

SENATOR BLAIR, in a recent article in the *Detroit News*, argued that the political union of Canada and the United States is essential to the preservation of the industrial independence of the latter nation. "Conditions," he says, "have now arisen which are rapidly producing a people to the north of us which in fifty years will be more powerful than the whole 45,000,000 who now make up the Spanish American countries, lying in such way as to threaten us industrially." Well, if the question of annexation must be discussed, it is refreshing to have it for once advocated as an economical necessity for the Republic instead of for Canada. Nor are we prepared to say, looking on the one hand at the tendencies to effeminacy and to dislike of industrial pursuits, so marked in some parts of the United States, and on the other at the capacity of our Northern clime and habits for rearing "most vigorous men," that there may not be a good deal of force in his argument. That argument is, however, one that concerns our neighbours rather than ourselves. It is, moreover, an argument for the annexation of the Southern country to the Northern, rather than of the Northern to the Southern. When our republican neighbours make application in due form, we shall, no doubt, be prepared to give the proposal due consideration, and say whether and on what terms we are prepared to receive them. But when Senator Blair goes on to maintain that the fact that the two countries are separated only "by an imaginary line of 4,000 miles in length, and the diversity of institutions and tendencies and of industrial conditions, make it apparently impossible for these two great peoples to live in such close proximity without perpetual and increasing collisions," he insults the Christian civilization of both countries. What more is necessary to guarantee perpetual peace and friendship, than that both shall desire only what is just and fair, and take measures to secure it by binding themselves to impartial arbitration, and avoiding, after the excellent fashion which was for many years set by the United States, the formation of armies and navies? All the real interests of both countries are on the side of peace, friendship and the freest social and commercial intercourse. Collisions can come only from selfish greed or quarrelsome obstinacy on the part of one or the other or both.

THOSE who have studied with any care the recent remarkable Democratic victory in the United States must have been struck with the fact that a new force is to the fore in American politics. We refer of course to the part taken by the Farmers' Alliance, which had so much to do with bringing about the result. For the first time in the history of the Republic—may we not safely say in the history of any nation?—the farmers appeared as an organized and disciplined army, marching on to victory. When but a year or two ago the proposal thus to organize the farmers and enable them to consult and work together in their own interests was mooted, it was received with very general incredulity. It was naturally thought that the conditions of the farmers' lives were such as to render effective co-operation well nigh impossible. They were necessarily separated from each other as individuals by the size of their farms, and were thus, in the very nature of the case, placed at a great disadvantage as compared with all other large classes of labourers. The event has shown all such objections to be futile. Combination, organization, unity of action have been proved, by the best of all tests, to be perfectly feasible. This being accomplished, their great victory was not needed to demonstrate their power. The meeting, a week or two since, of the Farmers' Alliance Convention in Ocala, Florida, emphasized the fact that the tillers of the soil are already a great power in the Government of the country and are sure to become a still mightier one at no distant day. The Alliance had succeeded in uniting and working with the labourers in towns and cities—a thing which had been pronounced impossible a year ago. The process of amalgamation went on during the Convention, by the organic union with it of the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association, which had itself proved formidable in the Illinois election. Then, again, the Coloured Alliance, which claims a membership of several hundred thousand, held its session separately at the same time and place, but worked in full accord with the white alliance. The question of forming a Third Party was seriously discussed. The proposal met with great favour, but action was postponed to give opportunity for fuller consideration. But the important point to be noted by Canadians is that this movement brings into the field of action an entirely new army of very great strength. Its possibilities of development are practically unlimited.

"Hitherto," one of their leaders told them at Ocala, "they, the farmers, had followed the plow with their eyes open, but party leaders with their eyes shut. They had been afraid to act for themselves." But in a single year their movement had become so important that there was no longer a solid North, and he trusted and believed that in 1892 there would be no solid South. What has been done in the United States can be and will be done elsewhere. It is only a question of time when the farmers of Canada will follow suit, and by organization and united action make themselves one of the most potent factors in Canadian politics. There is no cause to dread such a movement. There is much in the life and habits of the farmer to develop independence of thought, shrewdness, and sound judgment. These qualities, combined with a moral principle and sentiment, probably higher on the average than that of other industrial classes, go far to give assurance that the influence of the body in politics will be on the whole wise and beneficent.

