

**THE COLONIES AND IMPERIAL  
UNITY, OR, THE "BARREL  
WITHOUT THE HOOPS",  
INAUGURAL ADDRESS**

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The Colonies and Imperial Unity, Or, The "Barrel Without the Hoops", Inaugural Address by  
Edward Jenkins

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# THE COLONIES AND IMPERIAL UNITY

OR

THE "BARREL WITHOUT THE HOOPS"

Inaugural Address

DELIVERED AT THE CONFERENCE ON COLONIAL QUESTIONS, HELD AT  
WESTMINSTER PALACE HOTEL, IN LONDON,  
JULY 19, 20, AND 21, 1871

By EDWARD JENKINS

AUTHOR OF "GINK'S BAST," "THE GOOLIE," "STATE SEDUCTION," ETC., ETC.



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## PREFACE.

THE following was delivered as the Inaugural Address of a "Conference on Colonial Questions," held at the Westminster Palace Hotel, on July 19th, 20th, and 21st. The tone and spirit of the criticism offered upon the proceedings in certain quarters is at once so unfair and infatuated, that I am induced, before the larger and complete Report of the Transactions, which is in course of preparation for the press, is issued, to send forth this Address in a shape that will enable almost every Englishman, at Home or in the Colonies, to form a judgment between the promoters of the Conference and its cynical detractors. It is printed as it was read with a few verbal alterations.

It would seem as though the time were fast coming when it will be a crime to be a reformer; when once more inconvenient propagators of new doctrines may be hanged or pilloried for being in advance of their age—for startling a selfish, self-satisfied, self-satiating community with troublesome warnings of its follies or its perils. British policy is now at the mercy—do I say at the mercy?—is now *tyrannised over* by a limited but powerful class. They are driving us to the devil with a smoothness, precision, and certainty that must be as grateful to him as it seems satisfactory to them. They resent the outcry of some such protesting passengers as we, and certain "guards" of the Press, I am sorry to say, assist in repressing it with singular intolerance.

In the following Address will be found explicitly set forth the objects of those who promoted the Conference. It was essentially what its name imported—a *Conference on Colonial Questions*. As illustrative of the general honesty and accuracy of our critics, I may mention that an article upon it in so careful a paper as the

*Pall Mall Gazette* was headed: The "Colonial Conference"—with the inverted commas as they are printed—a name not only entirely incorrect, but conveying a meaning very different from the term adopted by the committee. With equal accuracy the Conference has been criticised as if it had been the factious effort of a clique of returned colonists to create a mutiny when the sea was calm and the ship of Empire fairly bound. I would it were so—I would we were all as addled as they profess to think us! As a fact very few colonists were connected with the initiation of these meetings; the aim of them was far less ambitious than has been represented; they were projected not for agitation but for discussion—not to promote specific schemes but to give or gather information.\*

Is it really necessary that I should meet the reflections made upon the programme of the Conference by friends or foes? No meetings on such questions so comprehensive in their range had before been projected, none certainly ever held. None so calculated to disarm the sort of objection urged against it could have been conceived. Yet such high-class journals as the *Daily News* and *Pall Mall Gazette* challenge us for worrying the public with needless outeries, while the *Standard* condemns us for not uttering sounds sufficiently defined and resolute. It may freely be admitted that as yet we are not in a position to organise a party to promote any specific scheme either of federalism or emigration. But is that a reason for silence? Again, exception has been taken to the variety of topics in the programme—to their relevancy, to their practical utility. It may be that in a tentative effort like this some errors were committed; but on the whole we may confidently leave this point to the opinion of the public, when the ensuing Address and the whole of the transactions are placed before it.

I should think that rarely was any honest effort, owned by its critics to be a somewhat enlightened one, so ignobly and viciously libelled as this. Of sneers we have had good store; of countervailing arguments but few. Feeble commonplaces, of the *laissez-faire* stamp, have been opposed to irrefutable facts; an alarm, too justly based and too strictly made good by proof, has been contemptuously ridiculed; the very breadth and elevation of our views is suggested as an evidence of the unpractical nature of our

\* The twenty guarantors of the expenses of the Conference included Peers, sons of Peers, Members of Parliament, and English merchants.



propositions; we are informed that principles and plans as yet never fairly discussed, though elsewhere become practical and visible realities, are the dreams of a speculative and theoretical philosophy. Such arguments as these may well be despised by reformers inspired with a great idea. Such arguments would have strangled the infant agitations by which the liberties and prosperity of England have been placed upon their glorious footing. There was no more conspicuous illusion to the stupid dogmatism of the past than the doctrine of Free Trade; or, to go further back, than the creation of the most powerful republic the world has ever seen from the fortuitous league of some rebellious colonies.

It is possible that we may turn out to be to this age but unpractical speculators. *Laissez-faire* may win the day, as it has so often done before! But with what consequences of blood, of tears, of agonies social and political, of morbid outbreaks and remorseful retrospects!

