

POLITICAL FEDERATION OF THE EMPIRE.

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THE tens of thousands who witnessed from within, the hundreds of thousands who witnessed from without, and the millions who have eagerly read of the stately and unique ceremonies by which the Imperial Institute has been inaugurated, were the genuine representatives of every part of our wonderful Empire.

The Queen and Empress, not less respected than beloved by more than four hundred million subjects, here received, with her son and heir-apparent, the willing homage of by far the largest national "party" of the human race; and these subjects truthfully pride themselves that under her crown they enjoy a freedom more secure, genuine, and well-ordered than the liberty, so often degenerating into license, which is the lot of citizens of the new-fashioned money-ridden republics.

Yet this very Empire, to which the Imperial Institute has become a necessity, was, in its present character, actually non-existent fifty years ago. It is a fact that the British Empire has appropriated three out of the four areas within the temperate zones not hitherto occupied by civilized man. North America, South Africa, and Australasia have fallen to the British; only South America remains for other colonizing races. In reclaiming for the uses of civilization these vast and fertile areas, the British race has found new opportunities and channels for the investment and creation of capital, the development of industries and commerce, and the employment of population both at home and abroad.

So gigantic and rapid a development of economic conditions has, not unnaturally, created a proportionate sentiment and pride of far-reaching effect. The national sentiment is now centred on the Imperial ascendancy of the race, and throughout all classes the idea of a great united empire has taken such hold that the barest suspicion of treason to that idea suffices to hurl from power the most influential statesman.

The idea of the unity of the race and the integrity of its realms, at one time the ridiculed dream of theorists, at another the impracticable scheme of too-ardent politicians, has become the first article in the avowed creed of every public man. At the last general election there was not a candidate but spoke and wrote of his absolute intention to uphold the unity of the Empire.

Imperial Federation is the catchword that has seized upon popular favour, and its actual, or technical, meaning has been lost in the wider fact that the phrase is merely taken to represent this idea of the unity and integrity of our great Empire. Yet, for all thoughtful statesmen, the phrase is the source of much anxious pondering. The question is constantly propounded: What can be actually done? What real, tangible work can be undertaken that shall secure the substantial realization of this great idea?

The history of the mother country in the past contains the only reliable indications of the history of the future of that mother country and her numerous colonial offspring. That history is the tale of successive developments, of a series of growths and changes, usually of such slight comparative importance as almost to escape notice. British history affords no example of sudden, new reforms, no magnificent paper constitutions, no brand-new codes and institutions—it is only a record of perpetual growth.

So must it be with the consolidation of the various component parts of the Empire; with the realization of the idea and spirit of co-operation and unity; with the consummation of what is meant by the popular phrase, Imperial Federation.

Working for this great end is the one overwhelming political farce—the popular will. This may be guided and stimulated by the historian and the statesman; in the press and on the platform; in parliament and in private. But it can only grow to be an overwhelming force by reason of its being broad based upon the true economic necessities of the case.

Statistics clearly show that, while of the total imports into the United Kingdom one-tenth only is manufactures, of the exports no less than four-fifths consists of manufactures. On the other hand, while of the total imports into India and the colonies at least one-half is of manufactured articles, of the total exports nineteen-twentieths is made up of foods and raw materials.

Such leading facts indicate the true economic relations between England and her colonies, and afford very substantial reasons for the faith that the public has in the Empire, and the determination not to fritter away that Empire.—*Fortnightly Review*.