

WITHIN THE EMPIRE;

AN ESSAY ON

Imperial Federation.

BY

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CHAPTER I.

The Necessity for Action.

When the news arrived from England six years ago, of the formation of the Imperial Federation League by some of the foremost statesmen and administrators in the Empire, it was received as glad tidings by many loyal hearts. In these, the hope of a United Empire had been hidden away for years without a chance of germinating. In 1885 the favourable time seemed to have arrived to agitate for the Unity of the Empire, and "The Imperial Federation League in Canada" was formed. The founders of the League at home gave no uncertain sound with regard to their objects, and while acknowledging that their path was beset with difficulties they were ready, whenever opportunity offered, to point these out, and discuss the best means of overcoming them. It is true that the resolutions adopted were general and elastic, but several of the leaders gave their views quite freely regarding the political aspect of Federation, and even discussed the best plan of establishing a Parliament for the Empire. It was hoped and expected that, by such discussions and candid interchanges of opinion, a plan for the proposed Federation would gradually be developed, satisfactory to the great majority of the members of the League, capable of being placed before the English and Colonial public as its platform and of being pressed upon the statesmen of the Empire for consideration and action.

It has to be admitted, unfortunately, that these expectations have not been realised, and that many loyalists in Canada are again beginning to experience a little of the hope deferred which "maketh the heart sick." Not only have the utterances of our leaders become more and more indistinct, but the efforts of members to get the policy of the League defined have been discouraged, and it has become the fashion to sneer at such troublesome individuals as "constitution-mongers." Speaking generally it may be said that Lord Salisbury's remark about the Fair Traders applies with equal force to Imperial Federationists: "Where they are precise they are not agreed and where they are agreed they are not precise." When we reflect that the Anti-Corn Law League accomplished its object in seven years, that from the start that object was well defined and that five years have elapsed since our movement was inaugurated, we cannot but be convinced that an accelerated rate of progress would result if the Federation faith were properly formulated, and a standard raised round which true British men might rally and fight, and which they might ultimately carry forward to victory. From the following facts it will, however, be seen that there is no hope of this at present, and that therefore individual Federationists are justified in speaking out and insisting that the time has arrived for action on the part of the League as a whole.

On the 23rd of July, 1889, Lord Salisbury wrote to the President of the Imperial Federation League, on behalf of himself and colleagues in the Imperial Government, that they would "be happy to receive and to consider, with all the respect due to a communication from so influential a body, any suggestions which the League desires to make for the purpose of modifying the relation between this country and its colonies." No such suggestion has since been made by the Council of the League, much to the regret of many who are anxious for the progress of the movement.

For a long time the Imperial Federation League avoided the adoption of any particular plan for closer union. At last, it ventured a step forward and applied to Her Majesty's Government to summon a second Colonial Conference. Every federationist would, without doubt, have hailed with joy the assembling of another Council of the Empire, but Lord Salisbury was averse to the proposal, and expressed the opinion that "it would be an unusual and inexpedient course for the government to summon a meeting to consider the question of Federation unless they were themselves prepared to make a recommendation on the subject." Under these circumstances the wisdom of persisting in the appli-

cation for summoning a conference at once may well be questioned.

Here in Canada when the Government is approached by the representatives of any body of citizens, the latter would consider itself as very fairly and favourably treated, if requested to formulate its views for the consideration of Ministers. They would only be too glad to do so, especially if the Premier promised to treat them "with all the respect due to so influential a body." There does not seem to be any reason why, in England, such a course would not be fitting, and there is too much reason to fear that the Council of the League "missed the occasion" when they neglected to take advantage of Lord Salisbury's offer to receive and consider their views.

In August, 1888, Sir Hector Langevin, delivered at Joliette, in the Province of Quebec, a forcible speech on Imperial Federation, in the presence of his colleagues in the Canadian Government, Sir Adolphe Caron and the Hon. Mr. Chapleau. In this speech Sir Hector threw down the gauntlet to Imperial Federationists, and demanded a declaration of their principles. He said: "Let them show us in black and white how this Imperial Federation can take effect without destroying our existing liberties; let them show us what voice we shall have in this grand Imperial Parliament, that is to decide questions concerning all quarters of the Empire; let them show us how the United Kingdom will modify its fiscal policy so as not to force us to have recourse to direct taxation." Further, let them tell us, will our representation be based on population? Up to the present moment this appeal remains without official rejoinder from the Imperial Federation League, although it is plain that a union, such as federationists desire, cannot be brought about without the good will of the French Canadians and their leaders. Sir Hector's opposition is bred of distrust. Imperial Federation is to him suspicious from its vagueness, and it is plain that if the fears of his compatriots are to be removed the authorities of the League must announce a more definite policy.

Several efforts have been made since the delivery of Sir Hector's speech to impress upon the officials of the League, both here and in England, the necessity of replying authoritatively to such demands for more information. Some plain statement of policy is indispensable to enable those who believe in Imperial Federation to convince others that a closer union of the various portions of the Empire, would be of advantage all round, and that it would not, in any material degree, interfere with the rights we now enjoy. But up to the present time the Council of the League has not thought fit to move in the desired direction, and to-day Sir Hector's remark of two years ago may be repeated with equal emphasis, "the fact is that this question has not been carefully considered."

