

colonial fellow-subjects. I think that you may also feel that the main object of your visit has already been to a great extent accomplished. The great pageant to which you contributed so interesting a feature has shown to this country, to the colonies, and to all the world the strength, the power, the resources, and the loyalty of the British Empire. It was, I think we shall all agree, a most remarkable and absolutely unparalleled demonstration of personal loyalty to a Sovereign and of the essential unity of the Empire.

"Her Majesty's Government, while very anxious to take this opportunity of an interchange of views with you on many matters of common interest, have carefully avoided suggesting anything in the nature of a formal conference. We do so, in the first place, because we do not wish to detract in any way from the personal character of this visit, and also because we do not desire to take advantage of your presence to force upon you discussions on which you might be unwilling at this moment to enter. On the other hand, we are open to consider in the most friendly and the most favourable way any representations which may be made to us by the representatives of the self-governing colonies, having regard to the present or the future relations between the different parts of the Empire, and in this respect we are in the position of those who desire rather to learn your views than to press ours upon you. I might, I think, upon this sit down and invite your opinions, but it has been suggested to me, and it seems reasonable to suppose, that it might be convenient to you at this, our preliminary meeting, if I were to state as briefly as I can the subjects which appear to us to be most worthy of our joint consideration, and then it will be for you to say whether these subjects, or any of them, are such as you would like to consider more formally and in detail, in which case I hope we may arrange for subsequent interviews with that object; but to-day I will state for your consideration a list of subjects, and I will ask you to give me your views as to the way in which they should subsequently be dealt with.

POLITICAL RELATIONS.

"Now, gentlemen, undoubtedly the greatest, the most important, and at the same time the most difficult of all the subjects which we could consider is the question of the future relations, political and commercial, between the self-governing colonies and the United Kingdom. I do not think that it is necessary for me to argue at all upon the advantages of such closer union. Strong as is the bond of sentiment, and impossible as it would be to establish any kind of relations unless that bond of sentiment existed, I believe we all feel that it would be desirable to take advantage of it, and to still further tighten the ties which bind us together. In this country, at all events, I may truly say that the idea of federation is in the air. Whether with you it has gone as far it is for you to say, and it is also for you to consider whether we can give any practical application to the principle. It may well be that the time is hardly ripe for anything definite in this regard. It is quite true that our own Constitution and your Constitutions have all been the subject of very slow growth, and that they are all the stronger because they have been gradually consolidated, and so, perhaps, with Imperial Federation: if it is ever to be accomplished it will be only after the lapse of a considerable time and only by gradual steps.

"And undoubtedly one of those steps to which we must all attach very great importance is the grouping of the colonies. We rejoice in this country that Canada has already shown the way, with results which every one has seen have conduced greatly to her strength and to her prosperity. We observe, with the most lively interest, the proceedings which are taking place in Australia with the same view. We know that in South African politics the same idea has bulked very largely in the past, and probably will come to the front again. In regard to all these matters it is not for us to offer advice; it is not for us to press upon you in any shape our interference or our assistance. If it be possible for us in any way to help you to give effect to your own desires, I need not say that we are entirely at your service; but, in the meanwhile, I can assure you, on behalf, I am sure, of the people of this country, that we most heartily wish success to your efforts, believing, as I have said, that it will in your case, as it has already done in the case of Canada, conduce to your prosperity and to your power. But as regards the larger question, and anything in the nature of a federation of the Empire, the subject seems to me to depend entirely upon the feeling which exists in the colonies themselves. Here you will be met half way. The question is whether up to the present time there is such a genuine popular demand for closer union as would justify us in considering practical proposals to give it shape.

"I feel that there is a real necessity for some better machinery of consultation between the self-governing colonies and the Mother-country, and it has sometimes struck me—I offer it now merely as a personal suggestion—that it might be feasible to create a great council of the Empire to which the colonies would send representative plenipotentiaries,—not mere delegates who were unable to speak in their name without further reference to their respective Governments, but persons who by their position in the colonies, by their representative character, and by their close touch with colonial feeling would be able upon all subjects submitted to them to give really effective and valuable advice. If such a council were to be created it would at once assume an immense importance, and it is perfectly evident that it might develop into something still greater. It might slowly grow to that Federal Council to which we must always look forward as our ultimate ideal.

"And to a council of this kind would be committed, in the first instance, the discussion of all minor subjects of common interest, and their opinion would be taken, and would weigh most materially in the balance, before any decision were come to either by this country or by the Legislatures of the several colonies in regard to such matters.

"There is only one point in reference to this which it is absolutely necessary that we all should bear in mind. It may be that the time has come, and, if not, I believe it will come, when the colonies will desire to substitute for the slight relationship which at present exists a true partnership, and in that case they will want their share in the management of the Empire which we like