

The British Empire 1889

Friedrich Heinrich Geffcken

1889

•

THE first—the overpowering impression produced upon the visitor who wanders through the endless courts and halls of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, is an impression of the vast magnitude of the British Empire. It may be freely admitted that the superscription over the entrance : “ British Empire—area, 9,126,999 square miles ; population, 305,337,929,” is not to be understood in literal exactness ; for who has measured by the square mile the ice-deserts of the far north of America, or numbered the Kaffirs and other savage tribes ? It must also be acknowledged that there are represented in the Exhibition certain territories that do not belong to England, Cyprus is not a British colony : it is merely administered for the Sultan, to whom the surplus revenue is paid, Nepaul is an independent state ; and the dependence of Cashmere is confined to a yearly tribute—paid by its Prince to the Empress of India—of one horse, twelve she-goats, and six shawls. However, such considerations do not alter in the slightest degree the stupendous fact of the magnitude of this Empire, beside which the Empire of ancient Rome appears insignificant—a fact which accompanies us at every step we take in the Exhibition. Why, the Dominion of Canada alone exceeds in extent the entire continent of Europe ! And how insignificant, by comparison, appear the foreign possessions of the other European States ! Holland holds 688,000 square miles, with 26,841,600 inhabitants ; France, 382,700 square miles, with 8,723,000 inhabitants ; Spain, 165,730 square miles, with 8,175,470 inhabitants. In fact, it is only when one explores the labyrinth of this Exhibition that one perceives clearly the truth that London, that gigantic city of near five million inhabitants, is simply not *possible* as the capital of the British Isles ; but *is possible* only as the capital of an Empire embracing numberless states. The mother-country, indeed, comprises not more than one-sixty-sixth of the total area, and reckons somewhere about one-eighth of the total population. And this Empire is spread well-nigh over the entire globe,—insomuch, that a traveller who journeys from London to Yokohama, thence across the Pacific Ocean to Vancouver’s Island, thence to Halifax, and so back to London, finds (with a few trifling breaks) the British flag along his whole course. In the first half of his journey he stops at Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, India, Singapore, Hong-kong ; in the second he passes by rail from Port Moody over the entire breadth of North America to Newfoundland ; and from Newfoundland, Queenstown is reached by steamer in eight days. And yet there remain untouched the Cape, the African islands and coast settlements, all the Australian Colonies, the West Indies, Honduras, Guiana, and a whole series of less important points, from Borneo to Heligoland. The British Empire comprehends all zones, from the fur-hunting tracts of Hudson’s Bay to the tropical jungles of India and the mahogany forests of Honduras : hardly a product of the animal, vegetable, or mineral kingdom can be named which is not supplied in rich abundance and of finest quality in one province or another of the Empire. If India and Canada are, so to speak, great granaries, Australia and the Cape command the wool-markets of the world ; Canada exports cheese to the value of 1,600,000*l.* sterling ; the West India Islands yield sugar in the greatest abundance ; the tea of Ceylon is now accounted the finest ; Indian cotton and jute, Australian and Canadian timber are everywhere objects of commerce. Victoria alone has during the last thirty years yielded gold to the value of 216,000,000*l.* sterling ; the Cape sends its diamonds, Ceylon its precious stones, the Bahamas their pearls. Coal, iron, copper and all the other metals are found in various colonies in inexhaustible abundance. Nor is it easy to name one object of human industry which has not its representative of highest quality in the British Empire—from Indian carpets, muslins, ivory carvings, to the nails of Canadian manufacture, of which a pyramid is exhibited containing many

hundred kinds. In short, though a *zollverein* or commercial union, embracing the British Empire, is, from politico-financial considerations, an impossibility, yet, from an abstract politico-economical point of view, it could be realized ; for hardly a single product would be required from without, which is not also produced within its bounds.

Not less various are the stages in human progress comprised in the Empire—from the black aborigines of India, the wandering tribes of Canada, the more advanced Maoris of New Zealand, and the Kaffirs of South Africa, to the inhabitants of Toronto and of Sydney, who, in respect of culture, yield to no European. Alongside the Christians of all shades of belief stand 150,000,000 Hindus, 50,000,000 Mohammedans, the Buddhists of Ceylon, the heathen Kaffirs, and blacks of Australia, the fetish-worshippers of Western Africa. India and the Crown Colonies are under absolute government ; Canada and Australia enjoy democratic constitutions. These latter are virtually new Englands beyond the sea ; again, in India a mere handful of Europeans rule over 259,000,000 of natives. Quebec is a French-speaking province; at the Cape the Dutch element prevails ; the Bible is printed in 130 languages and dialects, spoken in India and the Colonies.

Notwithstanding all these various and checkered elements, there reigns throughout the Empire—Peace. Whatever the nationality, religion, stage of progress, form of government—law and order are everywhere maintained. The Indian outbreak of 1857 was of a purely military character, and arose from causes which cannot operate in the future. The Cape, indeed, is an exception ; but the condition of the Cape, on the whole, shows English capacity for the government of colonies, at its very worst.

This Empire, of such magnitude, and comprising all these elements—an Empire of which it can with truth be said (and it has been often said) that upon it the sun never sets—is so much the more remarkable, as it has been built up in a time comparatively short. During the period of the great discoveries, England did not, like Spain and Portugal, effect great conquests in distant lands. Holland stepped forward as their rival before her. In the time of Elizabeth, she possessed scarcely a foot's breadth beyond the sea. Milton, indeed, speaks of his country as “ surrounded by all her daughter-states,” but this was a prophetic vision, not a reality ; for, the only foreign settlements of England in Cromwell's time were those of the Puritans (or “ Pilgrim Fathers”), driven out of their country by Charles I., and Jamaica, which the Protector captured from the Spaniards. Harrington, in his *Oceana* foretold the greatness of England beyond the sea, on the ground that it was better adapted by position to be the foundress of such an Empire, than Venice, which lacked the advantage of insular situation ; but he certainly never dreamt that in two hundred years whole continents would be inhabited by English-speaking citizens (50,000,000 in number), and that the Parliament at Westminster was destined to pass laws which would be operative in Africa, and in the Empire of the Great Mogul, where, at that time. Englishmen were hardly tolerated as traders.