On the 9th May, 1885, scarcely six months after the inauguration of the parent society in England, the Imperial Federation League in Canada was formed. On the evening of the same day, in Montreal, a most successful public meeting was held, the newly elected president, Mr. Dalton McCarthy, presiding and giving utterance to these words: "We are all prepared to shoulder a musket in defence of the mother-land, and she is equally ready to do the same by us. If that sentiment fills every loyal heart, there can be no harm in putting in definite terms the conditions under which we can be called upon to stand shoulder to shoulder." Many eloquent words were spoken besides those of the President, but none awakened such enthusiasm as the speech of Principal Grant of Queen's University. Two years and a half afterwards the latter distinguished orator penned the following sentences in an essay entitled, "Canada First."—"The weakness inherent to political organizations that have no definite work to do is seen in the difficulty that has been found in forming, and maintaining in existence, branches of the Imperial Federation League. I am a member of that League, but it is evident that it will soon vanish into thin air, unless some scheme of commercial or political action is agreed upon for the carrying out of which its members may work."

Mr. G. Downes Carter, President of the League in Victoria, when visiting England, nearly two years ago, expressed himself as follows at a meeting of the League: "In speaking to-day, I simply put before you that which I believe to be the true position of affairs, and when you give the word that we are to announce a more active programme, you will find no warmer advocate than myself. Until you give that sanction we shall be

"perfectly loyal to the parent League; for there must not be two voices, one speaking one way and one another. But I do put this question before you for consideration, whether the time has not now arrived, when we should have an active instead of a mere passive policy—whether you should not have a positive instead of a negative force, because if you do not, one does not know what at any moment may happen."

In March, 1886, Sir Frederick Young wrote regarding the Policy of the League as follows: "The time must undoubtedly come when this judicious reticence will have to be abandoned, and when some definite scheme must be put forward by the League, as the one for which it claims support, for giving practical effect to the principle it advocates—the Federation of Great Britain and her Colonies." In the same article, Sir Frederick places on record a summary of the various plans which had been proposed for effecting the object of the League. Since then we have had four years of discussion, and the columns of *Imperial Federation* contain the thoughts of many writers on the momentous subject, but still the time referred to by Sir Frederick Young seems to be as far distant as ever.

From these quotations and the circumstances above narrated, it will be seen that from all quarters, friendly and hostile alike, the League has been urged to propound a more definite policy. But all that it can be held responsible for are the following principles taken from its published proceedings, neglecting only the resolutions which refer to matters of organization.

1. That in order to secure the permanent unity of the Empire some form of federation is essential.
2. That the object of the League is to secure by Federation the permanent unity of the Empire.
3. That no scheme of Federation should interfere with the existing rights of Local Parliaments as regards local affairs.
4. That any scheme of Imperial Federation should combine on an equitable basis the resources of the Empire for the maintenance of common interests, and adequately provide for an organized defence of common rights.
5. That the establishment of periodical conferences of representatives of the self-governing communities of the Empire should be the first aim of the Imperial Federation League.

While attempting to criticise the policy of the League, we must not neglect to acknowledge the great obligation which that body has conferred upon the friends of the movement, in providing such a journal as *Imperial Federation* for the discussion of all phases of the question. It is hard to say which is most to be admired; the ability with which it has been conducted or the liberality with which its columns have been thrown open to the expression of every shade of opinion among Federationists.

It is also to be gratefully recognized that the League is raising the standard of the "permanent unity of the Empire" has done excellent work in England. But it can scarcely be admitted that a new organization, based upon this principle alone, was necessary in Canada, because fidelity to British connection is one of the essential characteristics of the Liberal-Conservative party. This grand principle the League proposes to secure by Federation, that is to say, if Mr. Freeman's definition is to be accepted, by causing the various parts of the Empire to form one state in its relation with other Powers. Can it be said that in its platform there is one practical measure proposed to cause the Empire to present a united front to foreign nations? To take a very simple instance, is there in it any proposition so to reorganize the British diplomatic service as to make it as careful of the interests of India and New Zealand as of England? or does it afford any prospect of the invention of a common coinage for the Empire? There is not a single practical step toward Federation proposed or even suggested, and the programme of the League might fairly be paraphrased by these words, "We want to federate the Empire, but don't know how, and wish the Imperial Government to take the matter in hand."

