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# THE GREAT PRO-CONSUL.

## SIR GEORGE GREY'S MEMORABLE CAREER.

## EMPIRE-MAKER AND THINKER.

[BY ONE WHO KNEW HIM.]

Almost on the day that the Queen came to the throne, the old ship Beagle—the Beagle of Darwin's voyage—sailed out of Plymouth Sound with an exploring party on board. This party was bound for the north-west regions of Australia—really unknown then—and at its head was a lithe, vigorous, young officer of the 83rd Foot, Lieutenant George Grey. In the early summer of 1894 there landed at Plymouth a venerable figure, bowed and white with age, one who carried a full four-score of years. In that going we had the first departure of Sir George Grey for the other England which was in the cradle away down in the Far South. In that coming back—the final return of the wanderer to his mother-land—we had him as the revered Grand Old Man of the Greater England which had now taken so great a place among the peoples of the earth. A sailing ship tumbling to the humor of the elements—so he went; a magnificent liner which ended her voyage to the hour in defiance of wind or weather—so he arrived.

### When Oceana was Young.

As the veteran spent his final years at home with us—in the heart of London indeed—we got to know the man as well as his work, to understand both as our kinsmen in the southern seas understood them. Grey came of an English family with a lineage—the Greys of Groby. His father, a brilliant officer of the Peninsular Wars and a colonel at thirty, fell in one of the terrible struggles before Badajoz. He was born a few days later—to be precise, on April 14, 1812—at Lisbon, where his mother had been staying. Thus he was a mother's boy, and he would often talk of the sweetness and light with which she surrounded him. For the most part he was educated privately, but how thoroughly was seen when he passed through Sandhurst with honors of a quite exceptional sort. He had, as a child, seen the bananas and the oranges that weighed down a fruit-stall in a side street near the Bank of England, and he longed to visit the far countries betokened by them. His boyish fancy—and truly he was a boy in heart to the last—took a deeper meaning when military service in Ireland threw him among the sufferings of a population. Ireland was just over the struggle for Catholic emancipation, and turmoil, discontent, bitter privation, hung upon the land. These things set him thinking, and he knew also how much misery there was in the larger sister island. What followed was a career which gives almost an Elizabethan touch to the reign of Victoria. Nobody is likely to tread such a path of freshness and movement again, for it was only possible at the birth of Oceana.

### Dreaming and Doing.

As has been seen, Grey wanted to go exploring—this was a spirited young man's ambition—but he asked himself at the same time, "Can't we get to learn about those new countries in the South in order to people them and so bring relief to the teeming population of the Old Country?" Not much, he believed, could be done at the moment to ameliorate the condition of the working classes in Great Britain and Ireland. He looked to the South for relief—though the light must first be sent from the North—for new and better conditions of life, for a civilisation which should avoid the cankers and the arsenals of Europe. Those points ought to be set out at once, because they were the influences which governed his whole work—a tender, brotherly feeling for the mass of men, an earnest desire to improve the conditions of living, whensoever and wheresoever he might, and irrespective of the color of a skin. A youthful explorer, he was even then a thinker and he was fully as anxious to find land suitable for settlement in North-West Australia as he was to solve the geographical problem whether great rivers there drained themselves into the sea. But, indeed, the two objects, as is evident, went hand in hand, and Grey's discoveries were important in the highest degree. "It was all very interesting," he used to say of that time, "and the greatness of virgin nature in contrast to man continually filled one with admiration and amazement. When I first landed in Australia the Southern Hemisphere was almost a secret—you had only to go outside your own door to find something which contributed to the knowledge of science." The natural history specimens that he sent home from Australasia and South Africa at various times were innumerable. His activities on this line—activities combined with real knowledge—gained him the friendship of men like Lyell and Owen, and many a friendly lance he broke with them on some learned question.

