

FEDERATION OF THE EMPIRE.

BY G. E. FENETY.

Canada is now spending about half a million of dollars for military purposes, upon the principle, perhaps, of preparing in peace for time of war—nor will she be found wanting in the hour of need, whenever her services are required by England. Could she do more in the right way if federated? If memory is not at fault, a whole regiment was volunteered by a Canadian colonel during the Crimean war, but the offer was politely declined at the Horse Guards. Other colonies, especially Australia, have been equally zealous and warlike, and manifested a strong sense of duty from time to time by offering assistance, even going so far as to volunteer for service abroad. This is all very well, Federationists may say, but England in union must have the power to control, direct and tax all the Colonies alike without reference to their geographical position, for the maintenance, not only of the army but the navy as well. If a mutiny breaks out in India, or the Afghanistan frontier be invaded by Russia, or the Soudan be in a state of commotion, or the Zulus or the Ashantees be in insurrection, or Abyssinia holding within her grasp English prisoners, Canada must be in a position to ask no questions, but transport her troops wherever ordered, as though they were residents of the British Isles. There is no escaping the conditions. In connection with this subject the most grand idea that presents itself is interwoven with its commercial aspect; and here the difficulties in the way appear to be insurmountable—but which, if they should be overcome, a platform might be laid, upon which all parties could meet and probably shake hands. It is argued by some of the friends of the measure in favor of a common commercial bond of union between England and all her Colonies, that one tariff might be established, wherein the whole business of the Empire, embracing nearly 300,000,000 producers and consumers, should trade together and prosper, shutting out, as it were the rest of the world, especially those nations that now discriminate in their tariffs so greatly to the disadvantage of the Empire. Sir John Lubbock, the chairman of one of the League meetings, remarked—"We might have a Customs union such as existed now between England, Scotland and Ireland; and he thought that this was more peculiarly the time to face the question." Sir Alexander Galt (of Canada) at the same meeting said—"that the commercial union of Great Britain with her Colonies and India should be undertaken and pressed upon the people both at home and abroad, with one leading principle in view—of treating British industries as entitled to peculiar favor as distinguished from that of foreign nations." Perhaps such views as these expressed at a meeting so nebulous upon what is really wanted may be excusable, but as to the practicability of the utterances is another question altogether,—for Mr. Galt [notwithstanding what this gentleman said on a former occasion when in office, as previously quoted, giving strong reasons, as it were, why Canada should not be federated] must know that Canada is in no position, with her immense debt of \$250,000,000, to abate her duties of 35 per cent., in order to enter into a free trade or moderate-tariff compact, although as a free trader from his youth upwards the writer would gladly welcome such a change. The Hon. Senator Wark (also of Canada) contributed a well-written article to "The Journal of the Imperial Federation League," dated October 1, 1886, on the Federation subject, from which the following quotation is made:—"If we are to become one people, a united Empire, we cannot too soon set about revising our revenue laws and removing the restrictions on the trade between the different parts of the Empire. This will require time, but it may be brought about much more speedily than many would think possible. It has only to be gone about energetically and judiciously, and men will gradually see its advantages and consent to the tariff changes. Different modes of raising revenue will be adopted which, while unshackling commerce, will not add in the slightest degree to the burdens of the people; and the ultimate result will be that every producer able to choose, out of a population of three hundred millions, the best market in which to dispose of his goods, and every consumer will have a like privilege to choose the cheapest market from which to supply his wants. Thus the best interests of every individual, and of the whole population, will be promoted, and the result, general prosperity. * * * The Empire could then treat the hostile tariffs of other states with indifference, as their influence on the general prosperity would be scarcely perceptible. Such states would soon begin to seek to form liberal commercial treaties. With the freedom of trade would come more equal distribution of capital. Instead of money being pent up at some points where it cannot find profitable investment, it would find its way to where a demand for it existed, and thus add to the general prosperity." To these sentiments the writer can fully subscribe, and if it were not for that little word but, they might be capable of fulfillment. There is, however, no argument, no combination that can convince John Bull, that in order to bring in the Colonies for special purposes he should reverse, or considerably modify his commercial policy,

