

FROM EMPIRE TO COMMONWEALTH

By Philip Kerr

DURING the past twenty years a very marked change has taken place in the character and constitutional system of what is known as the British Empire. The old view was described in 1911 in *The Round Table*, a quarterly devoted to discussion of the political problems of the Empire, as follows:

“Forty years ago the British Empire was regarded as a failure. Contemporary judgment, conscious of the difficulties and burdens of the day and of the doleful lessons of the past, could see no future before it . . . As Seeley said, ‘We had not learnt from experience wisdom, but only despair.’ History, indeed, seemed to prove that human beings failed of the capacity to rise above a certain territorial nationalism. In Turgot’s phrase, colonies had always been ‘like ripe fruits which cling till they ripen.’ Was it not the manifest destiny of the British colonies also to declare their independence so soon as they could stand alone? Gladstone, indeed, went so far as to suggest that we should anticipate the inevitable end and settle the difficulties between England and America over the Civil War by an immediate transfer to America of British territory in Canada.

“There was much the same feeling about the dependencies. India and the West Indies were England’s chief possessions—an empire she had gained by no deliberate policy, but which had been forced upon her in her struggles with France and Spain, and by the restless enterprise of traders and adventurers. Her own political traditions—especially as embodied in the phrase ‘no taxation without representation’—compelled her to abandon the methods of earlier empires and refrain from levying tribute from subject peoples. There was, therefore, no great enthusiasm for the dependencies. The trade with them was considerable, but it affected only a small portion of the British population, while the burdens for their defence all had to bear. . . . In fact, to use a phrase of Mr. Asquith’s, the Empire ‘was regarded as a regrettable necessity, to be apologized for as half blunder, half crime.’

“In the colonies themselves there was a complete indifference to the subject. People were absorbed in the task of settling and developing a virgin country, and in casting off the thralldom of a somewhat ignorant, narrow, and unsympathetic office in Downing Street, Whitehall. They had little knowledge of world problems beyond their borders, they had but little consciousness of their own, and were content to let events shape their destiny.”

Finally, there was no Imperial constitutional machinery of any

kind. The government of the Empire was conducted from Downing Street, at the unfettered discretion of the British Government save in the then unfederated provinces or states of Canada, Australia and South Africa, which governed themselves.

Nobody would say that this was a true picture of the British Empire today. It has been so transformed that even its name has been changed. In the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 it is officially described as "the British Commonwealth of Nations." It is the purpose of this article to describe the nature of this transformation, and the forces which have brought it about.

I. THE DOMINIONS

In the middle of the last century the territories now known as the Dominions, namely Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, consisted of a number of provinces, mostly governing themselves, but with no machinery for conducting their common affairs save the ordinances of the British Governor-General and the colonial office, and no means at all for participating in the management of the Empire of which they formed part. As population flowed in, however, the necessity for dealing with the problems of the colonies on a national basis became apparent, and the movement for federation everywhere began to grow. It was successful first in Canada, in 1867. Australia followed suit in 1900; South Africa in 1909, after the Boer War had removed the obstacle of the two flags.

The achievement of federation, in every case the work of purely local movements, produced two effects. It involved the final elimination of the power of the British Government in the internal affairs of the colonies. The Dominions, as they later came to be termed, became, so far as their internal politics were concerned, practically independent self-governing nations, united to the rest of the Empire by sentiment and by certain legal ties symbolized by allegiance to a common crown, but by no governmental control.

The second effect was a rapid growth of national feeling, which manifested itself in protective tariffs designed to develop local industries, and a determined resistance to anything like interference or dictation from England.

In proportion, however, as the independence of the Dominions grew and the authority of Great Britain diminished, the feeling of loyalty to the Empire as a composite of free nations—inde-

pendent of one another, but united in patriotism, pride in their institutions, and for common defense—steadily strengthened. The first outward manifestation of this new spirit appeared in 1887 on the occasion of Queen Victoria's jubilee. Then the first colonial conference was called, because, as the British Government declared, of their "conviction that there is on all sides a growing desire to draw closer in every practicable way the bonds which unite the various portions of the Empire."