### Chosen Pro-Consul.

There is no need to write in detail of the story of Grey's explorations—of his terrible tramp overland to Perth, which rescued his party from certain death, or of the severe wounds he got at another time in saving himself and two of his men from a savage onslaught of the aborigines. With him it was ever romance and adventure, although he never sought either for its own sake. They simply came to him while he was pursuing one task or another as "the Great Pro-Consul." No doubt it was the years he spent as an Australian explorer that cast him for Pro-Consul, since they proved him to have no ordinary parts. A little period of service as British Resident at Albany before the chapter of his explorations closed, across the seas to England, a week or two's rest among his relatives, and then one morning, wholly a surprise, there came a Queen's messenger knocking at his door. Affairs in South Australia had quite gone wrong, and the colony was threatened with bankruptcy almost before it had gone into business. Lord John Russell, who was at the Colonial Office—this was the autumn of 1840—scarcely knew what to do, and finally turned to the young Captain Grey. True, he was absurdly under age for a Governor—only twenty-eight—and he had worn a red coat instead of tied red tape. Still the hour had come, the man was needed, and in Grey he was evidently available. Thus he went to South Australia as Governor—the youngest Englishman in our time to hold such a high post, as he was one of the very youngest to receive the K.C.B. Only, as Peel declared on one occasion in defending Grey, youth was a fault which was always curing itself. He found everything at Adelaide in a tangle; his difficulties were endless; yet within five years he had established South Australia on a basis of prosperity from which it has hardly looked back.

### Planting the Anglo-Saxon.

"In South Australia," Grey would recall, "I endeavoured to carry out what I regarded as a cardinal principle in the making of a new country—to create capital direct from the natural product of the soil, not by the raising of too heavy loans." His reforms and economies did not suit those who had flourished under the old system—they even made him widely unpopular for a time—but he was for the settlers as a whole, and their future, and they got to see it and to appreciate him. During all his labors as a Governor he was an unflinching advocate of the right of the mass of the people to the land, an equally unflinching foe to the monopolist, especially in the form of a company. "Get the people on to the land," was his motto in South Australia, and it is a fact that he actually took part in reaping the first big wheat crop of the colony. Remember always that Australia was new, that so far it had been little more than a place of banishment for our convicts, that foundations had to be laid down on which it might arise as a nation. Two essential conditions were always in Grey's mind touching the growth of the southern lands to which he had been called as, in a notable measure, their architect. To the south of the line the Anglo-Saxon tongue must run, but the effete traditions of the Old World ought, as far as possible, to be kept out. He took this torch to New Zealand when Lord Derby sent him there, again to deal with a colony in a state of grave crisis. Too often, one judges, that was the way Downing-street had with Grey—to use him for an emergency demanding high qualities, and then in after years to forget his exertions. If it was so, a younger school of English statesmanship endeavored to make atonement by the distinction conferred on him within his last years—the distinction of being admitted a member of the Privy Council. For titles and honors, in themselves, he had small regard, but when conferred as the hall-marks of public service, he thought they ought to be esteemed and valued by every subject of the Queen.

### War and Peace in the South.

When Grey got to New Zealand in 1845, it was aflame with a Maori war; everything was unsettled, the outlook was dark. To trace events even in the shortest form would be to go over his first administration of the colony, which extended to 1854. On relinquishing his post in that year to go to South Africa it was his happiness—to quote an expression of his own—to leave the country in a state of tranquillity and prosperity. He also left it with a constitutional government, and what happened in that connection really forms a better story of Grey in New Zealand than any general description of his Governorship—better even, perhaps, than instances of his personal courage in dealing with the Maories on the battle-field. A cast-iron Constitution, fashioned on old-world methods—such was his definition of it—had been sent out to him by the Home Government, and he was ordered to introduce it. He examined it carefully, and came to the decision that it would be unjust to the bulk of the settlers, a violation of the rights of the Maories, and further, that it would act against the federation idea for the British possessions in Australasia. Accordingly he took the very bold decision of setting the Constitution aside, of refusing to establish it. It was a proceeding which only a strong man would have adopted, for it might be likened to mutiny in the field—mutiny against the Imperial authorities in England. But he never budged from the case in justification which he promptly put before Downing-street, and he went through with flying colors. He was not only empowered to hang up the ready-made Constitution, the British Parliament not only took the unprecedented step of going back on a measure which it had passed, but Grey was given authority to draw up another Constitution, and he did so—one better fitted, as he believed, for a young democracy. He did not have the same success in another matter which claimed his attention about the same time. This was his effort—squashed by the powers that were in England—to preserve New Caledonia for the Union-Jack—an effort, in truth, to keep out of the Pacific any flag but the one he loved so well. No; a Polynesian federation under the protection of England was not to be considered for a moment, not although most of the native chiefs had agreed—and gladly agreed—with Grey to accept it. Then, as later in South Africa, he saw clear and far: he saw what the local influences of English politicians did not permit every Colonial Secretary to see. But he had to submit, and he did that with the keener disappointment because he regarded England as far greater than herself, as representing the freest and most freedom-loving race in the world, and so the race which could best govern a new world—the Anglo-Saxons.

