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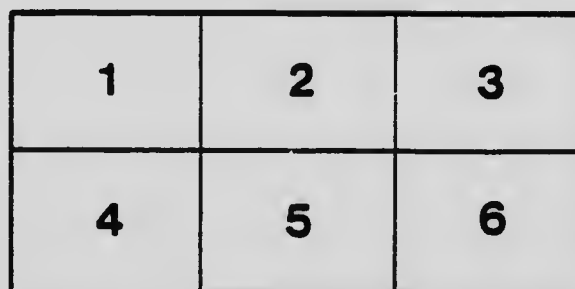
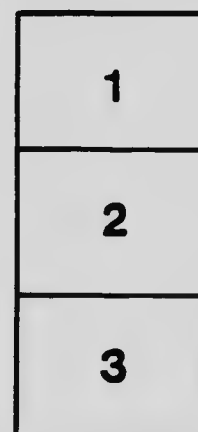
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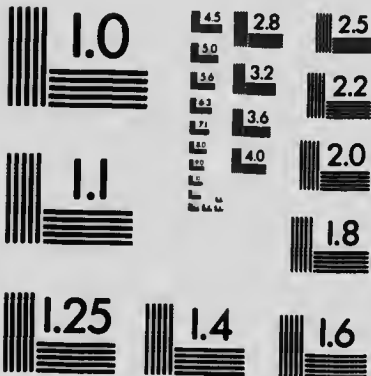
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HENRI BOURASSA

AND

# The Future of Canada

By A. G. G.

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Reproduced from *The Daily News and Leader, London,*  
June 27th, 1914



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# HENRI BOURASSA AND THE FUTURE OF CANADA

By A. G. G.

IN THE

*Daily News and Leader*, London, England

(JUNE 27th, 1914)

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Perhaps the most interesting figure to be met with in London to-day is Mr. Henri Bourassa, the leader of the French Canadians, who is on one of his not infrequent visits to Europe. "When I die", Sir Wilfrid Laurier is declared to have said long ago, "Mr. Bourassa will be king in Quebec". He is king in Quebec already. It was the desertion of the French Canadians who dominate Quebec from his standard at the last election which was largely responsible for the downfall of Sir Wilfrid and that desertion was due to the influence of Mr. Bourassa.

It is not difficult to understand that influence in the presence of this alert and engaging Frenchman. He has not of course the grand air of Sir Wilfrid who as someone said is "a picture gallery all to himself". But then there is no one in the English-speaking world to-day with the grand air of Sir Wilfrid, no one who comes trailing such clouds of glory from the past. He is not "a book in breeches", as Macaulay said of Sidney Smith; but a poem in a frock-coat. And if Mr. Bourassa is without the eighteenth century savour which gives such dignity and repose to the elder statesman, neither has he the enigmatic quality which always leaves one wondering what is the thought behind Sir Wilfrid's grave and gracious manner.

You will not be long in doubt as to Mr. Bourassa's thought. He cultivates no discreet and perplexing silence, but talks with the eager enthusiasm of a full and untrammelled mind. In repose the face is not distinguished; but in conversation it becomes extraordinarily animated and is lit up by a quick responsive smile, which is rendered a little whimsical by the habit of screwing up the left eye while the right, wide open, gleams with intelligence and high spirits. His pronunciation, unlike that of Sir Wilfrid, is entirely free from the American accent, but it is more reminiscent of his native French than the speech of Sir Wilfrid, in whose English there is no hint of the fact that he did not speak it until he was eighteen.

### THE THREE CANADAS

But it is the impetus of mind, the strength of conviction and the high character of the man, rather than the externals of manner, that are the source of the impression he conveys. Obviously, here is one who has to be reckoned with in forecasting the future of Canada. Able, resolute, disinterested, clear and decisive in his opinions, the master of perhaps the most solid phalanx in Canadian politics—it is important that we should ascertain what he is out after, to what sentiment of patriotism and to what ideal of government he is attached, if we would understand the drift of events. For the future of Canada is not the least obscure and perplexing of the many problems affecting the future of the British Empire. Everywhere the artificiality of that structure is to-day becoming apparent, everywhere we are confronted with difficulties that seem insoluble. Directly a test question like that of citizenship is applied the unreality of the position is apparent. We call the Indians our fellow subjects, but when they ask for admission to a British colony we have no power to support their claim and every British port is closed against them.

