

jobbery and intrigue for doing so. To me, sir, this appears a matter of great moment. It is only too notorious how much of the misery and misfortune which has befallen the United States, is to be traced to the systematic degradation of their public men. It is well for us that the matter is still in our own power. It is well for us that we have still the choice whether we will have statesmen or stump orators to rule over us—whether this House shall maintain its honorable position as the representatives of a free people, or whether it shall sink into a mere mob of delegates, the nominees of caucuses and of wire-pullers. It is still in our power to decide whether we shall secure a fair share of the best talent we possess to carry on the affairs of the country, or whether we will ostracise from our councils every man of superior ability, education or intelligence—with what practical results we need not look far abroad to see; and I think, sir, it is fast becoming apparent that in this, as in other matters, the people of Canada are well disposed to adhere to the traditions of their British ancestry. There is one objection, Mr. SPEAKER, which has been advanced perpetually throughout this debate by some hon. gentlemen who, while unable or unwilling to show any valid reason against Confederation in itself, profess themselves bitterly scandalised at the political combination by which it is likely to be brought about. Now, sir, I admit at once that there is a prejudice, a just and wholesome prejudice, against all coalitions in the abstract. I admit that that prejudice is especially strong in the minds of Englishmen, and that, in point of fact, a coalition is always an extreme measure, only to be had resort to in cases of extreme emergency. A coalition, Mr. SPEAKER, may be a very base act, but it may also be a very noble one. It may be a mere conspiracy, for purposes of revenge or plunder, on the part of men hating and detesting each other to the uttermost—or it may be an honorable sacrifice of private personal enmity before the pressure of overwhelming public necessities, to escape from great danger or to carry a great object. Sir, I shall not insult the intelligence of the House by enquiring whether this present existing Coalition has proposed to itself an object of sufficient importance to warrant its formation. Even those who censure the details of this scheme most strongly are fain to do homage to the grandeur of the project, and

are compelled to admit that a union which should raise this country from the position of a mere province to that of a distinct nation, is a project well worthy of the utmost efforts of our statesmen. To determine the remaining question whether the position of our affairs were so critical as to require the utmost energy of all our leaders, and to justify any union which gave a reasonable hope of extricating ourselves from our difficulties, I must again revert to the condition in which we found ourselves during the last few years, and I ask every hon. member to answer for himself whether it was one which it gives him any pleasure to look back upon? Was it pleasant for us, Mr. SPEAKER, a young country without one penny of debt which has not been incurred for purposes of public utility—was it pleasant for us, I ask, to find our revenue yearly outrunning our expenditure in the ratio of 20, 30 or even 40 per cent. per annum? Was it pleasant for us to know that some of our once busiest and most prosperous cities were being depopulated under the pressure of exorbitant taxation? Was it pleasant for us, inhabiting a country able to sustain ten times its present population, to find capital and immigrants alike fleeing from our shores, even if they had to take refuge in a land desolated by civil war? Was it pleasant for us, sir, the only colony of England which has ever vindicated its attachment to the Empire in fair fight, to know that our apathy and negligence in taking steps for our own defence was fast making us the byword to both friend and foe? And lastly, Mr. SPEAKER, I ask was it pleasant for us, needing and knowing that we needed a strong Government above all things, one which should maintain a firm and steady policy, and possess the good-will and support of at least a large majority of our people—I say, sir, was it pleasant for us at such a crisis to find ourselves the victims of a mere political see-saw—to be sure only of this one fact, that whatever course of policy was adopted, the circumstance that it emanated from one party would cause it to be viewed with jealousy and suspicion by the whole remaining moiety of the nation? I would not have it thought, Mr. SPEAKER, that in saying this, I am blind to the difficulties with which our statesmen have had to struggle. So far from this I believe that it has been quite too much the fashion to underrate them in times past. We have spoken of them as if it were the easiest task in the