

probably if we suffer this opportunity to be wasted we shall never see again such a conjunction of circumstances as will enable us to agree, even so far, among ourselves. By a most fortunate concurrence of circumstances—by what I presume to call, speaking of events of this magnitude, a providential concurrence of circumstances—the Government of Canada was so modified last spring as to enable it to deal fearlessly with this subject, at the very moment when the coast colonies, despairing of a Canadian union, were arranging a conference of their own for a union of their own. Our Government embraced among its members from the western section the leaders of the former Ministry and former Opposition from that section. At the time it was formed it announced to this House that it was its intention as part of its policy to seek a conference with the lower colonies, and endeavor to bring about a general union. This House formally gave the Government its confidence after the announcement of this policy, and although I have no desire to strain terms, it does appear to me that this House did commit itself to the principle of a union of the colonies if found practicable. That is my view, sir, of the relations of this House to the Government after it gave it expressly its confidence. Other members of the House take another view of that matter, they do not think themselves committed even to the principle, and they certainly are not to the details of the scheme. (Hear.) After the Coalition was formed an incident occurred, which, though not of national importance, it would be most ungrateful of me to forget. An intercolonial excursion was proposed and was rendered practicable through the public spirit of two gentlemen representing our great railway, of which so many hard things have been said that I feel it my duty to say this good thing—I refer to the Honorable Mr. FERRIER and Mr. BRYDGES. (Cheers.) Forty members of this House, twenty-five members of the other House, and forty gentlemen of the press and other professions, from Canada, joined in that excursion. So many Canadians had never seen so much of the Lower Provinces before, and the people of the Lower Provinces had never seen so many Canadians. Our reception was beyond all description kind and cordial. The general sentiment of union was everywhere cheered to the echo, though I am sorry to find that some of those who cheered then, when it was but a general sentiment, seem to act very

differently now, that it has become a ripened project, and I fear that they do not intend to act up to the words they then uttered. They may, perhaps, intend to do so, but they have a very odd way of going about it. (Laughter.) Well, sir, this was in August; the Charlottetown Conference was called in September, the Quebec Conference in October, and the tour of the maritime delegates through Canada took place in November. Four months of the eight which have elapsed since we promised this House to deal with it have been almost wholly given up to this great enterprise. Let me bear my tribute, Mr. SPEAKER, now that I refer to the Conference, to the gentlemen from the Lower Provinces, who sat so many days in council with us under this roof. (Cheers.) A very worthy citizen of Montreal, when I went up a day or two in advance of the Montreal banquet, asked me, with a curious sort of emphasis—"What sort of people are they?"—meaning the maritime delegates. I answered him then, as I repeat now, that they were, as a body, as able and accomplished a body as I thought any new country in the world could produce,—and that some among them would compare not unfavorably in ability and information with some of the leading commoners of England. As our Government included a representation both of the former Opposition, and the former Ministry, so their delegations were composed in about equal parts of the Opposition and Ministerial parties of their several provinces. A more hard-working set of men; men more tenacious of their own rights, yet more considerate for those of others; men of readier resources in debate; men of gentler manners; men more willing to bear and forbear, I never can hope to see together at one council table again. (Cheers.) But why need I dwell on this point? They were seen and heard in all our principal cities, and I am sure every Canadian who met them here was proud of them as fellow-subjects, and would be happy to feel that he could soon call them fellow-countrymen in fact as well as in name. (Cheers.) Sir, by this combination of great abilities—by this coalition of leaders who never before acted together—by this extraordinary armistice of party warfare, obtained in every colony at the same moment—after all this labor and all this self-sacrifice—after all former impediments had been most fortunately overcome—the treaty was concluded and signed by us all—and there it lies on your table. The propositions contained in