

THE UNION JACK

By BARLOW CUMBERLAND

UNDER the heading of "Le Drapeau de la Confederation" (The Dominion Ensign) there recently appeared in the columns of *La Presse*, of Montreal, an article rather taking to task the Educational Department of British Columbia for having directed that the Union Flag, generally known as the "Union Jack," should be officially raised over the Public Schools of that Province, the direction being that the Union Jack, and not the Canadian Ensign, should be so used. It is to this latter regulation that objection was made.

Apart from the question of this particular regulation, it may be well to first consider the general subject of the using of flags.

At sea and afloat the indication of the nationality and ownership and of the rank of the vessel itself or of the personages on board is of so much importance that by all countries and at all times definite and imperative regulations have been issued for their proper and official display. The flying of a flag without due authority renders the vessel and her captain subject to penalties and fines.

National flags carry with them to foreign shores the power and protection of the authority which they represent. Wherever a British ship sails she carries with her the presence of British sovereignty and law. Her deck is as sacred to friend and foe as the soil of the country whose flag she bears.

On land, within the precincts of their own country there are always distinct regulations for the use of certain flags for official purposes, but their use by private individuals is governed more by personal selection than by any set rules. They are being displayed by friends in the midst of friends, yet their use should always be governed by propriety.

The Royal Standard is the personal flag of the King, or proclaims the presence of some member of the Royal Family. It would not be thought proper to use it unless it might be on some special occasion or anniversary in honour of the Sovereign.

It would scarcely be considered appropriate that a private individual should use the special flag of the Governor-General, or of a Lieutenant-Governor, the latter being the Union Jack with the arms of his Province in the centre.

Propriety would also indicate to a foreigner that as a private individual he should not raise his foreign flag unless at the same time he displayed the flag of the country on whose soil he might be. In these and other like instances propriety should rule, and unpleasant misunderstandings would thereby be avoided. Should he, however, be a Consul or an official representative of a foreign nation then the raising of his country's flag over his official residence is justified, and carries with it, as on a ship, the evidence of its nation, and is entitled to be respected as though it were upon its own country's soil.

Specific instructions for the official use of national flags are necessary, therefore both on land and at sea and when issued should be willingly obeyed.

What flags then may be used in general by private British persons on British soil?

The Union Jack in the early centuries was authorised to be used at sea only on the King's ships. Subsequently regulations have been issued for its use on other ships, and on land on military garrisons and official buildings. A usage, worldwide, in all British countries has grown up in the flying of this flag by private persons on land, but except by inference no definite authority had been given for the loyal practice.

In reply to my enquiry, as President of the Ontario Historical Society, stating the position and usage and asking for the authority, the following letter was received:

Sandringham, Norfolk, 29th Dec., 1907.

Sir,—In reply to your letter of the 9th inst., I beg to inform you that the "Union Jack," being the national flag, may be flown by British subjects, private or official, on land.

(Signed) KNOLLYS.

Barlow Cumberland, Esq.

By this letter of the Private Secretary of His Majesty, the King, the usage is thus confirmed and authorised.

Formal declaration has also been since issued by the "Home Office" in England "that the Union Jack was to be regarded as the national flag, and

may be used generally by British subjects on land."

A British subject may therefore always use the Union Jack on British soil.

The three crosses of the three nations whose union it first typified have since expanded far beyond the United Kingdom of the parent isles.

The sons of the Kingdoms have in centuries of prowess carried it far afield, and bringing distant continents beneath its realm, have built up the Dominions beyond the seas in Australia, Canada, India, South Africa, and the myriad islands of the oceans, so that it has become the Union Jack of the British Empire.

It is in this respect that *La Presse* has erred in describing it as "le drapeau d'Angleterre" (the flag of England). On the contrary, it is not the flag of any single one of the nations, but is the union emblem of all the British, who, whether originating in the old lands or arising beneath its protection in its expansion in other lands, raise it over their portions of the British Empire in united allegiance and loyalty to their Union Sovereign and British Realm.

This, then, is the one flag which may be used by all the united nations around the world, the National Flag of the British Empire.

But there are also loyal and local flags which may be used in each.

The flag of the Englishman is the Red Cross of St. George, on a white ground; of the Scotsman, the white cross of St. Andrew, on a blue ground or his upstanding lion; and of the Irishman, his St. Patrick's cross or his harp and crown. These are the local flags of their home countries.

The local ensign of the Australians, adopted at their union, is the Southern cross, upon a red ground, with the Union Jack in the upper corner. Such, too, is "le Drapeau de la Confederation," our Canadian ensign. In its broad red field are the arms of the Dominion of Canada, as the sign of our Canadian Union, in the upper corner is the Union Jack, as sign of our British Union. As the other local flags are to each the emblems of their home country and their lineage, so too is the Canadian Ensign, the emblem of our own home country and our growing lineage united from ocean to ocean.

