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WHAT IS THE MEANING OF EMPIRE DAY.

(BY J. MILLER MCCONNELL.)

"What is the meaning of Empire Day? Why do the cannons roar? Why does the cry 'God Save the King' Echo from shore to shore? Why does the flag of Britannia float Proudly 'neath fort and bay? Why do our kinsmen gladly hail Our Glorious Empire Day?" School children all over Canada will be singing this new Empire Day song on the 23rd of May, which, as everyone knows, is now the day chosen to acclaim the greatness and extent of the British Empire, more especially to inculcate the Empire idea in the minds of the younger generation.

The above lines constitute the first verse of a song recently written and set to music in England and dedicated to the Earl of Meath and Lord Strathcona. Those two great exponents of the Empire Day ideal have sent this song broadcast over His Majesty's possessions beyond the Seas to be sung by the children, more particularly in connection with Empire Day exercises.

It is easy to picture the multitude of little ones who will raise their voices to this Empire note. In the little backwoods school house, as well as in the more pretentious towns and cities, school rooms will re-echo with the refrain: "Glorious Empire Day."

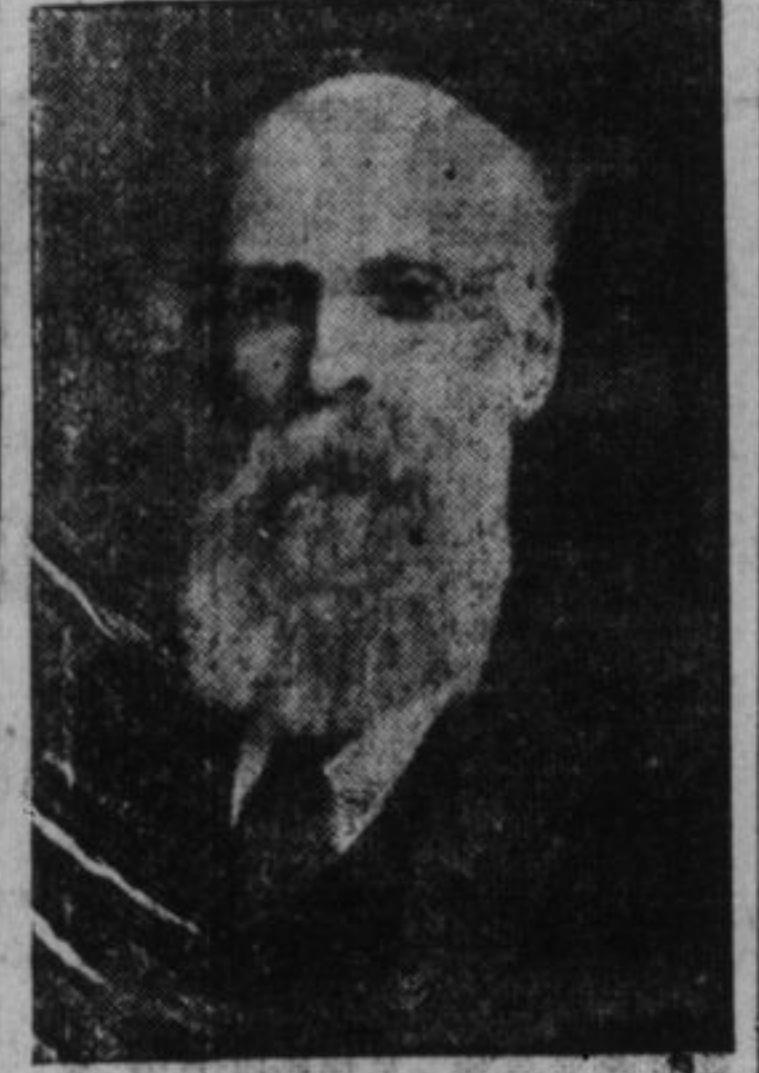
To those of us for whom school days are but a memory and to many a recollection of opportunities neglected, the old ditty:

"The twenty-fourth of May Is the Queen's birthday, If you don't give us a holiday We'll all run away."

is more familiar. In these days of good old Queen Victoria, the 24th was a day associated with freedom from school books and a tramp into the country with a tin can full of worms, plenty of hooks, and a sharp knife wherewith to cut an alder bush to constitute the weapon, when properly connected, to tempt the flighty brook trout. There was not so much heard then about Empire ideals, although they existed in the minds of many of the more advanced advocates of British connection and its development. Since then the campaign of education has borne fruit and is to-day a prominent feature of our political aspirations. A Nation within a Nation, or as Kipling aptly put it:

"Daughter in her Mother's House, But Mistress in her own."

