

“ One of the people!” No king ever took to himself a prouder title. No Prince of Wales was ever so worthy as this prince of that principedom whose motto is, “I serve.”

The King is King of Canada, and it was this form of Responsible Government which was intended to be introduced into Canada by the Union Act of 1841.

A Governor was sent out from England to represent the King and for a time the Governor sometimes took his title and his position seriously and interfered with, even attempting to direct, the government of Canada.

But this became less and less common and by the time of the end of the American Civil War, Canada had in substance Responsible Government.

This had a great impulse given to it by the Union of the British North American colonies in 1867. The Canadas Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, drew up a plan of Union and this plan was approved by the British Parliament and became law. In form the British North American Act 1817, which may be called our Constitution, is an Act of the Imperial Parliament; in fact it is a compact made by the several provinces put in the form of an Imperial Statute for purpose of regularity and formal validity.

As yet Canada was concerned only with her own affairs. True her statesmen had generally been consulted in matters affecting her which came up for discussion and settlement with other powers, but it was in 1871 for the first time that one of her people became a Plenipotentiary for the British world. Sir John Alexander Macdonald, Prime Minister of Canada, took part as a British Commissioner in the negotiation of the Washington Treaty; moreover, so far as the Treaty affected Canada, it was not to come into force until laws to carry it into operation had been passed by the Parliament of Canada.

Even the appointment of Sir John Macdonald, however, was due to the fact that Canada was vitally interested in the matters to be discussed and settled; and for a score of years after Confederation in 1867, it cannot fairly be said that Canada counted for much outside her own concerns.

But in 1887 a great stride was made in her progress to nationhood. That year was called the first Colonial Conference attended by representatives of the various self-governing British Colonies—for Canada was yet a “Colony.” It was the day of small things, but one statesman at least had a glimpse of the real significance of the gathering. Lord Salisbury said: