

THE OTTAWA CONFERENCE.

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THE Conference which is to be held in Ottawa commencing June 21st will be one of the most important gatherings in which Canada has ever taken part. More than that, it will be an event of far-reaching Imperial significance, as marking the first practical step towards the closer union of world-wide British interests. It will be a meeting of representatives from Britain's three chief colonies—Canada, Australia, and the Cape of Good Hope—coming together from the furthest separated parts of the earth to pave the way for more intimate trade relations and all that is involved in a better knowledge of each other's wants and supplies. With them there will also be a commissioner from the Home Government: so that, in a sense, the Conference will have an Imperial character. An impulse of patriotism must move every Canadian heart as it is realized that this event so full of promise was inspired by one of our Dominion statesmen, and is to take place in our own capital.

This Conference grew directly out of Honorable Mackenzie Bowell's mission to Australia in the latter part of last year. That visit to the Antipodes followed as a reasonable sequence to the establishment of a line of steamers to ply regularly between Vancouver and Sidney. When, however, the Minister of Trade and Commerce had spent a month in the colonies he found it most difficult to make anything like satisfactory progress in dealing with the distant Governments comprising the Australian group. They covered a very wide area, and the actual separation by distance was intensified by the friction growing out of tariff legislation and long maintained rivalry in various phases of commercial and inter-colonial

life. That is to say, not only would much time be taken up in visiting each legislative centre, but little could really be accomplished with any one colony until it was known what other colonies were likely to do. Joint action was absolutely necessary: and this could not be had without bringing the parties together. It was first proposed to have a meeting of the delegates in Australia: but several of the legislatures were in session at the time, and this proposition was found impracticable. Mr. Bowell was not the man to let the matter drop, however, or to be long undecided. In effect he said: "If you can not meet me here, then come to Canada, where all the matters which concern us collectively may be carefully discussed." Four out of the seven colonies gave their acquiescence at once, and with that promise Mr. Bowell returned to Canada. Soon after his return, formal invitations were sent to the Imperial Government, the Australasian Colonies, Fiji and Cape Colony, to send representatives to Canada in June of this year.

At the moment of writing, favorable replies have been received from the Imperial Government, the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, New Zealand, South Australia and Cape Colony. Their delegates will convene in Ottawa about the 21st of June.

The scope of the Conference is not limited within fixed boundaries. It may be safely assumed, however, from the terms of the invitation sent to the parties concerned, that three things in chief will be considered:—1st. The development of inter-colonial trade; 2nd. The laying of a Pacific cable between Canada and Australia; 3rd. The