The younger generation will be brought up to a more orderly conception of Empire Day and its significance and the various patriotic organizations throughout the land will see that no



EARL OF MEATH.

opportunity is missed to bring about the desirable impressions.

Originated in Canada.

A year ago Lord Strathcona told a London patriotic association that Empire Day originated in Canada and was becoming more and more popular every year in the Dominion. In every village and town on that day the air was filled with patriotic and imperial sentiment and patriotic music and sounds, he said, could be heard from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The Earl of Meath heard about the manner in which Canadians had transformed the old Queen's birthday into one for the celebration and observance of imperial connection and he took up the matter in England and now the day is joyously celebrated there as in any other part of the Empire.

In the commencement of this article each stanza, after the question: "What is the meaning of Empire Day?" starts with the interrogation of "Why?" which calls for an answer.

First of all the idea is an educational one. Older people for the most part have heard and read so much about the Empire and imperial connection that they do not need to be taught. Education along those lines has been an evolutionary process with them. The young can now obtain the benefit of well arranged tuition and know what they are perpetuating. Their fathers made Empire Day for them to take up and keep with all its patriotic significance and nothing makes the youthful breast expand with more pride and satisfaction than a patriotic exercise.

Children of the Empire should know such songs as "The National Anthem," "Rule Britannia," "The Flag of Britain," or some of the other numerous Empire songs, of which the one quoted above is the latest. Every school should possess a flagstaff and Union Jack, a large wall map of the Empire, a portrait of the King. Systematic instruction in good citizenship should be given in the schools, and every child be trained in such a way as to enable him or her to give, in after life, the best possible service to the community and the state. The Union Jack should be ceremoniously hoisted and saluted by both boys and girls, and songs and recitations of an appropriate character given on the days of national observances.

According to Lord Strathcona's idea the movement was for peace and not for war. "Patriotism," he believed "bound them all together; it made them proud of themselves and of their position in the world; it enabled them to stand side by side in cases of difficulty;

and it enabled them to share with each other the joys and sorrows of the Empire."

Last year the British House of Commons declined to give official sanction to the recognition of Empire Day, by voting down a proposal that it be obligatory to fly the national flag over the House of Parliament on Empire Day. On that occasion the London Times remarked: "The growth of the feeling in favor of an Empire Day celebration is eminently characteristic of our national methods. Started by a private individual and fostered by a voluntary organization, the League of the Empire, it has now reached such proportions that its acceptance as a



MRS. CLEMENTINA FESSENDEN.

state institution cannot much longer be delayed."

"In many countries such a demonstration of patriotism and national unity might well have been originally proposed from above and forced on a comparatively unenthusiastic community. We cannot, however, help thinking that the British method of proving to the government that the movement is deep-seated and earnest before official action is taken is on the whole the better. Nevertheless, the government have carried a natural cautiousness too far by not realizing that the time has now come when they can safely fly a few flags to show officially that the celebration really represents a national expression of feeling."

Lord Meath, the indefatigable pioneer of the movement in England, has stated that the great object is to develop the "inner spiritual meaning" of the British Empire and to "inculcate on British subjects the honorable obligation which rests upon them of preparing themselves, each in his or her own sphere, for the due fulfillment of its duties and privileges."

"There is another reason," adds the Times, "why we need not be afraid that this Empire Day celebration will be a long and unproductive one to our credit. It is a creditable economy in the outward display of national sentiment. It is, above all, a movement to bring together the various parts of the Empire, and to make the school boy on the veld or the prairie feel that he has some of the higher interests of life in common with an urchin in the slums of Whitechapel."

