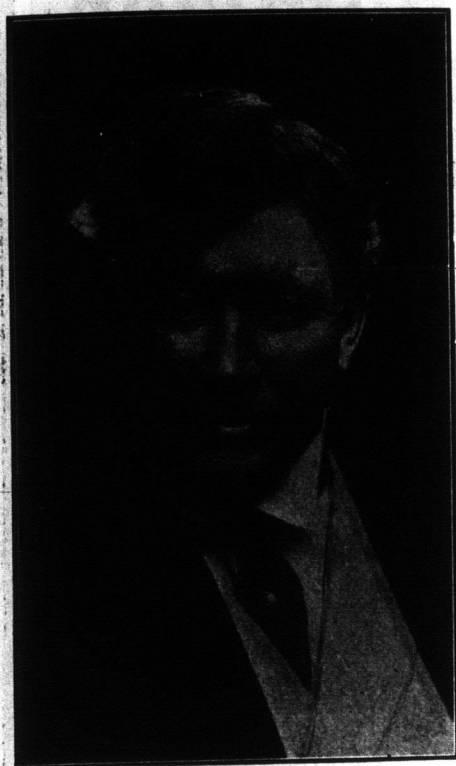


Canada and its Future.

By Neil MacPhatter, M.D.C.M., F.R.C.S., President Canadian Club, New York.

In reply to your request that I contribute an article to your Christmas number, I will state that it is with assurances of singular pleasure that I do so.



NEIL MACPHATTER, M.D.C.M., F.R.C.S.

During my visit through Western Canada, I was amazed at the boundless possibilities of the country; its vast geographical extent; its magnificent prairie Provinces with golden grain waving tasseled heads in abundance over undulating plains; the wonderful timber and mineral resources all appealed to my bewildered imagination. Here surely in years to come, countless millions of people will dwell contented and happy, rich in all the great concerns and activities of life. Here, too, the political destiny of this great Nation, eventually, and before many decades, will be controlled. It is in this spirit of belief, that I venture to assume the responsibility of stating my opinions upon so important a subject.

There are crucial periods in the history of Nations, as of individuals, when decisions made in a moment may be fraught with consequences affecting all future years; a time when the tide, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune, may be stopped in its onward flow, and shoals and misery be the result of a wrong decision—of lost opportunities—of auspicious circumstances neglected which never again present an open sesame to the goal of success.

Such a conjecture—such a combination of circumstances—now present themselves, not to Canada alone, but to the whole vast Empire of which it forms so important a part. Canada is now standing, Janus-like, at the threshold of new conditions, with the past and future in full view. A past replete with achievement and flushed with glory—a future so bright with promise of the good things to come, that our most sanguine expectations must seem reasonable—our dream of future greatness no mirage, no ignis fatuus of a vain-glorious mind, but an anticipation based upon sound judgment and logical inferences.

But bright as the future of Canada is with promise, the beacon-lights of history warn us, that glowing prospects are no pledges of continued success, no guarantee against disaster. Canada's future prosperity, while contingent more or less upon unforeseen circumstances, will be in a large measure made or marred by ourselves. We are the architects of our own fortunes, and it behooves us to so plan and construct the edifice that it may prove itself sound and substantial to those who follow after and enjoy the fruits of our labor.

The period at which we have arrived in our history is critical. It is incumbent upon us to consider well the signs of the times and to determine whither we are tending. While proud of our position as a most important member of the Great British Empire, there is much to be desired in the relations of Canada with the Empire. I feel that the ties of sympathy, a common origin, a history whose glories of achievement we also share, together with the political bond now uniting us to the motherland, are not enough. I feel that we and the other self-governing nations constituting the Empire must be drawn closer together, or we may drift apart—that the ties of love and sympathy and the frail political bonds now existing must be strengthened, made indissoluble by an union, a consolidation of the various members of the vast Imperial domain, which will

constitute Canada as an integral part of it as the British Isles now are. Such a wished for consummation is no doubt difficult to achieve. The different tariff regulations of the various members of this prospective confederation is perhaps the most serious obstacle that bars the way to Imperial Federation. But, surely, when we estimate the immense advantages to be secured by such a union, the magnitude of the interests involved, the unrivalled opportunities it would give, as the greatest of world powers, in moulding and directing the destinies of humanity to higher aims and nobler ambitions—surely, I repeat, it would be worth while making a few sacrifices to attain so magnificent a result.

But, I firmly believe that the few mutual concessions made to secure so grand a desideratum would result in financial gain, not loss; would increase our commerce, not diminish it; for while partially, perhaps, restricting our trade with the world at large, it would introduce practically unrestricted trade between the nations forming the vast reconstructed British Empire.

A former Governor-General of one of the Australian commonwealths, in a public address he made a few weeks ago in London, said that within fifty years the capital of the British Empire would be in Ottawa. While we Canadians are too modest to make such a prediction ourselves, at our present rate of increase of population, at the expiration of the five decades referred to, the population of Canada will probably approximate closely to the present population of the British Isles. Then, indeed, Ottawa would be the centre of the British Empire, both as to population and location—a central, converging point where the representatives from Australia, Africa and other portions of the grand confederation could assemble and legislate for the vast domain. But this, gentlemen, is the dream of a patriotic, titled Englishman, who has discarded his insular prejudices, and takes a more expansive view of British destinies than that circumscribed by the tight little Island.

Flattering as the ex-Colonial Governor's proleptic statement is to Canadians, I, for one, do not hope or wish for such an accession to our country. London will doubtless remain the political, as it is, and will be, the sentimental capital of the British Empire. There and in the mother country the history of our race has been enacted during twenty centuries; there our forefathers fought and bled and strived, always forging ahead by slow increments of change, leaving us finally a heritage of constitutional government, and the freest and best institutions in the world. In London, if anywhere, the grand council of the Empire, representing the general interests of the congeries of nations constituting the British Confederation, could assemble and enact laws for the common interests of the Empire which would have a dominating influence among the nations of the world.

Powerful as the Empire is now, its power and influence would be greatly increased were the ties binding its constituent members drawn closer together; were the bonds of sentiment and sympathy augmented by closer political union and increased mutual interests. All this, however, will come in good time, for I have an assured faith that the greatest days of the British Empire are still in the future. The full possibilities of that future we can scarcely imagine as yet—we can only conjecture of the wonderful power of an empire, composed of a half-dozen vigorous nations, bound together by the ties of kinship and common interests. The world having never witnessed such a union—such a combination of Titanic human forces, directed towards a common end, cannot realize its import nor estimate its influence in working out the destiny of the human race. In the not distant future of this consolidated empire there will be no German scare, no question raised as to naval or commercial supremacy; and, powerful enough to defy aggression, to override opposition wherever it confronts us, our veto will disarm warring nations and introduce an era of peace and good will among the nations of the earth.

Before the end of this century, Canada, Australia and South Africa will be found approaching the stage of national power and

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