

BRITISH FEDERALISM

ITS RISE AND PROGRESS

WERE the inception and growth of the great idea of developing the British Empire into a mighty federation thoroughly investigated, the research would, probably, reveal the fact that many more men of thought and weight should be credited with holding the idea than are supposed to have ever entertained it.

Few people on either side of the Atlantic, probably, ever contemplated the separation of the American Colonies from the Mother Country till compelled to do so by the most unwise of policies. Before Lord North and George Grenville pressed their fatal measures, the principle of the permanent unity of the Empire would seem to have been universally taken for granted; but, doubtless, men of foresight gave thought to the question how the position of the Colonies in the Empire could be improved by affording them a voice in its councils—an inquiry which, if followed up, must lead along the highway to Imperial Federation.

Had the men of his generation been prepared to accept the new and wise teaching of Edmund Burke, the unhappy rupture with the American Colonies would never have taken place, and their relations with the Mother Country would have become as amicable as those with our present Colonies have been rendered by the policy originated by the great orator and statesman. On the principles enunciated by Burke is based the present policy of maintaining the unity of our race and Empire; and it was fitting that what is most conducive to the future greatness of our British nationality, both in its old and new dominions, should have been set forth in the grandest eloquence of which its language or any other is capable. The speeches which lay the foundation principles of our true Imperial policy are imperishable, and we should hope and strive that the national unity of our race may be equally lasting.