

Some men among us occasionally speak of Secession. We have had an impressive lesson taught us in our day of what Secession costs,—what it meant to attempt to break up a great nation, even where its links seemed so weak as those that bound sovereign States together by a constitution that contained no provision disallowing the right to secede. That lesson prevailed twenty years ago in Nova Scotia when the Province returned seventeen out of its eighteen members for the express purpose of demanding a dissolution of the Confederation. Let it prevail still. Let wise men ponder what it means when they propose that a country shall change its flag, that a great people shall renounce their citizenship.

IV.

“WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF IMPERIAL FEDERATION?”

I have left myself little time to speak of these, and I am not sorry. I have treated the question from the point of view of duty, or of what is right to ourselves and the Empire, and I have no desire to come down to lower ground. It is not the time either to speak of possible commercial and financial advantages. That time will come when we have done the duty that lies nearest us. In the meanwhile, sufficient advantage is indicated, when it is seen that by Imperial Federation we would gain full self-government, and with it self-respect, and that only by this method would we gain our rightful place in the history of the world, the place to which all our historical evolution points.

I had a letter recently from your own Principal King, and one or two sentences in it struck me so much that I must be permitted to quote them. He writes: “The highest elements of character can be developed only where supreme responsibilities are felt.” Is it so? Then what are we in this world for? Is it to be merely human ants or beavers, each of us gathering about him the greatest possible quantity of stuff? Or, is it that we may realise for ourselves and our children the highest possible ideals of character? Can we cultivate these by being false to honour; by causelessly breaking with the past and all that our fathers have loved and toiled for?

“Where you feel your honour grip,
Let that aye be your border,”

is Burns’ advice to his young friend. The grip of honour is as binding on nations as on individuals.