HOW GREAT BRITAIN GOVERNS HER COLONIES.

"They went out on the footing of equality with, not of slavery to, those who were left behind."—*Thucydides*.

The peculiar interest which attaches to the study of the Colonial Empire of Great Britain at the present time arises out of three considerations. First, because it is the most extensive and successful system of colonization the world has seen; second, because the prestige which it has brought to the British nation is being seriously menaced by the reversals now being sustained by British arms in South Africa; and, third, because the United States have recently acquired possessions, some of which are so far removed from our shores and are surrounded by such climatic, social, racial and religious conditions that they will have to be treated, for a time at least, as dependencies, before they can be incorporated into the Federal Union.

The record of the Colonial Empire of Great Britain is a wonderful record; a tale of peace and war, of change, of enlargement, of unparalleled growth. We are precluded by the limits of this article from reviewing this record and by our natural limitations from divining the secret of its wonderful success, and we shall not undertake to do either. But before describing the political machinery used in the administration of this system it will perhaps be interesting to note some of the agencies which have made the Empire possible and which contribute to its strength and perpetuity.

Nature fortunately gave to England such obvious boundaries, that it has been spared the perpetual melting down and recasting processes to which the countries of Continental Europe have been subjected. Her fortresses are the works of nature. She is literally

"Neptune's park, ribbed and paled in
With rocks unscalable and roaring waters."

This natural advantage has served not only to "coop from other lands her islanders," but also to prevent wrong-headed rulers from trying to enlarge her boundaries by annexing the lands of their neighbors on the Continent. Strong, healthy nations, like healthy

individuals, must grow. This can be done in two ways—either by taking possession of adjacent lands or of distant parts of the world. England has been debarred from the first method by nature and hence has devoted her energies to colonizing lands beyond the seas.

Four causes have contributed largely to the success of this enterprise—two of which might be termed mechanical or scientific, and two administrative or historical. The scientific agencies referred to are the improved methods of applying steam to transportation and the use of electricity in transmitting intelligence under the sea as well over the land. These forces, by practically annihilating space and time, have brought about conditions without which neither the commercial and financial activity nor the political life of the Empire could exist. The failure of the Empires of antiquity was often due to the fact that they were unable to overcome these physical conditions which lay in the way of vigorous and effective administration of possessions lying at a great distance from the seat of government. Aristotle estimated that one hundred thousand freemen were too many for a single state, yet Great Britain rules a single dependency of two hundred and fifty millions of inhabitants, distant thousands of miles from her shores. Steam and electricity are the natural enemies of ignorance, prejudice and provincialism. They spread democracy and learning. You will recall that they have only been effective as world agencies during the last fifty years. The first submarine cable between England and America was not successfully laid until 1866. The ships that carried the first settlers to Australia took eight months on the voyage, whereas now the trip can be made in less than six weeks. Burke expatiated at length upon the effect remoteness had upon administration. In his time it took six weeks to reach the American Colonies. "Three thousand miles of ocean," says he, "lies between you and them. You cannot pump this dry. No contrivance can prevent the effect of this distance in weakening government. Months pass between the order and execution. Who are you that you should fret and rage and bite the chains of nature?" While Burke was perhaps the most profound statesman that ever lived, he caught no glimpses of what the future had in store in the way of scientific invention. For purposes of administration the ocean has been pumped dry and the chains of nature burst asunder. Man has conquered nature with nature. The storm cloud and raging billow have no terrors for him. He makes the lightning of the one minister to his needs and laughs at the fury of the other, as his leviathan of steel and steam gathers speed by churning it into foam. Now the execution follows swift

on the heels of the order and the ocean is crossed in as many days as it then required weeks.

The two administrative or historical facts which have played such an important part in the growth of the Empire are the repeal of the Corn Laws by the British parliament in 1849, and the loss of her American Colonies in 1783—the former making Great Britain a free trade nation, and the latter teaching her the necessity for granting local self-government to those Colonies where the English speaking people predominated. The growth of the doctrine of free trade and the principle of independent government in the English speaking Colonies went hand in hand. At the time when British statesmen were inclining themselves to give free institutions to the Colonies, the doctrine of free trade was becoming a fundamental principle of British politics at home, and its application fundamentally modified the relations between the Mother Country and the Colonies. In early times it was never doubted that the Mother Country should enjoy a monopoly of the trade of her Colonies. Now she has no preference in their markets unless they choose to give it to her, for each Colony frames its own tariff, and may impose what duties it pleases on the export of the Mother Country or of other Colonies. Sixty years ago, when English statesmen were confronted with the problem of how to govern their great dependencies, Canada and Australia, they had before them two significant facts; the places were so far removed from home that great difficulty would attend their management, and that English people predominated among their inhabitants. Experience taught them that English Colonies had thriven under self-government, and that the greatest of them were lost forever by the action of the Mother Country in imposing taxes on the Colonists instead of leaving them to tax themselves.