And nowhere is the Imperial position more delicate than in Canada. The Dominion to begin with is not a unit. There are at least three Canadas, that of the East where the population is predominantly French and Catholic, that of Ontario where the British sentiment prevails, and that of the West,



where a stream of immigration is pouring into the country from the United States. The question here is not merely whether Canada will remain under the British flag; it is whether Canada will remain Canada. The influences that are playing upon the Dominion are not so much cohesive as separatist. The industrial East wants Protection; the agricultural West wants Free Trade. The East opposes reciprocity with the United States; the West wants it.

### THE AMERICAN INVASION

There is no common bond of sentiment, of speech or of commercial interest between the Frenchman in Quebec, the Englishman in Ontario, and the American in the West, and in the absence of such a bond there is no counter attraction to the enormous magnet that lies to the South. America's newspapers flood Canada; its ideas are the common property of Canada; even its accent is triumphant in Canada. Sir Wilfrid Laurier or Mr. Hamar Greenwood talks as pure American as Mr. Bryan. Before the Canadian of the West touches English soil he has to cross a continent and toss about on the sea for a week. He goes into the United States, and there is nothing to remind him that he has left his own country. Commerce is largely one, and the railway systems are closely related. J. Hill himself, the greatest railway potentate of the continent, began his high-soaring career as a mud clerk at a little wayside Canadian station. Labour is indivisible. It flows across the border without restraint, almost without consciousness that there is a border, and the trade union organisation of the United States applies equally to Canada.

What competition can this little island, two thousand miles away, absorbed in the affairs of the old world, offer to the appeal of that vast community which, for the most part, is only separated from Canada by an arbitrary line? By what sorcery can we prevent the flow of trade and interest taking its irresistible course? We might as well try to take the earth out of the orbit of the sun as to take Canada out of the orbit of the United States. These things are beyond the range of political ingenuities, tariffs, and the like. They

are rooted in the bedrock of facts, and you can no more shift them than you can shift the equator.

What will be the influence of all this upon the political future of the country? Will the diversity of interest result in the separation of East and West, will Canada, in spite of itself, become absorbed in the United States, or will it retain its independence, and, if so, will it be independence under the British hegemony, or outside it? Whatever the answer which time and events make to these questions, we know that it will not be governed by sentimental considerations. It will be dictated by practical necessities.

### AUSTRALIA & CANADA : A CONTRAST.

But it is true nevertheless that the ultimate destiny of Canada must be affected by the direction which is given to its political movement now. It must be borne in mind that the bond between England and Canada is very much slighter than that between England and Australia. Not only is the population of Australia almost entirely British, while that of Canada is composed of French, British, and Americans, but the isolation of Australia is an even more important differential fact. If Australia passed from under the British flag to-day it would have to face to-morrow the greatest problem of defence that ever confronted any modern State. It would be alone in the Pacific, a small people in the possession of a vast estate, accessible to very powerful and warlike peoples, and with a coastline of enormous extent and vulnerable character. The British connection, in a word, is vital to its security.

The case is far otherwise with Canada. Its shield against attack is not the British Navy, but the Monroe doctrine. That is a fact of which Mr. Bourassa will promptly remind you if you suggest that the safety of Canada is dependent upon the arm of Britain, and it is a fact about which there can be no controversy. So long as the Monroe doctrine stands there can be no attack on Canada which would not have to meet the whole might of the United States. The only attack that could be made would be from the United States itself and if that were possible—which happily it is not—it is obvious that Great

Britain could not offer Canada any effective help. It would be overrun in a week. From the point of view of defence, therefore, it is clear that Canada, unlike Australia, is independent of us.

