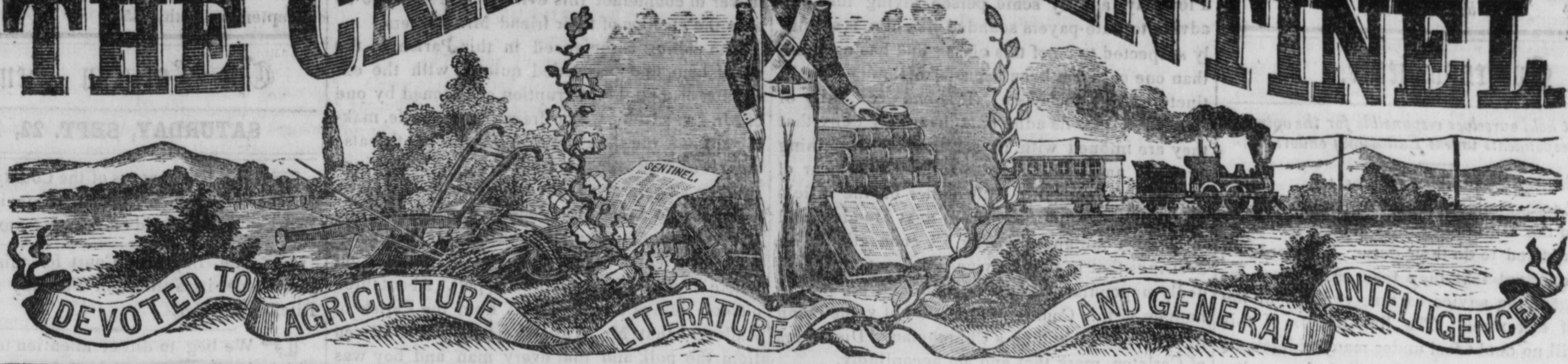


# THE CARLETON SENTINEL



Published and Edited]

“OUR QUEEN AND CONSTITUTION.”

[By JAMES McLAUCHLAN.

VOL. VIII.

WOODSTOCK, N. B., SEPTEMBER 22, 1855.

NO. 4.

## UNION OF THE COLONIES OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

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[From the Anglo-American Magazine.]

The subject of a political union of the British North American Colonies has engrossed so large a share of attention, among the people of the Provinces themselves, that little could now be said upon the desirability of such a union, which would be new to them. A detailed scheme for a Union of the North American Colonies was drawn up by the late Hon. Richard John Uniacke, and submitted to the Imperial Cabinet, about the commencement of the present century. A similar scheme was proposed by the late Chief Justice Sewell of Quebec, in 1814; and was warmly advocated by His Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent. Since then it has been strongly urged upon the Imperial Government by that distinguished statesman, the late Earl of Durham; it has been highly recommended by nearly every author of respectable reputation who has published his views upon British America; it has been extensively discussed by the provincial press, and by the people, at their own fire-sides; it has been spoken of, in the highest terms, on the floors of the Canadian Parliament; and in the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, a movement—in which the “leaders” of the Government, and the opposition, of the day, cordially joined—has been made to carry it into effect. This being the case, the writer, in advocating the necessity for such a union can do little more than repeat what has been already said, and give a brief summary of the reasons why this idea of union has taken so firm a hold upon the British American mind.

The principal of these reasons is to be found in the relation which the North American Colonies bear to all the rest of the world. Among the natives of those Provinces, there is that craving after nationality which is inseparable from the minds of a free people in whom the want is unsatisfied. The peculiar situation of the British Americans makes them feel this want in an unusual degree. Situated between Great Britain, on the one hand, and the United States of America, on the other, they are incessantly tantalized by the might and glory of these, the two greatest nations on the earth.—They know and they feel that British America too, is capable of taking and maintaining, in the estimation of the world, an honorable national rank, beside these elder powers; but it is prevented from doing so by her anomalous position. All the institutions of both Great Britain and the United States, are on a grand and magnificent scale. None of those belonging to the Provinces are so; because, from their disconnected position, they cannot unitedly carry out any great work, and not one of them is capable of doing so alone. The dissatisfaction which this engenders, is heightened by the comparisons provoked by the vicinity of their insignificant institutions to those of their more distinguished neighbors.

The British American, on looking across the Southern frontier of his native land, sees a people, distinct but speaking the same language and having many of their leading institutions founded upon the same model as those of his own country, who have a world-wide reputation, and to whom the field for individual exertion is unbounded, and for whom the rewards of success are of the very first class. He there sees men of the humblest grade rising to a position which places them on a political level with the greatest potentates on earth: others attaining a world-wide fame as statesmen, as jurists, as diplomatists, and as mili-

tary and naval officers. He sees the republic of the United States assuming, to itself exclusively, the title of “American,” whilst its territory is inferior in extent, in resources, and in advantageous geographical position, to that portion of the continent to which he himself belongs. He knows that the flag of the United States is known and honoured, in every corner of the earth, as that of a nation which is considered a wonderful phenomenon for its great achievements in wealth and commercial prosperity; whilst British America, which, under all disheartening circumstances, has worked up to a position which makes her, in reality, “the third commercial power on earth,” has no distinguishing rank, place, or even name, beyond her own borders. He knows the American Republic to be a familiar idea—its history, institutions, wealth, power, and future prospects intimately known—among communities who have never heard of the American Provinces; or who, if they have, think of them but as some barbarous deserts “on the outskirts of creation.” On looking farther away, to the other independent nations of America and to the inferior States of Europe, he sees them, although inferior to British America in every point of view except the mere accident of distinct nationality, seated in the common wealth of nations, and their alliances courted by the greatest empires.

Turning to his native country, the contrast which he sees it present to each of these, and particularly to its republican neighbour, is not at all calculated to gratify his ambitious feelings, whether they are of a national, or merely personal character. British America cannot receive that degree of foreign consideration to which, taken as an aggregate, it is, in strictness, entitled; because it cannot, in fact, be considered as an aggregation, but as a number of disconnected and mutually independent individuals, each of which, regarded separately, loses immeasurably by that contrast already mentioned. To be a British American, means nothing in the world's estimation; to be a Canadian, a New Brunswicker, or a Nova Scotian, is to be just the next thing to nothing.

On coming down to his own individual case, the British American finds the prospect not more cheering. The Province has but few prizes to offer, as reward to honorable exertions in the higher walks of life. Those honors which under established national organizations, furnish so powerful a stimulus to industry and talent, are here “few and far between;” and the few which are attainable, are too insignificant in themselves to satisfy the natural cravings of human nature for distinction. The very channels by which such honors are usually attained, are virtually closed against the American Colonist. True, he belongs to that great empire in which, as a general rule, talented exertion meets with more signal rewards than in any other; but he is far removed from the arenas on which those rewards are achieved; and practically, although not in theory, is excluded from the fountain head whence they proceed.—Few feel the desire to enter any of those professions by which alone they can hope to attain a distinguished rank as Britons, in contradistinction to mere local rank; because, by doing so, they must necessarily turn their backs forever upon what they consider as more particularly their own country. Apart from this consideration, they know too well that they have the smallest chance of success. The British American Colonist believes—with how much reason, let others judge—that it would be next to madness for him to enter the British Army, or Navy, without that interest at head quarters—not possessed by one of his countrymen out of ten thousand—which is neces-

sary to procure promotion even when it is honorably earned. A similar lack of patronage aids in deterring him from entering either of the English “learned professions.” The *Corps Diplomatique*, it is sufficiently obvious to every one, is completely closed against him. The Imperial Parliament, the diplomatic body, the army, and the navy being virtually closed against him, the Colonial Bar and the Colonial Legislature, furnish the only narrow avenues by which he can attain what may be called professional distinction. Whether or not, he possesses the particular talents required for success in either of these, he knows that the distinction which that success will confer, is extremely insignificant. A seat in a Provincial Cabinet, or on the Bench of one of the many Courts which share the legal and equitable jurisdiction of the Provinces, affords, in itself, but a small temptation to the man of powerful intellect and lofty aspiration. The British American sees men, in the Mother Country, springing up to the rank of Field Marshals, Admirals, founders of noble houses, Viceroy presiding over countries which are themselves mighty empires—nay, to the position of virtual rulers of the great empire which comprises many of such Viceroyalties. He may be by nature qualified to enter the list in competition with these world-renowned fellow-subjects of his. He is precluded by his position for making the attempt. A few miles from his own home he may see one with whom probably he is personally acquainted, and has always considered as, in every respect, his inferior, raised to the high position of President of the United States. He may not aspire even to the position of Governor of his native Province.

