

WITHIN THE EMPIRE; AN ESSAY ON Imperial Federation.

BY
Thomas Macfarlane, F. R. S. C.

CHAPTER II.

Nationalities and Nations.

The most superficial observer of the political events of the last fifty years can hardly fail to have noticed that the tendency of the age is towards the formation of larger and more powerful national aggregates. What the cause of this may be is uncertain. It may result from a desire on the part of small communities to be of greater consequence in the world, or perhaps the object is to reduce the general expenses of government. But, in any case, the fact remains that national consolidation is characteristic of our times. Where the nature of the case makes it impossible to speak of the autonomy of the new combination, some one nationality, more powerful, intelligent or energetic than the others in it, usually steps to the front and exercises a preponderating influence and action, a hegemony and by its means a national union on a broader and more liberal foundation is effected. This has happened with Prussia in Germany and Austria among the Slavonic nationalities. In the case of the British Empire this hegemony is already possessed by the United Kingdom, and only a very little exertion on her part would seem to be necessary to transform the present loose connection between herself and her colonies into a closer and more beneficial union, which, for want of a better name, those who desire it call Imperial Federation.

To denote this closer union one of its most distinguished advocates, Mr. G. R. Parkin, who recently visited Australasia as a representative of the League, made much use of the expression "national unity." It is, of course, to be regarded as equivalent to Imperial Federation, or perhaps as indicating the end to which the latter is only a means. The expression is also a most appropriate one for distinguishing that broader national union, such as federations aim at, from so-called Nationalism, which in reality is only sectionarism or provincialism. It is very necessary in studying this whole subject to draw a very distinct line between that school of politicians which sees political salvation in the establishment of numberless independent or semi-independent nationalities, in centrifugal secession or separation, and that other more modern and more reasonable way of thinking which discerns better prospects of political permanence, material improvement and national advancement in what may be called political centripetalism, or the combining of nationalities into great nations. The latter would seem to be the true direction of political progress, just as in cosmical evolution, nebulae condense to stars, and these again arrange themselves in constellations or solar systems. It is, however, in history, not in astronomy, that we find such a record of the past experience of nationalities and nations as will guide us in shaping the future of our own country. The further we go back in history the greater do we find the efforts of nationalism to have been in the cause of liberty, and the more futile the struggles of the nationality. In more recent times the nationalities or nationettes as they have been called in a Canadian newspaper, have to a very great extent given place to nations, much to the advantage of civilization and political progress.

It is unnecessary to go back to the first French revolution. The successes and the catastrophes of that epoch culminated at last in the fall of Napoleon, and the collapse of the kingdoms he had created. The patriotic achievements of the nations who rose were up against him, the stupendous sacrifices of England, and the heroism of Waterloo did not save the continent of Europe from afterwards becoming afflicted with all the diseases and miseries which attend upon government by petty potentates. Nationality insurrections were fruitless, and even the revolutions of 1848 produced no lasting beneficial results. But the disasters of that time seem to have taught the lesson of a more excellent way, and since then, the building up of nations rather than the dethronement of kings has been striven for by the friends of freedom and enlightened progress. That this tendency to resist national disintegration, and to favor the consolida-

tion of the nationalities has been at work during the last fifty years will be evident from a reference to certain events in Switzerland, Italy, the United States, Canada and Germany.

Insurrectionary movements were not always, in past history, the work of socialists and republicans, nor were these always directed against monarchical government. Switzerland affords an instance of this. In 1847 the Forest Cantons rose in rebellion against that republic, and endeavored to separate themselves from it. Luzerne, Schwyz, Uri, Unterwalden, Zug, Freiburg and Wallis formed themselves into a separate union called the "Sonderbund" to resist the action of the liberal cantons which controlled the federal government. The latter had decreed the subjection of the Church to the State, the abolition of the convents and was determined to expel the Jesuits from the country. When the "Sonderbund" was formed the government called upon it to dissolve. The demand was refused and armed resistance continued, but after their troops were defeated, and Freiburg and Luzerne taken, the rebel cantons were forced to submit, and the Ultramontanists to give up their pretensions. They were obliged to pay the cost of the war, to submit to changes in the cantonal constitutions, and to expel the Jesuits from their borders. The federal constitution was likewise modified and strengthened and the republic consolidated. In 1848 Switzerland ceased to be a collection of sovereign cantons, and became a peaceable and prosperous nation. This seems to be the first instance in history of the triumph of the spirit of national unity. The right of a republican community to secede from a federal union was effectively denied and the rebelling nationettes forced to remain united with their sister cantons as a nation.

