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IMPERIAL RELATIONS

*An address by Henri Bourassa, Esq.,
Before the Empire Club of Canada,
Toronto, March 6, 1913.*

This vast problem of Imperial relationship is one of very old standing, but with no finality. It is as old as the first days when a few individuals of the British races, abandoning the small islands to the north of Europe, went to foreign parts and brought with them their instincts, aspirations and national inheritance. It is still in the process of evolution, largely because, with people of British races, slower perhaps in their national development than the Latin races have been, but never prepared to stop on the road of progress towards the attainment of their ideal, there is no finality in the development of political institutions. In that process of evolution, if you and we, English and French Canadians, want to accomplish something of real bearing for the whole Empire, if we want to build something enduring in our part of the Empire, we must agree from the start on one point: that every Canadian, whatever his race or language, shall be allowed the most absolute freedom in expressing his opinion upon all the aspects of this great question.

Before we decide, as a people, what changes should be made in the existing relations between Canada and the Motherland, and the other parts of the Empire, is it not well that we should stop for a moment and not give ourselves altogether to blind sentiment? Eloquent and easy appeals are frequently made to the solidarity of the British races. More latitude should be given, I think, to the voice of reason. This great problem must be considered not only from the point of view of the