

OUR NORTH-WEST.

No. III.

There are always two sides to a question. "A British Immigrant," in his views upon the future destiny of Canada, has given us decidedly the darker side of the picture, placing those citizens of our Dominion who take a really deep interest in her welfare, in the somewhat unpleasant position of being forced to accept one of two alternatives,—either, on the one hand, to resign the country which they love to certain and speedy ruin, both national and commercial, or else, on the other hand, to bow in humble submission to the arrogant assumptions of the Monroe Doctrine, and to yield up the fairest jewel in Britain's Crown to the hungry maw of Uncle Sam. Now, in regard to the great question of Annexation, I do not feel myself in a position to pronounce an opinion; but I should wish, in this article, to present to the readers of the SPECTATOR a few thoughts in regard to the great North-West which may have some bearing upon the important question of Canada's future destiny, and which may possibly point to somewhat more encouraging conclusions than those arrived at by the author of the pamphlet under discussion. And, first, we are referred (and that with every appearance of reason) to the immense expense of Government in proportion to the total population of the Dominion. Now, it is manifest that one method of diminishing the *proportional* expense of central government is by increasing the population which shall share in it. The same, or nearly the same, governing body which administers the Federal Government of *six* Provinces would administer those of *twelve*. No one who has even the most general knowledge of the magnificent North-Western possession of Canada will doubt that there is capacity for half a dozen Provinces between the Red River and the Rocky Mountains. Take the valley of the Peace River alone. There we have a most magnificent stretch of country, equalling in area the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec put together, with land of almost unbroken fertility, growing wheat of as fine a quality as any to be found on this Continent, possessing a climate which has been proved by records carefully kept to be not a whit more severe than that of Ottawa or Montreal, containing within its borders unlimited deposits of coal and iron, and, in fine, a country holding out every prospect of becoming the very garden of America. Now, it will at once be evident, that should we fill up even this one portion of our North-West with the population which it is capable of sustaining, a very large addition would be made to the sum total of the tax-payers of the Dominion, and the burden rendered proportionally lighter upon the whole population of Canada. And this remark will apply to the whole question of North-West settlement. Let Canada fill up the great river valleys and fertile prairies of the West with an industrious and productive population; let her take every measure to induce a vigorous and extensive immigration to the North-West, and in a few years the people of the older provinces would feel their own burdens lightened by having so many more fellow citizens to share them. There are other considerations, however, which should make the development and settlement of our prairie lands one of the chief questions which should engage the earnest attention of all thoughtful and patriotic Canadians.

To any one comparing the wheat averages of Ontario and Quebec fifty years ago with those of the last five years, it must at once become apparent that, as a whole, the farming land of those provinces is being worked out. Farming, as a business, has been for the most part in the hands of exceedingly small capitalists. The capital which, during the past half century, the average Ontario farmer has had at his control has, as a rule, been barely sufficient to carry on the work of the farm and to provide for the requirements of his family. The land of those two provinces has, therefore, been almost entirely without that high and expensive cultivation which the great landowners and gentlemen farmers of England and Scotland are enabled to bestow upon their farms by reason of their possession of extensive capital, the land has therefore run down, and is becoming each year more and more unfit for the cultivation of wheat. To what does this point? Evidently to the conclusion that Ontario and Quebec must, like the Eastern States of the Union, look to their manufactures for the building up of their future greatness. And many other circumstances point to this same conclusion. With coal procurable at four dollars a ton, as it is at present in Toronto; with a water-way of lake, river and canal nearly along her whole length, and touching her at nearly every point; with living as cheap as it actually is throughout the whole country, and with a large merchant-fleet to carry off her products to other markets, there surely ought to be nothing to prevent Eastern Canada from rising to a high and prosperous position as a manufacturing community. There is one thing, however, for which it is absolutely necessary that she should provide, and that is—cheap food. One of the chief reasons why American manufacturers have been able of late years to compete so successfully with England is, that they have in their own Western States, almost at their very doors, well nigh inex-

haustible granaries, while England has to draw *her* supply of food from such immense distances as America and India. Now, the veriest tyro in political economy will perceive at once that the cost of bread and meat is one of the most important factors which enter into the total price at which manufactured goods can be turned out.