The supporters of the movement hold that Britons are right in their belief that, on the whole, the influence of the Anglo-Saxon race has been beneficial and has tended, in the main, towards the advancement of civilization and of righteousness. It is therefore an effort to arouse the peoples who constitute the British Empire to the serious duties which lie at their door, and to lead them to subordinate selfish or class interests to those of the State and of the community.

The movement has made good progress and the annual increase in the number of schools coming under its influence is very gratifying to the promoters of the movement. There is hardly a portion of the King's dominions in which it is not to be found at work. It is officially recognized in practically all the self-governing colonies as well as in the Crown colonies.

The Earl of Meath, president of the League of the Empire, who is at the head of the great Empire Day movement, is a man of great prominence in social and philanthropic work in England. A glance into "Who's Who" shows that for many years he has been connected in a high official capacity with numerous organizations aiming to improve the general social conditions of the people. A few of them might be mentioned to indicate how widespread are his interests in that connection. They are Hospital Saturday Fund, Young Men's Friendly Society, Metropolitan Public Garden Association, British College of Physical Education, Lad's Drill Association, Church Army, Christian Union for Social Service, British Institute of Social Service, Dublin Philanthropic Reform Association. Besides taking an active official part in the kind of work indicated by the titles he has written a great deal on those subjects and has published several books.

It would be wondered how he could find time to take up any new class of work, but he seems to be an indefatigable worker and is an enthusiast about the Empire Day movement as he was about any of the previous work with which he is connected. He is the author of a work, "Our Empire, Past and Present," so that he must be pretty well posted on matter throughout the Empire. In his early days he went into the British civil service, but afterwards changed into the diplomatic service of his country and served at various European embassies.

Of the movement the Earl recently wrote: "If a great deal has been accomplished since the birth of the movement, much more remains to be done. Who will help to train the rising generation in the duties of Imperial responsibility and of duty? The assistance of volunteer workers is invited. Loyalty, patriotism, obedience to lawful authority, thoughtfulness and love of humanity, fidelity to duty, and readiness for sacrifice—these are some of the virtues which the movement desires to see instilled in the minds of the young, believing that by such teaching good citizens are created."

"How can we best make these and

like virtues not only acceptable, but greatly to be desired by the young generation? First, by showing that they are in accordance with Divine will; secondly, by example; thirdly, by pointing out the reasonableness and wisdom of these virtues and that the possession of them increases the sum of human happiness. It is the possession or non-possession of character by the peoples of the British Empire which will, in the long run, determine whether it is speedily to succumb to the fate of previous empires and disappear, or to be a mighty instrument for many generations in the hands of the Almighty for the regeneration of the world."

Mrs. Fessenden's Work.

It was mentioned in the early part of this article that Empire Day originated in Canada and a story about Empire Day would be incomplete without a reference to Mrs. Clementina Fessenden, with whose successful opposition and many discouragements, did most of the pioneer work for the movement. She it was who organized the first Hamilton Chapter of the Daughters of the Empire, originally named after her.

In everything she has written Mrs. Fessenden has shown staunch loyalty to British institutions and the flag. It was this frame of mind which suggested the Empire Day idea. After considerable trouble she got the Hamilton School Board to take up the idea, and the first favorable resolution was adopted in December, 1897. Since then the plan has grown wonderfully, and it was a great triumph for her when Lord Meath took up the movement in the Old Country.

When the tenth birthday of the movement came around, a couple of years ago, Mrs. Fessenden was signally honored in her home city, and her efforts officially recognized.

With regard to Mr. Larke's claim, he asserts that Empire Day originated in the request of the United States Commission of the Canadian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, to nations represented at that exposition to celebrate their national holiday in their national manner, provided the day fell within the time in which the exhibition should be held. He says: "As the Commissioner for Canada, this request came to me, and I submitted it to the Hon. A. R. Angers the Dominion Minister of Agriculture, who had charge of the Canadian exhibits, with the suggestion that it would be an important thing to demonstrate the unity of the Empire in the city of Chicago, inasmuch as it was so little understood in the United States."

