

-These questions we shall discuss in our future numbers ; and for the sake of England herself, we would intreat public attention to them, as subjects of vital importance.

With reluctance we say, Shame be to Englishmen for their neglect of India ! Even a selfish policy might awaken them from their torpor ; but they are at present blind to their own immediate and permanent benefit. The East India Company are now again petitioning Parliament that the commerce of India may obtain redress from the Imperial Legislature ; we trust the Court of Directors will persevere in their laudable exertions, and that when the nation at large becomes aware of its past conduct, justice will finally be conceded to the brave, intelligent, and long-suffering Hindoos.

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## COLONIAL REFORM.

THE COLONIAL OFFICE, DOWNING STREET.

**A**MONG the many anomalies in the English character, there is one of remarkable influence on the political affairs of the nation, and that is a disregard of leading principles for the guidance of government. Were it not that there reigns in the breasts of the Anglo-Saxon race a strong and inherent love of justice, it would have been impossible for this nation to have made the advances in power and wealth which the last two or three centuries have witnessed. When the energies of England are required on the momentous occasions of war, almost super-human efforts are achieved, because some definite object is in view ; but from the absence of any provident plan, or comprehensive statesmanship, we almost invariably lose in peace the advantages attained in war ; and it is a painful, but not less true assertion, of a commercial and generally quick-sighted people, that their diplomacy of foreign nations is always successfully exercised to the prejudice of even our most valuable mercantile interests. On examination of the long and instructive history of public events in England, it will be seen, that whenever there has been a fixed and just principle to act on, success, sooner or later, has been the result, while the absence of this marked course has led to great errors, immense losses, and an incalculable waste of time, talent, and energy. It is true, that immoveably fixed principles of government cannot always, and on every occasion, be adhered to, to *the very letter*, so long as mankind are devoid of the essence of Christianity for

their moral governance ; but the spirit of fixed principles, if guided by prudence, will always point out the path which a wise statesman should follow.

He who in the management of public affairs would refuse to watch the course of events, and so bring his fixed principles of action to regulate his conduct, would be like the mariner, who when he had launched into the wide deep, nailed his compass to the mast, and thought thus to reach the desired haven in the Eastern hemisphere, regardless of the winds that blow or of the island-rocks and promontories which might obstruct his progress ; his destruction, indeed, would be more speedy and certain than he who attempted to reach the same haven without any compass for his guidance.

It would be irrelevant to illustrate this observation by a reference to the conduct of the two leading political parties in England since the reign of Queen Ann, and who have alternately held sway in the councils of the state, and thus influenced public opinion ; but it may be remarked, that the one appears to have had for its governance, not only a fixed principle, but also an established *precedent*, the maintenance of which peculiarly 'distinguishes a thoughtful and provident people ; while the other has certainly adopted fixed principles, without, however, sufficiently examining whether they were true or false, or without inquiring whether, even if true, they were quite applicable to the state of society to which it was proposed to apply them, and unreminded of the *precedents* which time and experience have sanctioned.

Englishmen have from the earliest ages been in favour of practice before theory ; hence the proverb—*Nolumus mutare Angliæ leges*—and consequently when changes have been made of a just nature, they have been attended with beneficial results ; but when changes have been made from mere theoretical reasoning, and without any pressing necessity, evil has invariably ensued.

It is, however, worthy of note, and deserving of much heartfelt gratification, that as soon as the evil of any measure, or of any existing defect, is generally experienced in England, efforts are made by all classes of society to neutralize the mischief, and to produce as much good as possible with the least radical change. Therefore, as every human enactment contains more or less of evil, and as in the course of centuries successive changes expunge the evils which *speedily* become apparent, we have in the aggregate a large positive quantity of good, with a continually diminishing quantity of evil ; thus to some extent remedying the want of a more philosophic *fixity* of principles for action,

As society is continually undergoing mutations, an adaptation of Christian truth and equity to circumstances, is the safest guidance, and the surest means for producing general happiness.

We have been led into these prefatory remarks by the consideration of a subject now occupying the minds of a large and influential, but neglected, class of our fellow-citizens ; we mean the colonists of this vast kingdom, who at present are deprived of the benefits which might be expected to result from either the principles, or moral precedents, prevailing at home. Indeed the very acquisition of colonies by England has been less the result of any settled course of action than that of the force of circumstances. Elizabeth, it is true, with an extraordinary foresight (with which she was doubtless gifted for ulterior purposes), determined on “ planting colonies beyond the seas,” and thus raise England from a mere agricultural island to become a manufacturing, mercantile, and maritime empire. This grand principle, so congenial to an enterprising, industrious, and insular people, struck so deep a root, that it has never since been utterly destroyed.

