(November 10, 1913.)

Britain's Treatment of Canada.

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AT a regular luncheon of the Club held on the 10th November, Dr. Shortt said:

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club of Toronto,—I assure you that I appreciate to the full the honor which has been done me in asking me to come here to address the Canadian Club of Toronto once more, because I regard the Toronto Canadian Club as my foster mother, in this matter of addressing Canadian Clubs. It was before this Club that I gave my first address and I certainly feel the honor of being asked again.

Without, however, wasting time with preliminary matters, let me get down to my subject which is "Britain's Treatment of Canada."

The question of the relation of the colonies to the mother country and to one another has been one of eternal interest. It may change in its aspects, but must remain a matter of great interest until we work out some practical solution of that relationship in the development of an organization which will express the proper, stable relations of the colonies to the mother country.

Here in Canada, as you know, we have, by reason of our peculiar relations to the mother country, become pioneers in the development of colonial relationship, especially in working out some of the more independent features of the relations with the mother country. Now what I am here to do is not to go into great detail in discussing these relations as such, but to enter a plea for the more careful study of them. I think that no one who has dipped into that matter at all, especially no one who has had the good fortune to deal with the original documents—material of the most fascinating interest—can fail to realize that upon the adequate study of those documents the proper solution of present questions and the proper development of future relations must depend.

What has chiefly stimulated me to take this subject to-day is the frequent observation, in the newspaper press and elsewhere, of what I regard as a mistaken attitude as to the relations of Britain to the colonies.

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Now these false impressions have been due, I think, to lack of study of the facts, and to the further cause that in our history there have been certain conspicuous landmarks, certain crises, which have attracted special attention, but when their general atmosphere is not well known they have given rise to false impressions regarding their causes and consequences. Let me point out some general features.

In the first place, what was the original colonial relationship? What its stamp? What the fundamental characteristics? When you go back, not only to the early British colonial relations, but to the French, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Dutch and others, you find the development in a crude and very matter of fact way of very elementary principles. These countries saw opportunities to extend their dominion, to their economic advantage, in other parts of the world. This implied an awakening common to them all. One mistake we make is in thinking that this was the result of the discovery of America; it was just the other way, the discovery of America occurred over the head of the development of the idea and practice of extended dominion and enterprise. We find these countries sending out commercial agents, most frequently and most successfully in the form of chartered agencies, or companies, granted monopolies of certain trades. The English Muscovy Company was formed by giving a charter to certain people to monopolize the trade to Russia; it was an old and well known company on the same basis as the Levant Company. Another company was the East India Company, and almost at the same time the Hudson's Bay Company was formed. These companies represented one and the same principle, the sending out of emissaries to exploit those regions for the benefit of the home country. This stimulated to rivalry in the ransacking of the world, and in process of that movement America was discovered. The difference between the Muscovy Company and those trading to new lands was that the former was trading to an old and well settled country while the latter had to establish factories or agencies of their own. You all have read of the factories in India; and those of the Hudson's Bay Co. here, such as Nelson Factory and Moose Factory. These in countries less developed or barbarous were under the necessity of working out their own economy to a greater extent than in older settled countries. Where the question of bringing goods in to market had to be dealt with, it became necessary to make roads and open the country. That led in suitable climates to colonization. But permanent colonists brought new interest.

Suppose a company was organized here in Toronto, with a capital of two million dollars, to develop a new mine prospect back in the north country where there are no settlers. The company gets out equipment, spends money, and employs people to go back and open and work the mine for them. These people build their houses in a year or two, take up their families, and begin to settle. Suppose later on these people sent down a polite note to the company at Toronto, stating that they had decided to take over the mine on their own account, and asking what assistance the company could offer them towards maintaining it! What a commotion there would be down here around the Board in Toronto! (Laughter.) Yet that is practically what has occurred in several British Colonies in the course of time.

One case was that of the Georgia Company, in the State of Georgia. When the returns were slow in coming the Company sent out a new Governor, who was expected to be more vigorous in getting returns; but when they were urged by him to make suitable returns they sent back the Governor himself; as one director pathetically remarked, "It was the only remittance they had ever had from the colony." (Laughter.) That represents the change, from the original idea of sending out emissaries with a view to trade returns merely round to the present idea of self-governing nations within the Empire. It is a long, long stretch, and that sweep is the history of British colonial development. (Applause.)

