

munities where yesterday the barbarian reigned—that such people as these could not be trusted with as much political power as their less adventurous relatives enjoyed who never ventured beyond the Channel.

“What,” wrote Downing Street, in many portentous screeds, “do you mean to say that elected men in the New World shall have the same right to enforce their views upon the Queen’s representative as their countrymen have to compel the Queen herself to receive their views in London? Do you really mean that the peer who speaks for the Queen shall have no more power over you than the Queen had over him when he lived in England? Because if you do, and you are allowed to have your way, know by these presents that the great British Empire, erected during a thousand years on the just principles of freedom, cannot last. Cannot last, do you hear?”

As Late As 1895.

The principle of complete self-government could not be admitted for a moment, because if it were, there would be an end of the Empire through the setting up of petty independent States. Even as late as 1895, Lord Kimberley, who was the last Liberal Foreign Secretary before Sir Edward Grey, said in a despatch, that to admit Canada’s right to make her own trade treaties would predicate the end of the Empire. The event has proved that the old ideas about the foundations of loyalty were altogether mistaken, and that the only sane enduring loyalty must rest upon the liberty of a great community to do what to itself seems best.

Sundry good people imagine that to live in “the colonies” means that you become an Englishman minus. That is why they make such amusing errors in sizing up persons and conditions. They do not understand that the Englishman who knows England; who has learned what it can teach him imperial-ly; who goes to a newer Britain and there participates in the creation of communities out of the wilderness, is not an Englishman minus, but an Englishman PLUS.

When men live such mistakes as that it is no wonder that the Empire seems to them what it is not. They dwell all the time with the subtle idea of domination—personal domination. It is a grievous mistake. The attitude of mind which it expresses lingers more persistently than some of us suppose. It sometimes seems to pervade the English attitude towards Canada’s participation in this war.

“We are so glad you are helping us,” they say, and they mean altogether well. But the point of view is singularly defective. If the member of a firm in Montreal whose headquarters are in Manchester goes to Manchester on the business of the firm, he is not told “We are glad you have come to help us.” He is helping himself—they are members one of another.

We Fight for Ourselves.

There is the sense, of course, in which the fighting is especially local; but the local is swallowed up in the imperial. When a man says “We are fighting to preserve the Empire from destruction,” and then, a minute later, when one of his partners in the Empire comes along with his sword, he says, “You have come to fight for me,” he has missed the true inwardness of the event. He is expressing an old idea of proprietorship of the Empire which the war is sweeping out of the firm.

The war idea that is expressed in Canada is the same—the other way on. We are helping Britain, some people say. It is not the clearest way of looking at it. If Canada is in danger our fight is for Canada first, and let there be no mistake about it. To put it any other way is to exhibit an under-estimation of what the Empire means and what our place in it may be. It is to signify an aloofness and not a spiritual incorporation which will wrestle with principalities and powers.

Suppose the Empire were to go down; and suppose that Canada were to take refuge either in a Germanised independence or in incorporation with the United States, what would the self-respect of the Canadian people amount to? We should be the meanest of man-