

### Canada's Place in the Empire.

Fred Howatt, '39

The present status of Canada in relation to the Empire may be deduced from the following quotation from the report of the Balfour Committee, (1926):

The Dominions "are autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

The vagueness of this statement, however, necessitates a fuller description of Canada's position as an integral part of the Empire. Because of the importance of the topic, the standing of the Dominion will first be viewed from the political standpoint.

Self-government was inaugurated in Canada in 1848, in which year the freedom, responsibility, and right to self-government of the Canadian people was recognized by the Crown. A convention was thus established, upon which is based the system of government prevalent throughout the Empire today. About twenty years later (1867) the British North America Act was passed, providing for the federation of the original colonies, and for the admission of additional territories. It also defined the limits of dominion and provincial jurisdiction. There was nothing in this Act to curtail in any way the Canadian right to self-government.

From 1867 to the present the Canadian nation has made great strides toward the goal of complete autonomy. A gradual severance of the legal ties binding Canada to the United Kingdom has taken place. An example of this separation is the curtailment of the powers of the Governor-General. His position has become similar to that of the King in England. He is appointed with the consent of the Canadian government, and his official acts are within the control of the Dominion Legislature. His office serves chiefly as a symbol of the unity of the Crown in the Empire.

The Dominion has the right to make its own laws, and, to aid in the interpretation of these laws, a Supreme Court has been set up. The Crown, however, has retained the power to disallow Canadian statutes, but this power has ceased to be exercised. Canada has also control over



her own immigration, and over her policy in regard to the wars of Britain. She cannot be forced by Britain to participate in armed combat. Such a step may be taken only by act of the Dominion Government.

Another important prerogative enjoyed by the Canadian nation as a Dominion of the Empire is the right to negotiate, sign, and ratify treaties affecting only Canada and Canadian interests. This right was recognized at the Imperial Conference of 1923, with the stipulation that it was to be exercised only after due consideration of its possible effects upon the other Dominions and upon the Empire as a whole.

The present position of Canada as a Dominion of the Empire has been summed up admirably by Lloyd George, in his statement at the Imperial Conference of 1921:

"The British Dominions have now been accepted fully into the comity of nations by the whole world. They are signatories to the Treaty of Versailles and of all the other treaties of peace; they are members of the Assembly of the League of Nations; and their representatives have already attended meetings of the League; in other words, they have achieved full national status, and they now stand beside the United Kingdom as equal partners in the dignities and the responsibilities of the British Commonwealth."

Another aspect of Canada's relations with the British Commonwealth which must be considered is her position in Empire trade. Canada was first among the British Dominions to grant a preference on the produce and manufactured articles of the United Kingdom and of those nations or possessions in the Empire willing to reciprocate. This preference has gradually been extended until at present it is applicable to nearly all parts of the Empire.

Probably the most important trade agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom was that drawn up at the Imperial Economic Conference of 1932. By virtue of this agreement those preferences granted to Canada and the other Dominions by the Import Duties Act were continued, and additional preferences for important Canadian products were provided by increasing the duties on the products of those foreign countries competing with Canada for the United Kingdom trade. The United Kingdom, however, reserved the right to lower duties on foreign wheat and certain metals if at any time the Domin-



ions should be unable to provide these commodities in quantities sufficient to meet United Kingdom demands.

In return, Canada agreed to give greater preferences to a large number of British products. These products were enumerated in the Agreement. She also agreed to regulate her tariffs in order that the United Kingdom producers might have an opportunity for reasonable competition within the Dominion.

In addition to this Agreement, others have been made with New Zealand, Australia, the Union of South Africa, and other parts of the Empire, giving reciprocal preferences to the products of those countries involved.

As a consumer of Empire products Canada stands next to the United Kingdom in the British Commonwealth. The value of her imports from the Empire in the boom year 1929 amounted to \$257,388,000. As an exporter Canada stands second to the United Kingdom in the Empire. In 1929 she exported to the British nations products valued at \$536,000,000. These figures have, in recent years, been subject to the vicissitudes of the world-wide economic depression, but are now once again on the up-grade.

The economic life of Canada depends largely upon her natural resources, which for the most part are still in a comparatively early stage of development. Only one-sixth of the potential agricultural lands of the Dominion are under cultivation, yet during the boom years of the late '20's the products of the Canadian agricultural industries were valued at approximately two billions of dollars per annum.

The forests of Canada rank second to agriculture as a source of national income. The vast quantities of wood pulp and lumber exported from the Dominion constitute a most important factor in Canada's trade balance. Each year the forestry products approximate one-half billion dollars in value.

The Dominion leads the world in the production of nickel and asbestos, and holds second place in the production of gold. Coal, silver, copper, lead, zinc and radium are also found in large quantities within her boundaries. The total value of mineral outputs in 1929 was about 300 million dollars.

It would seem that a nation so vast in area, so rich in natural resources, yet so sparsely populated as Canada would be in constant dread of invasion by the over-popula-

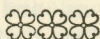


ted, land-grabbing powers of Europe and the Orient, but this is not the case. The Canadian citizen enjoys a security unparalleled in the world today. Geographical isolation makes armed invasion practically impossible. If, however, such were to occur, the naval might of Britain would be at hand to defend the shores of the Dominion. The United States also would take steps to repel the invaders, for, under the Monroe Doctrine, any attempt by a foreign power to gain foothold in the Americas would be considered as placing American security in jeopardy.

The possibility of invasion from the south is precluded by the peculiarly close friendship which has always existed between the people of Canada and those of the United States. This friendship is attested to by the 3000 miles of unfortified frontier between the two nations.

The good will existing between Canada and the United States serves to maintain and strengthen the relations and co-operation between the British Empire and the American Republic. And, as Sir Robert Borden has said, in his book, "Canada and the Commonwealth":

" . . . . . shall we not recognize an imperative duty resting upon the British Commonwealth and the American Republic? Not by formal alliance but in union of honourable ideals and in loyal co-operation for their fulfilment they can maintain international justice and hold the world's peace inviolate. This duty lies before them, clear, unmistakable, imminent. By the measure of its fulfilment they will be judged at the bar of history."



Oh, let us love our occupations,  
Bless the squire and his relations,  
Live upon our daily rations,  
And always know our proper stations.

—Dickens.

