

CANADA AND THE IMPERIAL WAR CABINET

I. BRITISH PROTECTION OF CANADA

THE defence of the British Empire is a perplexing problem. Attempts to solve it provoked the great revolution from which came the republic of the United States. This revolution was even more momentous than the French Revolution. Not only did it determine the form of the political institutions of the greater part of the two continents of America, but it was itself also in large measure the cause of the French Revolution. Royalist France was aflame with eagerness for republican principles, as applied in America, to the hurt of a hated rival in Europe. These principles, however, would not remain on the other side of the ocean from France. They crossed to Europe and in the end helped to make France herself a republic. Thus a problem of the internal government of the British Empire expanded into a world problem, the struggle between democracy and aristocracy, between local liberty and centralized control. Ever since, in 1607, English colonists settled in Virginia it has haunted the politics of the British Empire. After a stormy history of three hundred years it has taken on a new character because of the great war which broke out in 1914.

The British Empire, as now we all see, has become a world-wide Commonwealth of Nations. When once the British over the seas attained to importance as states they could not be controlled and directed by the people of Great Britain and the consequent problem of continued union became one of the most searching which statesmanship could face. At the time of the American Revolution most British statesmen would have denied the equality of colonial leaders with themselves. A great landowner, with a vast palace as his home, living in state hardly short of regal, naming to Parliament some of its members, would have smiled at the thought of equality with a plain John Adams or even with the Virginian landowner, George Washington. Compared with an English magnate, these colonists would have had a social and with it a