

of prematurely preparing them for separation, or of rudely casting them off, appears to me an unsound policy. The idea to be cultivated, instead of that of the parental relation, with its inevitable termination at the close of a very limited period, should rather be that of a partnership, which may last for centuries, and need not terminate at all, so long as it is mutually advantageous.

That Colonies have the right to break away and set up for themselves, if they are oppressed, will not at the present day be denied. That they will do this, if kindly and fairly dealt by, I hold to be at least "not proven." I would act as though it could not be proved. I would discountenance the idea of separation. I would have faith in the future—in our common brotherhood (which ought to count for something) even less than in the conviction, founded on our daily experience, that it is our interest to keep together.

It is sometimes thought that the Empire was weakened by conceding to the Colonies the system of responsible Government. The very reverse is true. They would inevitably have been dispersed sooner or later, had it not been conceded. This was a great Conservative measure, as well as a substantial reform. So far as the British North American Provinces are concerned, proof of the correctness of this opinion was given in a letter which I addressed to Earl Russell in 1846. Ample evidence has been accumulating ever since. Not only were the provinces presently saved by this