Nowhere was the nationalistic spirit in former times so strong as in Italy. Again and again had the aspirations of Naples and Sicily for separate national or legislative existence been powerful enough to ruin the cause of Italian liberty. But the year 1866 saw the beginning of a new policy and the first efforts towards a higher aim than nationetteism. At the Congress of Paris, Cavour laid before the great powers the demands of the Italians for national existence, and declared that, until these were satisfied, a permanent European peace could not be established. Austria then had possession of Lombardy and Venetia, French troops occupied Rome while Naples and Sicily were in the hands of the successor of King Bomba and the Camarillo. Italy included numerous nationalities, but Neapolitans and Florentines, Romans and Venetians were alike tired of their petty princes and reactionary governments, and looked upon the title of Italian as higher and prouder than any they had previously borne. Sardinia seemed to them like an oasis in the desert. Its King, Victor Emmanuel, cared more for the greatness of Italy than that of his own kingdom. He protected the exiled Italian patriots, broke completely with Ultramontanism, and squarely opposed Austria's policy and interests. Sardinia had only five millions inhabitants, but the whole moral power of Italy was at its back. With the assistance of France it acquired Lombardy in 1859, and so strong was the devotion of the Italians to national unity that they ignored the provisions of the Peace of Zurich, according to which the Italian states were to form a confederacy under the presidency of the Pope. They were as hostile to a new federation as to their little kingdoms and dukedoms, and the result proved their sagacity. In 1860 Tuscany, Modena and Parma joined themselves to Sardinia; Garibaldi next made a present of Naples and Sicily to Victor Emmanuel, the small potentates vanished and province after province was annexed. In 1861 Victor Emmanuel became King of Italy, and at last, in 1871, took possession of the capital, Rome. Thus, by suppressing the spirit of provincialism, the Italians established their national unity, an object which the previous struggles of the nationalities for centuries had failed to accomplish.

The theory of State Rights, which was upheld by the democratic party in the United States up to the time of the civil war, may be regarded as another instance of the occurrence of a nationalistic spirit in a republic, detrimental to its best interests and even dangerous to its existence. According to this theory the United States was made up of a number of sovereign commonwealths, each capable of exercising all legislative and executive powers except those expressly delegated to the federal government, and each possessing the right to separate from it at pleasure. These pretensions, combined with other reactionary influences were the cause of the attempt that was made to wreck

the Republic in 1861, when the slave states formed themselves into a separate Confederation or "Sonderbund," after the manner of the Swiss Forest Cantons in 1847. Almost all the inhabitants of the Southern States, comprising one-fourth part of the total population of the country, became rebels, and carried on a four years' war, during which a half a million lives were sacrificed. But the people of the United States knew the value of national unity, and exerted themselves to the utmost to preserve it. In the end the Union was maintained, the sovereign states deprived of their sovereignty, the doctrine of state rights destroyed, the nation preserved and the laws of the federal government made supreme.

The lesson thus taught, and the whole experience of the United States regarding state rights, were not without their influence on Canadian statesmen, at the time of Confederation which took place in 1867, shortly after the close of the American civil war. In the British North American Act the matters subject to provincial legislation are distinctly stated, as is also the principle that the Dominion Parliament is supreme, and charged with the control of all subjects not delegated to the provinces. It is perhaps to be regretted that Confederation did not effect a closer union of the Lower Provinces, and avoid the establishment of separate governments and legislatures for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. This and the payment to them and the other provinces of large subsidies by the Dominion renders any reduction of its customs duties next to impossible.

