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CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

TOPICS—	PAGE
Mr. Blake on the Situation	231
The Contents of Mr. Blake's Paper	231
What would Mr. Blake Advise?	231
The Result	232
The Reciprocity Treaty	232
A Munificent Gift	232
Some Facts for Thoughtful Canadians	232
Professor Max Muller on the Psyche	232
Education and Political Aspirations in India, W. S. Caine	233
The Situation in Germany	233
ART IN CANADA TO-DAY	233
PARIS LETTER	233
MIDNIGHT. (Poem)	234
OUR LADY OF THE SLUMS	234
A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF AN ANCIENT CANADIAN CITY AND OF THE OLDEST ANGLICAN CHURCH IN CANADA	235
A PLEA FOR OBTRUSION	236
HER GRAVE. (Poem)	236
CONGREGATIONALISM IN CANADA	236
A PREP AT THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT IN SESSION—BY A CANADIAN	237
LADY	238
THE SILVER QUESTION IN THE UNITED STATES	238
TO LOVE IN SILENCE. (Poem)	238
THE HAMBLER	238
CORRESPONDENCE—	
Two New Volumes in American Verse	239
ART NOTES	239
MUSIC AND THE DRAMA	240
OUR LIBRARY TABLE	241
PUBLICATIONS AND PERSONAL GOSSIP	241
READINGS RECEIVED	242
CLASSES	243

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NEXT to the immediate result of the elections, the most important political event of the hour is the publication of the elaborate paper addressed by the Hon. Edward Blake to the Reform Convention of West Durham. The paper was accompanied with a letter declining the nomination for that constituency, and is a statement of the writer's reasons for severing his connection with the Liberal Party and retiring, for the time being, from public life. The considerations which were thought to impose the "sacred confidence" in which the communication was made, having lost their force on polling day, the document is now given to the public. As an expression of the matured convictions of one of the ablest—in the opinion of many, the very ablest man—who has taken part in the public affairs of Canada during the present generation, as well as one of the most high-minded and incorruptible, the views of Mr. Blake are entitled to a consideration such as is due to those of very few, in Parliament or out. That consideration they will be sure to receive as soon as the intense excitement of the contest, which has for the time being obscured all other issues, shall have subsided. As the paper in question covers a pretty wide range, and as the writer has not felt called upon to state clearly, or at any rate, categorically, his views in regard to the course which should be taken by patriotic Canadians in order to extricate their country from the very serious difficulties with which, in his opinion, it is beset on every hand, our first endeavour shall be to ascertain, as clearly as we may be able, the exact import of his dissertation. We shall merely premise further that all must admire the manly conscientiousness which made it impossible for Mr. Blake "to fight under false colours," or with the mental reservations with which, it is to be feared, too many politicians would have soothed their consciences while aiding the friends for whose success they wished. Differences of opinion may, indeed, exist with regard to the moral courage and patriotism, or their opposites, involved in the policy of silence during the contest. But, in justice to Mr. Blake, it must be borne in mind that, from his point of view, the success of the Opposition was to be desired as the less of two evils on the one side; and, on the other, that he thought the time afforded for discussion altogether too short to admit of the fair presentation and consideration of the views or proposals which it seems to have been his intention to put forward had the general election been delayed until its proper time.

THE first section of Mr. Blake's paper indicates that so far from contemplating retirement from public life, it had been his intention to devote the bulk of his time to the service of his country—an intention which, by the way, it may be hoped has not been permanently changed by the unexpected turn of affairs which has led to his present retirement. He goes on to express his opinion that it is desirable in the interest of the country that the Liberal party should maintain and increase its strength, though the issue of unrestricted reciprocity which it has made "the sole party plank" since 1887 he is unable to approve; that in our present political condition a moderate revenue tariff approximating to free trade with all the world and coupled with liberal provisions for reciprocal free trade with the States, would be, if practicable, our best arrangement, but that the high duties rendered necessary as the result of our course for the last thirteen years, on the one side, and the settled policy of the United States to decline a limited reciprocity, on the other, render the best unattainable; that the Canadian Conservative policy has not only failed to accomplish the predictions of its promoters, but has tended towards disintegration and annexation and has left the country groaning under a burden of accumulated evils, financial, political and moral, which are depicted in the darkest colours throughout two very strongly worded paragraphs; but that we still have a goodly land, endowed with vast resources, and inhabited by virtuous and thrifty populations, and that, therefore, "all is not lost." Turning, then, to the various economic schemes which are advanced with a view to the bettering of our condition in the future, Mr. Blake deals with the principal proposals in order. The idea of a British Federationists and others, he dismisses, after brief discussion, with the remarks that he cannot bring himself to believe that Great Britain "will ever decide to tax the bread and beef which sustain the toilers in her industrial hive," and that "it seems difficult to conceive a suggestion which, coming from Canada, would be more calculated than this to alienate British feeling; even though accompanied by the sop of a delusive differential duty in favour of British manufactures." Conceding freely the great benefits that would flow to our country from enlarging our exports to Great Britain and elsewhere beyond the seas, and the desirability of making "every prudent effort" to secure such enlargement, he yet believes that "the results of all such efforts must be far below those to flow from a free market throughout our own continent." Unrestricted reciprocity with the United States would give us in practice the blessing of a measure of free trade much larger than we now enjoy, or can otherwise attain,—would bring us "in three words, men, money and markets," the three great needs of our country. Mr. Blake then proceeds to show by an array of arguments which are powerfully presented, though with most of them we are already familiar, that there can be little or no hope of unrestricted reciprocity save on conditions which would be scarcely distinguishable from commercial union, which is "perhaps, the only available plan." But, for obvious reasons, commercial union without some security for permanence would fail to secure the full measure of benefit to Canadian agriculture and the full development of manufacturing and other interests. Permanence is essential to success. Again, commercial union, in spite of high political advantages it would secure to the United Kingdom, would be taken in bad part by the manufacturing interests and other important elements of the population of the Mother Country, and would seriously affect the present tone and feeling in regard to the colonial relation. In Canada, itself, the tendency would be toward political union with the United States. In the United States, while perhaps 50,000,000 of the total population know little, and care less, about free trade with Canada, there is an underlying feeling, deep-seated and widespread, that "some day, sooner or later, a political re-organization of the continent should and must take place; not by force, but by the free consent of its inhabitants." Hence, while it is not absolutely certain that our neighbours would, under existing circumstances, enter into a treaty for unrestricted reciprocity, it is certain that the treaty once made, the vantage ground it would give in various ways which are hinted at or specified, would