They saw that they must incur one of two dangers; either by giving self-government they must run the risk of peaceful separation, or by refusing it they must run the risk of a second war of Colonial independence. They wisely chose the former alternative. They rule with a loose rein that they may rule at all, and the present force and vigor of their authority is derived from a prudent relaxation of authority. The fallacy in trying to keep a Colony of Englishmen in subjection was pointed out by Burke during the conflict with the American Colonies. He stated the gist and philosophy of the whole matter in his speech on "Conciliation with America," when he said, "An Englishman is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery." The ignoring

of this doctrine at the time and the subsequent adoption of it is another instance of "The stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner." This principle is now the chief corner stone of the Colonial Empire of Great Britain.

When we consider the vastness of the Empire, that it lies on "the scattered fringe of many oceans," and embraces every zone and parts of every continent, that it numbers among its inhabitants representatives of every known race and types of every form of civilization, from the lowest to the highest, from the oldest to the youngest—the Hottentot and the Englishman—civilizations whose origin is lost in the twilight of history and civilizations springing full panoplied from the forefront of the present—that it deals with religions of every form, and institutions of every character, and that it controls all the great highways of the seas, we are amazed and naturally wonder and inquire how is all this done? What methods are adopted? What political alchemy has the people of this little isle discovered which enables them to stretch their scepter to the four corners of the earth, and hold in their hands the destiny of such a large portion of mankind?

The answer to this is that the machinery of government in some instances is simple, in others complex. There is no hard and fast rule. The system in use is noted for its variety and flexibility of rules. It is not attempted to govern Canada and Basutoland in the same manner. The English never commit the folly of making a set of ideal laws and then undertaking to make their Colonies conform to it. They realize that the law under which a people live is the natural expression and product of their intellectual and moral and social gifts and habits, whence it follows that communities representing different types of life require different sets of laws. An examination of the situation discloses the fact that the Colonies of the Empire are distinguishable into two or three general classes. The classification may be grounded on climate, or on racial distinction, or on the form of government used. While we are interested in making the classification according to the form of government in use, it will be observed that, in so doing, the same lines will be drawn that would be drawn were the classification based on race or climate—that is to say, the form of administration adopted is determined by the race of people which inhabit the Colony, and the race of people in the Colony is determined by the climatic zone in which the Colony is located. For example, the temperate Colonies are the natural homes of the European races and have been now completely occupied by those races. These Colonies being peopled

by men accustomed to constitutional governments at home, are capable of receiving and working institutions similar to those under which they formerly lived. Naturally they carry these institutions with them to the new country. The American Colonies reproduced English institutions and English law. The same thing has taken place in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This is not true of the tropical Colonies. In them the incoming races are forbidden by the heat, not only to support open air labor, but also to retain their original robustness of mind and body. Such countries are Central Africa, British India, Borneo and the Philippine Islands. Here we find few European immigrants, an enormous native colored population and a very low type of civilization. So in these racial and climatic conditions we have the basis of our classification as regards the form of government used. Recognizing these distinctions, Great Britain has long since made it a maxim of British policy that every Colony where the English race constitutes the bulk of the population, ought from the first to receive local self-government, and ought to have an elective legislature and a ministry responsible thereto, as soon as the citizens have become numerous enough to work such a system. This rule applies to Colonies settled in the main by Englishmen, and they are classified as *Responsible Governments*. On the other hand, wherever the majority of the population are of another race, whether negroes, Asiatics or Polynesians, it follows that they can not be trusted with self-government. They are intrusted with only such power as they are capable of exercising safely and are usually governed despotically, and are classified as *Crown Colonies*.

The machinery of government at home is about as follows: The whole system is placed in charge of the Colonial Office, which is under the control and supervision of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He is supplemented by a corps of assistants who are selected by competitive examination and without any regard to party affiliations. The Secretary himself being a member of the cabinet, is, of course, a party man.