In fact, it was only after the long civil wars that England was sufficiently united in herself to be able to turn to account the peculiar advantages which her geographical position and her population offered for entering upon a contest for dominion abroad, and prosecuting it to a successful issue.

The colonial system of those old days was based on the principle that foreign possessions existed purely in the interest, and for the gain of the mother-country. The colonies were to yield up to her those products which she herself did not possess, and to furnish an outlet and market for her industries ; *her* ships exclusively were to be engaged in trading with the colony. Holland and England acted according to these principles quite as steadily as Spain and Portugal ; the colonies were to confine themselves to the production of the raw material,

which the mother-country either made use of herself, or disposed of to other countries at a great profit. Lord Chatham declared that not a nail should be made in America. Even sugar-refining was reserved to herself by England ; and when Virginia begged permission to found an institution for the higher education, on the plea that her young people had immortal souls, the State-Governor answered, “ *Damn* your souls ; grow tobacco !” — And yet, a system which in itself is hard and narrow, may be carried out in a very different spirit. Spain sought in her vast empire beyond sea only dominion, gold, and places for her nobility ; on commerce the Castilian looked with contempt, and it was confined to two regular Government convoys, —while intercourse with the Philippine Islands was restricted to one galleon-trip,—every year. “ The maintenance of a great Empire,” says Alexander von Humboldt, “ was carried on like the provisioning of a blockaded fortress ;” indeed, it was through foreigners that the Spanish Government often received the earliest intelligence of most important events that had taken place in America. While in this way Spain was starving in the midst of her treasures, the colonial monopolies were becoming for Holland and England the basis of a mighty development. Those countries conferred on great commercial companies the exclusive privilege of trading to certain of their territories beyond the sea. These traders, who at first bore the official title of “ Adventurers” were allowed a free hand, the mother-country reserving to herself only the right of stepping in when it was necessary to safeguard her interests by force of arms. Hundreds of enterprising young men went out from England every year to make their fortunes in the service of these companies and to return with great wealth, while the directors and shareholders in London drew their dividends. The riches which, during the eighteenth century, flowed into England through the Hudson’s Bay, the East and West India Companies were—for those times and circumstances—enormous. The duty on colonial sugar alone was estimated at 1,200,000*l.* per annum ; the tobacco-trade amounted to 24,000 tons, and all products of the colonies were paid for with English goods.

Yet another element in the colonial development of England was peculiar. The Philips of Spain, in their inflexible orthodoxy, would have regarded it as a crime to tolerate even one heretic within the bounds of their colonial dominions. The Inquisition carried on its work in Mexico and Peru, as it did in Madrid and Seville. The plan of Coligny to found a Huguenot community on the other side of the ocean came to nothing. In England, the Government, which at home oppressed alternately Dissenters and Catholics, gave them at least leave to emigrate. Nay, there was accorded to them in the charters of the American plantations, that religious liberty which was denied, to them at home. Now these emigrants who left their country, not on account of over-population, but on compulsion—to escape, in fact, political and religious oppression—had not, like Cortez and Pizarro, troops at their disposal to make conquests ; their object was to seek lands in a temperate climate, which would afford them space for settlements, and in which they could live by the labour of their hands. These they found in sparsely-populated North America, which soon became the most important colony of England, and of which, when the greater part was lost, Canada still remained. Thus there grew up a second England beyond the ocean, which, in our own time, has been doubled through the addition of Australia, and has remained united to the mother-country by community of race, language, and civilization.

But apart from these considerations, there lay in the old system of colonial policy the necessity of its extension. When the mother-country was on the lookout for territories which it could turn to its advantage, it naturally tried to gain possession of those colonies which were best fitted for its purpose, and, when these belonged to other Powers,—seized them by force. Thus it came to pass that England, as soon as she began to gain a foothold beyond sea, got into war with Holland, which, on her part, had conquered the most valuable Asiatic possessions of Portugal ; Holland was vanquished ; then began the great contest with Spain and France for the dominion of the New World, which, with one break, lasted near a hundred

years. France, when the greatness of Spain began to dwindle, had, under the intelligent leadership of Colbert, become one of the colonial powers, and at first seemed likely to beat England in the race. If the latter possessed the northern shore of what are now the United States, France dominated the great river-basins of the St. Lawrence, the Ohio, and the Mississippi. If the English emigrants went forth in order to escape the oppression exercised by the home Government, France (which as yet knew not the compulsory division of the inheritance introduced by the Code Napoleon, and the practice of limiting the family) had, in prolific Normandy and Brittany, a superfluity of population which colonized Canada and Louisiana. Her colony of St. Domingo was in 1789 the greatest sugar-producing country in the world, exporting in that year sugar to the value of 193,000,000 francs ; whilst her entire colonial trade amounted to 300,000,000 francs, and employed 80,000 sailors. Even in India, France took the lead. It was Dupleix, a man of great ability, who first conceived the idea of rendering a native army led by Europeans an instrument of conquest. In 1741 he put his idea into practice, and after a few years was the ruler of thirty-five millions. Labourdonnais captured Madras from the English ; Bussy conquered the territory of the Mahrattas, measuring 17,000 square miles. If these bold pioneers succumbed to the young adventurer Clive, if France lost in succession her possessions in North America, the cause is to be sought—on the one hand, in the wretched Government of Louis XV. (while the Government of England united in the highest possible degree the elements of stability and freedom, and under the guidance of Chatham’s genius pursued only grand, national objects and interests)—on the other, in England’s insular position, through which, herself unassailable, she was able to turn all Continental complications to her advantage in the increase of her colonial power. With the Peace concluded at Paris in 1763, the preponderance of England was permanently established.