after an experience of nearly forty years. But what is to prevent the Colonies of Federation agreeing in common for reciprocal trade relations? England would have no objection. If it is at all practicable why not call a meeting in London of representatives from all the Colonies, and form an agreement to exchange commodities free of duty, and to discriminate against "the foreigner," if business is meant and is wanted, here is a plan to work upon. But what is the position of Canada? Simply one of financial inability to attend such a gathering, in or out of federation. Only a year or so ago, Jamaica knocked at the doors of our Dominion Parliament for reciprocity in native productions, but her delegates returned home disappointed men. Mr. Dalton McCarthy, at a late federation meeting held in Ottawa, theorized *ad libitum* in the same strain. This gentleman (according to the *Globe*), thought that England should put a tax upon all imports from foreign countries while giving colonial imports free entry. But the practical absurdity of this would be quite plain to the common sense Englishman, who desires the markets of the world for the sale of his wares, and to whom the friendship of the great nations like the United States, France, Germany, Austria, is of far more practical value than any colonial relationship. In the year 1886 (continues the same paper), England imported from foreign countries goods to the value of £267,979,429 sterling, and from the Colonies she took only goods to the value of £81,884,843. Her total trade with foreign nations in 1886 was £404,905,546, and with her colonies only £136,926,116. In 1886 Canada bought in England £7,000,000 worth of goods, and the United States bought four times that amount. What reason is there to assume that in the face of facts like these England will discriminate against her best customers? Is it common sense to assume that she will tax herself on her foreign imports for the benefit of her colonies? Sir W. Rawson having given special attention to Colonial tariffs, numbering 44, enumerates their peculiarities under successive heads—1, 2, 3, 4, 5—some being high, some low, and some almost nil, according to the indebtedness of each Colony, the situation, and the expenses of maintenance. They rate from 4 to 25 per cent. until he touches Canada, (and two or three other places in the East,) when the figures run away up. But what is more important (says a late journal), is the conclusion which Sir Rawson reaches after a contemplation of these multifarious tariffs. He concludes that uniformity of tariff is hopeless at present; that tariffs suited to new countries are not equally adapted to old countries; that new countries will not readily submit to direct taxation and will continue to raise their revenues largely from custom duties, and that any movement toward uniformity is rendered difficult by the desire which exists in various Colonies to favor the production of different articles. Sir Rawson has thrown a good deal of light upon the question which he discusses, but the light only renders more apparent the almost impossibility of framing one tariff for the whole Empire. But it is unnecessary to enumerate further reasons or arguments in support of the belief that if ever federation is brought about it can be in favor of Imperial Colonial protection and monopoly of trade under the English flag exclusively. The battles of Free Trade and Protection in England have already been fought to the bitter end, and there is no retrogression; both Whigs and Tories are as one now upon this question—or rather agreed that the policy cannot be reversed. But then, there is rising up in England what is called "the fair trade party." As this, however, has very little influential following, it is unnecessary to consider it only *en passant*. By this party it is meant that England should levy duties in her markets to the same extent as her goods are treated in the foreign market—i. e., if for instance the United States persists in saddling English goods with a duty of 50 per cent., England should do the same with the United States goods, and so with every other foreign country. But as this is only another chimera of the federationists, about as practical as any yet submitted, we shall wait a long time for the substance while in pursuit of the shadow, Federation; for however reasonable the grounds taken on the side of "fair trade," there is nothing to indicate that either of the great English parties is disposed in that direction, and there appears to be no room whatever for this third party to wedge in between the two. In her trade relations with the world, England is disposed to let well enough alone, and not be influenced by speculations, however much they may concern her Colonies. Under her free trade system she has reduced her national debt since 1858 from £222,513,000 to £706,696,000, or about \$575,000,000 in 30 years. In the same time the population of the United Kingdom has increased from 28,000,000 to 37,000,000, and the average rate of interest has fallen from 3½ to 2½ per cent., so that she has lessened the per capita burden of her debt to less than one-half what it was 30 years ago. In face of facts like these, why talk of going backwards, when high protection was the commercial principle of faith in England and throughout the Empire? Fifty years

ago, Whigs and Tories alike held the colonies in high esteem in Parliament. Why? Because free trade principles had not yet entered into the computations of British Statesmen and Political Economists. It was high protection, prohibitory duties everywhere. The Colonies served as the great markets for the English manufacturers. In Canada for instance,—or New Brunswick more directly, might be referred to as an instance of the prevailing system—there were two sets of officials in the Custom House—the Imperial and the Colonial. There was an Imperial duty of 20 per cent. (as well as it can be recollected, the amount does not signify) and our Provincial duty perhaps 15, levied for local purposes. The object of England was not to collect those duties for the Imperial Treasury—for the Province in time got them all back—but the barrier was intended to shut out the foreign article, and compel us by this means to keep in motion the looms and shuttles and workshops of Birmingham, Sheffield and other great manufacturing centres. Thus, with such restrictions as these—a united duty of about 40 per cent., and a Colonial Empire embracing two hundred millions of people and more, including India—is it any marvel that English trade under protection like this, with all her Colonies for a market, should flourish, and that she should in time become the great mart of the world—the seat of Empire—and the exemplar of Nations? It may be answered that if England controlled the trade of her Colonies, so did the Colonies on the other hand enjoy unchecked the markets of England. This was certainly the case. Had we no markets for our ships and our lumber we could not have existed at all, and hence England would have had no markets for her manufactures—we were thus protected and crippled at the same time. Had we been allowed to market for ourselves, we should have had the world to deal with, precisely like the United States after the bonds which held the old thirteen colonies for centuries, were severed—then the birth of a great Nation dawned. But worse than all is the fact that as soon as England found that her policy might be reversed with benefit to herself, she suddenly upset the pro or ladders by which she mounted, and by her free trade measures completely threw us upon our backs for the time. Our usefulness was gone, and the only markets we had, so to speak, were then thrown open to our rivals all over the world. Since that period England has extended her branches of trade in every direction. Her wealth and manufactures are interwoven in every fibre of commerce throughout the world. In spite of opposing tariffs her manufactures find purchasers, whether in Europe or America—and with all her disadvantages she increases in wealth and influence. There is not a country in the world but what would suffer by her downfall. Her capitalists and scientists are everywhere lending money and executing giant undertakings. Only the other day, word was received from Washington to the effect that the Argentine Republic had made a contract with a capitalist in England by which the latter agrees to construct ten steamers of at least four thousand tons burden and sixteen knots per hour each, to ply between the North of Europe and the ports of the Argentine Republic, and four storm launches for emigrant service in Europe. Also four steamers to ply between the United States and the ports of the Argentine Republic. The capital involved in this transaction, amounts to between five and six millions of dollars. England waxes a controlling influence in the Suez Canal, when she purchases stock amounting to twenty-five million dollars. Even little New Brunswick is favored by British capitalists to the amount of four millions, for the construction of a Marine Railroad. But there is scarcely a railroad or a canal in America, but what has been largely subsidized by British capital. Talk of cribbing and confining a Nation like this, and telling her that she must do business only with her Colonies, is like trying to extract sunbeams from cucumbers with the hope of enlightening British Statesmen to a full realization of our great Colonial importance. (No. 17 and last, next Saturday.)

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