It may be said that it is very unphilosophical in the British Americans to entertain these ambitious feelings. That may be so, but the feelings are entertained nevertheless. They are not a more philosophical people than any other enlightened class of the human family; and it is but natural to suppose that they must experience emotions which effect powerfully all such classes, but more particularly the Anglo-Saxon race.—Whatever may be said in condemnation of personal ambition, it will scarcely be denied, that, where that feeling is systematically held in check, or confined within narrow limits, there can be no very long and peaceful continuance of what is called national progress. There will be either political convulsions, or general sluggishness. Personal ambition, as already shown, is now being thwarted in British America, after both these modes. Two results, of this, already too clearly discernible, are, a strong feeling of discontent among the more intellectual and better educated classes, and the splitting up of the whole community into small but violent political factions.

A union of the North American Colonies would remove the cause of this discontent and smother this factious spirit among the colonists. Such a union would throw open an arena vast enough for the desires of the most ambitious—one in which all professions would soon find ample scope for action and rewards commensurate with their exertion. The old narrow, partisan spirit would speedily die out in the new combinations thus formed; and politicians, of whatever name or party, would move with a higher and nobler aim. It would also satisfy the cravings of that feeling more widely extended, and perhaps deeper, than any which has self alone for its object. It would satisfy the cravings of national ambition. Men are not quite satisfied with their country, whatever it may be, unless it possesses, in their estimation, some considerable degree of grandeur, or glory, either past, present, or future. The accident of birth is rarely, if ever, sufficient in itself

to attach a man to his native country—at least, it is insufficient to render him quite satisfied with it. He wants something more to cling to. In contemplating the existence of his country, as in contemplating that of himself individually, he is not satisfied to confine his desires to the isolated present, however favorably circumstanced that present may be. He would fain indulge in fond reminiscences of the past, or exult in glorious anticipations of the future. To the British American, as such, the past is a blank. A consummation of the Provincial Union, would be to him an assurance that the future would not present the same dreary void. It would give his country a name and a standing which would be known and recognised in every corner of the earth; and would make it such a country as he could cling to with affection and regard with pride. Though its history and local associations would be for him unconnected with the traditions of a long line of ancestry, he could hope that they would be brightened by the deeds of a happy and glorious posterity. Few reflecting persons, in British America, of whatever rank, have not perceived, with painful feelings the insignificant position which, in a national point of view, their country has hitherto occupied. A compact political union would be at once, the most effective and the most feasible means of removing this wide-spread discontent.

The argument for union comprised in the foregoing observations, is one which has been felt and appreciated only by the more intelligent classes of the Colonists. There is another argument, which, whether recognised or not, is certainly felt by all. This is the argument deducible from the relation which the Provinces bear to each other—from the effect which their isolated and mutually independent condition has upon their internal prosperity. From the time when the Provinces became separately organized as dependencies of the British Crown, until the present day, they have been as foreign countries to each other. They have, it is true, been, in many respects, alike, although separated. They have been subject to the same Crown, and have had all their principal institutions modelled upon the same originals; yet, from whatever cause it is useless now to inquire, they have, until within a few years past, kept entirely aloof from each other. Each, acting for itself, has quite ignored the existence of the others; and by this means, needless differences have arisen between their various juridical codes, their public institutions, and their commercial regulations. Not only have such differences arisen, but they have led the Colonies to thwart and seriously injure each other, in their mutual intercourse. Increasing wealth and intelligence, with their consequent demand for a larger field of action, having necessarily brought them into closer contact, have led to the removal of some of the principal impediments in the way of that intercourse; yet those very increased facilities only make more vexatious the remaining obstacles to a perfect union. It is but a few years since the Colonies adopted the system of free commercial interchange of commodities with each other, instead of the system of protective duties which they had previously upheld to their great mutual injury. They are still separated commercially by the troublesome barriers which necessarily exist between independent countries, however amicably united by treaties alone. The needless existence of so many entirely separate and co-ordinate legal jurisdictions, in a single and compact section of the empire, as British America naturally is, tends, in a great degree, to impede commercial intercourse between its various parts. Moreover, the existence of several sets of commercial regulations, alike in all leading points, but