

### "The Outlook in Canada."

The Canadian Finance Minister, Hon. G. E. Foster, during his recent visit to the mother country delivered a number of addresses on things Canadian which have attracted a good deal of attention from the British press and public. One of the most notable gatherings which he addressed was a meeting of the City of London branch of the Imperial Federation League, held at the London Chamber of Commerce, Eastcham, and presided over by Mr. Alban Gibbs, M.P. The subject of Mr. Foster's remarks was, "The Outlook in Canada." Following is what he said:

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: I know you are busy people; the heart of busy London, and I am not an idler altogether myself. What I shall say to you this afternoon shall be very brief, very direct, and, I hope, very plain. Whatever may be our opinion with reference to the necessity for and the basis of that Federation of the Empire which shall draw all its different parts together into closer union than exists to-day, I think one thing is certain, that the subjects of Great Britain, whether they be in this country, or in the Colonies—all of them, at least, who are thoughtful and patriotic men—cannot help but desire that the relations at present existing between the Mother Country and the Colonies—happily existing, I may say—may continue not only in their present state, but if it be possible and practicable, as I think it is, that they may continually as years progress be drawn closer—(cheers)—and that the outside parts of the British Empire, and the head of the British Empire here, may have their communications with each other extended, and that the bond that binds them together may become tighter and stronger. (Cheers.) And I think it is true, without saying anything more upon that, that one of the best and surest means to create that sympathy and that interest which must always, I think, be the basis of any successful effort towards drawing the Colonies and the Mother Country together, is an intelligent idea of the extent and the capabilities of the different Colonies. I say that no surer method than this can be adopted in order to bring about the result which we all desire; and so far as I am concerned this afternoon, in answer to the very kind reception of the gentlemen who have invited me to speak, I am here to contribute my little share to this information with regard to the country from which I come. I may say, in the first place, that the confederation of the British North American provinces, which, as you all know, took place in 1867, entirely changed the outlook and the spirit and the zeal and the life of the Canadian people. Up to that time British North America consisted, as you know, of a number of small provinces, each of them bound up in itself, without any very great sympathy the one with the other, with a jangling of restrictions differing in each one of the provinces, with an outlook which was not large and scarcely going beyond the sectional interests and views of each one of the provinces. But, sir, confederation changed all that—that is, it began to change it—and, every year that confederation has been a fact in that country, the change has been progressing, and has been made more

marked. After confederation the outlook naturally became larger and wider. Sectional and provincial differences disappeared in the broader and wider life of the country, which at once took on an immense extent of territory, the common heritage of all, of a country whose resources became known in proportion as the attention and enterprise of the people were directed to its different parts, and as a public spirit, and, if I may use the term, a national life began to grow up, which was based upon the wide extent of territory, and the very rich resources of the country, and upon the wonderful promise of its future. (Hear, hear.) So that federation began in 1867 to turn the current of thought of Canadian public life in the direction which I have mentioned; and although we all know that twenty-five years is but a short period in the existence of a country, and although it cannot do everything in that time, and though we must not expect that it shall have absolutely taken away their sectional and provincial divergences of interests yet the fact has been such as I have stated—most marked; and its effects to-day are continuing in that direction. Well, sir, we have now entered upon the twenty-fifth year of our existence as a confederation, and it is pertinent to inquire what has been the result of this twenty-five years. The unfriendly critic of Canada might say, "Well, there is one result which is completely apparent—you have rolled up a united debt of 241 millions of dollars—that, at least, is one result of confederation." Now I desire just for a moment to say two or three words in reference to that matter, not in the way of extenuation, but in the way of explanation. When the unfriendly critic says that twenty-five years of confederation has been responsible for a united debt of 241 millions of dollars in Canada, he is not quite correct. For this must be kept in mind; that the different Provinces which formed the confederation had debts of their own at the time when they entered into the confederation, and it was one of the articles and conditions of that confederation that the debt which was at that time upon each of the Provinces should be assumed by the confederation authority, and should no longer be a burden directly upon each of the Provinces; and the total amount of the debts of the Provinces which existed at the date of confederation, or which have been assumed since, reached 100 millions of dollars. So that you have to take that away from the 241 millions of dollars, which will leave you about 132 millions of dollars, and that is the debt accruing in Canada as the result of confederation and of every federal expenditure from 1868 up to the present time. That just by way of explanation, and not by the way of extenuation. But, sir, if we have a debt of 241 millions of dollars, and if 132 millions of that debt has accrued since confederation, on what has that been expended and for what purpose? Has it been justifiable, and is it a debt which, instead of being a reproach to the Dominion of Canada, may surely be looked upon as one of its commendations in the way of enterprise and development? What have we to show for that vast expenditure? In the first place, the acquirement of a very large and a very fertile territory. As you know, the original Pro-

vinces, together with British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, were of comparatively small extent, although absolutely of large extent, but over and above that there was a vast, almost undiscovered, and unknown territory which extended from the western part of the Province of Ontario to the confines of British Columbia, and known generally as the Northwest Territory, and which at that time belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company. Well, the first effort of confederated Canada was to purchase that immense territory which extends for thousands of miles and which embraces hundreds of millions of acres of the finest land under the sun. (Cheers.) That was purchased, and the opening up and surveying of it into land lots and divisions has cost the country a capital expenditure of about seven millions of dollars. We consider that this is but a trifle as compared with the real value and importance of that vast territory. (Cheers.) But over and above that, Canada in 1868 had the problem presented to her of opening up the means of communication through that vast extent of her territory—ranging over more than 3,000 miles from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with a breadth large in extent as well. Without those means and facilities for communication there could in the first place, be no extended hope for the settlement of the country; there could be no facilities for taking out the produce that the lands were fertile enough to produce, and there could be very little commerce. Well, that had to be done. It could be done only in one of two ways—either by taxing the people for the years as they passed for the cost of building our railways and canals; or by adopting what was the more rational, and what I believe to be a far more economical method, of using our credit, borrowing the money and paying the interest from year to year. Well, sir, the two great means of communication which we were constrained to make use of were our water and railway communications. As you cross the Atlantic and enter the St. Lawrence Gulf by the Strait of Belle Isle you come first against the territory of Labrador, and shortly afterwards the territory of Canada, and from that point—at the Strait of Belle Isle—there was a water communication more or less interrupted for 2,000 miles into the very heart of the North American continent. But that could not be opened up for remunerative traffic without the building of links of canals and the improvement of navigable rivers, and that Canada has felt bound to do; and I may be permitted to tell the audience that we are within three years of seeing that immense project practically completed, and within nine millions of dollars of seeing that amount which will have completed its cost. Up to the present day we have paid on capital account for the water communication—the most magnificent line of water communication in the world—we have paid to-day on capital account the sum of thirty-five millions of dollars. That also explains the way in which part of this debt has been assumed. What have we in return? We have from the Strait of Belle Isle up to the city of Quebec a splendid line of navigation, and from the St. Lawrence to Montreal a waterway by which the largest ocean vessels can go up to the city of Montreal