

# THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE.

VOL. I.

APRIL, 1893.

No. 2.

## THE NATIONAL STATE.

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It has become customary, in every discussion of the political future of the Dominion of Canada, to assume that one of three distinct paths must be taken. It is generally declared that we must have either Annexation, or Independence, or Imperial Federation. These proposals are assumed to be mutually exclusive, yet they will be found, upon closer examination, to have one fundamental idea in common. It is an idea which not only is receiving more wide-spread attention among the masses of mankind than ever before, but dominates entirely the theoretical discussions, the whole political science of the present day. It is the idea of the nation, and the national state. Are we to form part of a world-wide British *nation*; are we to become absorbed in the American *nation*; or are we to build up a new Canadian *nation* of our own? Such is the language invariably used in stating the problem of our political future. It might possibly serve to clear the way for a satisfactory discussion of what our policy should be, if this idea of the national state were examined a little more closely,—if its origin were investigated, and its exact position in universal history recalled.

A study of the history of political science will show that the political theories of a given epoch are the pro-

duct of the political facts of the few preceding centuries, and that any particular theory of the State will retain its hold upon the minds of political thinkers long after the facts upon which it rests have disappeared and have given place to others, which, in their turn, are far on the way towards the evolution of another theory to correspond with them.

The history of political science begins in the islands and peninsulas of the Ægean Sea. From the earliest times the cities of Greece lived independently of one another. No political bond was ever formed to establish and maintain the unity of Greece. In spite of common religious festivals, and a code of rules by which the various States were supposed to be governed in their relations with one another, each city acted entirely in its own interest, without other restraint than the fear of the military strength of its neighbors. Such being the *facts* of Grecian history, the philosophers, the political scientists of the time, when they came to discuss the theory of government, confined themselves entirely to the *polis* or the City-State. No other conception of political conditions ever entered their minds, for the simple reason that no other conditions had been known in the preceding centuries of Grecian history.