

preach the gospel of all-British co-operation as the gospel of Imperial salvation.

An Imperial constitution, however necessary (and in the case of the British Empire it is undeniably necessary), cannot be written in a day ; it is better to "hasten slowly" in Empire-building ; it has taken centuries to bring the Empire to its present state ; it cannot be completed by the passage of an Act of Parliament at Westminster creating a federated Empire. The question before us is not to draft an Imperial constitution, but rather to indicate the road by which the goal of Imperial unity is most likely to be reached. "We are more likely to achieve success by proceeding step by step, by a gradual advancement towards the ideal."

The First Essential.

The first need—the root of all common action—the one enduring basis of Empire consolidation—is mutual understanding between the integral and component parts. This is the spirit of Imperialism, and hardly a day passes on which something may not be done, some impulse given in the right direction, some check given to the movement in the wrong one—and there are a hundred ways of doing either in an Empire as vast as ours.

The present conception of the British Empire regards Great Britain and the self-governing Dominions as constituting a league of free nations. If there is a difference between the ordinary relations of allied peoples and those existing between the Motherland and the kindred States, it lies in the fact that there exists much greater freedom of speech and intercourse than is permissible and customary between other allies : there is a recognition on the part of the Motherland of the perfect autonomy which has accompanied the growth to full nationhood of the self-governing Dominions : and there is on the part of the latter a clear and fair conception of their responsibilities as part of one Empire. There seems to be, in short, a virtual declaration for autonomy first and combination afterwards. Nor does it appear that any other solution of the problem would be either advisable or possible.

The true essentials to any really forward step towards closer union are a recognition of the equal partnership of Empire and a zealous spirit of co-operation.

Of late years Imperial sentiment has been gradually displacing "Little Englandism." The Oversea States have manifested a desire for closer union for purposes of mutual trade and profit, and there is evident a strong national effort on the part of the Motherland to meet their wishes. The movement coincides with the looking forward of the Imperial provinces towards participation in Imperial defence. No change of political sentiment has been more marked than that towards the kindred States of the Empire. The fatalistic indifference that was widespread half a century ago has been replaced by an Empire-wide desire for closer union between all the Empire States, and much real progress has been made towards that desirable goal.