

general welfare of the whole country without the sad feeling that if any small province chose to take offence at it, the responsibility of any disruption which might ensue would be laid on his Viceregal shoulders. No one of any position would accept the office. This is only one of the incongruities of such a Federation as may possibly be pressed upon us by our wise men. If we are not anxious for permanent Union, let us say so, and accept with gratitude the little boon which we are told is within our reach. In this case however, we must not delude ourselves into the belief that we are going to become a great people. If, on the other hand, a real permanent Union is what we desire, let us say so, and examine carefully the conduct of our self-appointed representatives. Let us see whether a closer union by a little more pains-taking could have been obtained. Let us see whether they fairly represented the public feeling of the country, and if they have not done so, be prepared to resist their measures. Let us not be hurried into a Federal Union, when we wish for a Legislative one, merely because the leaders of our two political parties are in favor of the former, or too poor spirited to press for the latter. Let our whole people bestir themselves in this matter. Let the questions involved be turned over and over, until every different opinion on their merits, has had a fair share of consideration. Let us forget for a few moments the little jealousies which have hitherto furnished us with political excitement, and give our attention to the most important question which the people of Nova Scotia have ever been called upon to decide.

#### PUBLIC OPINION.

It would be very difficult to define what is meant, in a thinly populated colony, by the expression "public opinion." In most European countries public opinion makes itself heard, and in England it governs the country—absolutely and despotically. The English government is, as has often been remarked, the most republican government in the world. The meaning which, in England, virtually attaches to the words "constitutional monarchy" is—government according to the common sense of the people. Let the English people really want a measure and they will have it. They wanted Corn Law Repeal, Catholic Emancipation, and Reform,—and they got them all. Upon all great questions of real importance, public opinion in England carries the day, and it is from a well understood knowledge of this fact, that in matters of secondary importance the English people are content to hold their tongues and trust to the wisdom of their rulers.

What is public opinion worth in this Province? How is it expressed—does it ever make itself heard—do the people care to form any opinion upon great political questions, or if so caring, do they take the trouble to give their opinions publicity? Really, these are questions very difficult to answer. We are now on the eve of a measure, more important to the people of this Province, than was Parliamentary Reform to the people of Great Britain, and yet, up to the present time, the bulk of our people have not even expressed an opinion upon any one of the many questions connected with Intercolonial Union. We confess ourselves surprised at this extraordinary apathy regarding a question, the issues of which are so important. It may be urged that the question will, in due course of time, come before the representatives of the people. Very true. But are we on this account to sit idly down and remain mute on the matter. Constituted as the Assembly now is, the Opposition is feeble in the extreme. That the body of the people, as represented in the Lower House, are with the Government, is a self-evident fact; but the questions whereon the Conservatives gained popularity are very far removed from the questions involved in the contemplated Union of the Provinces. It is one thing to elect a member with reference to a small local question, but it is another thing to trust him as the exponent of views which have never been discussed throughout the Province. The fact of a man holding popular views upon a question relating to a railroad, or

to the elective franchise, does not necessarily invest him with popular views upon a new and more comprehensive question. The questions debated at the late Conference were not mere party questions, about which the people have heard all that can be urged on either side;—were such the case, our apathy might be accounted for in divers ways. When we elect a representative pledged to vote for railway extension, we are not willing to quarrel with him because his views are opposed to ours upon a sewerage bill. But, on the other hand, although pledged to railway extension, we may be very much disposed to quarrel with him, should his views clash with ours upon a newly proposed Federation scheme. And the reason for this is not that we deem railway extension in itself unimportant, but that we deem a Federation scheme far more important. We love not Caesar less, but we love Rome more. Let us for a moment glance at some of the issues which the Union question opens up. Shall the Union be Federal, or Legislative; shall we, or shall we not, in case of Federation, nominate our own Lieutenant-Governor; shall we reconstruct our Legislative Council; what men shall we elect to represent us in the United Assembly; those, and many other questions, are, each and all, far more important than the questions whereon our present Representatives have been elected. A man, ambitious of winning fame in the United Assembly, might think proper to ignore altogether the local interests which he had been elected to look especially after. What would his constituents say in such a case? They might, and probably would, charge him with having betrayed his charge. But his answer would be simple. He would probably say—"Gentlemen—You did me the honor to choose me as your Representative, at a time when your special interests were dearer to me than ought else. But times have changed, and I feel assured that in acting as I have recently done, I have in reality advanced your interests more—far more—than had I voted in accordance with the principles enunciated when last I addressed you from the hustings. Gentlemen, you must not forget that you are now citizens of a vast commonwealth—you are no longer merely Nova Scotians—you are BRITISH AMERICANS—and in endeavouring to promote what—in my poor judgment—seems the welfare of BRITISH AMERICA, I can honestly declare that I acted with the most perfect good faith. You may not at present, Gentlemen, clearly comprehend the motives which led me to vote as I have voted, and to speak as I have spoken—but posterity will judge me aright, and to posterity I shall confidently appeal. You tell me, Gentlemen, that I have acted contrary to your wishes,—but remember that, up to the present moment, I have been ignorant of your views upon this—the first great measure discussed in the United Assembly—*You never took the trouble to make your sentiments known.* Gentlemen, you look abashed. You knew, many months ago, through the medium of the Press, that certain questions of the gravest importance—questions vitally affecting your well being, and the happiness of your lives from day to day—were being settled for you, and you were content to let matters take their course. You have sown the wind, you are reaping the whirlwind. You thought proper to shut your eyes, and—to use an expression familiar to most of you—you bought a pig in a poke! I ask you, Gentlemen, am I to blame in the matter? *Your own silence has been the cause of your present disquietude—a disquietude, gentlemen which will, I feel assured, prove but temporary.*"

This may prove no exaggeration. We are in complete ignorance of the opinions entertained about the issue of Union. The Press has spoken, but the people have not. What we want is, not only the opinions of the Press, or of the delegates, or of politicians, but of such of the people as have a stake at issue other than that of party interest, or personal ambition. We have already stated that the Union question, great in itself, involves other questions, each and all as important to us as was Reform to the people of Great Britain. Let us pause awhile, and consider how public opinion makes itself known in England. A great question is, during the recess, mooted by a Cabinet Minister, and commented upon by the leading Government organs. Next day, the *Times* puts forth one of those cautiously worded articles, familiarly termed "feelers." Then, from all parts of England, Ireland, and Scotland, come letters addressed to the *Times*. A wealthy Hampshire farmer, sends to the *Times* his opinions on the matter, in its relation to the laborers upon his

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