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CANADA: THE FENIAN RAID AND THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

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The last half century has been signalised by the rise of a sect whose members have appropriated or have complacently accepted the designation of *Rationalists*. Few departments of human knowledge and inquiry have escaped their invasion. We have Rationalists in religion, Rationalists in art, Rationalists in politics; and although it cannot justly be disputed that the world owes much to the new philosophy, it yet appears to us that a higher intelligence, looking down with inscrutably calm view on our petty mundane controversies, would be not unlikely to pronounce the judgment that the prophets of the new sect, as represented by the Renans, the Goldwin Smiths, and the Dilkes, are in many respects as credulous and as narrow-minded as the most bigoted adherents of the old superstitions whose errors they have made it their business to expose.

Our present concern is with the teachings of the political Rationalists, and more especially with that branch which treats of colonial relations to the parent state.

"Nothing can be a greater error than to suppose that we are indebted for any very considerable portion of our national greatness to the extent of our colonial dominions. In all those cases in which we carry on a really beneficial trade with a colony, the chances are ten to one we should carry it on to an equal extent were it independent; while the numbers of our colonies, their distance from the United Kingdom, the ease with which some of them may be attacked during war, and the difficulty and expense of defending them, are very grave considerations. On the whole, it will probably be found, if rightly examined, that the retention of distant territories, as colonies that have overcome the difficulties incident to their establishment, and are in a condition to defend and govern themselves, is a source of weakness rather than of strength. We derive our superior wealth and civilization from totally different sources—from the moral and physical advantages which have made the United Kingdom the headquarters, as it were, of freedom, civilization, and manufacturing industry; and while we possess these, we need not fear that any serious injury will result from circumscribing the extent of our colonial dominion."

That is the creed, as expounded by McCulloch, which is professed by the school of thinkers we have alluded to; which makes the greatness of a nation's trade and the greatness of that nation convertible terms bearing identically the same signification, which holds that nothing in the world is of any account that does not possess an exchangeable value in cash.

We hold, on the contrary, that the motive forces of the world are to be found in ideas and sentiments. France makes war for an idea, as we have learnt on high authority; and two millions of men are at this moment withdrawn from the blessed productive labours of peaceful industry, and are engaged in cutting each other's throats, for no material object whatever, but solely for a sentiment—the sentiment of national honor.

What is the motive which sends a man charging up the slope of "the imminent and deadly breach" with all the ardour of a young lover about to clasp his bride, but the thirst after the "bubble reputation"?

What is it that makes old men tottering on the verge of the grave—men of ancient names, titled men, who possess one would suppose all this world's good that heart can desire—what is it, we say, that makes them restless and miserable with a dissatisfied longing after an impalpable something, represented perhaps by a ribbon of a particular breadth and hue, but the craving for increased consideration in the eyes of their fellow-men during the few and evil days that are left them?

Do we not know that men individually are ready to imperil their lives—nay, their very souls—for some object or sentiment more impalpable than air? and yet we are to trust the economists—whose peculiar dictum is that what is best for the individual must also be best for the nation, which is only an aggregation of individuals—when they tell us that Great Britain would be *Greater Britain* if stripped of her transmarine empire and limited to her two little islands in the north sea, just in proportion as her expenditure and responsibilities would be diminished.

Are we then to believe that there is no moral power in the pride which the citizens of a state may feel in the greatness of its empire? Is there no moral power, for example, in the Englishman's boast that he is the subject of a dominion on which the sun never sets? An empire must be perilously near its fall where the notion exists to any extent that the distinction and the prestige and the moral force which are the attributes of empire are not worth preserving, if so be their preservation entail an expenditure of money.

But it would not suffice for the anti colonial party that her distant dependencies should cost England nothing. They advocate the severance of the connection on the ground that its continuance involves the inconvenient and dangerous obligation of defending them in war.

Fortunately these views, although held until lately by an apparently increasing party, have fallen into discredit with the public, and the present Government has declared that the whole strength of the empire would be put forth to defend the colonies if attacked—a declaration which, there is shrewd reason to suspect, was extracted sorely against the grain.

Of late years the complaint has been, and not without affording a plausible text to the anti-colonial party, that the connection is maintained exclusively for the benefit of the offspring, and at the sole charges of the parent. Not only are the colonies allowed to regulate their trade with foreign nations as they think proper, but even to tax, and in some cases to tax heavily, the manufactures and produce of the mother country. The one contribution which the colonists make towards the cost of the connection is in the payment of the salaries of their respective governors; and those officers constitute the only remaining symbol of England's authority over her lusty offspring—an authority which is practically little more than nominal.

On the other hand, England has until lately maintained in her distant dependencies a large military force, towards the cost of which—save in the exceptional cases of Australia and New Zealand, and to a small extent also in Canada—the colonies have contributed nothing, and she is, moreover, saddled with the inconvenient and dangerous obligation of defending them in war.

That is the case against the colonies; and though our limits do not permit a minute examination of the general question whether the possession of great and loyal dependencies such as Canada and Australia do or do not increase the power of England, we hold it to be easily demonstrable that our colonial empire gives us consideration and prestige are synonyms for influence and power, that the colonies do not form any drain on our resources in peace; and that, far from being a necessary weakness in war, they might, if properly organized, be made the source of greatly increased strength to the empire.

We postpone to some future occasion the arguments by which we conceive the foregoing conclusions might be established, and turn now to our special subject, the exceptional case of Canada.