During the Commonwealth, the tree (aye, we may call it the very “ tree *of life*” to England), though still young, flourished with astonishing growth, and, ere a century had elapsed, England had united to her crown the Scottish diadem ; she had conquered Ireland, had established colonies in the Western and Eastern hemispheres, and from henceforth ruled the destinies of Europe. Years rolled on, and England advanced with giant strides to power, honour, and prosperity, until she became unmindful of the grand principles for which colonies were established ; forgetful of the moral obligations which terrestrial authority imposes on every nation, and thus acting on selfish, tyrannical, and unchristian principles, the crown was most righteously dispossessed of its North American colonies ; and the children who had long borne with oppression, contumely, and wrong, became converted into a bitter foe or powerful competitor with the parent from whose loins they had sprung, and to whom they owed their laws, language, and lineage.

This sudden and violent disruption, while it afforded rejoicing to the enemies of England, was a source of deep humiliation and sorrow to British patriots, who beheld not only the immediate loss to the mother-country, but also the subsequent neglect of the wise principles of Elizabeth. The few colonies which remained to England were placed under the care of the Secretary of State for the *Home* Department, the board of council for trade and plantations was broken up, and apathy for colonial possessions was the prevailing feature in England.

But a general European war soon roused the lion from its inglorious and dangerous apathy ; “ Ships, colonies, and commerce,” had become the household cry of nations; and while Britain sat musing over her folly and misfortunes, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, &c. had been advancing with rapid steps in the acquisition of colonial dominion, and its concomitants-trade, marine, and power. Thrown into hostile collision with these nations, England had still a sufficiency of the roots of the oak which Elizabeth had planted, to send forth fresh shoots ; and partly from observing these new and verdant branches, but principally from the imperious necessity which arose for diminishing the power of her enemies, England, by stripping her opponents one by one of their transmarine territories, resumed her station as the arbitress of surrounding nations, and as undisputed mistress of the ocean. With the acquisition of fresh colonies came the necessity for attending to their management at home ; but it is evident that the Elizabethan principle had but little influence: it was intended merely to retain the conquered possessions of France, Holland, &c. until the termination of the war, and the close of the last century a temporary bureau, called the “ colonial office,” with a secretary of state for *war* and the colonies, was formed in Downing-street, without any fixed principles whatever for its governance.

It must be self-evident, that an office thus constituted, when the colonies of England were few and unimportant, without any statesman-like views, and without any responsibility, either to the colonists abroad or to the nation at home, (excepting the trifling and seldom exacted constitutional responsibility of a secretary of state, changing with every change of parties of administrations), must be destitute of the power of good government, and, as colonies became extended, utterly incapable of carrying on even the most ordinary routine of mere official duties.

This fact strikingly corroborates our remarks at the opening of this article ; and we trust that the remedy to be applied to the now generally acknowledged evil will also substantiate the views there expressed.

It can scarcely be wondered at that the most complete ignorance should for many years have prevailed respecting the colonies of England ; their number, extent, population, trade, resources, and condition, were equally unheeded and unknown ; no official return was thought of; and, until the year 1834 there was no complete history of the British colonies. Even then the government refused all aid towards awaken-

ing the public mind from its lethargy respecting the colonies, and a private and totally unaided individual was left to accomplish that which should have been done at the expense of the nation.

But, as we have before said, truth, if fully recognized in England, soon produces good fruits. The rapid increase of population within a sea-bound territory, the necessity for finding fresh markets to dispose of the constantly accumulating surplus of manufactures which steam-machinery produced, and the natural desire for employment and competence, led the thoughts of the public to those colonies whose situation and resources were now, for the first time, made apparent. Acting more under the impulse of imperious necessity, than guided by any fixed principle, the people of England are now eagerly intent on colonization, and are awakening to a proper view of the principles laid down by Elizabeth. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the government should take the lead in influencing public opinion, and in forming a comprehensive system for the management of the already vast, yet daily increasing, maritime possessions of England. Alas ! government, and the aristocracy of both parties, are too generally behind the people in their knowledge of what is requisite for the peace, prosperity, and permanent happiness of the vast British empire.

