

gentlemen before me. It may be that there are some even here who are secretly dazzled by the magnificent vision, so dear to American statesmen, of an empire which shall spread from sea to sea, and unite every scattered state and province from the Gulf of Mexico to Hudson's Bay under one law and one rule. Sir, I can understand the fascination which such an idea can exercise; I can even sympathise with it to some extent; and it is just because I do understand it that I am prepared to oppose it to the utmost, believing that in the long run the establishment of a power so gigantic could not fail to be fraught with the greatest misfortunes to those who might live under it, if not to the whole human race. And now, sir, to return to my subject, I would like to take a rapid glance at the perils from which we have but lately escaped; and in so doing, I shall speak only of those of which I have myself been cognizant in my own parliamentary career, brief though it is; and I appeal again to the consciousness of every honorable gentleman, whether there is anything in the events of the past two sessions of which we have much reason to feel proud, save, perhaps, their closing scene? What was our position, Mr. SPEAKER; what was that position which some honorable gentlemen have the hardihood to affect to regret? Two dissolutions granted (though in the latter case the Royal prerogative was not exercised); three changes of Ministry within the space of a single twelvemonth; the fate of cabinets dependant on the vote of a single capricious or unprincipled individual, in a House of 130 members; a deficient revenue and a sinking credit; all useful legislation at a stand-still—these, sir, were circumstances which might well have filled us with apprehension, had they occurred in a time of profound peace; but which, sir, coming, as they did, at a period when we are menaced with the gravest danger which can befall a free people, would have argued us deaf and blind to every lesson which the misfortunes of our neighbors ought to teach us, had we not embraced the very earliest opportunity to extricate ourselves from such a position; and the wonder to me is not that our statesmen should have shown themselves willing to bury their private grudges and paltry personal animosities, but rather that we could have been infatuated enough to permit such a state of things to continue

at such a crisis for two whole years. It is not for me to say who has been most to blame in the past. I judge no one, still less do I undertake to defend them; but I speak of acts patent and known to all, when I say that the position of parties in this province, the bitterness and virulence of party feeling, and the narrowness and acrimony to which those feelings gave rise, were degrading and demoralizing us all to a degree which it is not pleasant to look back upon even now. And so far from regarding the union of parties which has taken place as a political misfortune in itself, or as tending to deprive the people of any safeguard, I say that it was of the greatest importance to our people that they should be relieved, if only for a brief period, from the desperate party struggles in which they have been engaged—that a lull of some kind should be afforded, that they should have some opportunity of considering the grave dangers which encompass them, some chance of escaping from the state of practical anarchy into which they had been drifting. It is to their credit, Mr. SPEAKER, and to the credit of those who control the press of this country, that ever since this project has been fairly before us a very marked improvement has taken place in the whole tone and temper of public discussion. Of the press, in particular, I must say that the moment they were relieved from the necessity of supporting party manœuvres—the moment a subject of sufficient importance was submitted for consideration, they seem to have risen at once to the level of the subject, and to have abandoned all those unhappy and rancorous personalities which, in times past, were too apt to disfigure their pages. Sir, I believe the people of Canada have learned a lesson which they will not easily forget. I believe that henceforward it will not be found so easy to array citizen against citizen, race against race, as it has been heretofore. I believe our people have discovered that men who rise to be the heads of great parties are not of necessity villains and scoundrels—that both sides may have great political principles to maintain—that the words Reformer and Revolutionist, Conservative and Corruptionist, are not absolutely convertible terms, and that men who have given up the best part of their lives, and sacrificed too often, the best part of their fortunes in the service of their country, have had some better and higher reasons than mere love of