

beget mutual confidence. In order to that result a clear understanding will be necessary in regard to several matters.

First of all and above all it should be distinctly understood that no union is possible save with the free and hearty consent and approval of the people of Newfoundland. Of course it would be futile to hope for complete unanimity in such a matter. Under almost any conceivable circumstances there would doubtless be a dissatisfied, if not absolutely hostile minority. To wait for that to disappear would be to postpone any great change of the kind until doomsday, or later. But it should be made an unalterable condition of Canadian assent, that an overwhelming majority of the Island citizens should favour the union. To this end the verdict of the people, either as voiced in a general election on this issue or directly by a plebiscite, should be insisted on. The great mistake made at the first, in the case of Nova Scotia—a mistake, the mischievous effects of which are felt down to the present day—must not be repeated. Better no union at all than one which is not a union both of judgments and of hearts.

Second, we suppose we must admit, however reluctantly, must come the question of financial terms. These we do not now propose to discuss. We are no advocates of a narrow, ungenerous, cheese-paring policy. But it must be admitted that, if we may give any heed to the rumours which have, from time to time, reached our ears across the Gulf, any great expectations of immediate affluence as the result of access to the Ottawa Treasury will need to be ruthlessly dispelled before serious negotiations can be begun. Canada is not exactly an El Dorado, nor is even the treasury in question an inexhaustible storehouse of the yellow metal. We should hope for early development of the Island's resources, agricultural and mineral, as well as piscatory—and it is by no means unlikely that the former may prove to be much greater than hitherto supposed—as the result of the union. We should not care to refuse to look upon the picture which some fertile imaginations are said to have drawn of wonderful improvements in railway communication (with even a tunnel under the Straits showing faintly in the dim and distant background). But no Government could at present hope for the sanction of the Canadian people to any binding agreement touching any great or costly enterprise in the immediate, or indeed the distant, future. If our Newfoundland cousins enter the Confederation they must come prepared to share our fortunes, and abide by our limitations. We have always, we frankly confess, felt strong sympathy with the people of Newfoundland in their complaints of the interference of Canada to prevent the carrying out of the Bond-Blaine Convention, and should be gratified to believe that full reparation for any real loss thus inflicted would result from the proposed union.

There is one matter in regard to which we dare say many of our readers, who prize political purity and aspire to it as a goal yet in the future, may feel somewhat strongly. We refer to the fact that the Premier of the present Government and some if not all of his colleagues, by whom the coming delegates are accredited, have been only recently delivered by Act of Legislature, from the ban of disqualification for corrupt practices at elections. There is reason, however, to believe that the offence of which so many of them were found guilty was technically rather than wilfully corrupt. This was indeed admitted by the judge who felt himself compelled by law to pronounce the sentence of disqualification. The fact that the relieving ordinance was approved by the British Government may be accepted as a confirmation of this view.

We have space to touch upon but one other matter, but that is, unhappily, the most serious of all—the French Shore difficulty. Ever since the question of confederation was last mooted the stand has been taken pretty firmly by many influential persons and journals of both parties in Canada that some permanent settlement of this difficulty must be insisted on as a *sine qua non* of the admission of Newfoundland into the Confederation. This is but reasonable and sensible. No good could be done to Newfoundland and much harm would almost surely result to Canada from her assuming this old and exasperating quarrel. We do not know how the government view the case, but we are pretty sure that the majority of the Canadian people, of all shades of politics, are still firmly of the opinion that that difficulty must be taken out of the way before the question of union can be seriously entertained. How this can be done, or whether it can be done at all, remains to be seen. There is little or no hope that

the Mother Country can effect any friendly and permanent agreement with France, in the present mood of the latter country. Of course the treaty must be kept in the letter and in the spirit. It is probable that the trouble may have arisen largely from the unwillingness of the Newfoundlanders to recognize this fact in its full significance and to govern themselves accordingly. However we may resent the weakness or short-sightedness of those representatives of Great Britain who made the treaty, there is nothing left but to abide honourably by its provisions. It must be possible to ascertain with some degree of certainty what those provisions are. If Great Britain and France could but agree cordially on that point, all the rest should be comparatively easy. So far as we can see, should the negotiations reach a point at which this question comes to the front, the only wise course for our Government would be to confer freely with the British Government, in order to ascertain the position which the latter will uphold, and whether that position will be accepted by France, and then determine whether strict observance of those terms will or will not leave it still desirable to go on with the negotiations for union.

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Shakespeare's Characters.

ABOUT two years ago, Mr. Libby published "Some New Notes on Macbeth," in which, if he did not conclusively prove Ross to be "a coward, spy, and murderer," he at least very ingeniously showed that it was not impossible to harmonize such a conception of him with the rest of the play. From Mr. Libby's point of view, Banquo, too, has not the noble character with which he is generally credited, but in blackness of motive falls little short of Macbeth.

I had always accepted the orthodox view that Ross was an ordinary but kindly man, and that Banquo resisted the temptation to which Macbeth yielded. I was compelled to acknowledge that the new interpretation was not impossible, but when I began examining my unreasonable resentment I found it was not in the least on account of either Banquo or Ross. I disliked it because it seemed to make Shakespeare an inventor of literary puzzles of the dissected-map order, in which the result depends altogether on the way the different pieces are put together. One arrangement will give Africa, while another arrangement will give Europe. After reading Mr. Libby's interpretation, I half expected some one to prove Antonio selfish and Cordelia false. Further reflection revealed to me that were I obliged to reverse all my conceptions of Shakespearian characters, I should not be specially grieved, and I was confronted with the startling and puzzling fact that I do not love Shakespeare's characters. They are to me a warning rather than an inspiration.

I yield to no ordinary student of Shakespeare in reverence and love for the poet himself, but his characters are not real to me. They are mouthpieces speaking Shakespeare's thoughts, not their own thoughts. When I read of Portia, I see Shakespeare's conception of a young woman. Shylock but reflects Shakespeare's passionate protest against undeserved wrongs. When Brutus talks with Portia, I do not see a real Brutus and a real Portia, but I do see Shakespeare's ideal of the relations which should exist between man and wife.

Now, could any one succeed in raising even a suspicion concerning Sir Galahad's holy fervor, or King Arthur's unselfish nobility, I should feel I had lost faith in some one whom I love. From my childhood I had, in imagination, walked side by side with Elaine, and to cast a stain upon her would be to slander a beloved friend. Enid is more real and dear to me than either of the Portias.

Since my discovery of my mental attitude toward Shakespeare's characters I have wondered if any one else ever found them comparatively cold. Is it possible to so love an artist, to be so permeated with his personality, that our eyes are veiled to the beauty of his work?

This article has been written from an honest desire to know if any Shakespeare lover ever found himself or herself in a like predicament. Although I find Shakespeare's characters cold and shadowy, he himself is real and living. I know that he understood men and looked at life from countless points of view. His visions seem to me to have been hardly less thrilling than those of the prophet who stood by the river Chebar, but I should like to love his characters as I know they are beloved.

KATE CONWAY.