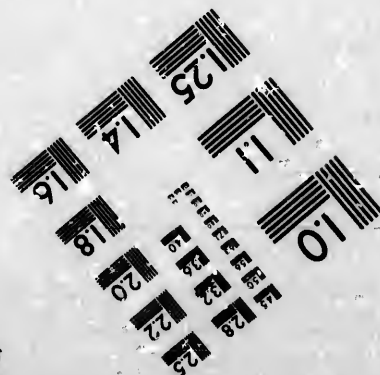
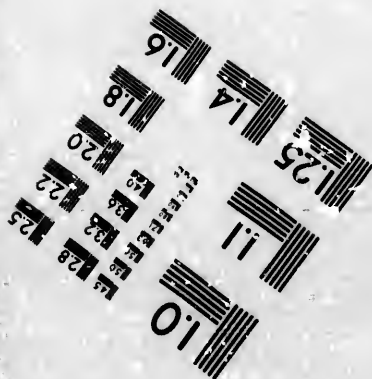
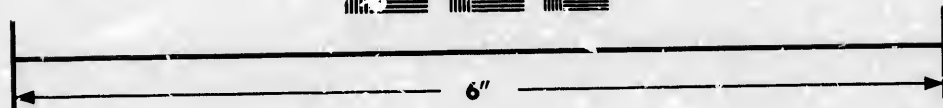
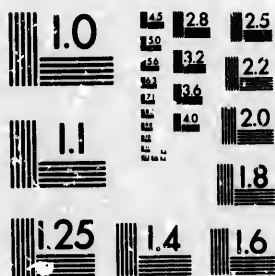


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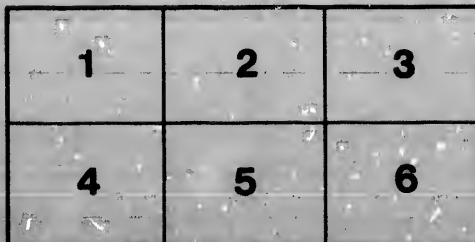
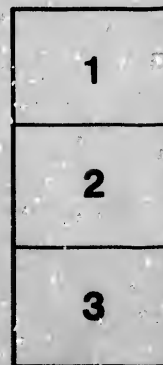
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# IMPERIAL AND COLONIAL CONFEDERATION.

BY

A. T. DRUMMOND, B.A., LL.B.

BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

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(*Reprinted from THE CANADIAN MONTHLY for May, 1875.*)

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MONTREAL: DAWSON BROS.

TORONTO: ADAM, STEVENSON & CO.

1875.

INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC

POSTAL TELEGRAMS

A. E. BROWN, JR., EDITOR

Published by the International and Domestic Postal Telegraphs Company

INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC  
POSTAL TELEGRAMS  
NEW YORK

## IMPERIAL AND COLONIAL CONFEDERATION.

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**A**N Imperial Confederation has recently formed the subject of discussion both in this country and in Great Britain. Some writers have thought that the Home Rule agitation in Ireland may yet possibly result in the British Ministry taking into consideration a more comprehensive confederation than even Home Rulers have entertained. Mr. Blake a few months since took occasion publicly to suggest the re-organization of the empire on this basis, and within the past few weeks our Agent General has discussed the question in Manchester. That the subject has received the attention it recently has is, no doubt, one of the results of our Colonial Confederation. The country has made rapid progress since the consummation of Union; a national spirit has been aroused, and the people have now awakened to find that, though they have in domestic affairs a national status, yet in their relations with the other colonies and with foreign powers—relations which may affect their gravest interests—they have not the smallest voice unless by the direct authorization of the Home Government; and though entirely disinterested, and desirous of peace, they are at any moment liable to be plunged into a foreign war, imperilling their resources, and perhaps sacrificing many lives among them. This political situation, and the concurrent strong desire to perpetuate the connection with the empire, seem to have suggested here an Imperial Confederation in some form, as a political change under which the Colonies would be represented at Westminster, and thus acquire some control over their foreign relations, as well as those of the empire.

