

OCEANA.



CHAPTER I.

The dream of Sir James Harrington—The expansion of the English race—The American colonies—Second group of colonies—Colonial management—Policy of separation—The England of political economists—Population and national greatness—Popular desire for union—Indifference of statesmen—Difficulties—The problem not insoluble.

IN the seventeenth century, when the once brilliant star of Spain was hastening to its setting, when the naval supremacy which Spain had once claimed and made her own was transferred to Great Britain and Holland, and when the superior power of Great Britain, her insular position and her larger population, had assured to her rather than to the Dutch Republic the sceptre of the sea, Sir James Harrington, in a sketch of a perfect commonwealth, half real, half ideal, which he addressed to the Protector, described the future destiny which he believed to be reserved for the Scotch, English, and Anglo-Irish nations.

‘The situation of these countries, being islands (as appears by Venice how advantageous such an one is to the like government), seems to have been designed by God for a commonwealth. And yet Venice, through the straitness of the place and defect of proper arms, can be no more than a commonwealth for preservation; whereas Oceana, reduced to a like government, is a commonwealth for

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increase, and upon the mightiest foundation that any has been laid from the beginning of the world to this day—

Illam arctâ capiens Neptunus compepe stringit,
 Hanc autem captus glaucis amplectitur ulnis.

The sea gives the law to the growth of Venice, but the growth of Oceana gives the law to the sea.’

In the two centuries and a half which have passed over us since these words were written, the increase of Oceana has exceeded the wildest dream of the most extravagant enthusiast. Harrington would have been himself incredulous had he been told that within a period so brief in the life of nations, more than fifty million Anglo-Saxons would be spread over the vast continent of North America, carrying with them their religion, their laws, their language, and their manners; that the globe would be circled with their fleets; that in the Southern Hemisphere they would be in possession of territories larger than Europe, and more fertile than the richest parts of it; that wherever they went they would carry with them the genius of English freedom. Yet the vision is but half accomplished. The people have gone out, they have settled, they have cultivated the land, they have multiplied, and although the population of Great Britain and Ireland is now seven-fold greater than it was in the Protectorate of Cromwell, the number of our kindred in these new countries is already double that which remains in the mother country; but Harrington contemplated that Oceana would be a single commonwealth embraced in the arms of Neptune, and the spell which can unite all these communities into one has not yet been discovered. The element on which he calculated to ensure the combination—the popular form of government—has been itself the cause which has prevented it. One free people cannot govern another free people. The inhabitants of a province retain the instincts which they brought with them. They can

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NORTH AMERICAN COLONIES

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ill bear that their kindred at home shall have rights and liberties from which they are excluded. The mother country struggles to retain its authority, while it is jealous of extending its privileges of citizenship. Being itself self-governed, its elected rulers consider the interests and the wishes of the electors whom they represent, and those only. The provincial, or the colonist, being unrepresented, suffers some actual injustice and imagines more. He conceives that he is deprived of his birthright. He cannot submit to an inferior position, and the alternative arises whether the mother country shall part with its empire or part with its own liberties. Free Athens established a short-lived dominion. Her subordinate states hated her and revolted from her, though the same states submitted quietly immediately after to the Macedonian despotism. Republican Rome conquered the civilised world, but kept it only by ceasing to be a republic. Venice, which Harrington quotes, reserved her constitution for herself, ruling her dependencies by deputy. They envied her liberties. They did not share in her glories or her wealth, and she ceased to be what Harrington calls her, even a commonwealth for preservation. The English in North America had little to thank us for. Many of them had fled thither to escape from religious or political tyranny. They had forgotten their resentment. They were attached to the old home by custom, by feeling, by the pride of country, which in Englishmen is a superstition. They were bitterly unwilling to leave us. But when we refused them representation in the British Legislature, when English ministers, looking only, as they were obliged to look, to the British constituencies, hampered their trade, tied them down under Navigation Laws, and finally would have laid taxes on them with or without their own assent, they were too English themselves to submit to a tyranny which England had thrown off. The principles established by the Long Parlia-

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ment were stronger than national affection. The first great branch of Oceana was broken off, and became what we now see it to be--the truest in the opinion of some to the traditions of Harrington's commonwealth, and therefore growing or to grow into the main stem of the tree.

