

THE SUBJECT OF UNIVERSAL BRITISH CITIZENSHIP.

When is a British subject not a British subject? When as a foreigner he enters Canada, resides here for three years, takes out his naturalization papers, and becomes a British subject. So far good. But at this point his status as a British subject is confined to Canada only. Should he go into any other British dominion, colony, or dependency, or to Great Britain itself, he is still a foreigner or an alien. This is a strange anomaly which crept into the British North America Act after Confederation. This was no special distinction against Canada, because the same imperial legislation on naturalization applies to all British possessions. This subject is occupying the attention of the imperial authorities at the present time, and formed the subject matter of debate in the Canadian House of Commons last Wednesday. This anomaly can only be expunged from the statutes of the realm by legislation in Great Britain, and only one matter is likely to intervene in making the change conform to Canadian legislation, so that an alien naturalized in this Dominion becomes a recognized British subject in every portion of the empire, and that is the necessary period of residence. In Canada a three years' residence is demanded; in Great Britain the qualifying period is five years. Canada, being a self-governing dominion, no change need be made in the period of residence requisite for an alien to become naturalized in Canada; but it will undoubtedly require a five years' residence in this country before he may become a full fledged British subject everywhere within the confines of the British empire. This would not inflict hardship upon anybody, for the man who resides here long enough to become a British subject in Canada surely intends to live here permanently, and he can, without experiencing any inconvenience or disability, wait for the other two years to graduate into all the rights and privileges of universal British citizenship. There is nothing in the bill on the subject now before the imperial parliament which would constitute an invasion of the rights of this Dominion, as conferred by the British North America Act, while there is everything in it that will meet the anomaly contained in that statute.