

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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The British empire by Sir Charles W. Dilke

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SIR CHARLES W. DILKE

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BRITISH EMPIRE

BY
THE RIGHT HON.
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THE BRITISH EMPIRE

CHAPTER I

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

THE British Empire, with its recent extensions in the form of protectorates and spheres of influence, has an area of nearly four Europes, public revenues of 260 millions sterling (without counting the vast sums raised in the United Kingdom by local rates), a population of 400 millions, and half the sea-borne trade of the world. It stands at the top of almost every scale by which Powers are estimated, except indeed as regards its military strength in land forces : the total war strength of the British Empire, apart from armed police, being almost exactly the same as the peace footing of the

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Russian Empire, namely, 950,000 men. The British Empire produces almost every requirement of man, and stands first among the Powers in wheat, wool, timber, tea (as far as value goes—having displaced China), coal and iron (in both of which the United States run us close), and, perhaps now, gold. The doubt as to gold may come as a surprise to some. Our gold-fields in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, India, and some of our smaller colonies, are so well advertised that it is a little startling to find that the United States, who do not talk much about their gold in present times, still produce almost as much as we do in our whole Empire, the Transvaal running neck and neck with both, and that Russia produces half as much. Not only is there a close race as regards iron between ourselves and the United States, but in steel they have now beaten us out of the field. In silver we are nowhere as compared with the United States. In precious stones, and most of the minerals besides

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

those which I have named, we stand first. In tobacco we stand second to Spain, and in coffee, sugar, and other articles very high. With regard to sugar, the wails of the West Indian planters have made many think that our sugar industry has been destroyed by the bounties of the Protectionist Powers; but, whilst West Indian sugar has been pining, British sugar raised in Fiji, in Queensland, and in some other colonies, has been increasing fast in bulk, and there is not that falling off in total production which might be expected, to judge from the complaints.

The colonizing mania which has seized on Germany and France, and had seized on the Italians, who have recovered after a bad fit, cannot confer on France and Germany an empire similar to our own, because the best places were already in British hands. German colonization has, up to the present time, been singularly unsuccessful; French colonization has at great cost added an enormous African territory to the dominions of the French Republic, but one which is unlikely