But the parent stock was still prolific. The American provinces were gone. New shoots sprang out again, and Oceana was reconstituted once more; this time, in a form and in a quarter more entirely suited to our naval genius, in the great islands of the South Sea, and at the south point of Africa commanding the sea route to India. The mistakes of George the Third and Lord North were not repeated in the same form, but the spirit in which they were made reappeared, and could not fail to reappear. The Colonial Minister at home and the Colonial Office represent the British Parliament. The British Parliament represents the British constituencies, and to them and to their interests and their opinions, the minister, whoever he be, and to whatever party he belongs, is obliged to look. The colonies, having no one to speak for them, were again sacrificed so long as it was possible to sacrifice them. They were used as convict stations till they rose in wrath and refused to receive our refuse any more. Their patronage, their civil appointments, judgeships, secretaryships, &c., were given as rewards for political services at home, or at the instance of politically powerful friends. It cannot be otherwise: so long as party government continues, and Secretaries of State have the nomination to public offices, they are compelled (as a high official once put it to me) 'to blood the noses of their own hounds.' Willingly enough they surrendered most of these appointments when the colonies claimed them. It is possible that for the governorships which the Crown retains, the fittest men to occupy them are *bonâ fide* sought for; yet it is whispered that other con-

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MANAGEMENT OF NATIVE RACES 5

siderations still have weight. Nay, when one such appointment was made a few years back, we were drawn into a war in consequence, because someone was the greatest bore in the House of Commons, and there was a universal desire that he should be sent elsewhere.

More serious were the differences which rose continually between the mother country and the colonists respecting the treatment of the native population, whether in Africa, Australia, or New Zealand. The colonists being on the spot, desired, and desire, to keep the natives under control ; to form them into habits of industry, to compel them by fear to respect property and observe the laws. Naturally too, being themselves willing to cultivate the soil, they have not looked very scrupulously to the rights of savages over fertile districts of which they made no use themselves nor would allow others to use them ; and sometimes by purchase, sometimes by less respectable means, they have driven the natives off their old ground and taken possession of it themselves. The people at home in England, knowing nothing of the practical difficulties, and jealous for the reputation of their country, have obliged their ministers to step between the colonists and the natives : irritating the whites by accusations either wholly false or beyond the truth, and misleading the coloured races into acts of aggression or disobedience ; in which they look for support which they have not found. Never able to persist in any single policy, and producing therefore the worst possible results, we first protect these races in an independence which they have been unable to use wisely, and are then driven ourselves into wars with them by acts which they would never have committed if the colonists and they had been left to arrange their mutual relations alone.

The situation has been extremely difficult. It cannot be wondered at, that when war followed on war in New Zealand and South Africa, and British money was spent,

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and British troops were employed in killing Maoris and Caffres who had done us no harm, and whose crime was believed by many of us to be no more than the possession of land which others coveted, public opinion at home grew impatient. Long bills for these wars appeared in the Budgets year after year. Political economists began to ask what was the use of colonies which contributed nothing to the Imperial exchequer, while they were a constant expense to the taxpayer. They had possessed a value once as a market for English productions, but after the establishment of free trade the world was our market. The colonies, as part of the world, would still buy of us, and would continue to do so, whether as British dependencies or as free. In case of war we should be obliged to defend them and to scatter our force in doing it. They gave us nothing. They cost us much. They were a mere ornament, a useless responsibility: we did not pause to consider whether, even if it were true that the colonies were at present a burden to us, we were entitled to cut men of our own blood and race thus adrift after having encouraged them to form settlements under our flag. Both parties in the State had been irritated in turn by their experience in Downing Street, and for once both were agreed. The troops were withdrawn from Canada, from Australia, from New Zealand. A single regiment only was to have been left at the Cape to protect our naval station. The unoccupied lands, properly the inheritance of the collective British nation—whole continents large as a second United States—were hurriedly abandoned to the local colonial governments. They were equipped with constitutions modelled after our own, which were to endure as long as the connection with the mother country was maintained; but they were informed, more or less distinctly, that they were as birds hatched in a nest whose parents would be charged with them only till they could provide for themselves, and the sooner they were ready for

POLICY OF SEPARATION

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complete independence, the better the mother country would be pleased.

This was the colonial policy avowed in private by responsible statesmen, and half-confessed in public fifteen years ago. And thus it seemed that the second group of territorial acquisitions which English enterprise had secured was to follow the first. The American provinces had been lost by invasion of their rights. The rest were to be thrown away as valueless. The separation might be called friendly, but the tone which we assumed was as offensive to the colonists as the intended action was unwelcome, and if they were obliged to leave us it would not be as friends that we should part. The English people too had not been treated fairly. A policy so far-reaching ought to have been fully explained to them, and not ventured on without their full consent. A frank avowal of an intention to shake the colonies off would have been fatal to the ministry that made it. Ambiguous expressions were explained away when challenged. We were told that self-government had been given to the colonies only to attach them to us more completely, while measures were taken and language was used which were indisputably designed to lead to certain and early disintegration.

The intention was an open secret among all leading statesmen, if it can be called a secret at all, and in the high political circles the result was regarded as assured. 'It is no use,' said an eminent Colonial Office secretary to myself when I once remonstrated, 'to speak about it any longer. The thing is done. The great colonies are gone. It is but a question of a year or two.'

Those were the days of progress by leaps and bounds, of 'unexampled prosperity,' of the apparently boundless future which the repeal of the Corn Laws had opened upon British industry and trade. The fate of Great Britain was that it was to become the world's great workshop. Her people

were to be kept at home and multiply. With cheap labour and cheap coal we could defy competition, and golden streams would flow down in ever-gathering volumes over landowners and millowners and shipowners. . . . The 'hands' and the 'hands' wives and children? Oh yes, they too would do very well: wages would rise, food would be cheap, employment constant. The colonies brought us nothing. The empire brought us nothing, save expense for armaments and possibilities of foreign complications. Shorn of these wild shoots we should be like an orchard tree pruned of its luxuriance, on which the fruit would grow richer and more abundant.

It was a fine theory, especially for those fortunate ones who could afford parks and deer forests and yachts in the Solent, who would not feel in their own persons the ugly side of it. But the wealth of a nation depends in the long run upon the conditions mental and bodily of the people of whom it consists, and the experience of all mankind declares that a race of men sound in soul and limb can be bred and reared only in the exercise of plough and spade, in the free air and sunshine, with country enjoyments and amusements, never amidst foul drains and smoke blacks and the eternal clank of machinery. And in the England which these politicians designed for us there would be no country left save the pleasure grounds and game preserves of the rich. All else would be town. There would be no room in any other shape for the crowded workmen who were to remain as the creators of the wealth. What England would become was to be seen already in the enormously extended suburbs of London and our great manufacturing cities: miles upon miles of squalid lanes, each house the duplicate of its neighbour; the dirty street in front, the dirty yard behind, the fetid smell from the ill-made sewers, the public house at the street corners. Here, with no sight of a green field, with no knowledge of

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THE ENGLISH RACE

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flowers or forest, the blue heavens themselves dirtied with soot,—amidst objects all mean and hideous, with no entertainment but the music hall, no pleasure but in the drink shop, hundreds of thousands of English children are now growing up into men and women. And were these scenes to be indefinitely multiplied? Was this to be the real condition of an ever-increasing portion of the English nation? And was it to be supposed that a race of men could be so reared who could carry on the great traditions of our country? I for one could not believe it. The native vigour of our temperament might defy the influence of such a life for a quarter or for half a century. Experience, even natural probability, declared that the grandchildren of the occupants of these dens must be sickly, poor and stunted wretches whom no school teaching, however excellent, could save from physical decrepitude.

The tendency of people in the later stages of civilisation to gather into towns is an old story. Horace had seen in Rome what we are now witnessing in England,—the fields deserted, the people crowding into cities. He noted the growing degeneracy. He foretold the inevitable consequences.

Non his juvenus orta parentibus
 Infecit æquor sanguine Punico ;
 Pyrrhumque et ingentem cecidit
 Antiochum, Hannibalemque dirum :
 Sed rusticorum mascula militum
 Proles, Sabellis docta ligonibus
 Versare glebas, et severæ
 Matris ad arbitrium recisos
 Portare fustes.¹

And Horace was a true prophet. The Latin peasant, the legionary of the Punic wars, had ceased to exist. He had

¹ They did not spring from sires like these,
 The noble youth who dyed the seas
 With Carthaginian gore ;
 Who great Antiochus overcame,
 And Hannibal of yore ;

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drifted into the cities, where he could enjoy himself at the circus, and live chiefly on free rations. The virtue—*virtus*—manliness was gone out of him. Slaves tilled the old farms, Gauls and Spaniards and Thracians took his place in the army. In the Senate and in the professions the Roman was supplanted by the provincial. The corruption spread. The strength which had subdued the world melted finally away. The German and the Hun marched in over the Imperial border and Roman civilisation was at an end.

There is not much fear in England (spite of recent strange political phenomena) that we shall see idle city mobs sustained on free grants of corn; but a population given over to employments which must and will undermine the physical vigour of the race, generations of children growing under conditions which render health impossible, will come to the same thing. Decay is busy at the heart of them, and the fate of Rome seemed to me likely to be the fate of England if she became what the political economists desired to see her. That 'man shall not live by bread alone' is as true as ever it was; true for week days as well as Sundays, for common sense as for theology. These islands cannot bear a larger population than they have at present without peril to soul and body. It appeared as if the genius of England, anticipating the inevitable increase, had provided beforehand for the distribution of it. English enterprise had occupied the fairest spots upon the globe where there was still soil and sunshine boundless and life-giving; where the race might for ages renew its mighty youth, bring forth as many millions as it would, and would still have means to

But they of rustic warriors wight
 The manly offspring learned to smite
 The soil with Sabine spade,
 And faggots they had cut to bear
 Home from the forest whensoever

An austere mother bade.—MARTIN'S *Horace*, Odes iii. 6.