The next period brought, it is true, a terrible, reverse in the loss of the greater part of North America ; but the three-and-twenty years’ struggle against the French Revolution and the French Empire more than compensated that loss. England frustrated the designs of Napoleon against her Indian Empire, and established her exclusive dominion in the peninsula of the Ganges ; she annihilated the combined fleets of France and Spain at Trafalgar, and by that exploit became mistress of the ocean ; she took from Holland Ceylon and the Cape ; from France Mauritius and several of the Antilles, and won in Malta a stronghold in the Mediterranean, which brought to an end the project of making that sea a “ French lake.” At the close of the great struggle, England stood forth as the all but sole naval and colonial power ; France retained only miserable remnants of what was once her empire beyond the sea ; Holland was confined to Java and Guiana ; and Spain soon lost her ascendancy in South and Central America through the rebellion of her colonies in those quarters,—a rebellion which proved most advantageous to English commerce.

Now it is manifest that, with the development of commerce and navigation, which has taken place in the nineteenth century,—with, moreover, the rise of the United States into the position of a Great Power, the old “ colonial system” could not be any longer maintained. The colonies, with their increasing population and their rising industries, would not have put up with it. Besides, emigration now began to play an important *rôle* : in 1815, 2000 persons emigrated, but in 1819 the figures rose to 35,000, and the flow of emigration directed itself specially to the United States. The New World, which had been chiefly a place of trading resort for the Old, now became the refuge of those who were crowded out at home. If the emigrants found themselves, in the United States, in full possession of all political rights, and of the amplest social liberty, the claim to rule Canada and Australia from London, and in the interest of the mother-country, became simply untenable. But the old English system had in it the capacity for reform ; the Spanish, on the other hand, fell to pieces the moment one stone was removed from the artificial structure. Thus, in the case of England, the old fetters fell off,

—the monopolies of the companies, the corn laws, and the navigation acts were abolished ; the colonies with a European population were granted free constitutions, which secured to them the most complete self-government On the other hand, English ascendancy advanced in India by leaps and bounds, and gained a footing even in China. In the new state of things, commerce developed in a most extraordinary manner. Between 1816 and 1843 the value of English exports rose 63 per cent. ; the tonnage of the commercial marine, 55 per cent. The import of tea, which in the last year of the monopoly of the East India Company (1833-34) amounted to only 29½ million pounds, reached in 1853, 70½, and in 1879, 146 million pounds. But the most startling progress was shown by Canada and the Australian Colonies, which had never experienced the worst evil of the old system—namely, slavery. On all sides enterprising communities sprang up, with populous cities, railways, steamboats, great commercial activity, a comprehensive system of education, and independent legislatures. When white men first came to Victoria in 1834, they found only encampments of a people who hunted the kangaroo and opossum with boomerangs, and crossed the rivers in canoes made from the hollowed trunks of trees. *Now* Melbourne, which was at that time founded with a few wooden shanties, numbers its 325,000 inhabitants, and possesses splendid churches, theatres, picture-galleries, wharves, aqueducts, parks, and a university. The oldest colony in the Australian continent, New South Wales, with 36,598 inhabitants in 1828, numbered, in 1886, 992,875 ; Victoria (founded in 1834), almost 1,000,000. In 1792 New South Wales, at that time the only Australian colony, possessed 23 head of cattle, 11 horses, 105 sheep, 43 swine. In 1881, the Australian colonies together possessed 9,000,000 head of cattle, 80,000,000 sheep, 1,500,000 swine ; their total trade amounted to 40*l.* per head of the population, while that of Great Britain amounted to a little over 20*l.* The population of Canada advanced between 1871 and 1881 from 3,687,024 to 4,324,810, or 17·3 per cent. Behind this increase stands an abundance of natural resources which must for long remain practically inexhaustible. Of the two million square miles of agricultural and forest land in Canada, only about 70,000 are under cultivation, and of these only the half is actual corn-land, pasture, and garden ; so that more than 1,800,000 square miles are still virgin soil, and of these, one million, or more than eight times the area of the British Isles, is regarded as capable of producing wheat. In a space of 8,822,000 square kilometres in the Dominion of Canada, there are only 0·5 inhabitants to the kilometre, against 87 in British India. In New South Wales 852,000 acres are under cultivation, and 28,000,000 stand ready for occupation ; while the working of the collieries has scarcely begun. Surely these young daughter-communities have before them a magnificent future. Macaulay's New Zealander, sitting upon an arch of London Bridge, and sketching the ruins of St. Paul's, may be a figure of the coming time in regard to which the imagination has had too free play ; but it is indisputable that the Colonies form that portion of the Empire as a whole, which is advancing the most rapidly. Their population of European descent, amounted in 1837 to 4,204,700 ; in 1886, to 15,763,172. There is therefore no reason to doubt that Canada, Victoria, and New Zealand will one day play each as important a part as France or Italy ; they will be increasing more and more, when the mother-country, through the exhaustion of her coal-fields, is declining—as she must decline—in importance. In each of these states England will live again in renewed youth and vigour.

It is this Empire in all its parts, and with all its products, which the Exhibition at South Kensington brings before us—and that with a completeness and system which cannot be sufficiently commended. For not only are the objects from each colony and province exhibited in due order according to class, but at every turn we find excellent maps, drawings, photographs, paintings, which throw light on the country, its geology, meteorology, &c. ; complete tables of statistics ; models of natives (life-size),—of buildings, from the Indian temple to the Malay hut, with reproductions of carvings ; agricultural and manufacturing appliances—from the two stones between which the Indian women grind the corn, to the

mowing and threshing machines of Canada ; the mill, for crushing the auriferous quartz, of Australia ; and the diamond-polishing machine of the Cape, which enables us to follow the processes whereby the rough stone is got out, prepared, and set. The animal world is represented in splendid groups of stuffed specimens. In the Australian Courts we find modelled groups illustrating the life of the natives ; in the Indian, models of a village and a bazaar. We see the way the fields are irrigated, the method of ploughing and sowing, reaping and threshing—with absolutely primitive wooden instruments. In different booths sit the sellers of corn, vegetables, fruits, sweetmeats.