Mr. Blake appears to think that the time may be at hand when the people of this country will be called upon to discuss their relations to the empire, and Mr. Jenkins goes even farther in regarding the politi-



cal outlook as of such gravity, that it must be a question with us of Imperial Confederation or Imperial disintegration. That we are gradually approaching our political manhood, and that our relative position as a section of the empire must, as years go on, increasingly form the subject of thought among us, must be apparent to every one who has given attention to public affairs. An Imperial Confederation is a political change, which, could it be placed on a basis satisfactory to the contracting parties, might take effect at once. Questions of policy, however, frequently find their solution, even in the present enlightened age, rather through considerations of national glory than of national advantage, and it would seem as if, in this question of an Imperial Confederation, its commercial and financial aspects had been largely overlooked. No doubt it would tend to the national glory and prestige to further consolidate the empire, to more closely identify each member of it with the common interests, and thus to increase its power. Even to colonials like ourselves, with some national aspirations, there would be something fascinating in the very thought of what would thus, in the truest sense of the word, be a great Britannic Empire, and in the reflection that the name of colonial dependency would then be done away with, and that the colonists would not only have the opportunity of constantly presenting, in the General Parliament, the wants of their own sections, in both their home and their foreign relations, but would also rise one degree higher in the political scale, and become possessed, equally with Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen, of rights in the government of the empire at large. There are, however, grave difficulties in the way, arising from conflicting commercial and financial interests, from diverse elements in the population, and from the distance of the different sections of the empire from one another and from the seat of the central government.

It is true that the world has before witnessed confederations; but they were of communities contiguous to each other, whose commercial and political requirements were more or less identical. Circumstances are different in the case of Great Britain and its colonies. The industrial products of countries may vary largely with their climates and geological structures, and where in the world would there be found, under one Government, such individually large, and yet diverse commercial interests, as those presented by England and Scotland, with

their iron and coal; India, with its cotton and rice; Australia, with its wool and wheat; the West Indies, with their sugar; and Canada, with its timber, grain, and dairy products? It is, however, just possible that such a confederation might largely change the current of trade. Sections of the empire exist in every quarter of the globe, and under every climate, and produce, or can produce, more or less, nearly every known industrial product. The Confederation could thus impose heavy customs dues on nearly every article imported from foreign countries, and yet, the people might have those very articles at the very cheapest prices, because produced within the Confederation itself. Still, years must elapse after the union had been effected before such a change could be completely brought about, and under any circumstances—quality as well as cheapness being an element in the selection of merchandise, and every market being subject to fluctuations in value—foreign importations would necessarily continue. There is, indeed, hardly a question that, as a result of long-established commercial intercourse, this difficulty would present itself—whatever the nature of the tariff: that each section of the empire, before considering the interests of other distant sections, would naturally desire the general commercial policy to suit itself in its relations with any foreign power contiguous to it, and with which it had large intercourse. Thus Canadians would consider the effect of such a policy upon their trade with the United States, before giving a thought to Australia or New Zealand; and Australians, in turn, would probably in this connection give their attention to China and Japan, before heeding the interests of the West Indies or Canada. This difficulty would, with even greater force, apply in Canada if Free Trade were proposed to be the policy of the empire. It is an axiom in mercantile business that the larger the market, the greater the probable demand for each article of manufacture, and with the larger production, the more cheaply each article can be produced. This, to some extent, accounts for this market being at present successfully inundated with American goods, even in the face of duties. It is thus quite apparent that with a limited home market, the United States closed by an almost prohibitory tariff, and the demand for their products in this way greatly circumscribed, the manufacturers of Canada could not for a moment entertain the idea of Free Trade.

The arrangement of the finances would also present serious obstacles.

Those who have had to deal with the debts of the different Provinces forming the Dominion can readily believe that the adjustment of the Imperial and Colonial debts, and of the proportion of the expenses of diplomacy, defence, and war, to be borne by each section of the empire, would form the most difficult problem ever submitted to a financier. Even if each section of the Confederation assumed its own debts, the present foreign policy of Great Britain, and the existing treaties to which it is a party, not only result in heavy present outlay, but might at any time lead to difficulties with other powers, involving large expenditures, in the incurring of which the different colonies could have no interest except that of sympathy with the mother country. Again, should the revenues of the Confederation be distributed according to population, what small shares would fall to the lot of Australia and Canada, enterprising and relatively rich in comparison with some other colonies! And even were financial arrangements arrived at before Union, would not the ever-changing circumstances of such differently situated sections of the empire give rise to constant agitation for alterations? It does not seem possible that a mutually satisfactory financial basis could be arrived at.

