

History is the statesman's safest guide; it ought to be the basis of all his conceptions; indeed it would be treating its lessons with contempt, were we to attempt to dispose of the future without first knowing how Providence has disposed of the past. To make use of a maxim, common, but yet most truthful: "There is nothing new under the sun;" the history of the world is a constantly revolving scene; the same events pass and re-pass before our eyes under aspects varied enough, it is true, to deceive the superficial observer, but the man who thinks and investigates will have no difficulty in discovering that at all periods of the world's history, men have allowed themselves to be controlled by the same motives and passions, and will arrive at the inevitable conclusion that like causes produce like effects. The honorable ministers who have unfolded to us the scheme of Confederation have based all their arguments on the future; they have tried to prophecy, but for them the history of the past is a dead letter. Before attempting to predict the fate of our future Confederation, they should first have told us what had been the fate of past confederations. It does not suffice to paint a splendid picture of grandeur and prosperity; let it first be ascertained that the foundations on which the edifice is to be erected are sure and proved, and that established, we may then begin to build with safety. As has been said by one of the great professors of political science: "The wisdom of a statesman is the result of experience and not of theory." I am by no means astonished, however, at the repugnance evinced by the advocates of Confederation to make allusion to the past. The Minister of Agriculture alone has had the courage to open the volume of the world's history, and he hastily closed it with the significant remark, especially so falling from his lips:—

In all the constitutions in which the Federal principle has been adopted, it cannot be denied that the same fatal vice is to be discerned—the weakness of the central authority. This has been the fatal disease in all confederations of which I have heard, or whose histories I have read. They have died of consumption.

What the Government has not been willing to do, I now propose to do. Let us take counsel of those nations which have adopted federative constitutions, and may the recital of their unhappy experience be of use to us by placing us on our guard against the same

dangers. I propose to cast a brief glance on the history of each Confederation. I do not propose to lay before you my own views, and ask you to adopt them, but rather those of men of eminence, who have made the art of good government the study of their lives. I shall indeed make use, as nearly as I possibly can, of the very language which they have used. Lord BROUGHAM, who is listened to with profound respect in the Imperial Parliament, thus expresses his views in the third part of his work on *Political Philosophy*:—

Besides the other defects of the Federal union, its manifest tendency to create mutual estrangement, and even hostility, between the different parts of the same nation, is an insuperable objection to it.

And further on he adds:—

Whoever would see further proofs of this position, may be referred to the ancient commonwealths of Greece. As a Florentine hated a Siennese worse than a German or a Spaniard, or even an infidel, in modern times, so of old did an Athenian hate a Spartan or a Theban worse than a Persian. Now, the Federal union, by keeping up a line of separation among its members, gives the freest scope to these pernicious prejudices—feelings which it is the highest duty of all governments to eradicate, because they lead directly to confusion and war.

Passing from the confederacies of Greece and Italy to those of the Seven United Provinces (now Holland and Belgium), we there find the same state of things. Let us hear what Lord MACAULAY says in the first volume of his *History of England*:—

The union of Utrecht, hastily established amid the throes of a revolution, with the view of providing for the exigencies of the moment, had never been considered with calmness, nor brought to perfection in a period of tranquillity. Each one of the Seven Provinces, which this union bound together in one cluster, retained nearly all the rights of sovereignty, and exacted from the Federal Government the most absolute respect of its rights. As the Federal authorities had no means of enforcing prompt obedience from the Provincial authorities, so these latter were equally powerless as regarded the Municipal authorities.

The advocates of Confederation take pleasure in citing the result of the Swiss (or Helvetic) Confederacy as an exception to the disastrous fate awaiting all confederations; but Switzerland possesses all the germs of this fatal malady, as witness the civil and religious war of the Sonderbund. Here, however, the symptoms are less violent than in other confederations, on account of its