

DOES BRITAIN OR THE UNITED STATES HOLD THE FUTURE?

BY HOWARD GLASSFORD.



IN these days of competitive forces and increasing social advancement, the struggle for national supremacy becomes a momentous one. We are within the gateway of a new era in the world's history. The point on which hinges the future of a large proportion of the human race has probably been reached. At present there are on this earth two mighty powers possessing a preponderant influence in its affairs—Britain and the United States, both members of the great Anglo-Saxon family.

The expansion of the United States was the political phenomenon of the nineteenth century, and this, too, at a time when "the pulse and pace of the world were being marvellously quickened." She had her flood-tide of prosperity in the settlement of her virgin tracts. That explains the secret of an almost unprecedented development. There was, as Carlyle put it, "a vast deal of land for a very few people." Dr. Strong, in discussing this situation in 1885, thus expressed himself:

"The rapid accumulation of our wealth, our comparative immunity from the consequences of unscientific legislation, our financial elasticity, our high wages, the general welfare and contentment of the people hitherto, have all been due in very large measure to an abundance of cheap land. When the supply is exhausted we shall enter upon a new era, and shall more rapidly approximate European conditions of life."

The circumstances which made possible the abnormal expansion of the United States no longer exist. Limitation of area is now felt. There has been, in fact, an exhaus-

tion of the public lands. A writer in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, as far back as 1887, said: "The golden time is past; our agricultural land is gone; our timber lands are fast going."

More recent statistical reports by the United States Government give further accentuation to this condition of affairs. The fact that nearly the whole of the valuable portion of the public domain has already been taken up can hardly fail to impose a check on immigration, as the prospect of landed ownership is always a powerful incentive to the European peasantry—a circumstance proved by the steady movement of incoming population towards the unsettled districts of the West.

A brief inspection of the United States census returns shows that the percentage of increase in population has of late years been gradually diminishing. It was considerably less during the last two decades respectively than in any previous decade in her history, with the possible exception of the period between 1860 and 1870, principally due to the effects of the Civil War. All this is significant, and indicates, paradoxical though it seems, that the American Republic is beginning to suffer from, what in other countries she has for a century richly profited by, territorial deficiency. The time may be near when the press of numbers will manifest itself there as it is now doing in Europe and in Asia.

A well-known American author, referring to this subject, says: "Our wide domain will soon cease to palliate popular discontent, because it will soon be beyond the reach of the poor." Even now the United States has started an exodus of her