The formation of the Imperial Councils and Representation in the general Parliament would form another difficult problem. Is population the true basis of representation? Then India, with a race inferior, and yet improving to some extent in energy and intelligence, would have an undue preponderance; or would India still be regarded as a conquered empire? Similar questions would arise in others of the dependencies.

These are some of the difficulties which suggest themselves as standing in the way of the consolidation of the empire under an Imperial Confederation in its pure and simple form. Modifications of the idea have been suggested, but they all have some one or other of the obstacles above referred to. The least objectionable form, were it in the present temperament of the colonies feasible, would be that of a General Council sitting at Westminster, in which the United Kingdom and the colonies would be represented, each section retaining its present constitution practically unaltered, and imposing its own customs' dues, and appropriating its own revenues; and the Council having only powers affecting the general interests of the different sections in their

relations to one another and to the empire, and the interests of the empire in its relations to foreign powers. Were the Home Government a consenting party to even this scheme, it would not be without the proviso that the colonies should bear their share thereafter of the general expenses of the empire in peace and war; and then would arise the difficult problems of what these shares should be, and whether the colonies are at present able, and, if able, willing to undertake them. Should, however, a General Council be satisfactory to the colonies, and could an adjustment of the finances be arrived at, there would still remain the grave doubt whether Great Britain, so long accustomed to retain the power itself, and to regard the colonies as mere dependencies, would be, at present, willing to admit them as equals in the administration of the affairs of the empire.

Quite apart from the difficulties thus in the way of carrying out the idea of an Imperial Confederation, it may with reason be questioned whether the causes which have suggested it here, have, in reality, such force as has been claimed for them. Since the Union has taken place, the Home Government has shown a desire to avoid the diplomatic blunders of years ago, and to give the Dominion a direct voice in negotiations with foreign powers, where Canadian interests were involved; and two well known Canadian leaders have on separate occasions been appointed Commissioners on behalf of Great Britain in negotiating treaties with the United States. There is no doubt that Great Britain appreciates the situation, and that every reasonable wish of Canada in this respect would be promptly met. If our representatives receiving such appointments are untrammelled by limiting instructions from the Colonial Office, and fulfil the trust reposed in them of furthering the interests of this country, what more need the people of the Dominion desire? If, on the other hand, these representatives fail to fulfil their trust, the existing political situation cannot be blamed for it. As to the liability of being drawn, through connection with Great Britain, into a foreign war in which Canada might have no interest, we may at present dismiss the thought. The power the most likely to menace Canada would be the United States, and that country has at last found its own territories quite large enough, and the South quite difficult enough to manage, without adding to their difficulties by attempting to coerce a strong and much more inimical people to the north of it; and, at

the same time, it would have, through differences of origin and more limited commercial relations, a far greater objection to any other European power than Great Britain obtaining a foothold in British America.

In view of all the circumstances of the case, we may well let the question of seeking any political change in our relations to the Empire rest for a time, and devote ourselves more closely to developing the resources of the Dominion, and elevating the character of its people under a Colonial Confederation. We are not yet prepared for any revolutionary changes; and the advantages which would result from them, if they were at once brought about, are hardly clear. It is, however, the opinion of not a few of those who have given attention to the current of events of the past few years, that the onward progress of the country and the higher intelligence of the people will themselves develop in the course of time a change, and one which may be in the direction of a distinct national existence. It will not be sought for by us, such is our loyalty to the throne. It is just possible indeed that the course of the mother country towards us may suggest it; and under any circumstances, we shall probably, on adopting it, carry with us Great Britain's good will and friendly alliance. That it is even now the desire of some in England that there should be this change in the relations of the Colonies, is well known. However, the constitution, as well as the present wishes of the people, are opposed to it. In the Confederation resolutions adopted by the conference at Quebec, upon which our present constitution is founded, there were notably two leading principles laid down: that the executive authority or government should be vested in the Sovereign of Great Britain; and that in framing the constitution, the British model should be followed with a view to perpetuating the connection with the Empire. It was thus we affirmed to the people of Great Britain, and particularly to that party which desired colonial severance, that here there existed the wish to perpetuate colonial alliance. It was a happy result of Confederation that the mere proposal to adopt it should have elicited his expression of the popular will; and this expression of the popular will inspires confidence in us now, and in the future will bear its fruit in friendly and permanent alliance, whatever that future may be. Some few may think that the choice lies between Imperial Confederation and Imperial disintegration, and, inferentially, we may draw the

