

Queen Victoria memorial.

Contributions to be recommended to their respective Parliaments by the Premiers: The Dominion of Canada, £30,000; the Commonwealth of Australia, reply not yet received; New Zealand, not less than £15,000; the Cape Colony, £20,000; the Colony of Natal, not exceeding £10,000; the Colony of Newfoundland, £2,000.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS.

IN a telegram of the 23rd January last the Secretary of State intimated the desire of His Majesty's Government to take advantage of the presence in London of the Prime Ministers of the various self-governing colonies in connection with His Majesty's coronation to discuss with them various important questions of general interest. The subjects indicated in that telegram were the political and commercial relations of the Empire and its naval and military defence. The various Governments were also invited to furnish a statement of any subjects which they thought might usefully be discussed, and, with a view to facilitate and give a definite direction to the discussion, to furnish the text of any resolutions which they might desire to submit to the Conference. The list of the subjects suggested in response to this request, and the text of the resolutions proposed, are appended (pp.).

In addition to the Prime Ministers, the Conference enjoyed the advantage of the presence at its meetings of the Minister of Defence for the Commonwealth of Australia, and of the Canadian Ministers of Customs, Militia and Defence, of Finance, and the Canadian Postmaster-General. The Secretary of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the President of the Board of Trade were also present at the discussion of the questions affecting their special Departments.

As in the case of the last Conference in 1897, it was decided that the proceedings of the Conference should in the first instance be confidential, in order that the discussion might be as free as possible, and that the members might be able to set out fully and frankly the special difficulties and considerations which affected them in the practical consideration of the different subjects; and when, at the close of the proceedings, the question of their publication was discussed it appeared that some of the members were averse to this course. The full report must therefore continue to be regarded as confidential, and, as on the last occasion, only the statements made by His Majesty's Ministers in which they indicated generally the views of His Majesty's Government on the various subjects, and a summary of the general results and the text of the various resolutions passed, are now made public.

The proceedings were opened by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the following speech:—

The Secretary of State: I have made arrangements to have a full shorthand report of the whole of our proceedings, and I shall endeavour, as far as possible, to arrange that each day's report shall be sent to each of you before the next meeting. These reports will, of course, be treated by all of us as absolutely confidential—at all events, for the present. What we desire is a perfectly free discussion, which we could hardly expect if that understanding were not arrived at; but at the close of your proceedings we will then consider whether anything, and, if so, what, should be given to the public. No doubt some of our conclusions will be made public, and it may possibly be found on looking through the reports it may be desirable that more should be published. At all events, what I wish to explain is that that will be a matter for subsequent decision, and nothing will be published without the consent of the persons concerned.

And now, gentlemen, it is my duty, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to thank you for your presence here, and to give you, on their behalf and on behalf of the people of this country, a most hearty welcome. We know how sincerely you have shared our sorrow at the serious illness of the King, and we know also how you share our joy that the illness appears to be passing away, and that we confidently entertain an expectation that the King will be wholly recovered at a period earlier than, perhaps, we had at first dared to anticipate. The whole country has been darkened by the shadow of this serious calamity. It is lightening now; but at the same time we all feel much disappointment—and I am sure no one regrets it more than the King himself—that this mishap should have interfered with the ceremonies of the coronation, and that this disappointment should have been caused to so many of His Majesty's subjects who have come from all parts of his dominions in order to witness and take part in his coronation, and to pay to him their loyal respect and to acclaim him as the symbol of Imperial union.

But you came here, gentlemen, for two purposes. You have come here, of course, to take your part—and a very prominent part—in the ceremonies of the coronation as the representatives of the great nations across the seas, but you have also come for the purpose of a business Conference, which we open to-day.

I cannot, I think, overestimate the importance of such Conferences as these. Even if they should lead to nothing absolutely substantial in the way of practical resolutions, yet at the same time I am convinced that they are of infinite value and a great gain to the whole Empire, inasmuch as they afford an opportunity for a review of the policy of the Empire by the representatives of the