What I wish you to consider is this: you take a country starting out on that primary basis; you have to consider what it means when development will have changed their point of view, and they face a new situation. But you find those who know little about that change saying, "What do these people mean by telling us they can't do this or that, or accept this or that?" It is not, however, merely a question of the unreasonableness of the demands of Britain, or of the unreasonableness of the colonial attitude. It is a question of facing and understanding a new situation and the marvel is, that the relationship should have held together at all! And we represent the only empire that has held together on that basis. (Applause.)

Now what one objects to in a good deal of the discussion on this subject is the supposition that the relations of Britain to the colonies, and of the colonies to one another, have always been on the same basis. No allowance is made for historical conditions or development. Too much attention is paid to the matter from the present point of view, carrying back that

point of view to the past. That misfortune can be corrected only by more careful study of the facts, and by being a great deal more sympathetic in the discussion of the issues. When, therefore, you say Britain was doing this or trying to do that with us, the first question is as to what were the conditions at the time; was it unreasonable then? Certainly it might be so now; but could Britain have done differently at that time? That is the question you must settle before you can declare whether Britain was just or unjust. In the frequent facing of new conditions and stages there is certain to be a great deal of friction and trouble. We know it in our own experience as in the history of the Western Provinces, and the winning of responsible government by the West. The parties standing out against the movement in Britain or at Ottawa were severely criticised. But all those difficulties have been overcome, and we have come around to the present point of view.

Another aspect of the matter is the further assumption that the British system of government has always been the same so far as colonial government is concerned. That the fight, for example, for constitutional government was a fight to bring the colonies around to what Britain had always enjoyed. But when you look at the facts in the light of closer study, you find the development of responsible government in Britain to be just a little in advance of ours. When the United States broke off from Britain, they took the form which they saw at the time at work in the British system. Thus they started with an independent President, a Cabinet, Secretaries of State, and Legislature. This was simply a reflection of British conditions at the time. Again you find in Canada, that the people we suppose to have been the pioneers in responsible government, did not realize what we now understand by responsible government. If I had time to go into details, I could show you that our form was given to us not by the people who are supposed to have worked it out, but by practical parliamentarians from Britain. There was a series of Governors, Lord Durham, Lord Sydenham, Sir Charles Bagot, Lord Metcalfe, and Lord Elgin, who were chiefly concerned in the practical establishment of British responsible government. The people who were opposed to the Home Government in Canda were supposed to be always fighting for some fundamental principles and those supporting the Government were supposed to be always on the side of the Home Government—that, however, is another myth. I have gone over very interesting letters and documents of William Lyon Mackenzie, whom I

select because he was in the forefront of the rebellion. When he got the ear of Lord Goderich, he wrote to his friends in Canada telling how fine a thing the British Government was, how liberal, how splendid, because for the time being they were taking his side. What was the corresponding wail from the Family Compact? They wrote that if things were not done as they wanted, they knew another country they could be annexed to and live in freedom under another flag. (Laughter.) But there arose another ruler in the Colonial Office who knew not Mackenzie, at least did not know him in that way, and Mackenzie became more rebellious, and the Family Compact more devoted than ever!

This appeal from the parties in Canada, even from helpless minorities in Canada, to the Government of Britain to take their side, and fight their battles, and bring them to the front, is seen in hundreds of documents, and some of the most interesting letters in reply were written by Gladstone when he was at the Colonial Office.

These are merely phases. I am just telling you a few points that bear on my general argument that the British Government did not dominate Canada but simply accepted its policy from Canada. I am asking you to look more carefully and study the facts. (Applause.) When we find this "Downing Street domination," we might suppose the remedy should have been, "Let the people who are bound to run the country take their own way." But when we get down to cold facts, we find that the Home Government was simply supporting one element in Canada, which was giving them all the ammunition, all the information, all their point of view, against another party which was fighting the first. It was a fight between two Canadian elements, both trying to get the ear of the Home Government, stuffing the Home Government, of course, with stories pro and con. (Laughter.) There is an attitude you will appreciate.