Notwithstanding this, Confederation on the whole has been a decided success, and in a very marked degree conducive to national unity. This was especially seen in the suppression of the Riel Rebellion. Entirely of their own motion, and without the aid of British troops, the Canadians restored order in the northwest, and preserved the unity of their own Dominion and that of the Empire. After such action the possibility of successful secession on the part of any of the provinces is very remote indeed.

Perhaps the most brilliant instance of the tendency to national consolidation in our age is furnished by the German Empire. Details are unnecessary. The jealousies and hostilities of the German nationalities have given place to the unity of the German nation. Bavarians, Prussians, Saxons, Hanoverians and Hessians no longer vaunt their respective countries. All cry out with *triumph*, "The whole of Germany it shall be," and declare in the strains of one of the noblest of war songs, "Thou, Rhine! shall remain as German as our hearts."

Is there in all this no encouragement for those who desire the permanent unity of the Empire? Is the desire for consolidation less powerful in British hearts than under a German Empire or an American Republic? We trow not. Besides we must remember that, in point of fact, we now possess union to a certain extent and that our efforts are only required towards making that union more practical and fruitful for defence and for mutual encouragement and support in peace or war. In effecting this there is no necessity for requiring that any of the nations constituting the British Empire should sacrifice any of its peculiar characteristics or institutions. Neither do Imperial Federationists desire anything of this sort. In fact noninterference with local rights is one of the principles, already quoted, of the Imperial Federation League, and its journal has all along maintained that the arrangement of the local legislative and executive machinery of each part of the Empire concerns that part alone. It has declined to express any opinion on the Irish question that being a subject which exclusively concerns the people of the United Kingdom. Similarly it holds that Australasian Union is a matter with which Imperial Federationists, as such, have nothing to do, and there is not the slightest danger that in effecting the Federation of the Empire any change would be suggested as regards the institutions of any Canadian province, or of any appendage of the Empire in any other part of the world. Imperial Federation does not seek and could not accomplish the national obliteration of any of the races of the Empire. The Canadians, Australians, Africans, West Indians and East Indians would, each of them, still have their separate national existence, which Federation would tend far more to preserve than to destroy.

What then would be the nature of the Union which Imperial Federationists aim at? How would it be characterized? If a closer Imperial Union be brought about, it will and must be something altogether different from any sort of "federation" which has existed in the past. With Canada

already confederated, and other groups of British Colonies inclined to forsake the nebulous condition, their closer union with the other parts of the Empire would form a most brilliant constellation in the political heavens, or perhaps a new solar system, as Sir John Macdonald suggests; a central power with auxiliary nations; a confederation of federations without a parallel in the past history of the world. Still, for such a Union the term "federation" does not appear suitable, and probably no name will ever be found better than the present one of "Empire." If we cared to search far enough back in history we might doubtless discover "The Holy Roman Empire of German Nations," as the nearest approach to our contemplated union of British countries. But a name of this sort might not commend itself to English ears, and our Canadian traditions speak strongly in favor of a "United Empire." Most likely the majority of the communities now living under the Union Jack, would be contented to be known as forming part of "The United British Empire," or the "United Empire of British Nations."

As an instance within the Empire of the outbreak of that nationalistic tendency which has been stigmatized in this paper as antagonistic to the development of a large and liberal national life, Queensland may be mentioned. This youngest British colony has recently acquired some notoriety. In its review of the occurrences in 1888, which concerned the Colonies, the *Times* gave the following as part of the record: "Queensland has declined to ratify the Naval Defence Bill, which has been adopted by the other Australian governments, as well as by the Imperial Parliament, and has since compelled the withdrawal of Sir Henry Blake, whose appointment as governor had been announced, and in whose place Sir Henry Northcote has been nominated."