### Mr. BOURASSA & SIR WILFRID

It is this fact and the diversity of the population and interest which make a high Imperialistic policy in Canada so difficult to maintain. And it is the Imperialist policy which Mr. Bourassa believes to be the chief menace to the British connection. Perhaps this may seem an odd concern to attribute to him. It will be said by his opponents that he is against the British connection and for an independent French Canada. It is true that that was the aim of Mercier twenty years ago, and it is true also that some of Mr. Bourassa's actions may be construed into a similar purpose. For example, he first raised his flag against Sir Wilfrid Laurier on the question of sending a Canadian contingent to the Boer War. Sir Wilfrid had pursued a characteristically astute policy on the subject, resisting the idea at first in order to placate his French supporters in Quebec and then yielding to an apparently strong pressure. From that moment he had to reckon with his lieutenant as his most unrelenting foe. And when finally Mr. Bourassa threw in his lot with Mr. Borden and the Conservatives, Sir Wilfrid's fate was sealed. It was not that the Nationalist loved Mr. Borden more than Sir Wilfrid, but that he feared him less. He was frankly opportunist. He knew that the Borden scheme of a money contribution to the British Navy could never be carried and he knew also that the Laurier scheme of a Canadian Navy could be carried, and as he wanted no navy he threw in his lot with the party who asked for something which was impossible.

### HIS AIM

But in spite of all this he would claim, and I think sincerely, that he is the true defender of the British connection, and that its enemies are those who force Imperialism upon Canada. He wants the British connection, not because he has any sentiment-

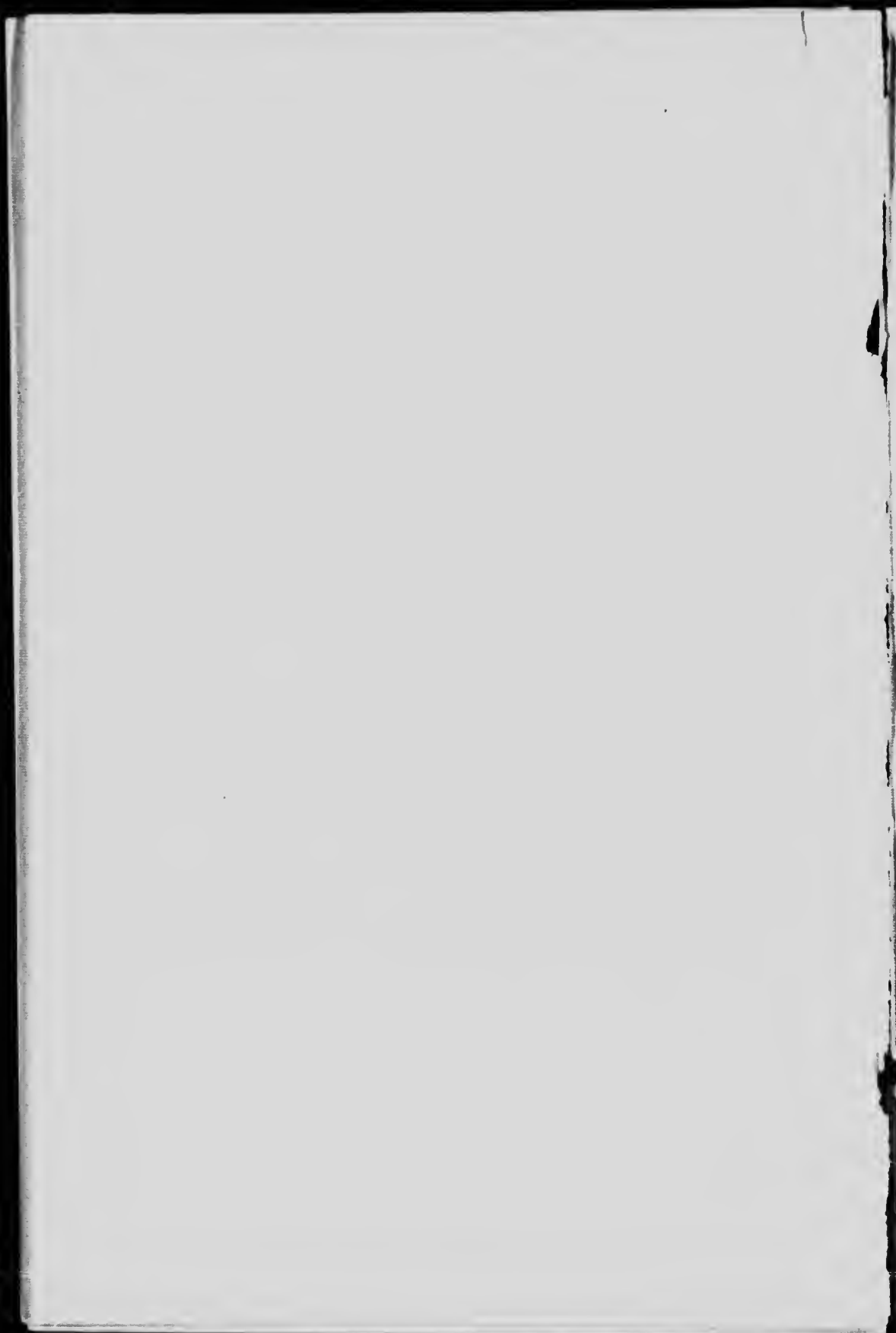
tal affection for England, but because he stands for an independent Canada and finds that independence most effectively secured under British institutions. He admires English forms of government and the English sense of liberty and he wants to preserve them. And he will tell you as a significant fact that Quebec is the province least influenced by its proximity to America. No doubt that is in some degree due to the language factor which prevents the journals of the United States finding much favour among the French-speaking people of Quebec. But the language explanation does not cover the whole ground, for he asserts, that the farther west you travel the fainter becomes the allegiance to England. Quebec is more Canadian and more British than Montreal, Montreal than Toronto, Toronto than Winnipeg.