In the same manner, the political and religious life of these dependent races is brought home to our minds by a series of excellent models. We find the huts of the aborigines of Australia, of India, of Central America ; Mohammedan mosques,—Hindoo, and Buddhist temples ; the houses of simple artisans, as well as of rich merchants ; splendid palaces of Indian princes with spacious courts and galleries. Over the entrance of the Exhibition we see represented a concert in the vestibule of one of these potentates,—himself brought before our view in all the grandeur and glory of a *Durbar*. All the leading types of soldiers, priests, postmen—officials of all kinds, are shown in accurate copies ; all weapons, tools, ornaments of the house, are here represented. The forests are brought under our view in single gigantic blocks of timber and trunks of trees, as also in complete collections of sections of the various kinds of wood. Besides these, hot-houses, specially laid out, present to us the whole vegetation of certain colonies— palm trees, ferns, orchids. Corn and wool, fruits and cotton, indigo, opium, sugar-cane, all kinds of sugar, tea coffee, spice, pit-coal and ores, are everywhere arranged in complete collections of specimens, and in a manner which enables one to take in the whole at a glance.

Let us, then, proceed to study the Colonies and Dependencies in their leading features.

WHEN we pass from the main entrance through the general hall, the south gallery comes into view. This contains in three sections or departments, the Indian Exhibition, and presents such a picture of the enormous Empire ruled over by the Queen in her character of Kaiser-i-Hind, as, in its wonderful variety, has never been seen before. This *coup-d'oeil* corresponds with the present significance and importance of India in relation to England ; for the nature of British rule in India is such that the relations subsisting between England and her great dependency are, in certain respects, much closer than those between the mother-country and the Colonies which govern themselves. The number of Englishmen in India does not amount to quite 200,000 ; yet they form the ruling element in a population which is exceeded by that of China alone, and is more than twice as large as the population which Gibbon assigned to the Roman Empire at the period of its greatest prosperity. In this land of castes, the English are the ruling caste, which, through its superior intelligence and organization, enjoys such absolute respect that everywhere a willing obedience is rendered to it. Over and above the army, England appoints all the higher officials in India. Nowhere in history do we find an example of a state which on the map of the world occupies so small a space, ruling, at a distance so great, an empire so large. This empire, distant thousands of miles from the ruling country, numbers 259 millions of people, and presents as many diversities in race and religion as do the nations of the entire continent of Europe. Ethnographically considered “ India ” is only a geographical expression, to denote all the tribes who occupy the peninsula as far as the chains of lofty mountains on the west and north ; politically, it denotes the rule of England over that ocean of human beings—a rule which forms the sole general bond that unites them all. Rome drew, auxiliary troops from conquered territories,—but her dominion over the ancient world depended, after all, upon her own legions ; on the other hand, the English troops do not form half the total strength of the Indian army. We may find a single resident official, living thousands of miles from Calcutta, ruling with absolute authority over

a district containing more than 2,000,000 persons, of whom not one ventures to oppose him. And this population consists, for the greater part, not of rude savages ; on the contrary, it possesses a highly developed civilization—a civilization far more ancient than any of which Europe can boast. The Vedas were completed long before Greece gave to the world the poems of Homer. Indian laws were committed to writing long before Lycurgus and Solon were born. The Dravidian temples, in grandeur of design, are nowise inferior to those of Egypt, and excel them in artistic finish. Indian textile fabrics, and works in metal, were considered, even in the ancient world, as unapproached models of art-industry ; and this industry stands in our time so high that we have much to learn from it. And not only are these educational establishments attended by the natives, but Indians of the higher castes repair to England in ever-increasing numbers for the purpose of studying there. Rajahs, in their gold-embroidered silk and cashmere robes, are frequent guests in social gatherings in London. At a garden-party of the Princess Louise, I once met whole families of Indians ; nay, I have seen an Indian gentleman, with his daughter on his arm, pass, in deep thought, through one of the Gothic porches of Westminster Abbey.

CEYLON,—called by old geographers the remotest island of India,—though separated from it only by Palk's Strait, is a very different country. The surrounding ocean moderates the heat; there are vast mountain-ranges and forests, filled with the most varied *fauna*. There is a universal fruitfulness and all nature, in this favoured island, is full of charm. It shows in the ruins of temples and palaces the remains of aboriginal civilization. The natives, unlike those of India, are almost exclusively Buddhists. It is clear that Ceylon, “ the pendent jewel of India,” as the poets have called it, has from the remotest times attracted adventurers and conquerors. The earliest European settlers were the Portuguese ; they were in turn dislodged by the Dutch, who bore sway on the coast for one hundred and sixty years, while the interior remained under native rulers. It was only so late as 1795-98 that the English conquered Ceylon and subjugated the whole island. It is now divided into seven provinces, and governed as a Crown Colony. The population is purely and simply agricultural, as is shown by great irrigation works (begun as early as 500 B.C.), whereby the rainfall is collected in great reservoirs. Commerce is wholly in the hands of immigrant Mohammedans. Up to a recent period the chief article of cultivation was coffee, which was introduced by the Arabs. Ceylon coffee fetched the highest price in the London market. In 1874 the coffee export reached the value of 5,000,000*l.* ; but quite recently the coffee plantations have been attacked by a fungoid growth on the leaves, causing a loss of 15,000,000*l.* sterling. This loss has been compensated by the establishment of tea-gardens (— not to mention the cultivation of cocoa and Peruvian bark ; these gardens already yield close on four million pounds of tea *per annum* ; the quality runs to 1*s.* 3½*d.* per lb., while China tea does not average more than 10½*d.* ; so that Ceylon will certainly become in the future one of the chief tea-producing countries of the world.

The large rock-island of HONG-KONG, thirty square miles in extent, was acquired in 1842. It commands the Chinese waters, but is specially important, from a commercial point of view, on account of its situation and its excellent harbour. Its trade had risen, owing to the Suez Canal, in 1884, to 5,500,000 tons.—In the Malay Archipelago, the Settlements of Borneo are the principal. Sarawak was acquired by Sir James Brooke in the thirties of the present century, and is now a colony of 300,000 inhabitants. NORTH BORNEO, again, seems to have a prosperous future before it ; its founders (the North Borneo Company) received in 1881 a charter, which confers on them most extensive rights and privileges.

