

# THE WEEK.

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## WHAT IS INCLUDED IN AN IMPERIAL CUSTOMS UNION. SUMMARY.

- Aims and intents of Imperial Federation.
- The need of more united defence.
- Mr. Chamberlain's trade policy.
- New openings afforded in the commercial and in the political world.
- The original declaration in New South Wales.
- Trade Congresses.
- Terms of "The Statist" competition.
- The Essays: Their distinctive variations.
- Essay of Mr. J. G. Colmer, C.M.G.
- Essay of Mr. R. S. Ashton, B.A.
- Points for discrimination.

We are told that the solution of the question of an Imperial Customs Union with a view to its being the stepping stone to Imperial Federation will tax the financial skill of the most experienced economist. The financial needs of each separate Government, the historical proclivities and tastes of their respective people, the preponderance of the practical good of the old *régime* over the present, the continuity of our constitutional tribunals of government and the maintenance of the present channels of business and traffic, are all factors in the problem. The result must be obtained without shock to established credit, or violating friendly relationships with other countries outside our own Union.

It is then a collection of questions, in which every one who undertakes to answer any one of them can use all his knowledge of history and in which he can bring his ingenuity to bear on the construction of a policy and programme.

Lord Salisbury states it as "nothing more or less than the future of the British Empire," and we should look upon it as the continuation of the work of building up our Empire, the different propositions as the stones in the building; and the care that the builders must take is to see that the stones both fit their own niche and are in harmony with the structure.

A constitutional Imperial Union already exists, having within itself principles of permanence and cohesion, so that federation will be the final step in the expansion of Great Britain to an Empire inhabited in every part by the British, alike in capacities, in possession of the same historical rights and united by a Federal constitution enjoying local control for their own individual development and entrusted with the royal prerogative.

In the different Imperial policies put forward there is no thought of in any way diminishing or narrowing the legislative functions we now possess. Every Colony will maintain intact its constitutional powers, in fact they will be augmented by the power of consent to Imperial affairs. Questions of Imperial Policy will come before the electorate throughout the Empire, the feeling of united nationality will be extended from a quiescent fact into active operation. The main object, however, at the present time being an extension and increase of our trade.

Viewed from the standpoint of united government the Colonies have always been bound together with but a slender thread. Lord Rosebery has said that he believed it impos-

## An Imperial Customs Union—What it is, and What it is For.\*

IN our issue of June 5th, we printed, under a "Request to Correspondents," an invitation to our contributors to give their views on the following questions:—

"What is your opinion as to the proposals made by Messrs. Colmer and Ashton, respectively, and—What is your solution of the problem set before the present Congress, namely, how to improve the trade relationships between the different portions of the Empire?"

We also referred to the synopsis of these two Essays in our issue of the 29th May, and the reports of the Congress have since appeared in the daily papers from the 9th to the 18th June.

We propose to keep this request open to the fifteenth of July, when we shall begin to print the replies under the contributor's name or otherwise, as they may wish. We cannot offer to print the whole length of all the replies, but we will give every contributor who favours us all the space we can.

Since this invitation appeared we have been asked to furnish information on the subject, or to say where it can be obtained, so that our readers can form a more accurate opinion in answering the questions.

It has also been proposed we should take a vote on the different replies received, and we have the suggestion under consideration; and it has further been proposed that we should organize a debate or series of debates on the replies as well, on all of which we would like to hear from our readers.

In compliance with the request for information on the subject we asked Mr. J. Van Sommer, of Toronto, whose essay was one of the six selected for honourable mention, for the following contribution. We intend to follow this up with a review of the Colonial Customs Acts now in force, and extracts from the Foreign Treaties which at present largely govern the situation. These with the list of books recommended for reference should help our readers to form an opinion.

\* EDITORIAL NOTE.—In this issue we depart, for once, from the usual arrangement of our columns. The vital importance to the Dominion of the question of Imperial Customs Union justifies our placing it in the foremost place in this journal. We earnestly call upon our readers to consider the subject as developed by Mr. Van Sommer's lucid synopsis, and to favour us with their criticisms and suggestions. Canadian intellect should be drawn in this direction rather than in that of internal strife.