

WITHIN THE EMPIRE; AN ESSAY ON Imperial Federation.

Thomas Macfarlane, F. R. S. C.

CHAPTER III.

A Retrospect and its Lesson.

Before considering how the consolidation of the Empire can be effected most easily, it would seem advantageous to take a look backward at the progress of the idea, and to do so from a Canadian point of view.

About two centuries ago, Great Britain and her Colonies on the Atlantic Coast began to find that the business of getting the country was a very precarious one. Raids and requisitions by the Indians of the west, and the French of the north, entirely dissipated any prospect of profit, or even of peaceable possession.

Equally oblivious were English statesmen of the interests of a United Empire in some of the treaties made regarding our boundaries. To this day the Ashburton Treaty is by every Canadian regarded as a proof of English indifference.

range, instead of following the natural route down the Columbia River. All these concessions were made by England in order to please the United States, and for the purpose of securing peace with them.

Nor did Canadian commercial interests fare any better than boundary questions. There was a time in the history of Great Britain when practice and experience were regarded as the true foundation for theory in every department of industry and statescraft.

It would be out of place here to discuss the merits of Protection and Free Trade. Federationists may properly take the position that each section of the Empire is free to adopt the principles of the one system or the other, as they may think fit.

The Germans say, "when the need is greatest then the help is nearest," and very soon after this time we have evidence of a reaction. But, in truth, the great heart of England never seriously thought of dismembering the Empire, and her weak-kneed statesmen found they had reckoned without their host, that they had made a huge mistake in even hinting at such a thing.

The American leanings of English statesmen were well displayed in the negotiations connected with the Treaty of Washington when the claims of Canada for compensation for the Fenian raid losses were set aside.

years ago, that the Hon. Joseph Howe expressed himself in this way:—"Of late new doctrines have been expounded in the Mother Country. The disorganisation of the Empire has been openly promulgated in leading and influential organs of public sentiment."

Quench not the smoking flax of patriot zeal That smoulders 'mongst our gallant volunteers. But nurse, encourage it; rife and steel May prove of service in a few short years.

To the Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald, K.C.B., &c., &c., at the opening of Parliament, February, 1879.

Let hardy settlers freely sow and reap; Unite our Provinces with iron bands. Our lakess and streams with channels broad and deep.

For all such blessings we will toll and pay A willing tribute on our dearest needs, For rich and poor alike do bless the day, When trade revives and enterprise succeeds.

Defend our labours first! the aliens foil! Measure for measure mete them; fearless wield The righteous power; let even Britains soil Be foreign while our homes and hearths ye shield.

To patriotic view all o'er the earth A prospect marvellous and wide expands Dear to religion and to human worth The closer union of all British lands.

Six years afterwards the Canadian militia shewed in the North-west the value of "rifle and steel" for the unity of the Dominion, and a better work still was done a year later when the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed.

From out the youthful West, radiant with hope, Where smooth Pacific laves Vancouver's shores, Where giant timber clothes the mighty slope, Where tunnel, bridge and rail unlock the doors

Now East and West are one; thy faith sublime Remove'd the mountains; bound with strongest steel Our provinces, west, centre, maritime;

Who sought thy lofty purposes to thwart; Eave, foul slander, e'en rebellion rose To discompose thy patriotic heart.

The shadows lengthen of thy busy life; But think not that thy warfare yet is o'er; Leave us not yet unguided in the strife;

If, in attempting the Federation of the Empire, English statesmen would handle that business as vigorously as ours did the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, it might be possible to complete the work five years earlier.

Nine years after the delivery of Sir John Macdonald's consolidation speech, the Imperial Federation League was organized under its first chairman, the Right Hon. W. E. Forster, who died 17 months later, on the 5th April, 1886.

Derby to write to the Queen's representative at Ottawa, and Sydney, and Victoria, and Adelaide and Brisbane, and Auckland, and Hobart Town,

ters will not be committed to an course recommended by such conference "until they have been informed thereof and approve?" Two years afterwards Forster's suggestion was followed by the Government which succeeded to power.

The proceedings of the Colonial Conference of 1887 have been published, but have not yet received anything like the attention they deserve. That the greatest importance was attached to its deliberations by the statesmen of the Empire is evident from their expressions of approval.

Lord Knutsford spoke as follows:—"Many plans have been devised, many suggestions made for fitting memorials of Her Majesty's Jubilee Year; quot homines tot sententia.

Imperial Institute, a Church Home, hospitals, free libraries, and so forth. But I assert, without fear of contradiction, that the assembling together in this country of leading Colonial statesmen and representatives of Greater Britain to discuss matters of Imperial interest affecting alike the Mother Country and the Colonies, is greatest of all memorials.

It is impossible to read such words and study the proceedings of this conference without feeling and exultingly declaring that with it and its development the "dream" of the old United Empire Loyalists is in full course of realization.

Whatever may have been the case in the past, it is certainly impossible now to say that Colonial affairs, at least, so far as regards territorial questions and Imperial defence—are not receiving sufficient attention from the Home Government. At the same time it can be maintained that the commercial interests of the whole Empire are not now obtaining that amount of consideration which almost every other civilised nation in these days feels bound to bestow on such matters.

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