Take another concrete illustration, on the commercial side. We find Lord John Russell writing to Lord Sydenham, asking how it is that the Legislature of Canada, just before the Union, sends over such contradictory demands regarding trade policy. Writing back, Lord Sydenham says it is quite simple: the Legislature of Canada, when it could do nothing itself, and could not decide which one of the parties it was going to favor and which to turn down simply sent on the demands of each. When the people of Montreal ask for exclusion of goods shipped by any other route than the St. Lawrence and the people of Toronto say they want their goods

by way of the Erie canal because it is cheaper; when the farmers of the West ask for protection on grain, and the people of Montreal want free grain, the Legislature simply backs them all in their appeal to Britain! (Laughter.) Because the Canadian administration will not be responsible for turning down any of them, all these burdens are thrown on the Home Government, and its decision is odious to some important element in Canada. Such a situation affords one of the strongest arguments for responsible government, thus throwing the burden of settling these things on Canadians themselves. When they were thrown back on them, how did it work? Lord Sydenham and others arranged that the majority of the Legislature must decide how things were to be done. The Canadian Government decided, for instance, in one of these cases that they would impose a differential duty on goods coming by any other route than by way of the St. Lawrence; pretty nearly the solid vote of Quebec favoured this, as well as the Eastern section of Upper Canada, but the other part was not in favor of it. The minority finding itself turned down did not accept the decision but wrote off in haste to the British Government about a "most alarming development" that was taking place, a "most unheard-of infringement of the Navigation Acts, and the British foreign policy" with which Canada had no right to interfere. They appealed to the old colonial system, the old Navigation Acts, insisting that everything should be done by Britain, but they were told that Canada must now settle its domestic difficulties. To disallow the provincial act would be simply to favor the western part of Canada. The ordinary idea was that in such matters Britain should take one or the other side, as in previous times she frankly did. But this was considered British domination, trying to stamp out freedom in the British Empire. Canada's past history has been framed by regarding only the high lights and overlooking the underlying conditions. Thus there has grown up what I consider a very unfair conception of the attitude of the mother country. (Applause.)

A proper understanding of that will have various effects. I think one striking lesson taught is the wisdom of having Canada settle as much as she can, as much as she ought to of her own affairs, (applause) rather than have too many things thrown back upon the British Government. And you will observe, we never ask the British Government to take any responsibility if we can arrive at any kind of unanimity among ourselves. We have always gone to them with an appeal to help out one or other Canadian party.

Another of the features in criticism of Britain has reference to the boundary questions. This has relation chiefly to our neighbors to the south, the Americans. I might pass in review the boundary treaties in general, but the one most talked of, and in which Britain is regarded most continuously as having "sold us out," or words to that effect, is the affair of the Maine boundary, settled by the Ashburton Treaty in 1842. It is urged that Britain was more anxious to please the United States than her own people, and consented to give away a good slice of Canadian territory in order to please the United States. What are the facts? It is a long and voluminous subject; I presume I have read a thousand documents on it if I have read one. The foundation of the whole matter is laid in that part of America which was owned and settled by the French in Canada. Britain, in fighting for her own people, shoved the boundary far north, right into the midst of the French. Especially after the Treaty of Utrecht which so greatly enlarged the British dominions they set up claim after claim, map after map, showing the south bank of the St. Lawrence as the northern boundary. That was one of the items for which they were fighting, the south bank of the St. Lawrence as the boundary between the French dominions and the British. When she ultimately conquered Canada Britain held the North American continent entirely under her supervision until the American Revolution. Britain outlines the subdivisions of her jurisdiction in that territory in the Proclamation of 1763 which included in the Province of Quebec part of the territory south of the St. Lawrence. Yet the south bank was claimed as part of the original British territory. In case the French should recover Canada Britain could say "there is what you get back, that is all you own." (Laughter.) But for the sake of administration they put into Quebec or Canada a portion south of the St. Lawrence. Though the true line was very indefinite, it followed the height of land separating the St. Lawrence from the American rivers. Similar remarks might be made about the Nova Scotia or Acadia boundary also.

The next point is that in the boundary of Quebec fixed by the Quebec Act of 1774, the description of the Proclamation of 1763 was repeated, except that when you get to Lake Erie it takes a dip to the Ohio, in order to get behind the American colonies and prevent them from extending in that direction. The result was to put that part of the continent under French law and French institutions, which, as Lord Hillsborough said, "will keep them out better than any boundary." (Laughter.)