conclusion that, in their opinion, a Colonial Confederation is not the phase of connection with the Throne best suited to our own and to Imperial interests. Such is not the opinion generally entertained here. We have deliberately cast our lot in a Colonial Confederation, and the time which has since elapsed has been too short, and the results, even in that short time, too satisfactory to make us long for any change. In the distant future, however, should there be fulfilled the bright visions which we now entertain of the western territories teeming with population alike with the eastern provinces,—the whole country from Vancouver to Nova Scotia thickly scattered with manufacturing enterprises; our merchant marine, already large, still further increased; our foreign relations requiring more constant attention; and our people alive to their position and appreciative of the duties it imposes upon them,—then will have arrived the time when, in the interests both of ourselves and of Great Britain, we must study deeply and decide on our relations to the Empire. Then will come a time when we may be brought face to face with Independence, not through our own seeking, but in the ordinary course of events as they are now happening. With the vast natural resources which we have of ocean and inland seas, of fields, and forests, and mines, and with a high-spirited population already large, and yearly increasing in numbers, enterprise, and intelligence, it must be apparent to every one who has given thought to the subject that a period will come when the relations of parent and offspring, however kindly they may remain, will of necessity, with such a breadth of ocean between them, be of a different type from those of early years. Maturity of years and self-consciousness of ability give a man an independence of spirit and a self-reliance which prompt him to cast aside the timidity of youth, and to cope with the world himself. It is much the same with colonies with energy equal to our own. They pass through similar phases, from colonial birth to colonial manhood, when national duties and national privileges, are appreciated. That the attainment of this manhood may culminate in Independence is not a mere chimera. "I believe," said the Minister of Finance on the floor of the House of Commons but a few weeks since, "that every man who has paid any considerable attention to the question of the future of Canada is prepared to admit that, with us, it is a struggle for the possibility of carrying out a distinct national existence. This object, which we may sacri-

vice something for, if necessary, it will be the aim and the interest of the Government to see that we shall prepare to attain without making the sacrifice unreasonable and not beyond due bounds. Perhaps it is as well that we should be thus called upon peaceably to do what other nations have had to do by means of wasting war." We are, however, far from having yet attained colonial manhood, and are quite unprepared at present to assume the responsibilities attending an independent existence, even if that existence presented any immediate advantages; but every year of progress is leading us one step onward in national thought, in self-confidence, and in command of resources. The present constitution has unquestionably given a stimulus to progress. Canada may not, however, be the first to definitely raise the question of its relations to the empire. When the country has largely increased in wealth and population, is it to be expected that the Home Government will continue to maintain diplomatic relations with foreign courts and to bear the burdens of defence, without calling on the wealthy colonies to contribute a share of the expense?

This political manhood, which must result in a change of our relations with the Empire, may be in the far distant or nearer future; but let us educate ourselves into that high standard of citizenship that when it does come we shall be found prepared, as a people, to assume all its responsibilities. There is great room for improvement in the internal machinery of the Dominion. We want the right development of the national character, and to this end we must have the infusion of a high-toned *morale* among the people, freedom of thought and action, and the spread of education. Not least among the characteristics of the people, we need the infusion of a national sentiment through the breadth of the land, which will find expression in a love of our country, in a healthy pride in its institutions, and an earnest endeavour to maintain and improve them. The internal economy of the Dominion and the fitting of ourselves for a higher national position, will for the present, furnish ample national interests to attend to. In the future before us there is work for every man to do. Each one will exercise some influence in giving shape to the course of that future and force to its current. We must not forget that we have a country to live for as well as a country to live in. There is here no long historic record from which to glean examples which we might emulate; but each man may

himself be an example to those with whom he associates. There is here no aristocracy but that of ability and intelligence to which every man can aspire. Here there is no dense population, no overcrowding of the spheres of labour, and position is only to be gained by hard, unsparing work. "Surely," says the Hon. Alexander Morris,\* "it is a noble destiny that is before us; and who, as he reflects upon all these things, does not feel an honest pride as he thinks that he too may, in however humble a sphere, or by however feeble an effort, aid in urging on that great destiny."

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\* Nova Britannia.