In summoning the conference the British Government expressly disclaimed the desire to discuss "what was known as Political Federation." They said that their chief desire, in view of the new era of international expansion symbolized by the march of Russia across Asia, the union of Germany, and the general grab for African territory, was to examine the problem of improving the common organization for defense. The colonies, however, were not impressed at that time with the necessity of contributing to the common defense. The policy of the colonial representatives was rather to promote Imperial unity by introducing a system of tariff preferences for Empire goods.

This first Colonial Conference accomplished little. Its main importance is that its deliberations show the sentiment which then existed about the Empire. It was clear that there was no dissatisfaction with the organization of the Empire, as it then was. It was England's business to run the Empire as a whole, to conduct its foreign relations, to defend it from attack, to govern the dependencies. Colonial legislatures, on the other hand, were recognized as being solely responsible for the government of their own territories, but they assumed no responsibility for defending themselves from invasion across the seas or for assisting in the defense of the Empire as a whole.

In the ensuing twenty-five years, five further conferences were held—in 1897, in 1902, in 1907, in 1909, and in 1911. The tendency throughout all these meetings is quite uniform. There is a steady refusal on the part of the Dominions to consider any form of federal or constitutional union, and an ever increasing insistence on their status as independent nations within the Empire. On the other hand, there is a steady increase in the insistence by the British Government on the importance of the problem of defense, and in the sentiment on the part of the colonies in favor of inter-Imperial commercial preferences.

In 1907, twenty years after the first Colonial Conference, the

position was crystallized in a constitutional resolution. There were in future to be regular meetings, every four years and oftener if need be, of what was to be called the Imperial Conference. The Imperial Conference, however, was to have no legislative or executive authority. It was to be a conference between governments, represented normally by prime ministers, for the discussion of "questions of common interest," whose decisions were only to be effective if endorsed by the respective parliaments.

This was the first step taken by the peoples of the Empire in evolving a rudimentary organization and in the transition from Empire to Commonwealth. Apart from this resolution, however, the Imperial Conference of 1907 did not accomplish much. The question of defense was not seriously discussed because the British Government at the time was trying to make an agreement for the limitation of armaments with Germany, and because, having just been returned to power on a Free Trade policy, it could not fall into line with the Dominion policy of Empire preference.

Two years later, however, when the announcement of the new German naval programme, which provided for the creation of a navy greater than any then in existence, showed that the peace movement had failed, a special Imperial defense conference was summoned to consider the situation. The British Government had in the past been inclined to ask the Dominions to contribute in cash towards the cost of the British navy and in men towards the Imperial army. But the larger Dominions, Canada and Australia, had made it clear that while they were perfectly willing to share in the burden their assistance must be in the form of Dominion navies and national armies, and not of contributions in money or men to an Imperial army. At the defense conference of 1909 the British Government accepted this view, and Australia agreed to maintain, in Australian waters and under her own control, an Australian fleet unit consisting of one dreadnought, three armored cruisers, destroyers, etc.; Canada undertook to keep up two smaller units, one on the Atlantic, the other on the Pacific; while New Zealand and South Africa, which could not afford separate units of their own, contributed in ships or money directly to the British navy. Each, too, undertook to take steps to increase their national forces and to train them on uniform lines, so that cooperation should be easy in case war broke out.

It was immediately recognized, however, that if the Dominions

were thus to share in the burden of defense it was essential that they should be consulted about the foreign policy which might lead to war. Accordingly, at the Imperial Conference of 1911, two years later, foreign policy for the first time figured upon the agenda.

The Great War did not change in the least the general line of constitutional development in the Empire. It only hastened and intensified it. To the amazement of the world the Dominions threw themselves from the outset wholeheartedly into the struggle against Prussianism. Out of a scattered population of about 15,000,000 they sent no less than 700,000 men to Europe. But even so the character of the cooperation of the Dominions grew steadily more national. At first the Dominion units were brigaded with the more experienced and trained British troops, but by the end of the war the Canadian and the Australian troops had become self-contained national armies, organized and commanded exclusively by Dominion officers, though under the orders of the British Commander-in-Chief for the purposes of the war.

The same process is to be seen in the direction of the war itself. In 1917, to quote the War Cabinet report, the Prime Ministers of the Dominions together with representatives of India "were invited to London to attend a series of special meetings of the War Cabinet in order to discuss the problems of the war and the possible conditions of peace. . . . The sessions of the Cabinet thus enlarged came to be known as the Imperial War Cabinet." In 1918, the Imperial War Cabinet again convened, remained in session as the supreme directing body until the armistice, and then went to Paris in 1919 as the British Empire delegation to the Peace Conference. Throughout this period the main questions of British policy were settled at meetings in which Dominion ministers took part on equal terms and with equal responsibility with British ministers.

The process of development from a colonial to an equal status reached its climax in Paris. While Great Britain and the Dominion delegates sat together as the British Empire delegation, the Dominions insisted upon being separately represented in the Peace Conference itself. They claimed that they had done a great deal more to win the war than many of the nations participating, and they would not tolerate being excluded in their individual national capacity.

The extent to which the new concept of the Empire as a Commonwealth of free and equal nations has grown is shown by the fact that on one occasion the Prime Minister of Canada took a line in a public session at variance with the rest, and that the British ratification of the treaty of peace could only be deposited after it had been separately approved by all the Dominion Parliaments. Finally, when the Covenant of the League of Nations came to be considered, the Dominions insisted upon independent representation within it, for the same reasons that they had insisted upon separate representation in the Peace Conference. This fact was afterward used in the campaign against the League of Nations in the United States in the form of the six votes to one slogan, to the general surprise of people in England, who thought that the United States had far more real control over the votes of Cuba and Panama or some of the Central American republics than Great Britain was ever likely to have over the votes of the Dominion nations.

Since the war, the Dominions have sent delegations to the League of Nations which have acted and voted more or less independently. On the other hand, at the Washington Conference the British Empire delegation, consisting of representatives of all its parts, acted more or less as a whole.

In 1921 the Prime Ministers reassembled in London to consider the post-war situation and the policy to be pursued at the Washington Conference. The anomalies of the present constitutional position are well illustrated by the difficulty which arose over the title to be given the gathering. The official title of the conference was "The Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India." And this is the only name by which the body which in fact determines the policy of a commonwealth containing more than a quarter of mankind is officially known!

A second question which arose centered on whether Canada should send a minister of its own to Washington. Great Britain had already agreed to this being done. But the other Dominions objected on the ground that if Canada did this they would have to follow suit, and that they did not wish to have to incur the expense of sending ministers all over the world. So far no minister has been appointed.

But the chief problem before the conference centered about the control of foreign policy. Each self-governing part of the

Commonwealth is independent so far as concerns its defensive preparations and the action it should take to deal with imperial or international crises as they arise. But who is to control foreign policy? That is the important thing, for it is foreign policy which leads nations into war and international complications or keeps them out of them. Yet foreign policy is not a matter which can wait for endless deliberation and consultation. Its essence is prompt decision and prompt action. How, therefore, is the foreign policy of a commonwealth of nations scattered all over the face of the globe to be conducted and controlled?

The conclusion arrived at by the Prime Ministers in 1921 was summarized in the *Round Table* in the following terms:

“Now, the ‘Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives’ is recognized as the body which formulates the policy of the Empire, especially in foreign matters; while the British Government becomes charged with the duty of carrying out that policy in the intervals between the assembling of the Conference, subject to such consultation as is possible through resident or visiting ministers or the cables and the mails. From now onwards policy is a matter for the people of the Empire, and the British Government will occupy a position somewhat similar to that of the President of the United States, whose foreign policy, to be effective, requires the consent and cooperation of the Senate—in our case, the Dominions.”

Since then the only change, and it is a very great one, has been the establishment of Ireland as a Dominion with the same status in the British Commonwealth of Nations as Canada. The self-governing portion of the Commonwealth now consists of six independent nations united under a single crown, linked in a common loyalty to one another, but possessing no common governmental organ save the occasional conference already described. Whether the Commonwealth is likely to develop a more effective organism of its own, or whether it will tend to develop along the League of Nations lines, I will briefly consider in the last section of this article.

II. THE NON-SELF-GOVERNING EMPIRE

The total population of the British Empire is given in the “Statesman’s Year Book for 1922” as being 440,923,000, or more than a quarter of the whole population of the world. Not more than 65,000,000 of them are Europeans in origin, and 47,000,000 of them live in the British Isles. What of the balance?

The overwhelming majority, no less than 319,000,000, live in India, leaving about 65,000,000 people in about fifty other areas scattered all over the world, from territories like Nigeria through mandated territories like Palestine, down to coaling stations like Gibraltar and miscellaneous islands like St. Helena or Fiji.

To the average American mind this whole Empire stands for "Imperialism." To some extent this is true. The British Empire has grown partly because the dominant classes in Great Britain in the past valued the prestige and power and the commercial gains that Empire seemed to bring. But there were two other causes at work which, if one studies the history and the feats of the past, will be found to have been far more decisive. One has been rivalry and struggle with other powers. The other has been the problem of what to do with backward territories after civilization has begun to affect them.

The expansion of Great Britain in India, America, Africa and the isles of the sea has been fundamentally caused by exactly the same forces that led to the elimination of France and Spain from the hinterland of the thirteen original colonies, and to the incorporation of Texas, the purchase of Alaska, the annexation of Hawaii, the inclusion of the Philippines, and the exercise of tutelage over Cuba and the Central American republics, by the United States. Probably nobody deliberately planned to annex these territories. But if it came to a question of whether Japan or the United States was going to have Hawaii, or whether Russia was going to spread over to North America, or whether some European power or the United States was going to end disorder in Central America, America had no two opinions. This same factor has been the biggest single element in the growth of the British Empire proper. It was the reluctance to allow the new world to fall under the control of Bourbon and Napoleonic France, and later of Bismarckian Germany, which was the primary cause of the expansion of the British Empire during the last 200 years.

And this same factor will continue to operate until the whole world is brought under some system of law which will define the rights of nations, give security to all, promote self-government in the backward parts and so end the rivalry and suspicion which necessarily dominate the policy and action of all powers, so long as they remain in a "state of nature" towards one another.

The second cause is hardly less potent. Few people realize the effect of the impact of civilization upon a primitive community.

It usually disorganizes it altogether. The only African or Asiatic state which has been able to absorb the methods of the West without disintegrating has been Japan. At the other extreme take the following case. Forty years ago Swaziland was an ordinary Kaffir community, ruled by a paramount chief and his advisers, and living extremely primitively but in comparative happiness, though subject to tribal wars with its neighbors. The first person who came along was the trader. He sold beads and blankets and later bicycles and gramophones in return for gold or ivory or anything else of value. Then he brought in liquor, then firearms. The old chief developed a taste for liquor, other natives for other things. They had no experience of how to deal in Western ideas. They soon had nothing to give in exchange for what they wanted save land and mining concessions. The last stage of the story of Swaziland was that the paramount chief, having signed away every concession he could, his own and his people's, signed a concession on his death bed for "all those concessions I have not already given," in return for a final consignment of gin. By 1902 the country was in chaos.

There is only one way of dealing with people as primitive as these, and that is for a civilized government to step in and control the foreign trader and concession seeker, whether he wants to do legitimate or illegitimate business, in the interests of the backward people. Some people say: "Leave them alone." It cannot be done. Every community can run its own affairs if left entirely to itself. But primitive communities do not know how to resist the deleterious aspects of modern civilization. It is obviously impossible to erect a ring fence round Africa and allow nobody to go in or out. In the case of Swaziland, George Grey, the brother of Sir Edward Grey, was sent in. He cancelled all concessions which interfered with the legitimate life of the people, redistributed the rest on fair terms, and set up a British resident with power to see that such things did not happen again.