CAN it be that the great nations of the world have passed the zenith of their civilization, and are beginning their relapse towards barbarism, thus justifying the old theory of recurrent cycles? There would seem to be some reason for such a dread, unless we are prepared to repudiate the view which has so long been regarded as one of the plainest teachings of history, and almost an axiom in sociology, that commerce is the mother of civilization. From various quarters come reports of increased national tariffs. The protected nations are adding new layers to the Chinese walls which they have erected as barriers to foreign intercourse. The great American Republic which should have been an example to the world in commercial, as it has been in some other kinds of freedom, is now leading the van of modern trade restrictionists. Cablegrams from Paris indicate that the French Republic is likely to outmarch even our American neighbour in the path of commercial unfriendliness and isolation. In Germany, too, the tendency is still towards higher tariffs, as the demands of the insatiable demon of military ambition become constantly greater. Other European nations, with one or two honourable exceptions among the smaller, are following the same general lines. Even the little Argentine Republic on this continent is said to be about attempting to retrieve its squandered fortune by a resort to high taxation. Were it not that Great Britain proudly maintains the grand principle of commercial freedom in the face of the hostile tariffs of the world, thus counteracting to a great degree the restrictive ordinances of the other great nations, it is not easy to see where the blind competition would end. It cannot be denied that the logical tendency of tariffs, verging more and more towards prohibitive limits, is in the direction of non-intercourse. We believe, of course, that the commercial instinct is too deeply rooted, the desire for intercourse with other nations too fully developed to admit of any great trading nation ever again sinking to the level of non-intercourse with other nations, and so dooming its people and its institutions to stagnation and decay. From one point of view it seems almost a pity that Great Britain could not repay her competitors in their own coin by imitating their protective systems, and thereby teaching them practically the obvious truth that hostile tariffs against trading nations tend to counteract each other and leave each nation in the same relative position which it would have occupied under a system of universal free trade, save that the necessities of life would have been made artificially dear. It may be that the apostles of protection in the countries which are adopting higher rates are simply moved to illustrate the old saying, *Quem deus*, etc., and that the first effects of their increased tariffs may be akin to those produced by the McKinley Bill in the United States.

CHRISTMAS is the preacher who emphasizes the fact that the religion which it celebrates is adapted to human nature. Horace is called the laureate of the worldly, of the epicurean, of the pagan who would eat and drink in view of to-morrow. The gay adage *dum vivimus* is cited with a shudder as the gospel of pleasure. Christmas was hunted in the Puritan Parliament as a kind of god of pleasure who was only a masked devil. It was confounded by Governor Bradford with the belly god. But why, said Charles Wesley, as he sweetly sang—why give all the good tunes to Satan? The sweet singer might have enlarged his view and his question. Why give Satan any of the good things? Why, above all, let him have Christmas? —G. W. Curtis.

CHRISTMAS.

The Time draws near the birth of Christ :
The moon is hid : the night is still :
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controlled me when a boy ;
They bring me sorrow touched with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

THE Festival of Christmas has ever been a favourite theme with the poets. It is Christmas—of all the feasts of the year—that inspired the carols, ancient and modern. It is Christmas which called forth the Waits in the dead of the cold night to remind their neighbours of the joyful event which this season ever commemorates. Christmas was sung by one of the greatest, if not the very greatest, of our English poets, in that glorious Ode on the Nativity, which is one of the great and eternal possessions of our literature.

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring :
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

And so it has been sung in strains as sweet, if not as strong, by the Poet of the Christian Year ; and there is no time in all the year, not even the glorious Eastertide itself, when the hearts of Christian worshippers are more deeply thrilled by the emotions which find expression in their songs of praise.

At this season the Gospel comes to every heart and to every home ; and it goes forth from every heart, carrying benedictions to all around. At Christmas we are all Christians ; we cannot escape the spell of its power and charm. It conquers us and makes us long to conquer and to be conquered—to know more and more of the victories which are gained by self-conquest and lowly love.

An English judge once declared that Christianity was part of the law of the land ; and this is true in a sense even higher than that which he intended. For the true law is not that which is merely written in statute books, nor even that common law which is recognized among us as an immemorial usage. The true law is that to which the conscience does homage ; and such is the Law of Christ among the peoples of our race.

But the thought comes to us at Christmastide in a form of greater beauty and tenderness. The Gospel is the Law and the Life of the Family. And it is here that we are most joyfully, thankfully conscious of the presence of the Christ-child ; for here the child has his place and his privileges. In the Great Congregation the eye turns to the little children as they celebrate the Divine child's birth, and grows dim as it gazes upon their sweet youth and hopefulness.

Well may Christmas be a time of "great joy" because of the "glad tidings" which it brings ; for it tells us that we are no longer to think of ourselves as orphans lost in a foreign land, but children who have a Father and a home : a Father who has sent the Son of His Love in our own nature and condition, who has so remembered our weakness, our fearfulness, our hopelessness, that He sent us not one who seemed a mighty warrior, a glorious King, an omniscient and omnipotent Judge—although He was all of this and more in potency—but

Wrapped in His swaddling bands,
And in His manger laid,
The Hope and Glory of all lands
Is come to the world's aid.

And here, amid our Canadian snows, where we have "the winter wild" without and the genial warmth within, we have perhaps a livelier picture of the meaning and the grace of this Christmas season than in the land which heard the songs of the angels on that first "happy day," or the lands in which our forefathers have for centuries celebrated and sung their joyous Nowell. For here around us lie signs of the chill of death which lay heavy upon mankind before the peaceful night

Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began :

whilst here within we have light and warmth from the rays of the sun given back from their imprisonment, never having lost the nature of their source.

The Babe of Bethlehem is the true sweetener of the family and the civilizer of the race. It is He alone who speaks to us of His Father and our Father as One who knows Him and can reveal Him. When we see Him we see the Father. In the accents of His voice the Father's love is thrilling. On the cross the Father's compassion is weeping and bleeding. Yes ! but even here at the manger