In South and Central America, England possesses—besides the Falkland Islands, which were occupied in 1833 as a whaling-station, but now carry on only cattle-rearing and fishing—GUIANA and HONDURAS. The chief exports of both these territories are timber—especially

mahogany and logwood—and sugar, which latter thrives wonderfully in the fertile marshes on the coast. The question of obtaining labourers to work in that hot, moist climate, presents the chief difficulty. Of the Antilles, England possesses Jamaica, Trinidad, the Windward Islands, Barbadoes, St. Vincent, Granada, Tobago, St. Lucia, the Leeward Islands, Antigua, Montserrat, St. Christopher, Dominica, the Virgin Islands, and the Bahamas. Irrespective of these last, the population of the West Indian islands numbers one million and a half ; the export value amounts to 6,711,243*l.*; the shipping is reckoned at 5,398,869 tons. All these are islands of the utmost fertility ; they possess, for the greater part, a good climate, and yield all tropical products. They have gone back greatly through the abolition of slavery, because the freed negroes worked no more than was absolutely necessary in order to live ; they have improved recently, however, through the introduction of coolies and the creation of small holdings for negroes. Sugar continues to be the chief article of cultivation, notwithstanding the crushing competition of bounty-protected beet-sugar of European production. On the other hand, the Creole's of Cuba, with indolent resignation, allow their sugar plantations to decay and die.

CANADA, successfully colonized by the French, was, after a severe struggle, conquered by England in 1760, and ceded to her in 1763. It was on this occasion that Voltaire, with the pride of ignorance, consoled his countrymen for the loss of what he called “ a few acres of snow” (*quelques arpents de neige*). It has now grown to be a flourishing confederation with 5,000,000 inhabitants, whose vast territory is capable of literally boundless development. Yet England, after the American War of Independence, was very near giving it up voluntarily, and retiring from the American continent altogether. Nothing but regard for the loyalists of the United States, who had betaken themselves to Canada, and who, on the score of honour, deserved protection, prevented this step. In contrast to its policy at the Cape, the Government has, with one slight exception, understood how to treat justly the two leading nationalities of the colony. Canada at the time of its cession by France, was occupied by a population almost purely French,—which, however, so quickly became loyal that, in the War of Independence, and again in 1812, it fought bravely on the side of England against the United States. The 60,000 French-speaking Canadians of that time are represented now by 1,260,000, and have almost completely crowded out the English from the province of Quebec ; these now retain a footing only in the commercial quarter of Montreal ; the French encroach even upon Ontario. Moreover, they show great power of assimilation : Scotch regiments which were disbanded at Quebec have become merged in this community of Frenchmen. Yet there exists no longer any intimate intercourse between them and France, the mother-country. Under free institutions, French Canada has remained a portion of pre-revolutionary France ; the peasants have retained their *patois* and their customs ; the clergy, rich and powerful, hate all revolutionary movements—and detest the United States ; and have passed over from Gallicanism to Ultramontanism. English and French in Canada were originally strongly conservative ; it was a large immigration of Puritan Scots (now numbering 695,863) that introduced a “ liberal” element. This new body rose against the oligarchical Government, so that when the latter strove to oppress the French, a civil war was the result. The wise administration of Lord Elgin restored peace ; the colony received a representative constitution; and in 1868, under Lord Dufferin, the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, British Columbia, and Prince Edward's Island were united into one Confederation, the *Dominion of Canada*.

Considering the boundless resources of Canada, the population—some 5,000,000—is small ; but, on this account, the country is well fitted for immigrants ; these in recent years have varied in number from 103,000 to 138,000 persons. The long trade depression in Europe will within the next few years increase this movement, and so much the more as, through the acquisition by the Government, a short time ago, of the extensive territories of the Hudson

Bay Company in Manitoba, wide and fertile tracts of land are opened up. The immigrants find an intelligent, settled administration, free from party strife,—impartial justice, law and order without Lynch or revolver, complete political and religious freedom, and good schools.

OF all the British Colonies the youngest are those of Australia ; they also show the most rapid increase, although the greater part of the interior of the continent is a desert, and through lack of rain will, to all appearance, remain so. The first settlement was, as is well known, the penal colony of Botany Bay—formed in 1787,—the Government, on the loss of the American Colonies, requiring another place to which convicts could be sent. Down to 1800, 5000 persons had been transported. The character of a penal colony gradually disappeared ; yet it is only forty-five years since Mr. Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales, wrote (on his arrival) thus : “ I find the colony hardly free from the swaddling-clothes of infancy, suffering from the want of all sorts of necessaries, the country beyond forty miles of Sydney impenetrable, agriculture yet undeveloped, commerce in its first beginnings, no settled revenue, the colony threatened with famine, torn in pieces by faction, the public buildings in decay, the few roads and bridges that exist—impassable, the population oppressed with poverty, neither public nor private credit, the morals of the great mass of the people sunk to the lowest ebb, while religion has almost disappeared.” *Now*—the colony numbers nearly a million inhabitants, although one part of it, Victoria, became a separate colony in 1851, and another, Queensland, in 1855. Sydney, the capital, numbers 240,000 persons, and possesses shipping of over 4,000,000 tons, or more than that of London in the year 1838. In the colony 852,000 acres are under cultivation, and 28,000,000 acres are yet to be disposed of. The number of sheep rose from 7,000,000 in 1863 to 34,000,000 in 1883, when wool to the value of 9,500,000*l.* sterling was exported. The Education budget amounted to 700,000*l.*—Still more astonishing was the progress of Victoria, which, founded as Port Philip in 1834 and made independent in 1851, has now a million of inhabitants, and an export amounting to 20,200,000*l.* sterling. Thirty years ago the streets of Melbourne were full of stumps of trees, and formed during several months of the year a swamp, in which waggons sank deep ; the city is now the fourth in extent in the British Empire—an advance perhaps unparalleled in history. At one end of the Victoria Court of the Exhibition we see an encampment of natives in hovels made of the bark of trees, such as the first settlers found in 1834 ; at the other end. an arch which shows the mass of gold—worth 216,000,000*l.* sterling, obtained in the colony down to the year 1875. The discovery of the gold-fields in the fifties, which caused immigrants to rush from all quarters, has naturally contributed very much to this mighty advance. But gold-seeking has declined : the great nuggets we see exhibited are now very seldom found, the gold-bearing sand must be carefully washed, the quartz must be crushed in a mill ; meantime, cattle-rearing, agriculture and coal-mining have become far more important. The Australian wool, of which sixty different samples from the various colonies are shown in the Exhibition, has exercised very great influence on European farming. Coal is now shipped in considerable quantity to India, Manilla, Japan and San Francisco. So recently as twenty-five years ago corn was imported from Chili and California ; now it forms a large export, especially from South Australia. Vine-culture has assumed considerable proportions ; a trophy here shows no fewer than 105 varieties of wine. Adelaide sends the model of a bunch of grapes, which would not have been unworthy the notice of the Israelitish spies in Canaan. For the production of silk, too, there is much promise in the rich growth attained in Australia by the mulberry-tree. The fruits which are on sale in the Exhibition, especially the apples, pears, peaches, grapes and bananas, are of the very first quality. Of wood, there are shown no fewer than 114 kinds : the richest forests are those of the eucalyptus ; then comes the gigantic kauri pine, which requires eight hundred years for its full growth, attaining a height of three hundred feet, and a girth of sixty—the pokutukama, whose scarcely less gigantic trunks stand up, as Mr. Froude says, like the pillars of a temple, while its roots resemble a nest of coiled pythons,—cedars, gum-trees, cypresses and palms, which, with