"To this end, Canada, I suggested, instead of celebrating Dominion Day, should join with the representatives of the United Kingdom and other colonies to celebrate a common day as Empire Day. The Minister heartily approved of the suggestion and submitted it to the Cabinet, which adopted it, and I was instructed to carry out the proposal."

"Owing to the delay in completing preparations for the exhibition, a suitable public demonstration could not be made on May 23rd, but it was determined that a dinner should be given. Through some disagreement in the British Commission this fell through and two of the British members requested that they might be allowed to give a dinner, which, under the circumstances, could not be refused."

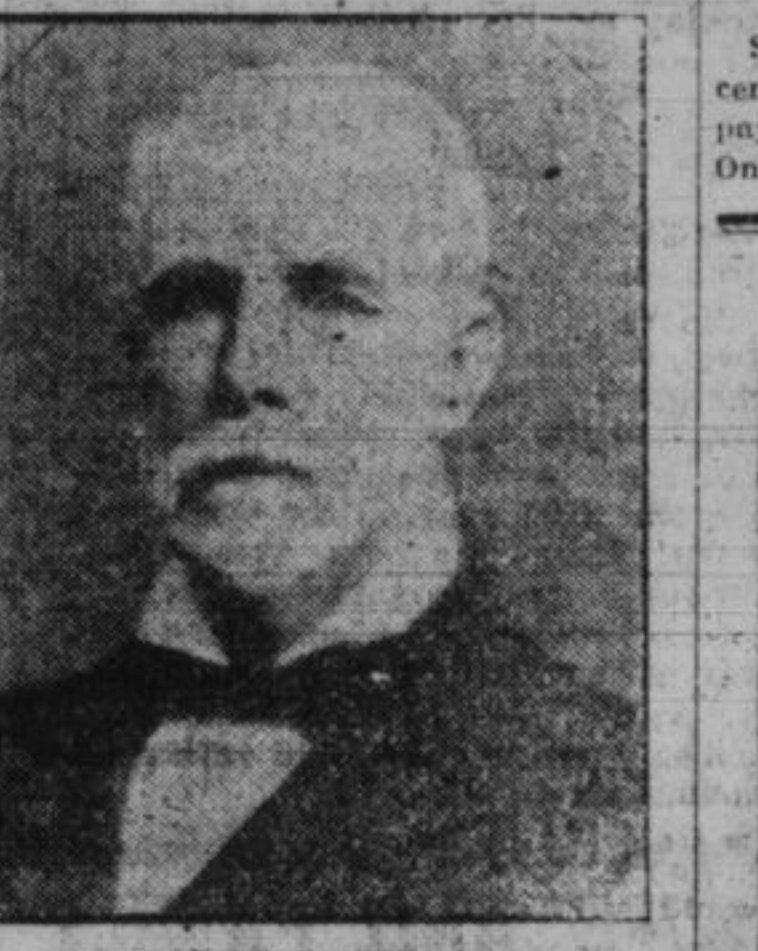
"Failing the original proposal, the Canadian Commission had a large meeting in their own building, in which all parts of the Empire were represented. A large Empire meeting was arranged

for August and was a great success. Before leaving for Australia, in 1894, I was invited to take part in an Empire Day celebration in my own town, Oshawa, organized by the school authorities. You will see, therefore, that the city of Hamilton, instead of leading the way, followed some three years after Oshawa, and I think, some other towns."

Mr. Larke certainly makes out a strong case for priority in connection with the Empire Day idea, but there is this to be said, that it did not make the progress or attract the same amount of attention as it did after Mrs. Fessenden took the matter up with such patriotic fervor and energy. Had Mr. Larke been permitted to remain in the country and been given an opportunity to promote the idea which he appears to have originated, the outcome would no doubt have been the same. It was the idea, not the personality of the proposer, which caught on and has spread so rapidly wherever the Union Jack floats on the breeze.

It was some five years after its inception in Canada that the Earl of Meath took the matter up in England.

The watchwords are "Responsibility, Duty, Sympathy, and Self-sacrifice." The motto is "One King, One Flag, One Fleet, One Empire," and the rallying cry: "For God, Duty and Empire."



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