

- 133  
- 133  
- 140  
- 142  
- 145  
- 148  
- 149  
- 150  
- 151  
- 152  
- 153  
- 154  
- 157  
- 161  
- 166

## PREFACE.

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THE design in the following pages is to set forth a rough and condensed account of the origin and growth of the principal British Colonies, with a glance at their possible future. The intention was to treat each item as shortly as possible, consistent with clearness, but the extreme interest of the subject matter proved a constant impulsion to stray from this laudable resolve.

Items which more properly come under the head of British possessions have been purposely omitted. It was thought that territories such as the West African group, British East Africa, British New Guinea, etc., etc., do not come within the strict category of British Colonies as places of settlement on a large scale for Englishmen. Similarly, all military stations, such as Gibraltar, Malta, etc., have been excluded as outside the subject under consideration. These, however, might very fittingly be made the object of a separate volume. Their interest is historical and explanatory rather than evolutionary.

A few that are on the borderland between colonies and possessions have been introduced. This was because in the one case, British Guiana and British Honduras, the harmony of a whole group would have been lost. In the other case, Ceylon, the subject matter is of exceptional interest and a flavour of maturity is imparted by antiquity.

The idea has been to show briefly and very roughly (1) how the British Colonies came to be in British hands at all, and (2) how from almost tiny beginnings they slowly and gradually developed and evolved themselves by a more or less natural process.

We all know the Dominion of Canada, for instance, but we do not, perhaps, all know how it came to be the Dominion of Canada, and why it so became, nor the chief component