

the system under which it was created. The question of its reconstruction or adaptation to new conditions is undoubtedly one of the greatest of the world-problems now coming up for solution.

In one of his most striking poems Matthew Arnold speaks of England as

The weary Titan, with deaf
Ears, and labor-dimmed eyes,
Staggering on to her goal,
Bearing, on shoulders immense,
Atlantean, the load
Well-nigh not to be borne
Of the too vast orb of her fate.

It is not the poet's mind alone which is profoundly moved by this fact of Great Britain's vast expansion; by the question of whether she will continue able to bear her enormous burden of empire. Statesmen have to face the fact in all its gravity; nations in every quarter of the globe know that their future history depends, more than on anything else, on the answer given to the question. For the world at large, civilized and uncivilized, there is not at present, in the whole range of possible political variation, any question of such far-reaching significance as whether Great Britain shall remain a political unit, with effective energy equal to her actual and increasing greatness, or, yielding to some process of disintegration or dismemberment, shall abdicate her present position of world-wide influence, and suffer the great current of her national life to be broken up into many separate channels.

The growing influence, immense interests, and widening aspirations of the greater colonies—the commercial, legislative, and even social exigencies of the whole national system—make it clear that an answer to this great political problem cannot long be delayed. A profound movement of thought upon the subject has for the past few years been going on among British people in every part of the world. More recently, a great stimulus to discussion has been given by the formation of the Imperial Federation League, a society unofficial in its character, but guided or supported by many of the best minds of the empire, and apparently destined to become a rallying-point for a strong national enthusiasm.

Within a short time a remarkable change has come over public opinion in the British Isles themselves. Twenty years ago it almost seemed as if Great Britain was ready voluntarily to throw away her vast colonial empire. A whole school of politicians favored the idea, and seemed to have gained the public ear. The "Times," supposed to reflect public opinion, claimed that England was paying too high a price for enjoying the luxury of colonial loyalty, and warned the colonies to prepare for the separation that was inevitable.

John Bright's eloquence and Goldwin Smith's literary skill were alike employed in the same direction. Under such guidance, intoxicated by the success of free trade, and indulging in dreams of a cosmopolitan future which it was to produce for the nations, the British people seemed for a time to look upon the colonies as burdens which entailed responsibilities without giving any adequate return. All this has now been changed. John Bright in England and Goldwin Smith in Canada still