

our representation in the British Parliament,—the only means by which we colonists could become the equals of our trans-Atlantic countrymen, and an impossible concession from the Imperial Government. If England were to admit the representatives of her millions of colonists to seats in the House of Commons, how long would she maintain her metropolitan and conservative dominance? How long before she must cease to consider colonial questions from an Imperial point of view, and find her children assuming the attitude of her masters? Such a solution of the colonial relationship is undesirable and impossible. Englishmen would never dream of it, and if they did, it would not meet our colonial wants. Perhaps it would be fair to interpret that speech in the light of Imperial opinion. It is not to be supposed, that His Excellency intended to start new and original theories. Let us believe him to have been in accord with the statesmen of his country and his time. In that great debate, from which I have quoted on the defences of this country, Mr. Disraeli alluded to the hypothesis of a desire on the part of Canada and the other North American Colonies, for independence; and to the hour when England might thus lose a dependency, but gain a firm ally and friend. And again, he said Canada has its own future before it. We have a right to assume it. It has all the elements which make a great nation. It has at this moment a strong development of nationality; and the full conviction on the part of England, that these provinces may ultimately become an independent country, is to her, not a source of mortification, but of pride. Mr. Bright in the same debate points out the reasons why Canadians should feel, if they are like other Englishmen, that it would be better for their Country to be disentangled from the politics of England, and to assume the position of an Independent State. He believed, from what had been stated by official gentlemen in the present Government, and in previous Governments, that there was no objection to the Independence of Canada whenever Canada might wish it. If Canada, by a friendly separation, became an Independent State, said Mr. Bright—choosing its own form of Government—Monarchical, if it liked a monarchy, or Republican, if it preferred a Republic, it would not be less friendly to England. And in case of war, Canada would then be a neutral Country, and her population enjoy greater security. In the same debate Lord Palmerston declared, that when the Provinces felt strong enough to stand alone, and desired the connection no longer, England would say "God speed you and give you the means to maintain yourselves as a nation." These general sentiments of the debate provoked no dissent in the House, where all shades of British opinion are represented. And though nobody

declared the time had come, England was manifestly shaping her policy to meet it. I shall pass over the stronger expressions, the advanced opinions of subsequent debates, because time does not permit me to produce a *repertoire* of all the discussions on this subject. But in the light of what has gone before, it is not easy to misunderstand the remarkable utterances of Mr. Gladstone, the Prime Minister of England, during the debate in the House of Commons the other day, upon the subject of guaranteeing the Hudson Bay Loan. Objections had been taken to the principal of Colonial guarantees, and Mr. Gladstone fully endorsed them. But he declared that this guarantee was given for a strictly Imperial object, to dissociate England from the inconvenience of too extensive territorial possessions. In former times, said Mr. Gladstone, the American Colonies were entangled in a vicious system of dependence on England. The Government wished to engender in them a spirit of Independence. They wished to wind up the old system and see the Colonies make a new start. That was not to be a beginning, but an end. Almost as I speak a confirmatory missive comes to us across the water,—one of the strangest, as it is one of the most important events of our time. The London "Times," by the last steamer, is handed me, containing a circular from a meeting of Colonists in London, expressing alarm at the new Imperial views of the Colonial relations and seeking to provide means of inducing the British Government to withdraw from its lately declared policy on the subject of colonial defence, or, failing in that, to demand to be released from their allegiance, and to adopt such further means as the exigencies of the new situation may require. The circular suggests a conference in London, during the next session of the Imperial Parliament, of delegates from all the Colonial Governments, and the *Times* vouches for the importance of the movement, which, it regards as an epoch, by the tone in which it discusses the whole question. That Journal, the most delicate thermometer of influential opinion in England, argues that the remonstrances will be fruitless and warns the Colonies to rely on their own Independence. From all this it appears that the attitude of England is sufficiently pronounced and comprehensible, and one of its effects will be, powerfully to modify and ripen colonial opinion. At first, no doubt, among our own people, we may witness bewilderment and surprise. Some will make it a pretext to advance preconceived opinions and others may at first turn from it in disgust; but in the end, the sober second thought of our countrymen, if the opportunity is afforded them, will grapple with the subject in a patriotic spirit and with a fair reference to its bearing upon the interests of both countries. In this spirit I propose to consider a little more fully the relations