Feed your labourers cheaply and you can turn out cheap goods; let them be obliged to pay high prices for the staples of life, and the increase in cost *must* in the end find its way into the price of the manufactured article. It will be easily perceived how these considerations bear upon the questions before us. It is manifestly the interest of Eastern Canada to provide, in the fertile plains of her own North-West, rich storehouses of breadstuffs, from which her manufacturing classes can always draw abundant supplies of the staples of existence at a reasonable rate. Therefore, rising to no higher point of view than that of mere self-interest, it would appear to be the bounden duty of the Eastern Provinces to lend their every effort to the opening up of the great wheat lands of the West, and to the providing as close and direct a communication as is possible between them, and the centres of commerce and manufactures in the older parts of the Dominion, and in this connection another consideration will naturally suggest itself. Let the great prairies of the West be once filled with a large and industrious population, and the manufacturer will be supplied with a home market for other goods. Why should Canada look *abroad* for markets when she could build up, in the rich corn lands of *her own* territory, a population which would readily consume all that her manufacturers had to sell? Why need the *commerce* of Canada languish and die out for want of fields in which to exercise itself, when a judicious and far-sighted policy could make the whole North-West, from the Red River to the Rocky Mountains, and from the boundary line to the valley of the Peace River and the slopes of the far Mackenzie, *our* great market for the wholesale emporium of Eastern Canada? I trust that I shall not be deemed a fond enthusiast or a day dreamer because, knowing as I do something of the richness of that priceless treasure which Canada acquired when her rulers purchased for her the great North-West, I look forward to a brighter future for the land of my birth than does the writer to whom I have had occasion to refer. But this I *do* believe, that upon the views which Canada and Canadians shall take of the opening up of the North-West depends the solution of the question whether Canada shall remain a handful of provinces, struggling ever with the difficulties which must attend a country of small resources and large hopes, or whether she shall yet become a mighty *nation*, climbing ever higher and yet higher in the fulfilment of a great and noble destiny. That grave mistakes have been made in the past history of our country, none will acknowledge more readily than myself. That serious difficulties lie along her path in the future, no one who has at all considered the question can doubt; but that national extinction (for that is really what annexation means) is the only fate to which true hearted and loyal Canadians have to look forward, is surely a conclusion from which, as a humble but devoted son of my country, I may be allowed to shrink. Let Canada be but true to herself and all will yet be well. Let Canadians but believe in *themselves* and in the great destiny of that country which they love to call their own; let a common earnestness of national purpose, and a deep regard for national honour be the great underlying principles of our national life; above all, throughout all the land, from the far off Pacific slopes of the Atlantic shore, let there run the strong and binding cord of a true national, Canadian sentiment, the merging of individual peculiarities of race or creed in a deep love for our common country; let this be so, and ere long shall come a time when Canada shall occupy as proud a position in the muster roll of nations as even the most enthusiastic of her sons could desire for her; a time when the fact of being a Canadian shall be as a crown of glory upon the heads of the sons and daughters of our Dominion; a time when the name of Canadian shall be a name of honoured renown the world over.

And in this noble future to which we look forward for our country, the great North-West will surely play no unimportant part. We are small as yet; although over 12,000 people have come into the North-West since last March, this is as nothing compared to the immigration which it may reasonably be expected that a few years will bring us. We have felt as yet only the first drops of that great torrent of human life that shall ere long fill to overflowing the great valleys of the West. As yet we hear only

"The tread of pioneers, of nations yet to be,
The first low wash of waves, where soon shall roll a human sea."

With millions upon millions of acres of soil, the richest in the world; with water communication, which with very little expense, could be made to stretch on one side to the Hudson's Bay, and on the other, well nigh to the Rocky Mountains; with a climate as healthy as any to be found in the world; with coal measures of immense extent, and with ever increasing railroad facilities, what future is too great to be imagined for this portion of our Dominion. I believe that in these views I am not indulging in vague and visionary day dreams, but that I have confined myself within the moderate bounds of a sober expectation and a reasonable hope. I trust in future articles to give such details in regard to the North-West as may possibly serve to justify the opinions which I have here advanced.

Canadian.