great ferns and creeping plants, form the richest vegetation. Of quadrupeds only the kangaroo, the opossum and the rat are native ; but all the domestic animals, and also game, have been introduced from Europe. The rabbit, indeed, has become, through its power of rapid increase, a perfect pest. A larger number of native birds are peculiar to the country,—casuars, parrots, and an abundance of sea-birds, from the feathers of which most beautiful wares are made. As to the climate, it is certainly hot, especially in Queensland : but the European can work everywhere ; except in the Fiji Islands, very few coolies are to be found in those latitudes. For want of rivers the continent suffers from drought ; but much could be done to counteract this by a system of irrigation like that practised in India. The climate of the volcanic island of New Zealand, with its great rivers, waterfalls, hot springs, and alpine mountains, is described as marvellously fine.

The natives are dying out ; even the most intelligent and the most powerful race, the Maoris, now numbering 40,000, who migrated to New Zealand in the fifteenth century, can hardly maintain themselves much longer. Apart from these, the population of 3,350,000 is almost purely English. Mr. Fronde states that more provincialisms are to be heard in Exeter or York than in Australia ; so that these colonies in the South, are far more truly a New England than Canada is in the West. Although thoroughly democratic in its institutions, the population is thoroughly loyal in sentiment, and takes the most lively interest in English politics. In 1885 Mr. Fronde found everywhere the utmost amazement that England put up with the humiliations brought upon her by the Gladstone regime ; and, in spite of the procrastinating lukewarmness of Lord Derby, New South Wales sent her volunteers to the Soudan. Australian democracy has nothing in common with European radicalism. In a country in which everybody has a competency who will work, socialistic visions are not likely to find great acceptance. The higher classes, indeed, who have much to lose, are in their way conservative, and are extremely fond of distinctions conferred by the mother country. The picture has, of course, its dark side. New Zealand, for example, has accumulated a debt much beyond her means ; the working classes, because they fear a fall in their high wages, oppose bitterly that immigration which is absolutely necessary. For the purposes of parliamentary government, again, there are wanting those party distinctions which over-ride material interests. The colonies have no foreign policy, no diplomacy and no history. All the elements of aristocracy are wanting. The society of Melbourne or Sydney resembles that of Manchester or Birmingham. The higher classes are rich business people, and the *jeunesse dorée* of rich fathers show a total absence of effort after an ideal. On the other hand, a good deal is done for education. The study of Botany and of Astronomy is especially cultivated. The great cities possess excellent libraries, and the best English periodicals are to be seen everywhere. The traveller from Europe meets on all hands a magnificent hospitality ; Government House (though, politically, the Governors possess very little power) affords to society a valuable centre of intercourse. Even the beginnings of a landed gentry are seen in the fact that business men who have made their fortune follow the English custom and establish themselves in beautiful country seats.

With resources, for a long time to come, practically inexhaustible,—with an active, rapidly increasing population, and with communication, internal and external, becoming every day easier, these rising communities have unquestionably a great future before them. The advance may not be so rapid as in the gold-seeking days ; but with increasing immigration, it will be all the healthier. The plan of a Confederation of the various colonies will hardly be found practicable : though there is perceptible a certain community of feeling among all the Australians. It approaches, indeed, a sort of Monroe doctrine, and may be expressed in the formula, “ Australia for the Australians.” This feeling was perfectly justified in regard to the French penal settlements ; but in regard to the German occupation of North Guinea, unjust and, therefore, transient. For any closer connection the interests of the several

colonies are too various. Between the protective tariff of Victoria and the free-trade system of New South Wales, a union is scarcely possible ; and no colony will readily renounce its independence as to revenue. Besides, an Australian Confederation would rather hinder than help the completion of a closer union with the mother country,—that “ Imperial Federation ” so popular in the colonies.