While indebted to the Mother Country for the security of its coasts and shipping, Queensland aims at depriving her of almost the only right remaining to the Crown in a British Colony, the appointment of the Governor. Not only so but it is said to be governed by men pledged to affect its separation from the Empire, thus diminishing the latter by about one-thirteenth part of its area, and about one-thousandth part of its population. One Queensland newspaper urges the discussion of the question in order that "the more friendly and easy may be the separation when it comes," and another, according to Sir Charles Dilke, has described the view of the present premier as being that the British Cabinet and the Colonial Office are a pack of old women, and the Mother Country "a composite grand-motherly old wreck . . . tottering with a handbag and a cotton umbrella towards an open grave."

Truly the assurance and waywardness of this scantily-populated fragment of the Empire is immense. It seems resolved to repudiate the solemn vows made by loyal sponsors for it at its baptism, refuses to be confirmed and wishes to follow after strange gods. It appears ambitious to become the South Carolina of the Empire, to use tall words, eat fire, and inaugurate a rebellion, at least on paper. Just as there were in the United States men who proclaimed the right of each State to secede, so there have been Englishmen particularly anxious to tell the colonies that they might go when they pleased. The result has been to promote the growth of pernicious ideas in certain colonial communities. In the United States such doctrines were resisted and stamped out by a sanguinary war. They were regarded as destructive of the existence of a nation which the United States claimed to be. Can they be permitted to spread without danger to the existence of our Empire? The secession resisted successfully by democratic America, can surely be suppressed with greater consistency and equal effect by monarchical England.

There is really no other ground for reasonable Britons to take in this matter than that expressed by Sir Julius Vogel:—"I do not believe it would be open to any great colony to leave the Mother Country, any more than it is open to Ireland to do so." Grant the right of secession, and interminable troubles arise, leading to complications and wars far more disastrous than could possibly follow from maintaining the Unity of the Empire now and at all hazards. But are we to permit the seed of disintegration to be sown, and events to drift until civil war ensues; until the balky horses become unmanageable, and we have to undertake the task of whipping a colony back into the traces? This is what the United States had to do, but can we not learn from such recent history?

Is there not statesmanship left in England to steer clear of such a catastrophe?

"As a man soweth that shall he also reap." The text applies equally well to nations. Forty years ago England in arranging her fiscal affairs, did so in a matter utterly regardless of the commercial interests of her colonies, and has ever since, in matters of trade, treated them like alien communities. Is it surprising that some of them should now feel and act as such? No, indeed; the wonder is that the loyal sentiment in the colonies should have such wonderful vitality, when the indifference of many of the ruling statesmen in the Mother Country is considered. Far worse results were predicted by the historian Alison who says:—"Such distant dependencies, forming a vast Empire with the ocean for its anterior line of communication, and held together by the strong bond of mutual interest, may, if ruled by wisdom and directed by foresight, long bid defiance to the open or covert hostility of foreign powers. Divided by the neglect or irritated by the selfish legislature of the parent State, deprived of the strong bond of mutual interest arising from protected industry, cast adrift upon the world, and exposed to the competition of foreign countries, the Empire of which they form a part will speedily fall to pieces, because the ruling power at home, to gratify separate interests in the dominant island, has neglected the mission appointed for it by Providence, and ceased to benefit the human race."

The momentous questions of to-day are these: How can "The ruling power at home" repair the damage which British Unity has sustained, and induce such colonies as Queensland willingly to remain part of the Empire, and bear its share of the burden of defending it? Can this burden be placed on the shoulders of the colonies in such a manner as to encourage them to bear it?

It is useless in the case of a disaffected colony to appeal to sentiment alone. A plan must be brought forward which will, at the same time, recommend itself to the interest of the whole Empire. Such a measure has been suggested and will have full consideration in this essay. Meanwhile it is encouraging to observe some evidence of a return to reason on the part of the statesmen of Queensland. Its representatives at the Federation Conference, in Australia held in February last, were quite careful and moderate in their language, and strongly approved of the proposed Australasian Federation under the British Crown.

Professional.

TAYLOR McKEITH, Barrister, Solicitor, etc.
Scottish Ontario Chambers,
OTTAWA.

FRED. J. ALEXANDER,
ARCHITECT, &c.
No. 8 UNION CHAMBERS,
METCALFE STREET,
OTTAWA, ONTARIO.

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