The Colonial Office is the repository of the experience and traditions of several generations, and has accumulated a stock of precedents and a mass of special knowledge regarding the history and conditions of each Colony of the greatest utility for practical purposes. It knows the character, aptitude and record of every important official in the service, and is able to give due weight to his utterances and his policies. It must be borne in mind that there is but little work done in the home office for the Responsible Govern-

ments. Its chief business is to nominate a Governor to act as the local representative of the Crown. In Canada, the Home Government, instead of nominating the Governor of each Colony, nominates a Governor-General for the Dominion, and he in turn nominates the Lieutenant-Governors of the several provinces. For each of the Australian Colonies and for Cape Colony, the Home Government nominates a special Governor.

In general outline the machinery of government existing in the various Colonies is the same, but in its practical workings there is a vast difference. It consists of a Governor sent out by the Home Government, an Executive Council and a legislative body. The functions of the Council and Legislature vary as we pass from the Responsible Government to the lowest form of the Crown Colonies. In the Responsible Governments the Executive Council is nominated by a majority of the legislature and practically corresponds to the Cabinet in the Home Government. These Governments have their exact prototype in the Home Government with its parliament and cabinet and nominal executive. But it is quite different with the Crown Colonists. In all of these there is a Government from home, the power of which is in the last resort absolute. But in many there are also local legislative councils. In some these councils are nominated by the Crown, a scheme which indirectly checks the Governor by requiring him to listen to advice before he acts, though his advisors have no weight of representative authority behind them. In others the councils are partly nominated, partly elective. In most of the Colonies the Crown has reserved the right to legislate, by means of what is called an order in council, over the head of the local legislative council. There are a few Colonies in which there is no local council at all. In all of these Crown Colonies the supreme authority has been concentrated in the hands of a Minister in London and his lieutenant, the local Colonial Governor.

India is an Empire in itself, and though of the nature of a Crown Colony, it is under a separate management, which together with its unique position in the Empire entitles it to a separate consideration. The administration of British India is the most gigantic task ever attempted by a nation in the history of the world. The Roman Empire was larger in area, the Chinese Empire may be larger in population, but in neither case do we find a ruling race composed of foreigners whose home is beyond the sea.

British India is divided into eight great provinces, and these are sub-divided into two hundred and forty-five districts. The district is the unit of administration and corresponds to the English Shire.

The present form of government of the Indian Empire was established by the Government of India Act (21 and 22 Vict. Cap. 106), whereby all the territories formerly under the government of the East India Company were vested in Her Majesty. Under the provisions of the Royal Titles Act passed in 1876 (39 and 40 Vict. Cap. 10), Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India at Delhi before the princes and high dignitaries of India, January 1, 1877.

The administration of the Empire in England is intrusted to the Secretary of State for India, assisted by a council of not less than ten members, nine of whom have served or resided ten years in India, and have not left India more than ten years previous to the date of appointment. The administrative machinery in India consists of a Viceroy, who in theory represents the Queen-Empress, but who in reality is subordinate to the Secretary of State, and two councils, which owe their existence to a series of acts of parliament. One of these councils is executive, and the other legislative. The Viceroy is required to act in all cases through his council.

The executive council is composed of six ordinary members, with the commander-in-chief as an extraordinary member, who are all appointed by the Secretary at home. In certain respects it may be compared with the English Cabinet. The legislative council is composed of the preceding, together with from six to twelve additional members for making laws and regulations. They are appointed by the Viceroy from among high officials, other English residents, and prominent representatives from the native community.

While the whole tendency of constitutional progress in England has been to impose limitations on the power of the Executive, the whole tendency of administrative development in India has been to increase the authority of the Executive. Though the work of Great Britain in India is not yet finished, it has already yielded great results.

"It has established perfect internal peace and security through a vast area, much of which is still inhabited by wild tribes.

"It has secured a perfectly just administration of laws, civil as well as criminal, between all races and castes.

"And it has imbued its officials that their first duty is to do their best for the welfare of the natives, and to defend them against the rapacity of European adventurers."¹

Its work has been equally beneficial in the other Colonies.

¹ James Bryce.

Thus have we traced in brief, but dim outline, some of the policies, and enumerated some of the agencies which have been used in establishing and maintaining the great Empire, which, sixty years ago, was eloquently described by Daniel Webster as "a power to which Rome in the height of her glory is not to be compared—"a power which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts, whose morning drum-beat, following the sun and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs "of England."

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