Large colour printed pictorial map.

“FREEDOM, FRATERNITY, FEDERATION”

Imperial Federation Map of the World showing the extent of the British Empire in 1886.

Author
CRANE, Walter; and Captain J.C.R. COLOMB, M.P. formerly R.M.A.

Publication date
July 12th, 1886.

Publisher
Supplement to ‘The Graphic Magazine’, Maclure & Co. Queen Victoria Street,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Large colour printed pictorial map.

Dimensions
585 by 625mm (23 by 24.5 inches).

Notes
This Imperial Federation League map was published to coincide with the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, “a showcase for the wealth and industrial development of the British Empire”, it appeared “just before the Queen’s Golden Jubilee in 1887” and “reflects the celebratory consciousness of Victoria’s Empire” (Biltcliffe).

The realms of the Queen's Empire are coloured in red, while other geographical areas were left blank with only a minimum number of place names. An inset box was placed near each of the major colonies, listing statistics, supplied by Colomb, about geographical area, population, and trade. The words "Freedom, Fraternity, Federation", suggesting a peaceful co-existence within the British Empire, were prominently placed along the map's top margin, but the remainder of the map's illustrations distinctly imply "colonialism". At the bottom centre Britannia is seated on top of the world ruling over her subjects, represented by a variety of animals and costumed figures. India, identified by an elephant and a tiger, appears in the lower left corner, while Australia, including a kangaroo and a sheep, is shown in the lower right.
To the upper right is an inset map depicting Britain's colonial possessions one hundred years earlier in 1786.

The illustrations were drawn by Walter Crane, a prominent illustrator and artist with strong socialist sympathies, perhaps explaining the contradictory themes in the map of imperialism and "human labour" holding up the world in the form of Atlas. Crane's contributions to the map remained unnoticed until the research of Pippa Biltcliffe was published in 2005.

The mapmaker
Walter Crane (1845-1915), is probably best known as a well-loved illustrator of children's books. Between 1865 and 1875 Crane illustrated thirty-seven of these 'Toy Books' for Edmund Evans and Routledge. However this was followed by twenty successful years during which he moved in the "artistic and fashionable circles of Holland Park; George Howard, later twelfth earl of Carlisle, was a friend and patron, and so was Lord Leighton. Crane knew, and looked up to, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. At this time he widened the scope of his œuvre. He began to work as decorative artist, designing wallpapers, tiles, printed textiles, posters, stained glass, embroideries, decorative plasterwork. He was versatile and prolific. At first manufacturers wanted nursery tiles and nursery wallpapers, but he wanted to escape from the nursery. (Besides, he now had rivals there in Kate Greenaway and Randolph Caldecott.) He began to illustrate books for adults and works of literature. And in his decorative work he developed a versatile, linear style with scrollwork and emblematic, vaguely classical figures derived from his allegorical paintings. The aesthetic movement flourished in the 1870s, raising the status of decorative art, taking it seriously. That was what Crane wanted. It seemed as if decorative art might be a third way, between his success as an illustrator and his aspirations as a painter.

"In 1884, after some friendly argument with William Morris, Crane became a socialist. He joined the Social Democratic Federation along with Morris, and as Morris changed allegiance Crane followed, joining the Socialist League later in 1884 and the Hammersmith Socialist Society in 1890. This was more a matter of personal loyalty than of shared beliefs, for the sources of Crane's socialism were different from Morris's: the radicalism of his master W. J. Linton, the positivist belief in progress, memories of the Paris commune of 1871. He became the artist of the cause, designing posters, trade-union banners, cartoons, and newspaper headings, adapting the emblematic figures of his paintings to socialist themes. His 'The Triumph of Labour', drawn for May day 1891 and reproduced in 'Crane's Cartoons for the Cause, 1886–1896' (1896), is a Renaissance-style triumphal procession rendered in the gritty texture of wood-engraving and filled with sturdy workers, bullock carts, and banners. Morris said it was the best thing he had ever done " (Crawford)

Bibliography
Literature: Crawford for ODNB online.

Provenance

Price: £7000

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