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The Cohesive Elements of British Imperialism

By Alleyne Ireland

[Our readers will like to have a few personal notes about the author of this article. Mr. Ireland is a native of Manchester, England. His father was Alexander Ireland, the proprietor of the Manchester "Examiner and Times" and the friend and biographer of Ralph Waldo Emerson. His mother was the author of the "Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle." He was educated at the Manchester Grammar School, and subsequently studied at Berlin University. During the past twelve years Mr. Ireland has spent most of his time in the British Colonies. He lived for three years in Australia, and later spent seven years in the West Indies and in South America. During his stay in the West Indies he devoted himself to a study of tropical labor, taking the practical course of working on the sugar estates as an overseer. During the past two years he has contributed a number of articles to the leading magazines in this country. The more important of these are "European Experience with Tropical Colonies" and "Briton and Boer in South Africa," contributed to the "Atlantic Monthly," and "The Labor Problem in the Tropics," which appeared in the "Popular Science Monthly." Mr. Ireland has recently published a volume on "Tropical Colonization," and has in the press a volume on "The Anglo-Boer Conflict."—THE EDITORS.]

ON June 22, 1897, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated throughout the British Empire. As her Majesty left Buckingham Palace to take part in that magnificent procession which marched through the streets of London to the accompaniment of the frenzied applause of three millions of people, she touched an electric button, and forthwith there went out to every part of the British dominions a message—to glaring, sun-scorched Aden, to the sweet green slopes of Barbados, to the lands where the Southern Cross hangs right overhead, to the wide waste-lands flushed by the Northern Lights—a simple message of greeting, "From my heart I thank my beloved people. May God bless them."

I was in British Guiana at the time, and heard the Governor of the Colony read the Queen's message in a public place to a large crowd of colonists.

Now, the point is this: Why should that crowd of negroes, coolies, Portuguese, and half-breeds have given itself up to the most enthusiastic expressions of delight? Why should there have been such a throwing up of caps, such a cheering and hurraing, such a lusty singing of the national anthem? Why, later in the day, should many thousands of people in that little, out-of-the-way colony close under the Line have gathered in and around the cathedral to offer up their heartfelt

thanks to God that a monarch whom they had never seen should have been spared to rule for sixty years in an island whose shores they had never visited? Why should the crowd which gathered round the Queen's statue that afternoon to hear the school-children sing "God Save the Queen" have been moved with one accord to join their voices to the childish anthem, until the song became a chorus, the chorus a joyful tumult? Why, when the swift tropical night had fallen, could I look out across the land and see glowing everywhere amidst the palms and the breadfruit trees, shining from the thickets of oleanders and hibiscus, in every house and hut, a lantern, or at least a candle, alight by way of rejoicing?

Why? The answer would fill volumes; it would be a history of British colonization. But, apart from matters of sentiment or emotion, there are so many things to be accounted for in the British colonies that there should be some interest even in a most brief and inadequate survey of the cohesive factors of British imperialism. For instance, I might continue my questionings in another direction, thus: Why do we find in the annals of the negro colonies of Great Britain no record of outrages on white women? Why is the page unstained by the story of a lynching? Why do we find a mulatto occupying the high office of Chief Justice in a British colony having a population of twenty