naturally be used for the accomplishment of the ulterior purpose of bringing about the unification of the continent.

WHAT, then, is, or would be, were he now at the head of the Liberal party, Mr. Blake's policy? This is a question which, from one point of view, it may seem hardly fair to press in the way of attempting to elicit an answer from his paper, seeing that he more or less explicitly declines to add "any speculations of his own," or to "epitomize the many points which occur upon the several projects for federation with the United Kingdom, for independence, and for political union with the States; all of which are thought to have once been, or still to remain, open in some sense to our choice." And yet this is the question to which, above all others, the many who have been accustomed to look to Mr. Blake for light and guidance, or at least to attach great weight to his opinions as those of one of the clearest, most judicious and most judicial of Canadian thinkers and statesmen, would like a specific answer. We are, we trust, sincerely anxious to do him no injustice by holding him responsible for opinions which he has not explicitly declared; yet it seems to us that no one can carefully follow the course and trend of his whole argument without being convinced that, so far as it is valid, it shuts us up to the conclusion we have above stated, viz.: that political union with the United States is the best if not the only possible escape from the complicated difficulties of the present situation. This is a startling conclusion. We should most gladly see it repudiated on good authority. We should much prefer to be able so to interpret the context as to feel warranted in giving a strong emphasis and a deep significance to the following sentence:—

But next to though much less warmly than political union, they (the people of the United States) would favour Canadian independence; and it is quite possible that in connection with such a policy advantageous international arrangements on various most important points not here brought into discussion might be secured.

But when Mr. Blake can see nothing but disintegration and annexation in the present Conservative policy; when he regards a revenue tax for all the world and restricted reciprocity with the United States—the best policy—as both impracticable and unattainable; when he is persuaded that the sole condition which could make Imperial Federation useful in delivering our country from the slough of despond in which it appears to his eyes to be floundering, is one to which the people of the Mother Country will never consent; when he can dismiss the idea of future independence, which is the hope and inspiration of many young Canadians, in a single sentence; when he can see in unrestricted reciprocity nothing but commercial union, and in commercial union only the prelude to political union; and when the chief objection he has to urge against such a consummation lies, so far as appears, not against the thing itself, but against our thereby allowing our future to be settled "by accident, or unwittingly; by sidewinds or the inglorious policy of drift," instead of choosing it with careful forethought and moving towards it with deliberate purpose—it is certainly not easy to reach any other conclusion than that he, for one, is prepared at least to consider favourably the more direct and deliberate mode of procedure towards an end which the stress of his reasoning goes to present as well nigh inevitable. We say this, not as deprecating or denying the right of loyal Canadians to advocate boldly whatever policy they may believe to be the best for their country. Deep and abiding as is our faith in the ability and purpose of Canadians to carve out a worthy future for their country as a distinct and independent American nation, we recognize as a birthright the fullest liberty of speech in all matters pertaining to her welfare. Nevertheless we have, we must confess, wondered not a little at the way in which Mr. Blake's paper has been received by the loyalist press. Whatever its author's real opinions and purpose, it is a paper which will, in our opinion, do more to encourage whatever of annexationist sentiment there may be in the country than anything that has before been said or written. We venture to hope that Mr. Blake may see it his duty to supplement this negative document at an early day with an explicit, positive declaration of his opinions