

CUS 417/7.10

CANADA'S PLACE IN THE EMPIRE,  
LECTURE BY DR. OSLER.

The announcement that Dr. Osler, the Regius Professor of Medicine, would lecture in the Assembly Room, City Buildings, on Saturday afternoon, on "Canada's Place in the Empire," attracted a crowded audience. The meeting took place under the auspices of the League of the Empire, which is a non-political organisation which aims at the development of Imperial sentiment and the consolidation of the Empire.

Professor H. E. EGERTON (Beit Professor of Colonial History) occupied the chair, and said the name of the lecturer was a household word, and those who did not know of him in any other capacity had read in the halfpenny Press of the terrible iconoclast who was reported to desire to put every Professor over the age of 60 into the melting-pot. Dr. Osler would, no doubt, have a marvellous record to tell them of progress and prosperity, but they must remember that the final test of nations was not their material wealth, but the quality of the men they were giving forth, and it was because the great Dominion of Canada, tried by that test, answered true that they could look with confidence to her future—(applause). He had been asked to announce that the Oxford Branch of the League proposed to hold an exhibition and sale of Colonial products and curiosities this summer, to celebrate Empire Day, in the grounds of the Radcliffe Infirmary. General French would address a public meeting, and it was earnestly desired that every member of the Empire League should do all they could to make the occasion a great success—(applause).

Dr. OSLER, in the course of his lecture, said by the domestic infelicities which culminated in the Declaration of Independence in 1776 the Mother Country lost, and lost most justly, the Colonies which some of the bravest of her sons had founded. But a vast territory remained British, stretching to the frozen Pole and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, sparsely settled, little known, and, so far as this country was concerned, little valued. With three great staples of commerce—fish, forests, and furs—she enjoyed a lusty youth and gave promise of a vigorous womanhood. But the growth was slow, and it was not until her capacity for producing the greatest of all staples, corn, was realised, that the real value of the country became evident to her inhabitants and to the Motherland. Not the least striking indication of her vitality had been the growth of an educational system, of which Canadians felt justly proud. The Universities had kept pace with the material evolution, and in Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, Kingston and Winnipeg were institutions of sound learning, not only administering to the intellectual needs of the country, but rapidly becoming centres for the diffusion of new knowledge. He could wish, indeed, this ancient seat had technical schools such as those which adorned the campus of McGill University, Montreal, and which had been provided by the generosity of her citizens—(applause). Colleges had translated the science of the schools into the practical life of the farms and the dairies. And now a citizen of Montreal, Sir William MacDonald, had come forward with a magnificent donation of nearly one million sterling to build and equip an agricultural college near Montreal, in which the youth of the farms would be taught practical work in all de-

the growth of a national feeling that was very encouraging. Among a large number of Canadians, too, there was at heart a feeling of resentment that their country had not always had full justice from the United States, and the memory of the Fenian Raid was still bitter. The most serious aspect in the relation of the countries had been the general absorption of so many young Canadians by the United States. How serious this migration had been might be judged from the fact that in the 50 years ended 1900, 1,800,000 Canadians moved across the border. Lately, as they all knew, there had been a strong movement of population in the other direction, particularly from the North-Western States. A second and much more likely possibility was that with the growth of the country in population and power the national feeling might become so strong that Canadians might wish to become independent and sever even the very slight ties that now bound them to the Mother Country. This was a contingency which had to be faced. The members of the younger generations knew less and less at first hand of the Mother Country. A great majority of them had never seen Great Britain, and never would. For those who were born of English parents and had close affiliations with the Old Country it was a different matter, but they must look forward to a growing population without these advantages. The national feeling had been fostered by a belief that the interests of Canada had not infrequently been sacrificed, particularly to the United States. Thus the recent Alaskan boundary decision was very unpopular. On the whole, however, he did not think the desire to break away from the Old Country was at all the dominant feeling throughout Canada—(applause). The third possibility was the one present in the minds of the great majority, namely, the persistence of the present status with a certain re-arrangement of the relations between the Mother Country and the Colonies. At present the political ties were the Governor-General and the Privy Council. But there had been growing up gradually, not only in Canada, but in other parts of the Empire, a feeling which, he was sure, was destined to have a most important influence on the future of the race. In Canada 40 years ago, at the time of Confederation, there was practically no national spirit; then there gradually developed a strong Canadian sentiment, which had been strengthened enormously in the recent phenomenal growth of the country. And now we had reached the stage when many felt that, perhaps, there was something even better than this national spirit. We were witnessing, both here and in the Colonies, the birth of a new sentiment, a new spirit, wider and ultimately, he trusted, to be much more potent than any local feeling—he meant the Imperial idea which had at last captured the race—(applause). In this matter he need not remind them how much they owed to that great statesman, Mr. Chamberlain. For over-sea Britons he was the first English statesman who had made them feel that they were of real importance to the Empire, and here at home he had tried to teach them to think Imperially. How the bonds between different constituents of the Empire were to be tightened was the problem before our statesmen. It seemed a rational hope that the final solution may be a federation of some sort, in which there would be a preferential trade between the units and a common plan of defence, the cost of which would be distributed equally. He felt strongly that the Mother Country should not have to bear the ex-

