

THE COLONIES.

III.

To the Editor of the Times.

SIR.—I now advert, in conclusion, to some points untouched in my former letters which bear on the existing conditions of the present connexion, and to suggest the measure of duty which the circumstance seem to call for.

It is true that up to this time there has been no contribution by the colonies to the general expenses of the empire, and that British subjects going there are exempt from most of the burdens, while they continued to possess all the advantage of the connexion; but the period may not be distant when the circumstances of the colonies, or some of them, at least, may warrant some revision of their relation. Any one who knows the struggle which an emigrant has on settling in a remote colony, for mere existence, will admit that to attempt to burden him with any other taxation than that which the circumstances of the country itself demand would not only be unwise but wholly fruitless. It would check its growth and development, the influx of population, and postpone for years the time when it might with some probability be in possession of sufficient means to assume a share of the expenditure for national services which all interests not in England only, but in the outlying portions of the empire, have a common advantage in sustaining.

Surely there ought to be no inseparable difficulties in the way of distinguishing the class of expenditure which may be said to belong to England proper, and to result from the social features of her insular condition, from that in which the whole empire (the colonies included) have a common interest, and next in devising some equitable apportionment of the latter, having regard to considerations of advantage, obligations already performed, and ability to assume it.

Having already endeavoured to prove how groundless the argument is that the supreme consideration of common safety points to separation in the case of any colony, that the colonies are not a burden to the English taxpayer, and that they are, judging them by the light of past experience, not unwilling to revise their relations so as to mitigate any burden which may actually be found to exist, let me now say a word with reference to their utility. To those who in the admitted absence of real grievances on either side, would settle this question solely by the test of the immediate profit or loss which a balance sheet might show, I have not a word to say. I would not accord undue importance to a sentimental attachment in the presence of pressing grievances of a practical kind, but national unity is a principle the influence of which I trust will never cease to be felt in the direction of English affairs. Self-interest is becoming a powerful rule of action, but have love, the associations connected with home or country, ambition, pride, national susceptibilities, honor or patriotism, become wholly extinct or powerless emotions either with individuals or communities?

England would have lost nothing if Consul Cameron had still languished in Abyssinia; she would have been none the poorer if Mason and Slidell had remained in Fort

Warren; yet, in both cases, the universal impulse took a higher view of national duty. And so it will be again. May we not take example from the United States in their efforts to maintain their national unity, and receive some teaching from the result? Public opinion in England at one time favored the idea that the interests of the South were so wholly separated from those of the North, and that the obstacles arising from social and economic causes were so great as to interpose a permanent barrier to their well being as one people. But, in the face of those admitted elements of future difficulty, far more appalling than any which spring from the Imperial and colonial relations, a struggle such as England is not asked to engage in to maintain her colonial autonomy went on. On its termination people then predicted that though military occupation of the South as a conquered country might be held, there never could be anything like harmony in the relations of the two. And yet re-construction proceeds. State after State accepts the new Constitution, and the Union now stands on a more firm basis than it ever did. May we, in adhering to the principle of union, but not circumscribing it within insular limits, not trust to the influence of time and the irresistible force of events, for adjusting the future relations between all the outlying portions of the empire towards their common centre.

No one who desires to promote this national unity to make the relations just to both sides, can disapprove the efforts which have been made of late years to make the colonies self-reliant—to give them entire freedom of local self-government, and, as far as they have the attributes of independence to impose on them when they are at all able to bear them the corresponding burdens; and to reduce the expenditure, whether military, naval, executive or otherwise, to a point which shall be justifiable by considerations of necessity only.

I am sure there is no desire on the part of the large colonies, nor, so far as I am aware, of any of them, to ask for any expenditure which the English tax payer may justly point at as unnecessary. If that be the case, does it not seem a rash experiment, even to those who would act solely from utilitarian motives, to renounce an estate merely because it yields at the moment no direct return? No man can withhold his sympathies from those who appeal to the ten millions a year paid for poor rates; to the fact that one in every thirty mer of the population of London lives on charity; and to the other onerous charges of which the industrious middle classes complain. But may not these colonial possessions be turned to some account? Might not a portion of the ten millions now paid to keep so many thousands of able bodied men and women in degrading idleness be usefully employed in transplanting them to your outlying fields? To almost every colony nature has supplied a healthy, if to some a rigorous climate, and free grants of land are to be had for the asking.

But, it is argued, our manufactures are steadily increasing. Let us retain our people here and make England the workshop of the world. Let me ask, however, is the superiority formerly possessed by England over all other nations with reference to manufactures likely to be perpetual? Have not foreign skill, mechanical science, and trade unions at home done something already to produce conditions of equality unknown before? Under the existing social conditions here, will it pay to keep a larger operative class within this island, either with the aim of making labour cheaper, or insur-

ing a stendier supply? Is there no danger of increased poor-rates or of a popular demand for the distribution of land? Assuming however, that emigration is desirable, it may be said that the facilities for emigration would be equal if the colonies were independent, or in the case of Canada if allied to the United States, and that there the emigrant would be as valuable a consumer of English manufactures as if he remained a British subject. There is a class, I know, who answer by a reference to any other principle of national action than this, as mere sentimentalism. But to those who have other aspirations for England's future than to see the coming generation a community of peaceful artisans, I would ask is there no prospective national advantage in having communities all over the the earth in friendly alliance rather than in enmity? Take the Irish exodus to the United States and to Canada. In the former, the emigrant finds himself surrounded by influences hostile to England, his old antipathies are not only perpetuated, but intensified, and with out almost any exception every Irishman then becomes a Fenian, his powers of mischief increasing with his wealth: in the latter he finds himself without a wrong, no dominant Church, no land grievance, no exclusion from his fair share of influence in the direction of public affairs; his surroundings and the example of his countrymen all tend to make him a loyal subject, and there is not one in a thousand who would not meet in deadly enmity a Fenian invasion of the Canadian Frontier.

Are then the symbols of English sovereignty the influence of English associations, and that wholesome retention of a feeling of reverence without which a community must deteriorate, of no account in those outlying portions of the empire, even as respects the future of Great Britain? I hesitate alluding to the passionate sentiment of loyalty to the person and family of the Sovereign no less than to the Constitution existing in the hearts of the great body of colonists. No one can understand who did not witness the almost idolatrous devotion extended to Prince Arthur in his recent visit to the rural districts of Canada, simply because he was the son of their sovereign. It was not mere curiosity or a senseless ambition to be presented, no gaping desire for sight seeing, but a profound and respectful homage coming from the heart of a loyal people. Is this all to be thrown aside and are these communities to be turned into soured and resentful outcasts? But it will be said no one dreams of abandoning the colonies against their inclination. True, but the revulsion of feeling which may spring from a mistaken notion of the views held here is what I would guard against, and this brings me in conclusion, to consider what should now be practically done.

I have said that the case of New Zealand is a special one with respect to the shades of right or wrong, of which there may be an honest difference of opinion. I deprecate, therefore, approaching the consideration of the more general question in the light or under the instigation of that supposed wrong. I do not think that any attempt now to introduce radical changes into the relations between England and her colonies is needed, or that it would be likely to improve them. Over zeal in the promotion of reform may strengthen the hands of the party of separation. Has there been any withholding of a proper measure of power from any colony, or the exercise over it or on any of its people of undue authority on the part of the colonial office, as to call for a fundamental reconstruction of their rela-