

mere local or temporary significance, but capable of general application, led me to think that, if the result were embodied in the form of a treatise on parliamentary government as administered in Great Britain, it might prove of practical value both in England and her colonies; and that in the constitutional states of continental Europe it might serve to make more clearly known the peculiar features of that form of government, which has been so often admired, but never successfully imitated. I therefore determined to avail myself of the resources of the well-stored library under my charge, and attempt the compilation of a work which, while trenching as little as possible on ground already worthily occupied by former writers, should aim at supplying information upon branches of constitutional knowledge hitherto overlooked.

I proposed at first to prepare, more especially for colonial use, a manual which should include a dissertation upon the peculiar features of 'Responsible Government' in the colonies. But I decided, after much reflection on the subject, to change my plan, and to confine myself to the exposition of parliamentary government in England. I arrived at this conclusion, firstly, from a conviction that the safest guide to the colonies, whose institutions are professedly modelled upon those of the mother country, will be found in a detailed account of the system which prevails in the parent state; and, secondly, because parliamentary government in our colonies is still in its infancy, and its success is as yet but problematical. 'The well-understood wishes of the people, as expressed through their representatives,' has indeed been the acknowledged maxim of colonial rule;