To ask the Government of the day to call together Colonial Conferences to consider "the possibility of establishing closer and more substantial union," is to ask it to devise a plan and to take the responsibility of proposing it. If the Imperial Federation League cannot shoulder this responsibility, is it reasonable to ask the Imperial Government to do so? The League is only a private

organization, and even if it were to make mistakes in its proposals the matter would not be so very serious. But it is very different with a Government, whose mistakes may not only be ruinous to itself, but may be also very disastrous for the country. Moreover it is doubtful whether a government can be reasonably called upon to act in a matter which has not been placed before the people, and upon which public opinion has not been formed. Even supposing that a second Colonial Conference were called, what would the League be prepared to recommend? To judge from their utterances its leaders would be "caught napping." If they were wise, before urging the government to take action they would call a Congress of Federationists and decide upon the best measures to propose. We might then be able to cease boasting that we no programme, and frame the best that can be devised with our present light, stating plainly that it is subject to revision with the growth of our knowledge and experience. All this is the work of the League and should precede any action by Her Majesty's Government.

Such a programme should emanate from the whole Imperial Federation League throughout the Empire, and not from the Council or Executive Committee of the parent body alone. Nor, indeed, does the latter claim any monopoly in the matter. Lord Rosebery himself declares that it should be "guided by the opinion of the Colonies" with regard to another Conference. But to obtain this by correspondence and without bringing representatives of the League together to exchange ideas verbally would be, obviously, a very imperfect course. It is true that the constitution of the League contains no provision for consulting the Colonial organizations before taking any important action, but it is quite possible for the League in England to invent such means. Indeed it is very necessary that it should do so unless the Colonial Leagues are to become independent and form their own plans. To prevent anything of this sort, and to promote the unity and progress of the movement, besides preparing the way for a second Conference, it would seem indispensable to call together a convention of Imperial Federationists. Indeed, when we come to think, it seems wonderful that nothing of the sort has yet been held, and that we have made any real progress without it.

The Imperial Federation League was not formed one moment too soon, for influence, are at work in several Colonies which will make the Consolidation of the Empire the more difficult of accomplishment the longer it is postponed. There never was a case in which it could be said with greater truth that delays are dangerous, and never one in which the time for positive action was more opportune than at present. In a speech in the House of Lords, not so very long ago, the noble President of the League made use of this very word "opportunity," and just as he then urged reform on his colleagues, so may action now be urged upon the Executive Committee of the League in the very quotation Lord Rosebery made use of:—

"Miss not the occasion; by the forelock take That subtle power of never halting time, Lest the mere moments putting off should make Mischance almost as grave as crime."

Of course it is incumbent upon those who urge action to indicate the direction it should take. This I have endeavoured to do in the present chapter. I recommend a convention of Imperial Federationists, to agree upon a plan to be suggested to Lord Salisbury for the consideration of an Imperial Conference. In the following chapters of this essay I shall endeavour to describe what I consider to be the plan of easiest execution. It may be said briefly to consist of the following steps:

A. Obtain an *Imperial Revenue* from a duty of 5 per cent. *ad valorem* on all foreign imports into every part of the Empire over and above all local tariffs.

B. Place this revenue in charge of an *Imperial Ministry*, separate from that of England, to defray the cost of the British navy, and to meet other Imperial outlays.

C. Let this Ministry be responsible to an *Imperial Senate*, formed by so re-constructing the House of Lords as to give representation to each division of the Empire in proportion to its contribution to the revenue.

There is abundant evidence to show that the commercial phase of Federation is uppermost in the Colonial mind. On the other hand, it may be noticed that, in the United Kingdom, the current of thought among Federationists turns mostly on the defence of the Empire, the extent to which the Colonies ought to contribute to its cost and to the improvement of inter-British telegraph and postal affairs. A third view is that

of the Fair-traders, who adopt the principle of "Free-trade (as far as possible) within the Empire, and Protection against the world." Now, if these different currents of thought regarding Federation, now flowing separately, although in the same direction, could be guided into one channel their power would be greatly augmented, and, in fact, rendered irresistible. This union may be accomplished and the triple object of uniting and defending the Empire, and encouraging its trade attained by the adoption of the above mentioned measures.

It is sometimes argued that the Colonial legislatures should be the first to formulate their wishes for closer union. Meanwhile the Colonies are waiting for action by the Mother Country. Under such circumstances there can be no progress, and how is it to be expected that a legislature can act before public opinion has been educated by the operations of the League and its branches? They must first propose a policy. Here again the branches wait on the parent League, and the latter, apparently, on the branches. Well; the League in Canada has taken action on the Commercial question without provoking action by the League in London. How long are we to play at this shifting and shirking of responsibilities?

Lessing causes the fiery Saladin to exclaim, "He who considers seeketh reasons for not daring." Schiller makes William Tell say, "He who deliberates too much will accomplish little." It is a common German saying that, "Boldly ventured is half won." In these days Germany suits its action to its words. Is it possible that the "Fatherland" is gaining what the "Motherland" is losing in manly statecraft. Certain it is that Germany would very willingly pick up anything in the shape of Colonial territory or influence that England might abandon.

There was a time, previous to the peace of Iliit, when England was implored by the Continental powers to come to their aid against Napoleon. She refused or delayed and afterwards had to wade through blood, and spend millions to accomplish, almost single handed, the liberation of Europe. Is her future Colonial policy to be one of which we should be able to say "Experience teaches?" or is it only to result in confirming the adage, "He that will not while he may shall not when he will?"

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