

can colonies should provide a portion of the cost of their own defence, as our great colonies are doing at the present time, and he only resorted to Imperial taxation because he despaired of achieving this end by any other means. The step which he took was no doubt a false one; as is so often the case in England. It was made worse by party changes and by party nominations, and many later mistakes aggravated and embittered the original dispute; but I think an impartial reader of this melancholy chapter of English history will come to the conclusion that these mistakes were by no means all on one side. It is impossible, however, to review the colonial history of England without being struck with the many serious dangers that might easily have shattered the Empire which were averted by wise statesmanship and timely concession. There was the question of the criminal population which we once transported to Australia. In the early stage of the colony, when the population was very sparse and the need for labour very imperative, this was not regarded as in any degree a grievance; but the time came when it became a grievance of the gravest kind, and the Imperial power had then the wisdom to abandon it. There was the question of the different and hostile religious bodies existing in different portions of the Empire, at a time when the monopoly of political power by the members of a single established Church was cherished as a kind of religious duty to politicians at home. Yet at this very time the Imperial Government sanctioned in Canada and in some other parts of its dominions a system of dealing with Dissenting Churches far more liberal than that which it admitted in these islands, while in India it abstained, with an extreme, and sometimes even an exaggerated scrupulousness, from taking any steps which could by any

possibility offend native religious prejudices. There was the question of slavery, though we were freed from the most difficult part of this problem by the secession of America. In addition, however, to its moral aspects it affected most vitally the material prosperity of some of our richest colonies; it raised the very dangerous constitutional question of the right of the Imperial Parliament to interfere with the internal affairs of a self-governing colony, and it brought the Home Government into more serious collisions with the local Governments than any question since the American Revolution. Whatever may be thought of the wisdom of the measures by which we abolished slavery in our West Indian colonies, no one at least can deny the liberality of a Parliament which voted from Imperial resources 20 millions for the accomplishment of the work. There was the conflict of race and creed which, between 1830 and 1840, had brought Canada to absolute rebellion, and threatened a complete alienation of Canadian feeling from the mother country. This discontent was allayed and dispelled by some of the most successful legislation of the present century, and there are few greater contrasts in the present reign than are presented between Canadian feeling towards the mother country at the time when Her Majesty ascended the throne and Canadian feeling at the present hour. There was also the great and dangerous task to be accomplished of adapting the system of colonial government to the different stages of colonial development. There was a time when the colonies were so weak that they depended mainly on England for their protection, but, unlike some of the great colonizing Powers of ancient or modern times, England never drew a direct tribute from her colonies, and in spite of much unwise and some unjust legis-