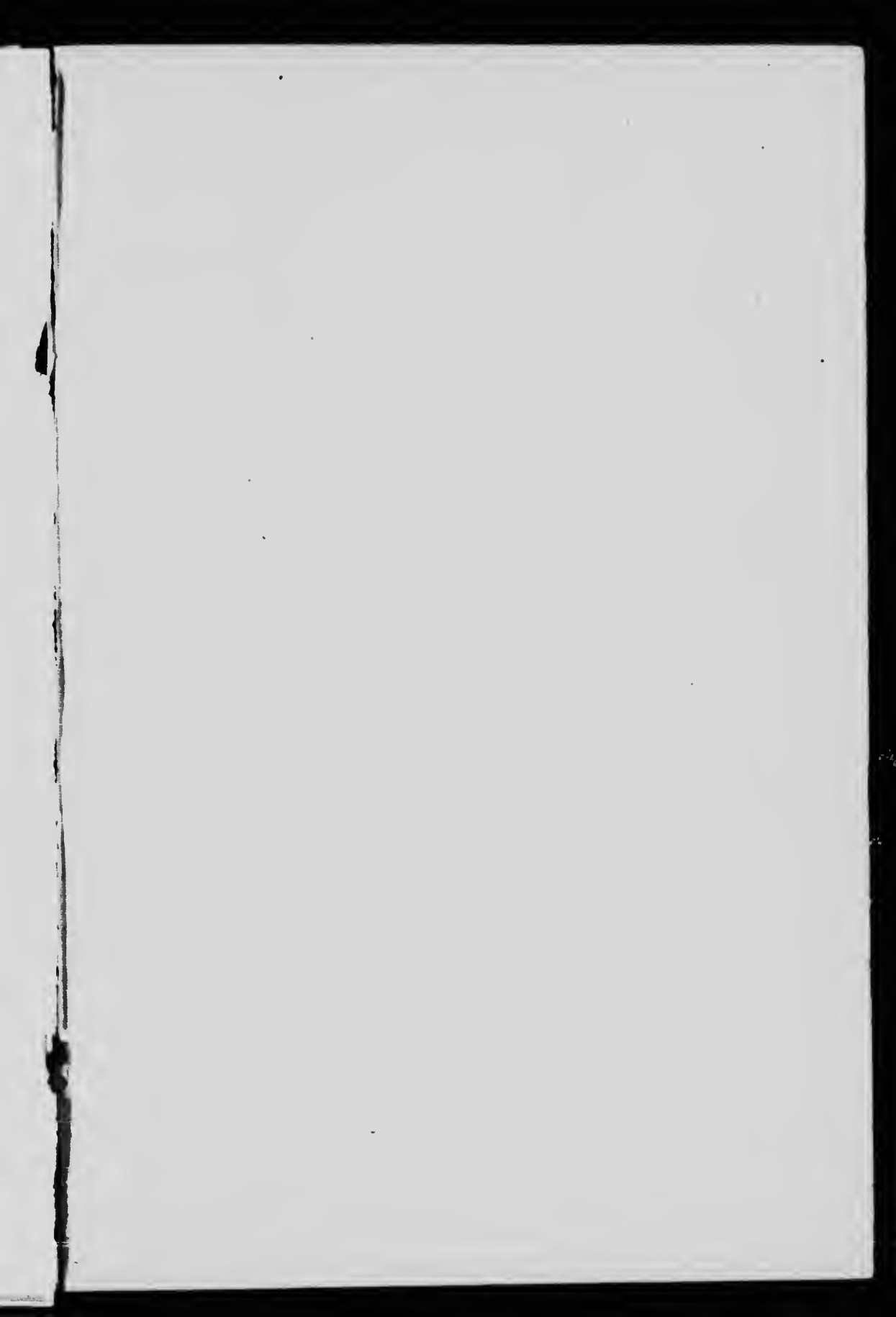
Now from this diminishing influence of England as we advance Westward, Mr. Bourassa deduces the obvious conclusion that any attempt to impose Imperialism on Canada will not only destroy the British connection but smash Canada. It has been seen that the links that bind East and West are, as the result of deep seated conditions, extremely fragile. They may hold so long as the British connection is just sufficient to preserve a common interest; they will snap directly it is attempted to convert that connection into a relationship which will qualify Canadian independence in the slightest degree, or influence Canadian policy on home affairs. Now Mr. Bourassa doesn't want them to snap. He wants Canada to remain at once entire and independent. Hence his fierce antagonism to Imperialism. To put the matter quite brutally, he wants the British connection only in order to make his country politically independent of Great Britain, of the United States, and of everyone else. It is not a very substantial allegiance; but we must not look for too much from Frenchmen and Americans who after all owe little to us and do not even need our arms to defend them. In the long run, it is probable that the Nationalist policy of Mr. Bourassa will be more effective in keeping the British flag flying in Canada than the Imperialist policy of Mr. Borden, which if carried into effect would leave both the French East and the American West in revolt against the intrusion of English interests in Canadian affairs.

## IF THE BRITISH FRIGATE GOES DOWN

Let us face the crude truth about Canada and the Empire. We do not hold it by force, or by superior interests, or even by sentiment. We hold it because the arrangement suits Canada. On the day that it ceased to suit Canada it would cease to exist. And on the morrow of that day the independence and the unity of Canada would cease also. The separatist elements that are so apparent even now would bring disruption. Perhaps the whole Dominion would fall like a ripe plum into the basket of Uncle Sam. More likely the West would be absorbed by America and the French of Quebec would form an independent enclave outside the Union. That was the dream of Mercier. If his ideal of a Nationalist Canada, united and independent, fails, that will be the dream of Mr. Bourassa, too, for he said long ago that if the English frigate goes down his object will be to prevent the wreckage, so far as Quebec is concerned, falling to the American corsair. There is no reason why the British frigate should go down if the British Admiralty will avoid the repetition of recent follies.











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# The Foreign Policy

— OF —

## Great Britain

===== by =====

HENRI BOURASSA

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1915