If we study the history of the expansion of European states or of the United States we shall find this process operating everywhere. The primary cause of the entry of the British into Egypt was the disorder which followed the misgovernment and oppression of the Khedive when he tried to get taxes to pay for loans he had borrowed abroad. The greatest menace to China's future is the money which its military leaders and ministers can borrow in return for concessions and which they spend in fighting wars

of their own. The United States had to stay in the Philippines because it could not leave the Filipinos without any government after the Spaniards had withdrawn. And Great Britain had to stay in Mesopotamia and other German colonies for exactly the same reason.

This does not mean that foreign intervention has not often been brutally oppressive and exploiting. Some of the worst scandals of history have occurred under this plea. Nor does it mean, as I shall show, that Great Britain has always been wise in the way she has governed the politically backward peoples. But it does mean that the problem is quite different from being a mere question of "Imperialism." The problem of adjusting the relations between advanced and relatively backward communities is one of the most urgent in the world. It cannot be ignored or solved by phrasemaking. It has to be dealt with somehow or other.

A study, indeed, of the history of Great Britain will show that at almost every stage her governments have been reluctant to increase the burden of her overseas responsibilities, but have felt forced to do so by one of the two fundamental considerations I have named, the general international situation, or the necessity of doing something to protect peoples ruined by the deleterious effects of Western civilization or by the consequences of war. Further, since the great trial of Warren Hastings towards the end of the eighteenth century awakened the public conscience, the British government of its dependencies has been benevolent. The testimony of impartial foreign witnesses is practically uniform that wherever Great Britain has gone she has introduced law and order, honest justice, good government and sound finance, and that railways and telegraphs, irrigation works, sanitary services, forestry work have sprung into being and that famines and private oppression have lessened. The evidence, indeed, is overwhelming that she has governed the peoples primarily for their own interest, that she has derived no tribute from them, and that prosperity has followed her footsteps everywhere. There is practically no doubt that in all these countries the people have never before in recorded history enjoyed such uninterrupted good government, peace, and order.

That does not mean that she has not benefited also. Though she has always maintained the open door to the trade and commerce of all nations, the fact that the territory is under British rule is undoubtedly an advantage to British traders, and the

task of government affords employment to a certain number of soldiers and administrators. Great Britain undoubtedly derives great advantages from her empire, though it also imposes upon her shoulders a burden of responsibility and taxation. None the less if Britain gains the peoples she has governed have gained also. As in every sound commercial arrangement, both parties have profited.

It is interesting to contrast the ordinary British criticism of America's attitude with the current American criticism of Britain on this subject. To the American, Britain is an international profiteer, who gets something out of every war, and he is inclined to regard his own attitude of renunciation as evidence of virtue. To the Englishman, the American renunciation is simply that of a man finding an excuse for refusing to take a hand in a difficult world job. The advice of the American, "Why don't you leave all these peoples to run their own affairs?" strikes him as having about as much to do with the problem as the action of the United States in sending a warship full of toys for the suffering children of Europe in 1914 had to do with the problem of saving democracy and freedom. Unless the civilized peoples take steps to maintain some supervision and control, many of the backward peoples have no chance of progress at all, for either predatory and reactionary powers or deleterious elements of civilization will lay them in ruins. Every informed Britisher knows this, but few Americans have yet realized that it is true. Moreover, the Englishman feels the less inclined to admit the superiority of the American attitude when he remembers that whereas Great Britain has always maintained the policy of the open door in the territory she is responsible for, on the ground that she was a trustee and not entitled to profiteer, the United States has rejected the open door and keeps the trade in her dependencies for herself, practically excluding the foreigner altogether.

III. INDIA AND SELF-GOVERNMENT

Is there nothing, then, to be said against the British Empire? I think there is, and it is a serious criticism. It is that the British have paid undue attention to administration and material progress and not enough to education and self-government. The basis of this criticism is embodied in the aphorism: Good government is no substitute for self-government. In making this criticism, however, it must be remembered that modern democracy is comparatively a recent thing. The United States did not

begin upon the basis of universal suffrage. At first barely one in three of its population had the vote. Democracy did not find a firm footing among the great powers of Europe until 1870, when France finally established the republic. Democracy was unknown to Asia until 1911, when China became a republic, and even in China democracy in any true sense of the word has not yet been successfully worked.