THIS leads us to consider the future of the British Colonial Empire. Twenty years ago one heard repeated in various forms, even in England, the statement that colonies were a thing of the past. In earlier times (it was admitted) they had certainly been of great advantage ; but from the time the monopoly system and the system of deriving direct and exclusive profit from the colonies had become untenable, circumstances totally changed. Self-government was the solution of all colonial difficulties, and complete independence was only a question of time. Why, therefore, retain any longer the ties that bound the colonies to England, seeing that such ties only forced her to come forward at great expense for their defence, and involved her continually in little wars, which might at any moment become great ones ? The independence of the colonies would set England free from this burden, and would cost her only a set of official posts with which the aristocracy provided for their younger sons.—The Manchester school was in its prime in those days, and these were the notions put forward by its leaders. Their ideal was,—not to keep the nation strong, and to raise it step by step in civilized development, but to produce the biggest possible amount of trading commodities. England was to develop more and more her industries, and was to supply with her products the whole world,—which, of course, stood open to receive them. With her capital, cheap, food and high wages, she was fit to cope with all competitors. The success of Free Trade in England was gradually to put aside all tariff barriers, and so go on opening up new markets for English products. Accordingly, the colonies, for which in earlier days so great sacrifices had been made, and which paid nothing to the mother country, were necessarily regarded as a burden on the tax-payer, of which he was to be relieved as far as possible. Cobden wrote (7th October, 1836) : “ The colonies, the army, the navy, and the Church, are only appendages of our aristocratical government. John Bull has for the next fifty years the task set him of cleansing his house from this stuff.” And in June, 1853, he declared in the House of Commons, that the Indian Empire was a burden which must be shaken off, and the sooner the better, since India was not worth what it cost. Mr. Bright, too, was never weary of declaiming against “ the increasing burden of our ever-growing Empire.” Trollope again, who really knew the colonies, wrote, only twelve years ago, thus : “ The colonies are children who have grown up, daughters whom we wish to marry off ; they have been educated, dowered,—and we shall separate from them, not without a certain feeling of sorrow, but in a manner perfectly friendly.” Even a man like Lord Palmerston, who had a strong feeling for England’s position in the world, troubled himself so little about the colonies that, on one occasion, when he was forming a ministry, and could find no Colonial Secretary, he said to Sir Arthur Helps (who relates the story) ; “ I believe I must undertake the business myself ; come up after the sitting, we will look at the maps, and you shall show me *where those places are.*” These views have their origin in the assertion of Targot (who formed the opinion, the defection of North America still fresh in his mind) that colonies, when they attain the years of maturity, *inevitably* break away from the mother country. But this view of the case requires modification : the fact rather is, that developed colonies break off only when they are treated unfairly. Had the principle, “ No taxation without representation,” been recognized as towards America, Franklin and Washington would have been content. This notion, that the colonies are only a burden on the mother country (which moreover was even at the time opposed by most decided Liberals,—among them, J. S. Mill,) rested on a strange over-estimate of the importance of that Free Trade which Cobden regarded as the remedy for all ills. The truth is, mankind is something more than a collection of producers, consumers and

tax-payers ; it is, through the dispensation of the Almighty, divided into nations, whose business it is to develop each its abilities, and rivalling one another in power and in progress, mental and moral, so to grow. That the colonies weigh heavily on the state-treasury is indisputable. It is likewise certain that they cause manifold dangers to England, and render her vulnerable, especially in India ; but the dangers are in reality the consequences of a false policy,—above all, of the Gladstonian policy, which has contributed so much towards shattering England's *prestige* abroad. *Prestige* is for England's power what credit is to a merchant. On the other hand, there is no position of power that does not involve danger, expense and responsibility. Let England lose her empire beyond the sea, and especially the following naval and commercial stations : Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Aden, Perim, Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore, Hong-Kong, Vancouver,—through which she takes the lead in all quarters—and she sinks to the position of a third rate power, even though her fleet were still, numerically, the strongest in the world.

But the chief value of the colonies lies in the fact that they offer the best field for emigration. From 1853 to 1884 1,500,000 emigrants went to Australia, and nearly 2,000,000 to the other colonies. England naturally allows free scope to emigration ; but she by no means disdains to make sacrifices in order to direct it to her own dominions. On the 31st July, 1883, Lord Derby made a communication to the Upper House, to the effect that the Government were prepared to grant to the Canadian Executive an advance of 1,000,000*l.* sterling, for the purpose of settling 10,000 families in Manitoba. The Colonial governments, again, do their part to attract emigrants. Some of the immigrant elements belonging to other European nationalities, as in North America, give at first to many places a cosmopolitan look, but they are quickly absorbed into the surrounding English population, and take on the stolid English character. Thus, everywhere, English-speaking communities grow up and develop,—communities in which the emigrant finds again his language, manners, institutions,—and which, as respects civilization, are directly in touch with England. In Seattle on Puget Sound, in Driar's House Hotel in Victoria, one finds the genuine qualities of the best English society. British Columbia can show quite a number of family names which are to be found in *Burke's Peerage*. Every English author writes for millions of readers beyond the sea ; every artist finds a public in the colonies,—a state of things towards which, in the present stagnation of trade, the Exhibition has contributed not a little. England is over-populated ; farther increase in this direction will not strengthen, but weaken her ; in her colonies she finds space and air. Finally, in a new emigration movement on a large scale, the solution of the Irish Question will be found to lie; for the Irish difficulty is, in essence, this : that a people with small disposition to turn to account the few advantages which nature offers, has been for a long period fruitlessly endeavouring to maintain on indifferent soil more human beings than that soil can support in comfort.

Nowhere can we discern any endeavour to break the connection with the mother country : it is felt, everywhere that nothing would be gained, but very much lost by such a step. Mr. Froude says that in any public meeting in Australia, the man who should advocate separation from England, would be hissed out ; he found the colonists everywhere *ipsis Anglis Angliciores*. Nobody in Canada thinks of union with the States ; the French know that they could not preserve their nationality ; the English cling to the mother country, and are content with their lot, because in the confederation of the Dominion they form the majority ; even the German nationality is better off in Canada than in the United States.

