

# The Status of Canada in the Empire

An Address to The Native Sons of Canada, at Vancouver, B.C., August, 1923.

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There is not, and there never was, in the history of the world a more interesting subject of human polity than that association of Free States and Self-governing Communities commonly known as the British Empire. And in all the long and checkered history of the parent Kingdom and of our own country,—the Banner State of all these British Dominions beyond the seas,—there never was a time more important than the present for the serious consideration of the future relations of the constituent States of the Empire by the people of this Empire themselves.

It is above all a peculiarly appropriate and timely subject of discussion for Canadians—notwithstanding what ardent or intemperate extremists on one side or the other may say to the contrary. For the Imperial Conference of the coming autumn serves to bring this whole question of Empire relations on the tapis, not only for the members of that conference but for every son of Canada, and for every right-thinking man, and good citizen of his country.

We are now, in this young Canada of ours, at one of the turning points or crossroads of history. Our present measure of political autonomy and responsible government is truly said to be the evolution of a hundred years. The change in that time has been steady and continuous, and the movement has been always in the right direction. And the end is not yet.

## THE ROMANCE OF OUR HISTORY.

For there never was in all history a short story, more fascinating than our own; nor one more marvellous, or more romantic. Nor is there any national epic more replete with human interest than this evolution of our native country from the trackless forest to the shining city, from the tepee to the mansion, from foreign domination, under which we began, up to our present proud position of perfect self-government and pure political autonomy. Nor was there ever, as we repeat in the course of that whole national career, a moment more appropriate or more interesting for the study of their history by the people of this country themselves.

Now when the advance notice of these remarks of mine first appeared on your agenda I had a friendly and anxious visit, quite privately, from a very active and excellent member of this body. He had been warned, it seemed, by some well-meaning Native Son that I was an "Imperialist"—whatever that is—and that my sentiments might not please every one. Well, that is quite possible; and may be regrettable. I would not be so rude as to say that it is a matter of indifference. You cannot please every one. No one who thinks for himself can hope for unanimous approbation. In the economy of nature, we are told that there is only the jellyfish or the oyster that never comes into violent contact with his fellows. Well, I do not belong to that species. No more does my learned friend, Mr. McCrossan, evidently, from whom we have heard with much interest, and who has not pleased every one, and from whom, at some points, no doubt, I may even have the honour to differ.

The early Christian injunction would be sound advice and sound philosophy for Canadians in all these constitutional polemics:—"In essentials, Unity;—in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, Charity." For, to me at least, it is always a matter of astonishment how much bitterness may be engendered between honest men having the same end in view, and how ardently good men may dispute merely over different methods of doing a good action. For when we all desire to reach the same great object,—the greatness of our country, it does not matter much which route we take nor which ship we would travel by to arrive at a common destination.

## FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Now philosophy, you know, speaks freely of all things. So

does patriotism. Hence every man who sincerely loves his country may speak freely of her destiny. He may hold opinions, even wrong ones; and express them openly and without offence, with regard to "the status of that country in the Empire," and the status of that Empire in the World.

And no man certainly is compromised by these remarks of mine, nor by any that have gone before. No order, or body, of Society is bound by these individual opinions. And however profoundly I may be convinced of their correctness, I am always free to admit that other honest men may entertain with equal sincerity opinions and convictions absolutely contrary to my own.

## THE NEED OF A NATIONAL SPIRIT.

The need of a National spirit is the *raison d'être* of this Society, the excuse for its existence. For I think I have never seen a country on my way round the world with so little of that national spirit as this country of our own. Certain it is that in no other Dominion of the Empire would the propagation of such a national spirit meet with the hostility or opposition we have lately observed here. Not in Australia; not in New Zealand or South Africa; not in India nor Ireland; in Scotland or in Wales. For there, in those lands, the National sentiment is almost universal. So much so that it goes without saying; and every one there would encourage such a movement and hasten to join it if he could. That national spirit we stand for is not based on antagonism to anything or to any one, or to any race or class. And above all it is not



HOLIDAYS ARE OVER

## NOTE

The November B. C. M. will contain three articles of outstanding interest entitled respectively:

- (1) "PACIFIC PROBLEMS";
- (2) "THE TIME AND THE TEACHER";
- (3) "THE CITY BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT".

We seldom get into any one issue all we would like, and, in any case, have hitherto usually preferred to let contributions speak for themselves. But we have no hesitation in recording that each of the articles noted is likely to have a special appeal. The first is by one of our ablest public men—in our opinion the article itself proves that; the second is by a leading educationalist; and the third is by a public servant whose work is related practically to the subject with which he deals.

Loyal citizens are likely to want extra copies to pass to their friends: See page three of cover, and list your friends' names NOW.