

# THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

## CHAPTER I

### THE KING-EMPEROR

At the head of the British Empire stands the King-Emperor.

### THE KING

There have been Kings in England (save for the briefest intervals) ever since its settlement by the English nearly fifteen hundred years ago; perhaps, indeed, even earlier, for it is doubtful whether the older 'Welsh' inhabitants ever completely lost their independence under Roman rule, and some of their chiefs, at least, were probably called 'Kings.' These ancient rulers were half patriarchal chief, deriving his power from birth and religion, and half military leader, or 'heretoch,' as the English called him.

But for many centuries these so-called Kings ruled over only small parts of the country, or, rather, over small groups of people. Then, by a slow process of combination, the numerous petty kingdoms (of which the names of some are known to us) became the seven Kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and, finally, the one Kingdom of England, under the Wessex House of Cerdic, in