

formation of this Society. Some short time ago our noble Chairman asked us to trot out our colonial hobbies. Some years ago, the Colonies having been the great hobby of my life, I became convinced that I ought to go and see them for myself. At that time of day I could not help feeling struck with many very remarkable features in the Colonial Empire. One was the Colonies themselves. Nothing more remarkable, I think, than the formation of these communities can be thought of or found in history. That was one of the features that most struck me. The second was that the apparent indifference which has been alluded to, on the part of the British public towards the colonies, is an indifference which is more apparent than real; and the third is, that the school of thinkers that seem to be studying the question at all, are a number of very brilliant thinkers—for they are many and even most brilliant—whose whole exertions seem to be employed to show that we are burdened by our Colonies. Those three things struck me as so remarkable, that I felt I could not do justice without going and studying for myself. I should say that our noble Chairman need not scruple in using the word *grandeur* in connection with the objects which this Society has to carry out. Now, this is not the place, I quite agree, to go into any discussion of the question of the relative position of the Colonies and the Crown, or whether they should be kept or thrown away; but I will just say one thing, that I know nothing more remarkable than the indifference, the singular coldness, with which that speculation has been maintained. What would be the fortune of those Colonies without us, if we were, as Mr. Goldwin Smith thinks we ought to be, separated from them? It is a very important thing that we should not fall into the error of undervaluing such a step. I am glad our Chairman does not undervalue it. The argument of Mr. Goldwin Smith points to this, that we have cut away every vestige of political connection with the Colonies, and therefore we had better get rid of all that is left of the connection. A more extraordinary political fallacy was never put forward. What have we done with the Colonies, and what shall we do as long as they are united to us? In every Colony which has separated itself from us there has always been the difficulty connected with the election of the Executive. Of that difficulty it deserves to be pointed out at the outset, that no Colony that has cut itself adrift from the parent stock has ever yet been able to solve that gigantic difficulty. Let me point out the cause of that terrible conflict which lasted so long in America. The whole question turned in reality on the point of a President's election. If there had not been that last ounce to break the camel's back, the election of President Lincoln—if that difficulty had not been pressed, many of the other difficult questions might have been solved without a civil war. And it is even so in connection with this, that I cannot help mentioning a most singular story which was told to me at the outset of that war. It is a fact that many of the most cultivated Americans, in the first anguish of that year, did recur,