In the Treaty of 1783 recognising the independence of the United States, the boundary is described again and on the same basis as far as the St. Lawrence at Cornwall as in 1763 and 1774. As that was laid down, Britain was putting more over into the purely Canadian line than she ever admitted as against France or up to that time. Thus Canada as a province was enlarged to a very great extent. Then came numerous demands for the actual survey of the boundary. Meantime Britain wanted a military road between Quebec and New Brunswick and wanted to get across the upper angle of Maine on much the same principle as when we tried to get an all-Canadian route into the Klondyke by shoving back the American line. When that was finally settled in the Ashburton Treaty, what we find as a simple matter of fact is, that Britain got somewhat more than she was entitled to under the first award or under her own showing as against France. Her chief difficulties were in fighting her own documents during previous conditions. Lord Ashburton certainly achieved a singular success. Governor Bagot congratulated him most heartily, and Mr. Featherstonhaugh, the British Agent, wrote a pamphlet showing that the settlement was most favorable to Canada, and to British interests. Mr. Webster, on the other hand, had a hard time of it with the American Congress. (Laughter, and applause.)

Two or three points incidental to the settlement are worth referring to as partly accounting for subsequent false impressions in Canada. In order to get the boundary settled at all, it was necessary for the Federal Government to persuade the State of Maine to hand over the territory in dispute to the United States under the assurance that it would do everything possible to protect their interests. In order to persuade the people of Maine to transfer the territory it was hinted that a certain map had been discovered in the French Archives on which Franklin had drawn a line giving color to the British claim and the matter should be settled before the British discovered it. Subsequently the Maine people said they were hoodwinked, and made trouble in Congress. This map was the famous "red line map," the discovery of which induced Mr. Featherstonhaugh to write a second pamphlet claiming that Webster had deceived the British representatives including Lord Ashburton and the others.

It turned out that the Franklin map in the northern section indicated a line which no one in Britain or elsewhere had ever contended for. When this question was brought up in the British House of Commons and it was asked, "How

were the Americans allowed to get away with this?" the answer of Sir Robert Peel was, "We knew all about that; our Agent in Paris had mentioned the map but it was not considered worth while. But," he added, "there was another map that we didn't say anything about. It was a map sent by our Agent, Mr. Oswald, to the King himself, and was placed in the King's library. This shows what was his conception of the boundary at that time, and that map gives the Americans their claim." He said, "Of course, we didn't say anything about that." Nevertheless Mr. Featherstonhaugh's second pamphlet has been accepted as the justification of popular belief in this country.

Lastly, there was this wind-up to the matter. When later it came to a question of settlement of the boundary between Quebec province and New Brunswick, the British claim would have given the disputed territory to Quebec while the American claim would have given a good deal to New Brunswick. Now, though New Brunswick was the province which stoutly supported the British claim against the Americans, yet in this new boundary dispute with Quebec they maintained that the proper boundary was what the Americans had claimed and not that defined by the British documents and arguments. Quebec thought she was absolutely secure and left the matter to the British experts. But the boundary was decided in favour of New Brunswick, thus supporting the previous contentions of the Americans.

If that was so then we got many hundred square miles more than we were entitled to, and all the congratulations offered to Lord Ashburton were amply due to him. Well, that is one of the instances in which, we are told by people high in authority, Britain "sold us out." Britain, of course, did nothing of the kind! She was supporting us, and we got quite all that we were entitled to! (Applause.)

But my time is up. I simply wished to give one or two examples which could be duplicated and reduplicated to any extent to show you that in dealing with these matters you have to find the primary situation, to consider the developments, the change in point of view, the surrounding facts and conditions; you have to regard the sweep from the original founding of colonies, on the basis of emissaries sent out to bring home wealth, to the present system of self-governing colonies. The toleration of the British Government, no less than the enterprise of the colonial leaders, has been essential to the realization of the Empire. All the first statesmen of Britain are on one side. Chatham, Fox, Burke, Shelburne and

Pitt the Younger were all on the one side in advocating toleration with the progressive colonies. They believed in finding out the actual situation, easing off the strain and retaining the American colonies.

The last word I have is this: When you find from time to time in the development of colonial relations, that British statesmen and others have given expression to the view that "We can't hold the Canadians very much longer, they are bound to break off," what is the basis for that very pessimistic sentiment? Always the extreme demands of Canada, involving concessions which would disrupt the domestic and foreign policy of Britain. When these demands were not promptly met there has been talk of rebellion or annexation. It matters not whether they were Liberals or Conservatives, who were making the claims, they all tell the same story. Take the Rebellion of 1837 or the Annexation Manifesto of 1848. My point is this: before you condemn Britain—she has her faults, and we have ours—before you make up your minds that we have been hoodwinked or sold out by her and before you settle what must be the immediate future of our relations to her, look into the matter closely, study it up carefully and you will commonly find the matter somewhat different from the popular conception of it. (Applause.)