

**THE ENGLISH PEOPLE  
OVERSEAS.  
THE AMERICAN  
COLONIES, 1583-1763**

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The English People Overseas. The American Colonies, 1583-1763 by A. Wyatt Tilby

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1583-1763

BY

A. WYATT TILBY

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

1912

## PREFACE

THIS book is in no sense a history of the English people in their own island. The home life of our country, both before and after the foundation of the colonies and protectorates, has been adequately treated by a host of previous writers: the colonial field, on the contrary, remains almost untracked, or marked out only in portions, by men who have written with different aims, seen events from different points of view, sketched in different perspective and painted without reference to the relative importance of their small foreground to the rest of the landscape. It has seemed to me that the whole of our imperial career, as it has sprung from one small group of islands, so it can best be treated as one series of connected events—to use a well-worn simile, as a drama which, though its various acts take place in every continent and on every ocean, still preserves the fundamental unity that even the constant shifting of the scene does not obscure. The present work is an attempt to carry out that idea.

The course of our history in other lands has often forced me to step outside the strict limits of the title. It would be impossible to understand our empire in India without some slight notice of the Indians themselves previous to their discovery by Europeans, and the Portuguese and Dutch explorers there; it would be impossible to understand

our history in America without mentioning the Spanish and French empires that preceded and for a long time overshadowed the English colonies ; the record of South African life is not that of English alone, but of English and Dutch together. Even in Australasia, which occupies a unique position in having afforded a footing to no other white race, the aborigines played a part in the early history of the colonies that cannot be passed over. The question, indeed, of the contact of a white race with coloured peoples in all parts of the world, which calls imperatively for treatment in a work of this kind, is, upon the whole, the most difficult one to treat impartially. It is almost impossible to pick the way clearly through the trade statistics, official reports, missionary experiments and political prejudice which obscure a scientific treatment of the greater problems at issue.

I have resolutely excluded that mass of detail which makes many modern histories so unreadably long, that the narration of events takes more time than their action. After all, there are other things in life than the study of the past ; the present and the future may also claim a little attention. But it has been my first principle that no settlement of the English-speaking people overseas should be left unnoticed ; and my second that the actors in the great drama should, as far as possible, speak for themselves from the records they have left behind—records that too often lie buried under an accumulation of library dust which tells that the sleep of the heroes they commemorate has seldom been disturbed by inquirers of the present generation. And while giving due notice to the long wars which in one sense founded our empire, I have concentrated more attention on that peaceful development of our institutions and society

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which form its true basis and make it worth having, in a widely different fashion from either the Roman Empire of ancient history or the Holy Roman Empire of the Middle Ages, or indeed any previous empire that the world has seen.

**A. WYATT TILBY.**

**BIRSTWITE, YORKSHIRE,**

**31st December 1907.**



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE publication of a new edition, in what I hope may prove a more convenient form for reading, has given me the opportunity of correcting one or two errors that crept into the first issue. The whole work has been very carefully revised before being reprinted, and some paragraphs have been entirely rewritten.

Several friends and some critics—the two characters are not necessarily separated in person—have urged me to add footnotes containing more information than it is possible to give in the text as to the original sources on which the narrative rests. I must own that I am not greatly enamoured of the footnote, which is apt to resemble the proverbial poor relation by interrupting the flow of conversation at inconvenient moments; nor is it always easy, in these days when the materials are accumulating so rapidly, to specify the exact ingredients and composition of every dish upon the menu. It may ensure the honesty of the cook; it may also provoke indigestion.

However that may be, I have given the leading references, somewhat briefly when the ground has been well covered by previous writers and the facts are clear; in more detail when the subject is controversial or the quotation difficult to identify. And this plan I propose to follow in the remaining volumes of this work.

A. WYATT TILBY.

ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE, LONDON,

*July 1910.*

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