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OF BRITAIN**

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**SOCIAL AND IMPERIAL  
LIFE OF BRITAIN**

**VOL. I  
WAR AND EMPIRE**

**BY  
KENELM D. COTES M.A**

**LONDON  
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To  
G. M. AND J. NORRIS

## PREFACE

IT would seem probable, after a science had been studied for centuries, that one of its humbler students would be able to compile a primer with comparative ease, and in most branches of knowledge the work would be safe, not unpleasant, and far from laborious. The way would have been already prepared by many other books of the same kind. In history, if history were only politics and biography with a slight admixture of religion and war, compilation would be an agreeable task with the guidance and assistance of recognised authorities, whose names in the footnotes would furnish a guarantee alike of good faith, that is of adherence to approved and stereotyped models, and of accuracy, that is of agreement with those models.

But, if a student is dissatisfied with outlines, and with the usual limitations ; if he is aware that there is a science of economics and a history of commerce ; if he is not ignorant of the existence of strategy and tactics, of military geography and the geography of the sea-roads ; if he knows anything of the story of the church, of literature, or of art, or of law ; he leaves the beaten track, and undertakes pioneer work which is certain to be long and arduous, and almost equally certain to be regarded as unnecessary and almost impertinent.

The plan of such a compendium of social history, by the nature of the case, could not occur to any but an unknown

## PREFACE

man. It would not be worth the while of a celebrated author to devote a tenth of the necessary time to work that must absorb all his energies, before even its first stage was fit for publication. As a matter of experience neither is it worth the while of an unknown man for the following reasons. Such a work needs, to make it complete, many volumes. To compress the facts would be to advance theories unaccompanied by the requisite proofs. To select the more vital portions of the nation's organic life, and to attempt to treat them fully with the object of discovering the laws which govern them in health and disease alike, is to use up all the space at the writer's command, while there still remain unaccounted for many other branches of his subject.

To bring a work even thus far, since it follows no well-known lines, requires many years of labour from a single worker. In *War and Empire* it is necessary to ask whether the fate of nations is decided by single battles and by the accident of a military genius being in command; or whether there are social laws which bring empires to a ruin that is only consummated on the battle-field, and which carry them triumphantly forward as long as they are doing work that is useful to the world. In *The Diversity of National Life*, the influence of Britain,—that is, of the land itself,—in training the peoples for empire, is discussed, together with the character of the successive bands of colonists that filled the land, and the way in which these two forces acted in moulding the national life, which sought in the Northern Seas and in the Mediterranean to become imperial, and finally achieved its destiny in the oceans. In *The Geography of Sea Power and Empire* the path of empire is traced, the widening of the world's horizon, the way in which the pioneers pushed into the unknown, and how the network of roads by land and sea covered in every century more closely the known world. Geography

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studied in this way shows that by the plan of the world empires are placed where lands connect the maritime regions, that all empires have depended on sea-power, that sea-power only falls to a people whose plebeians are armed and therefore free. The *Social and Imperial Geography of Britain* should deal with such problems as the effect of geography on the constitution, on civil strife, on the gradual conquest of the land, on architecture, on intercourse between provinces, on the life of the people not in Britain only, but in the wider world that is the British empire ; and all these together would make up a rough sketch of *The Social and Imperial Life of Britain*.

Such a work cannot be forwarded by the help of highly trained assistants, even if they were ready to give their voluntary aid. A vast volume of facts have to be collected before the plan can be made ; and, until the work had been mapped out in outline, it would be difficult to assign to others any share in the investigation. The subsidiary, no less than the main lines of thought, only gradually take shape, as in the perusal of whole class after whole class of specialists' books, as well as of original authorities, analogies and connections between the different branches of historical science are suggested. To take an instance : the specialist on war, who is treating of "arms and armour," of "the bow," or of "military architecture," cannot wander away from his subject to consider how it affects the constitution, although he may be acquainted with constitutional history. Neither can the constitutional writer turn aside from such an event as the summoning of burgesses to parliament by Simon de Montfort to notice in military architecture whether or no it was about this time that there was a special activity in fortifying the English towns, or in military history to be curious as to whether villeins were first at this period not only allowed but required to bear arms. Between the two schools lies that tract of history which



