

CHAPTER IX

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

281. **The British Empire.**—In all the history of dominion, there is, perhaps, nothing more astounding than the fact that a small country almost without allies or even well-wishers, should have extended its power over so large a part of the world as the British Empire occupies to-day. It now includes about one quarter of the land surface of the globe. Of its total population, only about fifty-five millions, or one in seven, are of British blood. Unless this fact is grasped clearly, it is impossible to appreciate the wonderful work being done in controlling and civilizing the millions of subject people, comprising hundreds of races, each with its own language, customs, and religion. Rarely, if ever, does Britain find it necessary to resort to force in governing her subject peoples. Even their prejudices are respected; their religion, their social customs, and local laws are seldom interfered with, unless for the purpose of preventing crime or abolishing brutal customs. In this lies the secret of Britain's empire-building. Her aim is to give her colonies as great a measure of self-government as their loyalty, intelligence, and general circumstances warrant. The Dominions, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, have practically complete self-government; some of the colonies, such as the Channel Islands and Bermuda, have governments partly under their own control; yet others, like Jamaica and many colonies in Africa, are ruled, except in purely local matters, by Councils over which the crown has control. Even outside the Empire proper, Britain exercises a controlling and protecting power over vast areas such as Egypt and many other parts of Africa.

The efficient control of this vast Empire has been made possible only by the remarkable improvements of the last