A strong consciousness of the total inadequacy of the "Colonial Office" for the proper government of the colonies, and a foresight of the rebellion that would burst out in Canada, and of the condition of Jamaica, &c., led to the preparation of the following petition to parliament in the year 1837, which petition being approved of by all classes of persons connected with the colonies, and unrestrained in the exercise of their opinions, was presented to the House of Commons on the 5th of December, 1837, together with the annexed "Observations in support of the Petition." The house received the petition favourably, ordered it to be printed, and a day was to be named to move its consideration by a committee. While the usual formalities were being arranged, intelligence of the rebellion in Canada arrived, and the author of the petition, unwilling to embarrass the government, abstained, for the time, from pressing a further consideration of the question in parliament ; but many thousand copies of the petition have been printed, and circulated in each province of the empire, meeting everywhere a cordial response, which is now being re-echoed in the metropolis. It is intended, therefore, to move the appointment of a select committee, to take the petition into consideration, on the re-opening of parliament.

Colonial Petition, presented to the House of Commons, on the 5th December, 1837, and ordered to be printed.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF ROBERT MONTGOMERY MARTIN, AUTHOR OF THE  
“HISTORY OF THE BRITISH COLONIES,”

SHEWETH,

1. That the colonies and transmarine territories under the dominion and protection of the British Empire are of immense extent, and of the highest importance politically, commercially, and socially, and therefore deserving the serious and sedulous attention of your Honourable House.

2. That those colonies and transmarine territories are situated in both hemispheres, under every zone, and beneath various climes ; with a diversified population, speaking many languages ; unassimilated in laws, habits, and religion ; subject to different forms of local government, and therefore demanding a uniformly wise system of administration for their imperial rule.

3. That the inhabitants of those colonies and territories, although embracing numbers, wealth, and intelligence, are unrepresented in the Parliament of the United Kingdom ; their complicated affairs being entrusted to the care of a secretary of state, changing with every administration in England, selected for office with reference rather to an identity of party-feeling than to a knowledge of colonial and mercantile affairs, and acting therefore on no defined and permanent system ; without any known fixed principles, and, by reason of the precarious and temporary tenure of office, inspiring no useful confidence either in the colonies or in the merchants and others trading to, and interested in the peace and prosperity of those distant dependencies of the empire.

4. That when the “ Colonial Office ” was formed, our transmarine possessions were of minor consideration, compared with their value at the present day ; the additions by conquest, cession, and colonization, since the commencement of the present century, manifestly therefore require an altered and improved mode of conducting the colonial government at home.

5. Your Petitioner abstains from pointing out the reasons for the inadequacy of the Colonial Office to execute efficiently the momentous duties entrusted to its charge ; he adverts not to the anomalous power and patronage vested in a single individual, subject to so trivial a responsibility as that which now exists ; neither will he refer to the causes for the dissatisfaction and party-spirit which more or less pervade each **of** our colonies, destroying their social concord, retarding their trade, and weakening their connection with the mother-country.

6. Your Petitioner, relying on the wisdom of your Honourable House for an inquiry into, and a redress of the grievance of which he complains, presumes not to indicate the course which Parliament should adopt, further than to observe, that there are many retired colonial governors, judges, civil officers, and commercial gentlemen now in England, whose local knowledge and experience might be rendered beneficial should it be deemed proper to form an administrative department for the efficient management of the vast and paramountly important interests of the colonies of this’ maritime and commercial empire.

And Your Petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

The observations read to the House in support of this petition are hereunto annexed. Neither the “ Petition ” nor the “ Observations ”

have had a word altered, although subsequent events have materially strengthened the views therein expressed ; one of these is the fact of there being three secretaries of state, and three under secretaries of state within the space of less than nine months ; namely, Lord Glenelg, Lord Normanby, and Lord John Russell ; Sir George Grey, Mr. Labouchere, and Mr. Vernon Smith !

### Observations in support of the Petition.

I. No uniformly wise colonial system can be acted on, by reason of the constant changes of the secretary and under-secretary of state.

