

North-Western problem is one which cannot safely be left unsolved. The voice of Prohibition is beginning to make itself heard with most miraculous organ. Our interprovincial relations are ever and anon strained to a point which threatens the rupture of Confederation. As regards our relations with the mother country, no man of any political prescience can suppose that they can much longer remain upon their present footing. The scheme of an Imperial Federation of Great Britain and her colonies, in the opinion of most persons who have given much consideration to the subject, is totally impracticable. At all events it presents difficulties which must be inseparable for many years to come. There remain the alternatives of independence and annexation to the United States.

With respect to the latter, our party journals have caused many persons to think and speak of the project under the breath, as if the discussion thereof involved something nearly approaching treason. The *Mail* itself has been wont to take this view of the annexation question. Its point of vision, however, has recently undergone a change. It now proclaims that it does not count it treason for Canadians to discuss their future, and it denies the right of "any European power, not excepting Great Britain, to place a check upon the will of the Canadian people respecting any matter in which their interests are at stake." It is very unlikely that Great Britain will feel herself impelled to impose any such check. Annexation has not yet come within the domain of practical politics, either in Canada or across the line. A few years since we used to see frequent allusions to the "manifest destiny" theory in certain United States newspapers, but for some time past republican editors have found more pressing and practical subjects to write about, and have been much more chary of offering advice to their northerly neighbours. That a good many intelligent Canadians, more especially in the Maritime Provinces, have a bias in favor of annexation it would be idle to deny; but there is no present agitation on the subject, nor is any such agitation likely to arise in the near future, unless in the event of some unlooked-for crisis in our affairs. Such a crisis may at any time arise. Should the consensus of opinion in Canada declare itself clearly in favor of a union with the States, there can hardly be much doubt of the final result. The time for the coercion of American colonies by European States is past. In the case of our own country it is by no means probable that any British ministry would take upon itself the responsibility of making the attempt, and if it did it would soon cease to exist as a ministry. Our territory is too large to be held in forced subjection, even by the mighty power of Great Britain. Moreover, in the unhappy event of a conflict between us and the mother country the United States could hardly remain neutral, and there can of course be no doubt as to the side she would take. But such a struggle is of all unlikely things the most unlikely. When the parting comes between us and our parent it will come quietly, by mutual arrangement, and this whether the inducement to separation should be annexation or independence.

Independence has found a good many advocates in our midst, more especially among the young men who have been trained to think. The project was first heard of soon after the accomplishment of Confederation, and there has been a slow but steady growth ever since until within the last year or two, during which little has been heard of it. Few of its advocates are in any haste to bring about the cherished result, and no really prominent public man has ventured to identify himself with the movement, if movement it can be called. True, there is a Canadian Independence Society in Toronto at the present time, but we understand that the membership is under a score, and that there has been no meeting for several months. There is also an annexation society, composed of some capable and scholarly young men, but they have set on foot no active agitation, and do not seem to be growing very rapidly in numbers. They do not even openly call themselves annexationists, but constitutionalists, and their society is called a Constitutional Society. They do not seem to be in deadly earnest, nor to cherish any desperate or treasonable designs. It is certainly no harm for a few thinking young men to meet together for the purpose of making themselves familiar with the constitution of the United States, and the study of De Tocqueville will hurt no one who is mentally fitted to take part in political discussions.

To return for a moment to our muttens: With such momentous questions as these confronting it at every turn, no independent Canadian journal needs to be at a loss for timely topics for discussion. We hope to see the *Mail* taking up these subjects, and dealing with them in the trenchant fashion which it has at its command when it really buckles itself down to serious work. We, in our own feeble way, intend to consider them from time to time, and in doing so we shall not hesitate to express our deliberate convictions with regard to every one of them. Meanwhile, we congratulate the independent press of Canada upon the accession to its ranks of so powerful an ally as the late organ of Liberal Conservatism in the Dominion.—J. C. D.

THE LABOUR QUESTION IN POLITICS.

ONE of the most notable developments of the year just closed is the appearance of a new political party. The labour question is now fairly in politics. The remarkably large vote polled for three labour candidates for Montreal in the Quebec provincial elections, followed by the nomination in several of the larger cities of Western Ontario of Labour Reformers for the local legislature—one of the number being successful in the contest—shows that the movement has taken deep root among the working class. Henceforth the demand for Labour Reform, backed by a powerful organization which looks to independent political action as the means for accomplishing its objects, is a factor with which the politicians will have to reckon. It is no mere temporary or spasmodic agitation, but one of steady growth, and the result of the spread of principles here which have obtained widespread acceptance in other communities.

The aim and scope of the political Labour Reform movement is little understood even by those who take an active interest in