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belongs to geography, commerce and agriculture. The geographical writer can scarcely be expected to omit the minutiae of his own subject in favour of the breed of oxen, or of the capacity of certain lands to produce fine-woolled sheep. Still less can he who records civil war note that the land is naturally divided into the habitations of the more advanced and the more backward peoples. The authority on sea-power can hardly be supposed to follow the lines of commerce, and draw them from port to port across the lands which connect the maritime regions. On the other hand, the man who has made a profound study of commerce cannot leave his special work to trace out the way in which nature and history have marked out the sea-roads. Constitutional experts do not look for the vitalising influence on constitutions in the naval aptitudes of peoples and in their geographical position. Geographers do not look at the shape, and the mountains, and the resources of a land to give the key to constitutions in a chapter on *The Geography of Freedom*. Naval officers cannot spare the time from their profession to study geography and commerce, and to discover the springs of sea-power in the constitution, which is the formal expression of the national life.

To attempt even a primer, that will fill up in any degree the wide gaps that separate the different branches of the great science of national life, the exploration of each and all of these tracts is necessary, following in the footsteps of the eminent guides who have made them their peculiar care. To do this is to run into the danger of making what will seem to be blunders to those who are unacquainted with the books of specialists in the several branches of historical knowledge, since the facts, and still less the theories, will not be found in general authorities. If these apparent blunders are taken as a test, instead of the general truth of the theories put forward being examined on their

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own merits,—that is, in the light of the historical facts that are adduced in their support,—the writer will seem after years of toil to be less acquainted with history than the average student of the regulation volumes.

Yet it is only by one man undertaking the task that it is possible to arrive at the general impression which is here put forward, not as being final or adequate, but as pioneer work. This tentative effort offers to some slight degree a solution of the problem of the course of empire, and of the laws under which it comes into existence and decays. The assertion is made that it is no accident, but that it depends in the highest sense on the character of the people, however that character was produced, and that the measure of its strength and of its duration depends neither upon chance nor on the heroic lives of single men, but that its possession is the reward and its loss the penalty of the social life and character of the nation, whose hands have been strong enough to grasp it or too weak to retain their hold.

To have added to this book lists of authorities or references would have required another volume. Great pains have been taken to acknowledge my obligations to the authors whose facts or translations have been used. A translator, who has made a special study of his author, expresses his meaning better than any one else can do on the spur of the moment; and I am in the extraordinary position of understanding English so well that I read it more rapidly than the few other languages I can translate from. I mention Messrs. Bell & Son's translations, those by Mr. Shuckburgh, of *Polybius*, *Tacitus*, the translators of *Thucydides* and *Herodotus*, Mr. Laing's *Sagas*, Sir George Dasent's works, and if the Charters and the Rolls Series had been all translated, I would have used those translations instead of reading them in the original. There are also Burton's *History of Scotland*, the Story of the Nation series, "besides I know not if I have" benefited much

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from any other beyond those noted in the body of the work.

For the laws of imperial life I alone am responsible. They are laid down every day by statesmen as they address the people on matters of public policy. I can meet the possible criticism that I am oracular, by the answer that it is not my fault if history has hitherto ignored the existence of these laws. That cannot invalidate them. Statesmen and peoples as they make empires are in as strong a position as Stephenson, when he was asked what would happen if a cow got in front of a locomotive. He replied to the well-meaning member of the parliamentary committee, who thus championed stage coaches and pedestrianism, that he should be sorry for the "coo." I am merely in the position of the humble reporter, who hears the strong voices of the empire-makers express their pity for the "coo" of history.

KENELM D. COTES.

UNION SOCIETY,  
OXFORD.

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