Between March 1833, and April 1835, there were *eight* secretaries and under-secretaries of state ; and subsequently two assistant under-secretaries ; thus making ten changes 'within about two years. [In one year, from April 1834, to April 1835, there were three secretaries and three under-secretaries of state.] The names will sufficiently indicate the fluctuations of counsel that must have prevailed in the Colonial Office during this brief period :—

**Secretaries of state**—Lord Stanley, Mr. Spring Rice, Earl of Aberdeen, and Lord Glenelg.

**Under-secretaries of state**—Viscount Howick, Mr. Lefevre, Mr. Gladstone, and Sir George Grey.

**Assistant under-secretaries of state**—Mr. Hay and Mr. Stephen.

II. Those who have the management of the vast and complicated affairs of the colonists have no local, and probably but very slight general knowledge of our transmarine possessions ; the heads of the office are naturally much occupied with the patronage, which extends from a governorship down to a custom-house officer ; the clerks, on whom the business devolves, cannot be supposed to be desirous of extra trouble, and Parliament is too busily engaged with domestic matters to pay much attention to the wants, feelings, and interests of several millions of our distant subjects.

III. The territories under the management, control, and protecting care and patronage of the Secretary of state are :—

**In North America.**—Canada, Upper and Lower, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward's Island, Cape Breton, and Newfoundland; area 435,000 square miles, or 279,400,000 acres, with a population of one million and a half of white colonists. [Independent of the foregoing, **Hudson Bay** territories extend over 370,000 square miles.]

**In South America.**—Demerara, Essequibo, Berbice, Honduras, and the Falkland Isles ; area 165,006 square miles, or 105,600,000 acres, with a population of 120,000.

**In the West Indies.**—Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, Grenada, St. Vincent, Barbadoes, St. Lucia, Dominica, Antigua, Barbadoes, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, Anguilla, Tortola and the Virgin Isles, New Providence and the Bahama Islands, St. George's and the Bermuda Isles ; area 13,600 square miles, or 7,720,000 acres ; population, 1,000,000.

**In Africa.**—The Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, Mahé and the Seychelle Islands, St. Helena, Ascension, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Accra, Cape Coast, &c. ; area 250,000 square miles, or 160,000,000 acres ; population, 350,000.

*In Austral-Asia.*—New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, Swan River, King George's Sound, South Australia, Norfolk Island, &c. ; area 500,000 square miles, or 320,000,000 acres ; population, 120,000.

*In Asia.*—Ceylon ; area 24,644 square miles, or 11,771,160 acres : population, 1,000,000.

*In Europe.*—Gibraltar, Malta, Gozo, Corfu, Cephalonia, Zante, Santa Maura, Ithaca, Paxo, Cerigo, &c. and Heligoland ; area 1,500 square miles, or 1,000,000 acres ; population, 400,000.

*Total under the Colonial Secretary*—1,750,000 square miles, equal to 1,120,000,000 acres, with a population of at least 5,000,000 of British subjects, and daily increasing.

IV. The languages used in these different colonies embrace the English, French, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Greek, Maltese, Cingalese, &c.

V. The laws are more or less based on the customs of the different nations from whom these languages are derived, and from whom we obtained the possessions.

Vi. The religions embrace the English Episcopalian, Dutch Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Greek churches, with various shades of Pagan idolatry and forms of worship.

VII. The value of the maritime commerce of the above-mentioned possessions is, in the aggregate, £35,000,000 per annum ; and the value of the property, public and private, moveable and immoveable, in lands, houses, roads, forts, canals, ships, trading stock, and horses, oxen, sheep, &c. is £450,000,000 ! all confided to the responsibility of a single individual, who has no permanency of office, and no local knowledge of the vast interests committed to his care.

VIII. Some of the colonies have an exceedingly democratic form of government, namely, a controlling representative assembly, with a £10 franchise constituency ; others have a legislative council, appointed by the secretary of state, and consisting chiefly of the principal government officers ; and some have no ruling authority but the fiat of the governor. Under all these different systems, there is no fixed principle; internal discord and party-feeling follow in the wake of the politics of the secretary of state at home ; and all the evils of sectarianism (lay and clerical) are in full force. to the utter ruin of social concord, and the great detriment of the commerce, peace, and prosperity of each settlement.

Governors and public functionaries are not chosen in reference to their personal qualifications, but chiefly with regard to their political bias, their family connections, and parliamentary influence ; and the unfortunate consequences of such an exercise of power are felt at the extremities, and react on the very heart of the empire, as exemplified at this moment in the state of Canada, and which will be the case with every other colony, as soon as its inhabitants feel their strength, and become sensible of the cause of their suffering.