### At the Cape—The Mutiny.

There is in Cape Town now a handsome statue of Grey which dumbly bears testimony to his qualities as a ruler in that part of the globe. He was eventually recalled from South Africa because—at all events mainly because—he had schemes for federating it. "I believe I should have succeeded," was his own deliberate verdict on mellow reflection, and indeed success appeared certain. Here again, however, federation was regarded by the Colonial Office of the time as a policy not to be entertained. When the clamor of Cape Colony practically compelled the English Government to send back its Governor, it was only to carry on the administration on lines regulated from Downing-street. The fine harbor at Cape Town is a monument to the initiative of Grey, and his foresight prevented what would probably have been a great native rising. He planted schools, libraries, hospitals, according to his usual policy, and similarly he had a successful method which he applied in reference to native labor. In South Africa, in New Zealand, in Australia, wherever he was, he never forgot the affairs of the Empire as a whole. There is no more striking incident in the history of our own times than Grey's deflection to India of the troops which were on their way to Lord Elgin in China. There was no cable to South Africa, as there was no Suez Canal, in those days; news took weeks and months to travel. Lord Elphinstone sent word by special steamer to Grey, at the Cape, that he feared trouble, perhaps a mutiny, was breaking on India. He put what slender information he could before Grey, but left him to act as he thought fit—whether to send assistance or not. Grey decided that if religious fanaticism was at the bottom of the outbreak it might assume the most critical proportions for our rule in India. He made up his mind at once, rode round the Kaffir chiefs, practically bound them over on their honor to keep the peace in South Africa, and shipped every soldier he could spare to India. He even sent his own carriage horses, and when the troopships for China called at the Cape in passing he ordered them to proceed instead to India. To countermand the destination of an army on his own authority was as bold a step as to return a Constitution to Downing-street, but Grey this time did something doubly unconstitutional. He created the disbanded German Legion—the foreign soldiery who had been sent to settle in South Africa—into a regiment and sent it also to Bombay. The amazing resolution of it all makes one marvel even now, only once more events showed how well Grey had judged. But for the succor he sent, Lucknow might have fallen for one thing, and the whole story of the Indian Mutiny might have been different. That is hardly saying too much; and in any case the service was a splendid one.

### The "Dangerous Man."

In 1861 Grey finally left South Africa and returned to New Zealand, where the Maoris were again abroad with the fiery cross. One secret of his success in these southern countries was the firm yet diplomatic way he had in managing the natives. "I always endeavored to treat them as human beings," was his own way of putting matters. "Sir George Grey," somebody else has observed, "treated Kaffirs, Maories, Australian aborigines, with as much consideration as if they were gentlemen and gentlewomen." Rewi, one of the sternest warriors among the Maories, prayed that he might be buried under the same headstone as his old opponent, "the Governor." Grey cured Tawhiao, another chief, from drunkenness by himself becoming a teetotaler. The Fingoes of South Africa called him a father in all things, and not very long since there reached him in London a beautiful address from the Cook Islanders. "Our word to you, O Grey," they called it; and they prayed, "May God's blessing rest upon you and give peace and happiness to you who have done so much for the peace and happiness of others." His friend Miss Florence Nightingale declared that he was nearly the only Governor who had condescended to qualify himself by learning the languages, the habits, and the ethnological peculiarities of the races he had to rule. Especially Grey admired the Maories as a race, and again, as before, there was peace in New Zealand when he surrendered the Governorship. One can easily see how a man who suspended a Constitution, who deflected an army corps, who tried to federate the Pacific Islands under the British flag, who would most likely have succeeded in federating South Africa—one can easily understand how such a man would come into conflict with the more sedate methods of the Colonial Office. Nor must it be supposed that he was without opposition in the various colonies which he governed; that was inevitable. Storms came from many a quarter, and often, but he never shrank from them. Wrong he might have been at times, yet few men perhaps could, in the twilight of life, have found so little to look back upon with regret. But he became "a dangerous man" to the Colonial Office—the phrase was Lord Carnarvon's—and the end of it all was his dismissal—for it amounted to that—from the Governorship of New Zealand in 1867.

