

PREFATORY INTRODUCTION.

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IT HAS often been said that there is no teacher of geography so interesting and so thorough as war. Americans, for example, hardly knew anything more of the Philippine Islands, and their inhabitants, and their political associations, than that such islands existed in a colonial relation to Spain. But alike the geography and the history of those islands have been studied with intense interest by scores of thousands of all classes in America during the last eighteen months. The new relations in which America found herself so suddenly involved with the West and the East Indies led many of her citizens to face the general history of colonization, and especially to investigate the extraordinary place which colonization has occupied in the development of British commerce and influence throughout the whole world during the last hundred years. It is not too much to say that a large number of Americans have come to understand the growth of the British Empire more sympathetically since they were led to see in their own case how a great people could be impelled on her historic development by circumstances and forces seemingly beyond her resistance. The shallow notion that Great Britain has conquered territory all over the world merely through greed, and cruelty, and oppression, is rapidly being relegated to the limbo already so well occupied of popular prejudices and international misunderstandings.

It is safe to say that a still larger number of the inhabitants of North America have been drawn, this winter, to a still closer study of the growth and spirit of the British Empire through the occurrence of this deplorable and disastrous war in South Africa. The demand is very great indeed for information regarding the history, the geography, the inhabitants of that country. People wish to know who the Boers are, when they arrived in Africa, what kind of people they found there, and the history of those people since the invasion of the country by Euro-