

Empire Day---and What It Signifies

A Talk by
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from 2ZW

IT is probable that on Empire Day the thoughts of many of us turn to Empire matters, particularly in times like the present, when it was never more necessary to give thought to our connection with the British Empire in general and with Great Britain in particular.

All is not well with the world, and the bonds of Empire are now being strained much more severely than perhaps ever before in history.

Fortunately the conception of Imperial economic unity, of free but effective co-operation between the various nations and countries of the British Commonwealth, has in recent times gained an even wider measure of support.

The economic situation that now confronts us, demonstrates clearly that if the British Empire is to subsist, all sections must work together, and think and act Imperially. If England, the heart of the Empire, goes down in this great financial and economic struggle now taking place, the effect upon civilisation cannot be estimated, and is too dreadful to contemplate.

Some keen observers realise the part the British Empire and Englishmen play in the world. One of these is an Austrian named Paul Cohen-Portheim, who included the following passage in his recent book, "The Unknown Isle":—

"The British Empire is incoherent, illogical, and, to all appearances, haphazard; it is an absolutely unprecedented and unique thing. The Englishman of to-day is pre-eminently and par excellence the colonising White. As the centre of gravity of the Empire shifts daily further toward the circumference, the Mother Country is declining in importance. Her agriculture was finished long ago. Industry and trade are in a chronic state of crisis, surrounded by competitors who have risen on every side. . . . Superficial observers regard England as out-of-date and reactionary, left behind in the race, in the grip of a decline; but they are forgetting the British Empire, forgetting, above all, the British spirit. England has succeeded in making a spiritual conquest of her colonies (and other places too); the tie that binds them to her is far more spiritual than political, and consequently unbreakable.

"English customs, habits, and ideals, and the English language, are supreme over half the globe; but the wonderful little island still stands at the centre of it all, as mother, some day perhaps it will be great-grandmother, of the family, with her memories that stretch so far back into the past, and her ancient traditions, so full of contradictions, that have kept their vitality even in the age of Americanisation, Capitalism, and Bolshevism.

"This England, and the English of to-day, the figures they cut in the world, their lives, ideals, and activities, are of greater possible consequence for the whole human race.

"The importance of the British Empire to Europe lies in the fact that it is the champion of the world supremacy of the white man. There is nothing more short-sighted than the belief that any European country could benefit by a weakening of the British Empire; certain commercial interests might derive some transient advantage from it, but the supremacy of the white man depends on Britain, and would disappear with her. Even the United States would be unable to avert this process.

"Britain forms the neutral link between White Europe and White America, being geographically nearer to the former, and spiritually, to the latter. Together they make up the white race which in the past few centuries has improved its sway on the entire globe, and the leader of the conquering whites has long been Britain, and is still to-day, the British Empire.

"One thing is certain; the British Empire will last just as long as its spiritual basis remains a living and effective force, and no longer; but the end of it will also be the end of the world-wide rule of the White Man."

In a booklet recently issued by the Canterbury Branch of the Royal Empire Society, Mr. F. Milner, C.M.G., M.A., writes:—

"Let us emphasise the compelling facts—the facts that gain for Britain the admiration of the world:

"She maintains a world-wide Empire supreme in history adapted to meet the new conditions of the post-war era, and protected by the most efficient Navy the world has ever seen.

"She bridges the chasm between East and West and refutes the cynicism of the Kipling couplet—

'East is East and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet.'

"She gives the world a working synthesis of people to promote inter-racial amity, yet in spite of its composite nature, so intense a loyalty does it beget, that in the Great War a million men laid down their lives to vindicate its honour and unity.

"She is supreme in the greatest work of world co-operation for world peace. She is the chief supporter of the League of Nations."

"Her attitude to war debts is the most generous in the world. She was willing to cancel the lot by general agreement. When others refused, she gave the most generous terms to her debtors, and at the same time heroically pledged herself to wipe off all her debt to America—a debt of practically one thousand million pounds which she incurred not for herself but for her allies. Nor does she accept one penny more from her array of European debtors than is needed to defray her obligations to America. Indeed, from this source so far she has received only one-fifth of what she has paid over to America.

"As Greece gave to the world Culture and Art, as Rome gave Law and Discipline, so Britain gives the most precious gift of all, Liberty, embodied in enduring institutions.

To be concluded
next week.

—Photo courtesy
"Dominion."