As an example of the manner in which the Colonial question is discussed, I may refer not unkindly to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. A bold and brave journal, not given to hysterical favouritism, it wins our admiration and must always challenge our respectful attention. This paper is one of few in the English press. It is not sold unconditionally to any man or devil, though it is not seldom very bigotedly tenacious of certain of its views. Yet in reviewing this Conference it falls into the style of tinkling, sprinkling, briskness that denotes shallow water—absolutely forgets itself—even ignores opinions seemingly not long since entertained. To its clear and infallible gaze, the members of the Conference were a company “sitting to afford an opportunity of ventilating all the crotchets which are formed in busy but unpractical minds, concerning one at least of the greatest problems of the day.” Let us “at least” be thankful for the admission—*there is a problem!* The writer of this article on the face of it shows that he never honestly attempted to ascertain what the busy and unpractical minds had said about it. This may pass. So may the other assertion that “the subjects touched on in this Conference appear to be so very miscellaneous, and some of them so slightly connected with what is possible in politics” (a phrase of remarkable sound, but extreme shadowiness of meaning) “that very slight notice of them may suffice.” In fact, we are forced to be content with no further notice of them. It would seem that the critic, when he came to look at the subjects, found that such notice would spoil his

paragraph, and wisely eschewed it. Is the application of coloured labour in British colonies—a subject rather prominently connected with the actual in administration, if not with the “possible in politics”—an idle topic of discussion?

Yet more amusing is the lofty air with which the writer, speaking of men to whom the whole history of the subject is certainly as familiar as it is to himself, bids us remember “that all this ground was gone over by intellects at least as acute as ours a hundred years ago!” and that Burke—who, it must be conceded, stands at a disadvantage as an authority under present circumstances, in the very fact that he lived “a hundred years ago,” and happens not to be living now—“was convinced of the hopelessness of absolute attainment of principles respecting it.” Franklin, if I remember rightly, was equally convinced the other way, and in some important matters his opinion was shrewder than Burke’s. But this ground was *not* gone over a hundred years ago. The discussions referred to took place when the conditions were entirely different. The circumstances did not exist and could not be foreseen. It is idle to trouble oneself with confuting such an argument, wonderful only because it appears in columns as a rule so carefully weeded of nonsense. When Free Trade was a theory—and steam and telegraph were scarcely ideas—and American Federalism was generating in the womb of politics—and English enterprise had not created new English communities all round the world—and Britain was hardly yet too full for her sons—and Toryism was a reality and not a spell—was it possible to argue conclusively for the time when a magical transformation of all these conditions has taken place? Alas! the ground gone over a hundred years ago broke off with disastrous precipitancy, carrying away with it half the strength and glory of our Empire! Is this the precedent to be stickled for?

Both the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *The Daily News* deny that the necessity exists for considering the question of confirming the bonds of empire. Just now they seem disposed to praise the flexibility, the simplicity, the harmony of our relations to the colonies. Yet I cannot forget that in the one originally appeared, and have been pretty persistently dry-nursed ever since, those letters of Professor Goldwin Smith, which have helped to open our eyes to the unsatisfactory and absurd condition of these relations; while within a few months some clever reflections upon them may be found in the comments of the other journal on the vexatious exercise of the veto in the case of an Australian Bill. We

have one advantage over our critics—we are at least consistent. Not very long since it was the fashion of anti-Colonial theorists to exaggerate the monstrosity of our Colonial arrangements; it is now their policy to reduce it to nil. They see plainly enough, as all men may see who will think as they look, that this is the surest way to disintegration. *Laissez-faire* is a notable solvent.

From another direction we are attacked for presumption. It is falsely declared that we are assuming to represent the colonies, who, we are informed, only desire "to be let alone." We assume to represent nothing but the truth, as we see it. As to this desire, we may first reply that they take a singular manner of showing it; secondly, it is conceivably inexpedient to let them alone. It would not be difficult to publish a volume of protests, outcries, and remonstrances from the Colonial press on the various incidents of our Colonial administration. But when we come to examine those who use this "let-alone" phrase, we discover that their meaning is far more comprehensive than the words. I take the Hon. Mr. Strangways, who made a speech at the Conference, which any colonist present must have considered an ill reflection of Colonial manners, whatever he may have thought of the opinions; and a Mr. S. Sedgwick Cowper, a gentleman who writes to the *Times* from the Exhibition, on the basis of his birth and breeding in a colony. It is plain that to these gentlemen "left alone" means unconditional permission to be taken care of and defended at the expense of these islands, coupled with a perfect freedom to do or say anything they please, without regard to their Imperial connection, their Imperial duties, and, if possible, with special exemption from Imperial dangers. Such was the brazen proposal made by Australian politicians for the formation of a Pacific Zollverein, which should be invested with the right to declare itself free of the Empire in the event of a war which was dangerous or distasteful to it.\*

\* Against this, at the time of the proposal, the *Montreal Gazette* protested in these manly and patriotic words:—

"The Commissioners recommend their governments to make application to the European powers to declare the colonies neutral in the event of England's becoming belligerent. This is puerility. Colonies have always been considered fair spoils of war, nor is there any reason why their accepted *status* should be changed. The Australian colonies are especially weak from their great distance from the protecting power, and especially tempting from their great wealth, and there is no shadow of reason to urge why all possible enemies of Great Britain should be called upon to renounce in advance any advantage derivable from the opportunity of swooping upon their golden shores. This is not the principle upon which to build up a hardy self-asser-