

personal fitness and territorial or sectional representation. When a man is mentioned for a cabinet position the question is usually "Is he an eastern man, a western man, a northern man, a silver man, a gold man, &c."

Under responsible government the first question is "Is he a Methodist," "Is he a Presbyterian," "Is he a Catholic," "Is he a Congregationalist," "Is he a Quaker, or an Orangeman." These questions are discussed by the cross roads politicians and newspapers who control the Federal Government, as if there were no other object than beating the air in a hopeless endeavor to unite in one harmonious whole, the representatives of religious and sectarian hatred and bitterness; when the only true, safe and strife-quelling policy is for the state to ignore completely the existence of all creeds and denominations and devote itself on behalf of all the people to the purely secular affairs of this world.

Responsible government is bad enough in England where absolute sovereign legislative powers exist. But the evil is intensified in Canada where we are tied up to an absurdly defective written instrument for a constitution; I refer to the Act of Confederation, called "The British North America Act," passed by the Parliament of Great Britain. The powers of the Dominion Parliament and all of the Provincial legislatures are very vaguely defined and set out in that Act.

Our constitution is supposed to be modelled upon yours, but we attempted the impossible, as oil and water will maintain a separate and complete existence however much you may agitate or churn them together; so we have found that monarchy, aristocracy and democracy will not amalgamate. Cowper realized this long ago when he said:

"Courtier and Patriot cannot mix  
Their heterogeneous politics  
Without an effervescence  
Like that of salts and lemon juice  
Which does not yet like that produce  
A friendly coalescence."

And I have thought that the only defect in the workings of your institutions is seen when you attempt to mix these elements, for you have them here in a lesser degree under different names. "Privilege" dies hard.

I have said that the Canadian difficulty is from within, and so it is, for all we have to do is to agree among ourselves as to what we want, which is not always an easy thing to do, and the Parliament of Great Britain will amend the British North America Act in any direction we may desire; but you know how hard it is to get an amendment to the United States constitution when you are right on the ground and have the enacting power absolutely in your own hands; there are so many interests to consult and protect. It is far more difficult with us for that Act is twenty-five years old this year and we have not had the first amendment yet, unless to correct some self-evident clerical error or omission, and I have no knowledge of even that. What an unnatural instrument that must be when it requires no amendment!

"Look abroad on nature's range  
Nature's mighty law is changed."

and yet we have been in this one miserable rut for a quarter of a century without deviation.

"It is not enough to win rights from a King  
And write them down in a book.  
New men, new lights and the father's code  
The sons may never brook.  
What is liberty now were looness then; their  
freedom our yoke would be.  
And each new decade must have new men  
to determine its liberty."

The politicians know a thing or two. They keep us busy with internal, external and eternal revenue laws. We elect men to put certain kinds of fruit and other necessities of life on the free import list and the broad souled, high minded (?) statesman who control our customs department thwart the spirit of the law by taxing the baskets that the fruit is shipped in.

An old man in a place where I once lived was asked by an honest, industrious, worthy fellow for a job shingling a barn; the old miser replied: "You can't shingle the barn in the rain." The young man answered: "No, Mr. Thomas, I will do the work when the weather is dry." The old man hobbled off saying: "The barn don't need shingling when it's dry."

And so with our constitution. We elect a House for the purpose of bringing about some great reform; after the election is over and the Reform Bill passed, the discovery is made that there is no provision for such legislation in the British North America Act. The matter is taken to the Supreme Court to test its validity and from there it almost invariably goes to the Privy Council of England, this takes two or three years, and the measure is eventually disallowed. By this time the people have had several bad crops and following that disaster comes commercial depression and then the struggle for bread and the wherewith to pay taxes drives mere questions of principle into the shade for another decade and then we begin again and repeat history for the benefit of a new generation.

The conditions of life have entirely changed during the past few hundred years, and a system of government designed to hold a King in check after having been shorn of all prerogative is a very inadequate and defective system to protect the people from the abuses of their representatives. Our watchword now is "save us from our friends." In all human governments there is more or less corruption. Imagine if you can the state of things if the administration at Washington, instead of being elected for a term of years as it is, were dependent for its existence from hour to hour upon the will and pleasure of a majority of the House of Representatives. Suppose the administration possessed the confidence of that House by a majority of fifteen, quite a sufficient majority for all practical governmental purposes; you see at once that the fate of the administration would be in the hands of any eight of its supporters, for the desertion of eight to the opposition would obliterate a majority of fifteen and leave the administration in a minority of one, and in that event the President and his cabinet under our system would be forced to resign. Just follow a little further. Think of some small State, we will say New Jersey, suppose her congressional delegation should wait upon the Secretary of the Navy and say: "We want a navy yard established in our State." The Secretary would probably inform the deputation that the Federal authorities had more navy yards now than it could use to advantage. Would the deputation meekly bow themselves out and quietly acquiesce in the Secretary's remarks? Not by any means. They would probably state, though not in so many words: "We came here to secure the establishment of a navy yard in New Jersey, and not to get your views on the subject, if this administration does not see fit to establish it we will mighty soon install one that will." Of course which ever party happened to be out of office would gladly pay that or any other price out of the public chest in order to occupy the treasury benches.

When New Jersey is satisfied Oregon makes a demand for a land grant to some of her favored