### As an Influence at Home.

Here, then, was a stirring career as pro-consul of nearly thirty years; and although Downing-street did not give Grey further employment, he did not let his energies rest. He came to England and conducted a memorable candidature for a seat in Parliament, withdrawing only to save the seat for the party Liberal. Needless to tell Liberalism in those days was a very different thing from what we know it. Grey preached free education and Irish Home Rule—actually drawing out a Home Rule measure—and on the score of his advanced views was once more called "a dangerous man." This was the epoch when leading men of both parties in English politics talked of cutting off the colonies—to "cut the painter" was the common expression. They argued the colonies a burden—Mr. Goldwin Smith was a leader of that school of thought—and would have England made self-contained, a tight little island which should be the workshop of the world. Grey vehemently opposed the movement, and it is reasonable to suppose that his voice and influence had a good deal to do in turning the ship of State upon the course with which we are now familiar. He went back to New Zealand and settled there, believing, apart from anything else, that it was from the colonies he could exercise most influence on the legislation and policy of the mother country. He became Prime Minister of New Zealand, thus ruling as the head of the Cabinet a country which he had twice ruled as Governor. No precedent for that suggests itself, and it was an immense proof of the hold which Grey had taken upon the affections of New Zealand. As the years wore on he had endless evidences of the trust of the Australasian democracy, and that was his constituency. He would just say to you, "I am filled with thankfulness for the opportunities of usefulness which have fallen to me, and only sorry I have been able to do so little."

### Backward and Forward.

One remark Grey often made—that his work lay in an exceptionally interesting period of Anglo-Saxon history. In America we had bred a second England and through our own fault had lost it when it grew to manhood. In Australia and South Africa our Oceana was taking form yet once more, but now the continents of the world were exhausted. His idea was to fashion in such a manner that the England of the South and the England of the North would remain for all time a single and a growing force—to make strenuously for the influences which ensured that. Not merely so, but he looked to the Anglo-Saxons of the United States to take their stand side by side with those of the British Empire—to a cohesive Anglo-Saxondom which should rule the world for peace and happiness. "Sentiment," a critic once observed. "Sentiment," was Grey's retort, "is the force which, almost more than any other, has moulded the universe." "A dream," somebody else declared. "I have often been called a dreamer of dreams," Grey answered, "but I have lived long enough to see many of my dreams realised." He had infinite faith in the destiny of the Anglo-Saxon people, this father of federation—for to that title his right is first and foremost—and there was almost a note of triumph in his voice when he spoke of the establishment of arbitration as between England and America. And, like the destiny of our race, which is not yet clear, so it is not easy to lay your hand on the book of Grey's life and say, "That is what it means; that is its fruit, to England and mankind." Administrator and statesman, man of action and thinker, student and book-lover, gifted with a quaint, tender humor, and beneath everything a deep religious feeling indicated in the declaration, "Providence is my word"—why, it is a life of singular fulness, and it has many tributaries. His large-heartedness was a proverb, his simplicity of character everybody knew, his love of "Light, more light," was witnessed by the Grey libraries in Cape Town and Auckland. Bitterly as he was attacked during some controversies, no one ever questioned, but rather all acknowledged, his stern honesty of purpose, the perfect purity of his motives. That Grey, with his large ideas, his advanced beliefs, his whole-souled democracy, his mantle as of the prophet, lived half a century before his time, is likely enough. Yet he and Carlyle and Babbage agreed that no genuine thought or act was ever wasted in this world—it hit somewhere—and perhaps that is the epitaph he would wish to have written over himself.

J. M.