None the less though Great Britain had established law and order in India and had planted the seeds of Western ideas of self-government and liberalism, she did little or nothing to prepare to train the people in the exercise of political responsibility.

The Ripon reforms of 1880 were a step in this direction, but came to nought, partly because the British officials were prepared to take all the responsibility and the Indian representatives were content to leave it to them.

Up till the beginning of the present century, however, there was no real demand for self-government. But the leaven of Western civilization and contact with Britain was steadily working, and after the success of Japan against Russia the nationalist movement rapidly grew. For a time it was regarded as seditious. In 1908, however, a long step forward was made in the Minto-Merley reforms, which constituted elected assemblies in all the chief provinces and for India itself. But these assemblies were really consultative. The Government kept an official majority, and while they improved government they did not place any real responsibility for it upon Indians themselves.

The war, however, brought about a great change. India, like the rest of the world, was profoundly moved by the cause for which the Allied Powers were fighting and by the utterances in which that cause was expressed. It threw itself generously into the struggle and nearly 1,000,000 men were enlisted for service in some capacity or other. Inevitably, however, the demand grew loud and insistent that further and immediate steps should be taken to make India self-governing. The British Government admitted fully the justice of the claims and in August, 1920, the famous pronouncement was made that the policy of the Government was that "of increasing the association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

The decision, however, to introduce responsible government into India was simple as compared with the problem of finding ways and means.

In order to understand that problem it is necessary to realize what India is. India is not a territory containing ten or twenty million people, homogeneous in race, language or culture. It is tantamount to a continent. It contains almost as many people as Europe, and as many races, languages and religions. The 1921 census showed a total population of 319,156,396 people, of whom 71,000,000 lived in native states, mostly governed by hereditary autocratic princes. There were eleven main languages, with more than 10,000,000 speaking each, twelve languages spoken by between 1,000,000 and 10,000,000 people and ten lesser dialects. There are two main religions, the Hindu religion with 217,580,000 adherents and the Mohammedan with 66,640,000, while there are also 10,721,000 Buddhists, 3,870,000 Christians, 3,010,000 Sikhs, 1,248,000 Jains, and 10,000,000 animists, or primitives. There was the all pervading factor of caste, far more rigid even than the social hierarchies of Europe.

Democracy, beyond the limits of the village, has never existed in historic India. It has always been autocratically governed. There was no class with political training, no electorates, and even the vernacular press had only just sprung into being. How was self-government to be introduced into this vast area? Many people are now wondering whether it will be possible for the United States to work efficiently a federal system swelled to include much more than 110,000,000 people. How, then, was democracy to be introduced in a territory containing three times as many people, none of whom had any traditions or any experience of self-government, with no common language and with threatening military neighbors?

The solution which was adopted, and which was afterwards embodied in the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, was known as Dyarchy. It was recognized that the transference of responsibility for government in India must be gradual. If chaos was to be avoided a class of Indians must grow up with practical experience of government and of the working of democratic institutions. It was necessary, too, for electorates to develop of sufficient size and education and responsibility to control intelligently their representatives. Nothing but responsibility for the effects of their own actions would convert either elec-

torates or representatives from mere critics into constructively minded administrators. Yet, obviously, full responsibility for so great an organism could not be suddenly transferred to inexperienced hands.

Under the plan of Dyarchy, the functions of government are divided into two categories, one of which is entrusted to the control of India Ministers, responsible to elected legislatures. Over this branch of administration Indian control and responsibility is complete. The control over the other category is retained in the hands of the Governor-General or Governor, as the case might be, subject only to the criticism of the legislatures.

Under the Montague-Chelmsford reforms two all-India bodies are created—the India Council of State containing sixty members, twenty of whom are official, and the Indian Legislative assembly containing one hundred and forty-four members, of whom twenty-six are official. Finally, as an essential part of the scheme it is provided that a Royal Commission should go to India every ten years to examine into the working of the Act and advise, on the basis of the practical success or failure of the Indian legislatures in working the powers entrusted to them, whether those powers should be increased or not.