It was very noticeable at the recent celebration in Quebec of the Tercentenary of the foundation of Canada that the Union Jack and the Canadian Ensign were displayed much more generally and the Tricolour much less than previously, and reasonably so, for the Tricolour of modern France is only of a later date and does not represent anything in his allegiance or his history to the French-Canadian. A quarter of a century before it came into existence, in the revolutionary period of the modern French, the French-speaking Canadian of more ancient lineage had adopted his allegiance and self-government under the Union Jack, and has loyally fought under it for the defence of his home and liberties in the wars of 1775 and 1812.

As the white ensign and fleur-de-lis of Champlain had before been the flag of his forefathers, so the Union Jack has now for a century and a half been the union flag of our French-speaking developers of Canada, and whether by itself or as le Drapeau de la Confederation, is the guardian signal of our united progress.

It has already been noted that when flags are to be employed for official purposes it is requisite that definite regulations shall be issued for their use. In Canada we raise the Union Jack on our Parliament and Legislative Buildings as indicating the presence of Government under the British Constitution; on our law courts, of the administration of British law; and on our municipal and home buildings, the Canadian Ensign, as evidence of our personal and local rule and lineage. When flags are to be raised over our Public Schools it is manifest that for so important and public a service in the instruction of our children distinct regulations require to be made so that they may be duly authorised and similarly displayed.

The lessons that these flags convey should be those of the widest patriotism, the most paramount in their meaning.

We are engaged in Canada in the most momentous problem in nation-building that is laid upon any people of the present day. Pilgrims are coming to us from all nations of the earth. Leaving

their original allegiance and their previous national flags, they come among us to acquire a new allegiance under another national flag. They come to enjoy the advantages of British protection and the rights of British citizenship. The parents have come to be members of the most world-wide and greatest Empire the world has ever known, and as they and their children see our Union Jack raised over the Public Schools they will quickly acquire the wondrous lessons that its waving folds convey and learn to love and respect it as their own.

If, though of varying lineage, they are from our kindred lands or are of our own upbringing, then under the Union Jack they will unitedly and in union feel at home, for it is the union flag of the British of all races and tongues.

Is it not an inspiration for ourselves to have it brought to mind that our union flag floats on every sea, that on one-fifth of the earth's surface it is hailed as their union emblem by 400,000,000 of fellow-patriots, in every clime, of many languages, and all religious faiths, each dearly loving their own native land, but united in loyal brotherhood with their fellow yet far-distant Britons under the one British King and Empire?

In Manitoba, Ontario, and now in British Columbia, the Union Jack is the flag which has been instructed to be raised over the Public Schools, and also in Australia and in the British Isles.

The patriotic celebration of "Empire Day," which first originated in the schools in Canada, is fast extending through the schools of the Empire. On this day as well as on other notable days, appropriate addresses are given, the national flag is reverently raised and saluted, and the National Anthem and patriotic songs sung by the scholars. It is recorded by Lord Meath that in the Public Schools of the Empire 6,000,000 children united in 1907 in this celebration; the record for this present year will be far in excess, and in time it is fair to believe that it will be adopted in all the Public Schools.

It was the Union Jack, the one flag common to all the Britons, which was thus raised on all these schools in all these lands. With such examples and such an inspiration, the local loyal ensigns in our sister-countries and our own are yet as much esteemed and displayed, but in this education of our hearts and youth we thus join hands in union with our brethren around the world.

That British Columbia has joined the circle is what, from its history, would be reasonably expected, and perhaps with much local propriety, for the Union Jack forms the upper part of the British Columbia Provincial Coat-of-Arms. Objection cannot well be made to the decision of her educational authorities.

Canada has now entered upon the fourth century of her history. In the Old Land varying races, as Angles and Saxons, Norsemen and Normans, held successive sway, bearing their share in the formation and character of the realm, and these many nationalities were fused together. The internecine wars of the Roses at last spent their dividing forces, and all differences have been blended in completed union. We have been continuing this same expansion of nationality on another continent under similar phases, but at greater speed, each decade adding its duties and responsibilities as we develop the previously unoccupied possibilities of its northern half. Of this progress our Union Jack reminds us. Under the single cross flag of Richard the Lion-hearted, the great-grandson of William of Normandy, our Atlantic Sea Provinces were planted. Under the two-crossed Jack French Canada came into our Union, the United Empire Loyalists in loyal fidelity followed it into our country, and our coasts on the Pacific were added by Vancouver. Under the three-crossed Jack all our Canadians rose as one man and joined to repel the invaders from the South, who had sought to compel us to leave its allegiance, and under it we have achieved the completion of our United Dominion.

It is the record of our history, the signal of our Northern zone, the flag of our Empire. In this wealth of meaning and as evidence to all men of the British liberties which it maintains, it has been directed to be raised over our Public Schools as a lesson, an inspiration and a talisman to all who live and grow beneath its magic folds.