.

The new books announced are sermons by Dr. W. Morley Punshon and Dr. Cochrane of Brantford, "Letters from High Latitudes," by Lord Dufferin, "The Wild North Land," by Captain Butler, and a "Complete Canadian Edition of the Poems of Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L."

Among those who took an active interest in "The Nation" and who are yet known as public-spirited Canadians are Lieutenant-Colonel George T. Denison and Mr. John Ross Robertson. But after a few volumes of "The Nation" had appeared, the spirit which had led to its publication found expression in other forms than journalism and it was not until 1883 that the national idea once more found outward and visible sign in "The Week."

It is dangerous to use the comparative degree, and still more risky to resort to superlatives. But we are safe in saying that "The Week" was the most satisfactory literary publication that Canada has seen. When we remember that Mr. Goldwin Smith, as "A Bystander," wrote "Current Events and Opinions," and that Mr. Charles G. D. Roberts was editor, the reasons for its literary excellence and influence have been supplied. The first number of "The Week" was issued on Thursday, December 6th, 1883, and, even after the lapse of twenty-three years, contains much that is suggestive by way of literary and political comment.

The editor refers to the recent election of Mr. James Russell Lowell to the Rectorship of St. Andrew's University as a "generous disposition to recognize a commonwealth of letters divided by no national boundaries." It might occur to the reader of 1906 that the influence of the Lowells and the Emersons was rather to be desired than the present ascendancy of Carnegie and Morgan. In the next column we are informed that Mr. G. W. Ross has just been appointed Minister of Education vice the Hon. Adam Crooks, and the Ontarian, of whatever political stripe, reflects with pleasure that Hon. G. W. Ross, after years of service in the Education Department and as Premier of the Province, is yet equal to the task of leading the Reform Party in the



Facsimile first page of
"The Nation," April 2nd, 1874

interests of the Dominion to the aggrandizement of party.

"Its only objects are the earnest advocacy of essentially Canadian views, the building up of a Nation, imbued with thoroughly British views of progress, and the endeavour by moral and intellectual culture, to assist in raising the masses to a sense of the dignity which they inherit from the past and may enjoy in the future."

The first volume of this weekly of a generation ago makes interesting reading in the light of Canadian development that has taken place in the last three decades. A mighty volume of water has flowed beneath Canadian bridges since Manitoba and British Columbia were first called provinces. The opening announcement is as follows:

"The first session of the new Parliament opened at Ottawa on the 26th ult., when the Speaker was elected. Next day the Governor-General, the Earl of Dufferin, read the Vice-Regal speech; the topics of which are the ballot, a Court of Appeal, controverted elections, the insolvency law, the militia, the Pacific Railway, canal improvements, the progress of the Intercolonial Railway, the control of which is to be transferred to the Public Works Department. The speech is thoroughly non-committal." Hon. T. W. Anglin was the Speaker elected. There is a drearily familiar sound about