

THE EMPIRE AND MILITARISM

ON a former occasion we have endeavoured to point out how ill-founded is the apprehension that the idea of empire involves something essentially antagonistic to democracy and civil liberty. We sought to show how the fallacy seemed to be due to a loose habit of thought, which hastily judges every form of empire by the phenomena exhibited by empires of the Byzantine type. The truth is that the form and method of government are no inherent parts of the political idea which we now express by the word empire. In our own time the word connotes not a constitutional system, but an organism. The only common idea that is essentially inherent in the modern conception of empire is a world-wide group of states or quasi-states under one supreme government. The degree of individual liberty, the degree of autonomy in the parts, and all the details of constitutional organisation which distinguish one national government from another, are but the accidents and not the essentials of empire, just as they are the accidents and not the essentials of nations. It does not follow that because the later Roman Empire—from which some empires have sprung and upon which some empires have modelled themselves—was a semi-Oriental despotism, that all empires must tend in the same direction. In the case of empires which, like the British and the American, are fundamentally expansions of constitutional nations, no tendency