the schools into the practical life of the farms and the dairies. And now a citizen of Montreal, Sir William MacDonald, had come forward with a magnificent donation of nearly one million sterling to build and equip an agricultural college near Montreal, in which the youth of the farms would be taught practical work in all departments. Not the least important indication of the development of the nation was the appearance of a literature with certain distinctive notes. The French Canadians had long had the lead in this direction, but now from the English press in Canada were issuing works on general literature, history and fiction, which showed an extraordinary awakening of intellectual interests. The magazines issued by the Universities at Montreal and Kingston compared favourably with those of the older countries. But most important of all as an indication of vitality was the advent of a group of Canadian poets. Without vision the people perish; without poetry, without the strong sentiment which seeks lyrical and other poetical forms of expression, a people could never reach a high plane of social development—(applause). As to the future of Canada there could be no uncertainty, so far at least as material development was concerned. There would be ups and downs, periods of trial and distress, as good for nations as individuals, but it would be a safe prediction to state that some of those present would live to see 25 or 30 millions of people in British North America, with a surplus food supply capable of feeding the Empire. A vital question here at home was—What were we going to do with these big daughters, so buxom and gay, whose ways were not always our ways and their thoughts not always our thoughts? Were we to look forward to seeing them set up house for themselves, as Mistress Columbia did, going off in a huff at the harsh treatment of her mother, or could we look forward to some family compact in which with the largest possible measure of national independence there was a federation for commerce and defence?—(applause). They all appreciated how much better it was for grown-ups to have separate establishments. Near relations loved each other better under such conditions, and in this case the good mother was, perhaps, fortunate in having her children settled in widely distant lands. In the case of Canada there were the usual three courses open. Union with the big Republic of the South had never been a possibility thought of by Canadians. The time was when the commercial advantages of the union were considered, particularly in the marine provinces, not, however, that there was ever any party in the Dominion seriously in favour of annexation, but there were those who felt that so far as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were concerned a union would have been very advantageous. The stand-off attitude of the United States commercially, and the failure to arrange a satisfactory treaty of reciprocity, had turned out to be one of the most helpful things in the development of Canada. Thrown upon her own resources, she had to seek other markets and she had found them. One heard a great deal of a desire on the part of Americans to absorb Canada, but he did not think they looked across the border with very covetous eyes. At least, he could say from a very varied experience in the United States that one heard quite as often expressions of opinion unfavourable to annexation. Many Americans felt that their country was large enough and their problems serious enough without annexing others, some of which were very complicated. Fifteen or twenty years ago one heard in some quarters rumours of annexation, but that had disappeared, and with the remarkable prosperity of the country had come

constituents of the Empire were to be tightened was the problem before our statesmen. It seemed a rational hope that the final solution may be a federation of some sort, in which there would be a preferential trade between the units and a common plan of defence, the cost of which would be distributed equally. He felt strongly that the Mother Country should not have to bear the expense of policing the whole world for the protection of the Colonies—(applause). These were questions which must be settled by our statesmen, but, after all, the strongest tie was one of sentiment, and that could be fostered by all of them in many ways. To the Jeremiahs abroad in the land let them turn deaf ears. There had never been a period in history when the outlook of the Empire was so hopeful. Trade conditions would adjust themselves probably without the assistance of either great political party. While the people were awake and interested there was no danger, and surely that was the condition to-day. We only saw the beginning of the wonderful work which this little island had initiated. We must trust to the strong sense of the race to work out a glorious destiny—(applause).

The CHAIRMAN, in moving a cordial vote of thanks to Dr. Osler, mentioned that the Mayor had hoped to be present and move that motion, but was, unfortunately, prevented through illness.—The thanks were heartily accorded. The lecture was illustrated with an excellent series of lantern-slides.