That is the system which has been working for the last two years in that part of India governed by the British. It has been attacked from two sides. It has been attacked by reactionaries on the ground that it is bound to lead to chaos, that all the foundational work accomplished in the last century will be thrown away, because there is no sufficient number of Indians competent to work the system. It has been attacked from the other side by Mahatma Gandhi and the non-cooperationists, either on the ground that India is quite capable of taking over the whole work of government immediately, or on the ground that they want to break down the whole influence of Western civilization and that they object to the reformed system nearly as much as to the old system because it involves Westernization.

Whether India should follow in the path of Western civilization or strike out a line of her own is for the Indian people to decide. But they can do this only when they have learnt how to govern themselves. India will not gain peace or the ideal age by destroying government, but by creating for herself a better government. Fortunately, perhaps, for mankind, the blind worship of the word Democracy and its mechanism is passing

away. People everywhere are coming to see that the mere existence of the vote and the mere erection of democratic institutions is not self-government. The mere machinery of democracy, indeed, may lead to a more subtle and paralyzing form of autocracy and corruption than absolutism itself. True democracy only exists where there is a sufficient degree of self-control and a sufficiently high moral standard among the people to enable it to choose capable leaders and wise policies. India under the new system has the opportunity to prove and make good her capacity to govern herself.

IV. THE FUTURE

The foregoing pages will have made clear the immense transformation which has come over the British Empire in recent years. On the one hand the self-governing Dominions are now separate nations, completely independent within the Commonwealth and participating on equal terms in the direction of British policy so far as geography and circumstances permit. On the other hand Great Britain is now committed to the development of self-government in all other parts of the Empire, as rapidly as the inhabitants can take over responsible control. The process which has been begun in India is being extended in various ways to Egypt, Palestine and Malta, and its gradual development everywhere is inevitable.

They will have shown, also, that with all its defects and mistakes the modern British Commonwealth does serve a great purpose in the world. It maintains some kind of constitution and law among a quarter of the population of the earth, comprising within itself peoples of every race and color and degree of civilization, and it keeps the peace between them while promoting the growth of self-government everywhere.

What of the future? In my judgment the problems of the British Commonwealth are becoming merged in the world problem. It is no longer a question of maintaining law and order and promoting orderly self-government over sections of the earth's surface, but over the earth as a whole. Obviously there is going to be no peace or prosperity for mankind so long as it remains divided into fifty or sixty independent states, brought hourly into closer contact with one another, yet with no real machinery for adjusting their relations save diplomacy and war. Equally obviously there is going to be no steady progress in civilization or

self-government among the more backward peoples until some kind of international system is created which will put an end to the diplomatic struggles incident to the attempt of every nation to make itself secure, and which will hold in check, under a mandatory or other régime, those deleterious forces of civilization already described.

The real problem today is that of world government. Every month that passes will bring home to people more and more clearly that all political problems—whether of preventing war, of establishing stable conditions for trade and commerce, of ending unemployment and bettering social and economic conditions, of improving constitutional organization—all ultimately come back to the problem of ending international lawlessness upon the earth and establishing some method by which world problems can be discussed and settled by constitutional means rather than by force or the threat to use force.

There is no doubt that the combination known as the British Commonwealth is doing much to maintain peace, develop freedom and promote prosperity in the world. Its directing nations manifestly cannot carry a greater burden than they do today. If peace and freedom and prosperity are to be made universal over the earth, the United States and other powers must take their share of the burden and cooperate in some such scheme as the League of Nations. The alternatives before us, indeed, are obvious—on the one side chaos ending in another world war, on the other side the work and self-sacrifice necessary to substitute law for force throughout the world. What part is the United States going to play? Is she going to take a hand in the greatest enterprise for human betterment that has ever been presented to a people, or is she going to shatter that hope and reap the rewards that inevitably befall those who think only of themselves?