As a remedy for these evils, it is suggested to form an Administrative Board in Downing-street, for the management of colonial affairs, with a secretary of state, as at present, but aided by a council of retired governors, judges, and civilians, who possess a local and general knowledge of our maritime possessions ; the number of the council not to exceed, or to be less than twelve, of whom six shall change with the secretary of state (on constitutional grounds), and six shall hold office *quam diu se bene gesserint*, with two assistant permanent under-secretaries for the respective departments of the colonies in the Eastern and Western hemisphere. This exposition will, it is to be hoped, sufficiently explain and justify the Petition to Parlia-

ment, which is totally unconnected with party or personal considerations, and seeks to *aid* rather than to embarrass government.

The necessity of some colonial reform being now generally admitted, we shall briefly advert to the manner in which this may be effected with regard to the home government, or administration in England of the affairs of the colonists, premising, however, that every practicable degree of social liberty and commercial freedom, should be conceded to each colony, according to their respective state. There are three modes by which the "Colonial Office" may be remodelled or reformed, without any displacement of the gentlemen now employed in Downing Street, and against whom no personal complaint is here made, the remarks applying to the system, and not to individuals.

1. The Colonies may be governed by a Colonial Board, as suggested in the Petition and "Observations."
2. By the establishment of a Colonial Council in London, composed of representatives deputed from each colony, in proportion to their numbers and property, as is the case at this moment in Paris, with the French colonies.—[See article on the Government of the French colonies, page 41.]
3. By admitting into the Imperial Parliament members, or delegates, to represent each colony.

Of these three plans, the last, although apparently the simplest in design, would prove the most impracticable in execution; independent of the overwhelming multiplicity of business with which the Imperial Parliament is now burdened, from a divorce or railroad bill, up to the highest functions of legislation.

Were representatives from the colonies to sit with the representatives of the United Kingdom, how could the line be drawn for each class to speak and vote? The sugar duties are levied for financial purposes in England, but they affect the colonists: but would the colonial representatives be allowed to vote for their abolition? thus also with other subjects, Practical men, who look to the ultimate 'working of a measure as the best test of its efficacy, would reject this plan.

The second proposition is of equally feasible adoption, less difficult **in its working, but** open to various objections of great moment; **namely**, all our colonies have not colonial assemblies, from whom the representatives would be chosen to advocate their interests in England: next, could the colonial office with its secretary of state be kept up, and a Colonial Parliament sitting next door in debate? in other words, **would** any English Colonial Office, however constituted, be a fit exe-

cutive for such a Colonial House of Commons, where party feelings, and alleged distinctness of interests, would soon destroy all harmony in council, and all impartial deliberations. Such a representative council would not sit for a year, before it would cause serious embarrassments to the government of the crown and its responsible advisers. If however, representatives from each colony were recognized as the accredited voice of the distant colonists, treated with the courtesy and attention due to their important delegated duties, consulted by the government on all questions affecting the interests of their constituents, heard at the bar of either House on Colonial legislative proceedings ; in fine, received in the mother-country with dignity and honour, and invested with certain privileges, then indeed there would be an efficient representation at home of the wants, feelings, and wishes of the most distant colonists.

We now, therefore, arrive at the consideration of the plan contained in the petition ; namely, a *Colonial Board*, and which would be perfectly compatible with, and indeed aided by, a proper system of colonial agency in England, as explained in the preceding paragraph.

Various departments of the public service in England are administered by boards ; the Admiralty, Treasury, Trade, India, Customs, Excise, Woods and Forests, &c. There is, therefore, precedent. Before the separation of the American colonies, there was a Board of Trade *and Plantations*. By vesting the appointment of the colonial board in the crown, and changing half its members with every change of administration, the constitutional prerogatives of the sovereign would be maintained. The patronage of office might remain, as at present, vested in the secretary of state for the colonies, but all appointments should be subject to the confirmation of the majority of the Colonial Board-at two sittings of one week's interval, previous to the announcement of the appointments in the gazette. This would be a security for the fair and honest exercise of patronage.

All laws having reference to the colonies, not to be laid before parliament without the concurrence of two-thirds of the members of the Colonial Board present, or in writing to the secretary of state. Thus the improper and imperfect legislation of the House of Commons, on subjects of which they are utterly ignorant, would be remedied.

It would, however, be premature to enter into further details, although they could be shown to be in perfect harmony with our constitution, and efficient for the ends proposed. The secretary of state would remain as at present, and the entire establishment of the Colonial Office. The two under-secretaries of state in parliament