Certainly, colonies like those of Australia and Canada could defend themselves, even although cut off from the mother country. But they do not wish to separate, and they will separate only in case they are unjustly treated. George III. and the Parliament of Lord North alone drove the American Colonies into rebellion. At present the tendency is all the other

way—towards a closer union. The plan of an “Imperial Federation,” indeed, appears to be for the most part an imagination of theorists. To give to the colonies representatives in the House of Commons is impracticable ; they would always be in the minority there, would be always out-voted, and would therefore not submit to the decisions of the House. As little would it work to call colonial representatives to the House of Lords. The appointment of these by the Crown would not give satisfaction in the colonies ; while the selection of them by the colonial legislatures would become a subject of party strife ; and every new ministry in Ottawa or Melbourne would send over a fresh representative. Completely impracticable is the idea of a Delegation formed from the British and the Colonial Parliaments. A parliament can govern a country ; it cannot rule over various parliaments. If the empire had one common government and constitution, each colony would exercise a certain joint control over all the others ; and yet Australia and South Africa have no more in common with each other than either has with any foreign State ; though they agree, for example, in this, that neither wishes to have anything to do with the fishery dispute between Canada and the United States. It is just this parliamentary meddling in their affairs that the colonists object to ; because such meddling, in most cases, only does harm,—as is shown by the condition of the Cape. Finally, a practical Federation, a state union, is impossible without a commercial union ; now there is wanting that continuity of territory which is absolutely essential to such a union ; and none of the self-governing colonies would give up its independence in matters of trade, and renounce its revenues ; the diversity of interests is too great for that ; even a differential system of tariffs would not work.

But it is nevertheless possible, perhaps, to strengthen in another way the bond between the colonies and the mother country. The principal proposal has been to establish a defensive union. The colonies can defend themselves against invasion ; but, having no navy, they cannot protect their commerce,—for that they have to fall back on the help of England. The question therefore arises—What forces has England at her disposal for the defence of herself and her widely scattered possessions in case of attack ?

As shown above, the magnificent Empire of England beyond the sea, is by no means the result of peaceful colonization, but has been created (chiefly since the middle of the seventeenth century), by an almost uninterrupted series of wars and conquests. Every war which England has waged since Cromwell’s time, with Holland and France,—especially the latter,—has had, as its guiding motive, colonial policy. Her ascendancy at sea forced her into Continental wars, and determined her alliances, and her position in regard to international questions. The continued extension of colonial territory, and, along with that, of commerce, furnished means towards carrying on those wars, and towards ever fresh expansions of the empire,—with which, of course, the national wealth rapidly increased. The result of this development was that, in 1815, England was the dominant maritime and colonial power.

Since that time circumstances have decidedly changed. England is, indeed, more than ever a colonial power ; not only have the territories which then belonged to her attained a great internal development, but the empire, as a whole, has, through a continuous series of peaceful colonizations, as also through violent annexations, steadily increased. West Australia was declared a British colony in 1829 ; Victoria, in 1834 ; South Australia, in 1836 ; Queensland, in 1859 ; the Falkland Islands, in 1837 ; the Fiji Islands, in 1879 ; Rotumah in 1880. At the Cape, Caffraria was annexed in 1866 ; Basutoland, in 1868 ; Griqualand, in 1876 ; Walfisch Bay, in 1879. Portugal ceded Delagoa Bay in 1881. Besides these, the following places in Africa were acquired :—Lagos in 1861 ; the Dutch portion of the Gold Coast, in 1872 ; Berbera, on the Red Sea, in 1884 ; the protectorate over the Niger territory was declared in 1886. In Asia, over and above the enlargement of the Indian Empire, there were added :—

The Straits Settlements from 1819 onwards ; in 1839, Aden ; in 1843, Hong-Kong ; in 1846, Labuan ; in 1855, Perim ; in 1874, Ladesch in Arabia ; in 1875, Mohammereh, at the mouth of the Euphrates ; in 1877, Quetta; in 1878, Cyprus ; in 1883, North Borneo. Besides the development of the Dominion of Canada as far as the Pacific Ocean, and the delimitation of its territory on the side of the United States—are events of the most recent times. But vastly as the trans-oceanic Empire of England has increased during this period, she is no longer the sole colonial Power in the sense in which this was the case in 1815. In America, the United States have, with wonderful rapidity, taken their place beside her, on equal terms, as a Great Power. France has founded in Algiers an empire already stretching on towards Tunis ; and she would like to have something to say in Egypt. She has also conquered Cochin China, has forced a protectorate on Annam and Madagascar, and has gained a footing in New Caledonia, Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands. The Dutch colonies in the Malay Archipelago have been very greatly extended. Finally, Germany has become one of the colonial powers, and has promptly proved to England that the time when she could assume that *she* had a claim to every unoccupied spot beyond the sea is at an end. Nor has the British navy been able to maintain its former position. If it is still, in an absolute sense, stronger than the navy of any other country, that of France comes very near it ; and it would be no match for a combination of the French, with one or more of the fleets of even the second rank. But the fighting force of England by land has actually declined ; and now, in this respect, she must be accounted only a second-rate Power. It is true that she has carried a series of little wars to a successful issue ; but these were waged against tribes ignorant of the methods of European warfare. Whilst formerly no great war was carried on in Europe, in which Great Britain did not sooner or later take part, she has, since 1815, only once (—in the Crimean war, and in alliance with France) interfered, in a military sense, in European complications,—and then not with particular success. On the other hand, during the great changes in the map of Europe brought about by the wars of 1859, 1864, 1866, 1870-1, she has looked on inactive. In 1878, when the Russian successes threatened her position in the East, she was forced to be content with a dubious compromise ; in 1883, she prosecuted her Egyptian enterprise in no very brilliant manner, and in 1885 gave way before Russia in Afghanistan. If, therefore, a French writer in former years called England “ a polype with a dwarf body, and gigantic tentacles clutching the globe,” it must now be said that the elasticity of those tentacles is decidedly not what it formerly was ; whilst, on the other hand, all over the world English interests are at stake, and no great Continental or transoceanic struggle leaves England untouched.

The British empire (1889)

Author : Geffcken, Friedrich Heinrich, 1830-1896. [from old catalog] ; Macmullan, S. J., [from old catalog] tr

Subject : Albert, Prince Consort of Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, 1819-1861; Palmerston, Henry John Temple, Viscount, 1784-1865 ; Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, 1804-1881; Gladstone, W. E. (William Ewart), 1809-1898 ; Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords. [from old catalog]

Publisher : London, S. Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, limited

Year : 1889 Language : English Digitizing sponsor : Google

Book from the collections of : University of Michigan

Collection : americana

Source : Internet Archive

<http://archive.org/details/britishempirewi00geffgoog>

Edited and uploaded to www.aughty.org

January 4 2013