

I.—THE STORY OF CONFEDERATION.

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THE story of Confederation has been told so often that it may appear superfluous once more to travel over the familiar ground; yet it seems fitting that this edition of the Canada Year Book, which chronicles the Jubilee of the founding of the Dominion, should contain a concise recital of the events culminating in that great epoch which we celebrated on July 1, 1917.

The idea of uniting the British North American colonies under one government has had many progenitors, the line extending back to the time of William Smith, a former Chief Justice of Canada, who in 1789 propounded to Lord Dorchester a project for the establishment of a central legislative body consisting of a nominated council and of an assembly, the members of which were to be chosen by the popular branches of the provincial legislatures. The time, however, was not ripe for such a system of government, and nothing came of Smith's plan. Twenty-five years later, another Chief Justice (Sewell) proposed a somewhat similar scheme, with like result. He was followed by others; but the difficulty of communication between the various colonies, apart from all other considerations, was felt to be an insuperable bar to any union other than that involved in their common allegiance to the British Crown.

With the introduction of railways, the idea appeared more feasible. In 1850, the British America League, formed to counteract the annexation movement of 1849, stated in its prospectus that the true solution of the difficulties of the time lay in the confederation of all the provinces. In the following year the Hon. Henry Sherwood, who had filled the offices of Attorney General for Upper Canada and Prime Minister, published a scheme for the "Fœderative Union of the British North American Provinces," which provided for two elective chambers, as well as for a system of local legislatures, somewhat as it exists to-day, save that the provincial governors were to be elective. The Fathers of Confederation seem to have had Sherwood's draft before them when framing the British North America Act of 1867. For example, it designates the representative of the Sovereign as the 'Viceroy,' and this may have suggested the name 'Viceroyalty' for the united provinces, which was under consideration at the London Conference of 1866. Again, Sherwood's draft provided for the erection of a Supreme Court of Appeal, as do the Quebec resolutions of 1864. Sherwood's scheme, however, while marking a development in the idea of union, shared the academic character of its predecessors and, like them, failed of result.

It was not until 1858 that the question may be said to have entered the domain of practical politics. In that year, Alexander