The greatest and most universal factor for the preservation of peace and sanity to-day, and the sole hope of a world overwhelmed by a chaotic sea of social disorder and unrest, is the British Empire. To the great watchword of free states must the eyes of the peoples of the world ever be turned for an example and an encouragement in the maintenance of a stable, just and beneficial system of government, as always in a crisis men have turned to what they know to be the highest guiding and promoting force; and for such a course of procedure there is surely a sufficient precedent in the policy of Britain at all the great turning points in her Empire's past history. If necessity there must, in the years that have gone to the formation of so great a sovereignty, arisen times which called for great decisions and still greater steadfastness to declared resolutions, and the mighty British Empire to-day, prosperous and self-sustained, linked by the chains of common interest among the dependencies and national pride of race, is a standing witness to the wisdom and far-sightedness of the statesmen of England at such times of universal disturbance.

Inversely, in the history of a great nation, occur times that are fraught with consequence for the destiny of that people. Brief the intervals of time between such crises may be compared to the long stretches of dusty highway that lie between the milestones, but whereas the milestones appear
...without unfailing regularity, turning points in the nation's story obey no such fixed laws, and often differ considerably themselves. One such point may come as a bolt from the blue, over before its arrival has been completely recognized. Others again, may occupy long spans of years for gradual development that is discernible only through the perspective of distance. Such is the first great stage in the history of the British Empire.

The awakening idea of empire expansion and overseas dominion was the outcome of the hundred and twenty years when the Tudors ruled England, a time when England, with the help of the untold wealth of the continent but newly discovered by Columbus, was rapidly becoming the richest and most powerful nation of Europe. Then was the time when the love of the sea, that had been the heritage of every Englishman since the days of Alfred the Great, bloomed out into that great and mighty thing that was in great measure responsible for the first formation of an overseas Empire. The national hatred against Spain, inflamed and augmented by the religious narrowness of the time, and the fact that Englishmen were unable to share in the rich plunder of America, over which Spain claimed a monopoly, broke out in sea warfare that robbed her of much of her precious plunder and, by creating a sense of incentive to wider voyaging, first brought before common notice the advantages of colonial expansion.

This, then, was the time when the first glimmerings of Empire expansion were manifested in the dreams and plans of such men as Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Then went chancellor to Archangel, Tobolsk, to
Salvador, Davis to the North-west Passage, Frobisher, 
and Drake in their many plundering and buccaneering 
expeditions — all the foremost men of the day entering 
into the spirit of expansion; and it was in the spacious 
days of Elizabeth that the first attempts at overseas settle-
ment were made. Gilbert failed at Newfoundland; Raleigh, 
that true Empire-builder, at Virginia, but the first 
divergence from the mainroad of the insular policy of 
development had taken place, and henceforward the story 
becomes that of the British Empire rather than that of 
Britain herself.

After these first steps had been taken, the external 
growth of the English nation continued, more slowly and 
serenely. The picturesque characters such as Raleigh, but 
powerful merchants and grave religious companies took 
up the business of colonization; and these succeeded where 
he had failed. The whole period was one of experiment, but 
the first fruits were tasted when the colonies in the 
west at Virginia, New Plymouth, and Maryland were 
permanently settled. And on the meanwhile, colonisation 
in the east had been steadily proceed. After the first 
voyages of Drake and Lancaster, and the formation of the 
East India Company, voyages occurred regularly and 
trading posts and factories were set up, despite the 
persecution of Dutch and Portuguese. Thus expansion 
was slowly beginning both in the east and the west, 
and this gradual increase in colonisation, particularly 
amongst the East Indies, leads up to the next step in 
the Empire’s history.

This may be named as the Navigation Act of 1651, 
the direct consequence of which was the first Dutch war.
Spain, her power already crumbling, was a thing of the past, and Britain entered upon her second great era of competition with a new enemy and one closer to home — the Dutch. The three Dutch wars, together with the vigorous colonisation of Cromwell, who had already been responsible for the most important British possession in the West Indies — Jamaica — did much to raise the Empire to a higher position than it had ever reached before.

With the restoration of 1660 came the policy of the Stuart régime again, and though there is much fault to be found in the reign of Charles II., (and there was), it had, at the least, in the first year of its existence, points worthy of respect in its foreign administration; namely, a keen interest in colonial expansion, and notions of trade and defence. However, from this time till well on in the 18th cent little save steady and remorseless growth marks the progress of the Empire. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, closing the French war, left England in an extremely gratifying position, with more dominions under her flag and her sea supremacy unhesitatingly asserted.

There now comes another and most critical period in the Empire's history — yet one more landmark beside the way of progress. This is the turning from expansion by settlement to expansion by conquest, a stage which occupies some thirty years, a succession of wars arising directly out of the determination to extend or to preserve British trade and sovereignty beyond the seas. The first of these wars is with Spain for a share in the Spanish-American trade, from which developed a war.
with France and Spain allied against Britain. It is of no
great consequence in itself, but so important in that it
led to an ever-increasing hostility with France, the new
rival in Empire expansion. Spain, Holland, and Portugal in
had passed - France was now to become England's chief
enemy. There was incessant warfare with the Indians,
many parties under French leadership, in the American
colonies. Braddock's defeat, in 1755, had a great effect,
and the number of Indian raids was greatly increased.
The English efforts against the French were repulsed,
and it was not until June, 1759, when Wolfe's victory
became firmly established, that the American conflict
became a national war. Troops, equipment and money
were forthcoming. The tide turned, and British
success followed success with great rapidity. In 1759
came the capture of Quebec, a glorious story of heroism
and endurance that is only saddened by the death
of Wolfe. Thus Canada passed into English hands.
Simultaneously with the trouble in America
(later to
have come trouble in India) the original French
East India Company had been merely a trading cor-
poration, and as such had set up many factories
and settlements, abstaining, however, from interference
in native politics. With the advent of Duplantier as French
governor, his ambition soared to higher ideals, and he
visualized a great French Indian Empire; throughout
his whole term of office he shaped his administration
so that the weak link in the chain of conquests,
however, was the fact that a dominant nation in India
must, in order to preserve her position, have supreme
control of the seas, a possession that had been England's
alone ever since the Treaty of Westphal. Actual war between
England and France was declared in 1744, and as the
peace of 1763 was not negatagible in its effect upon
the actual combatants, it is best to consider a period
of active warfare from the former date right on to
the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The awakening of the English
in India to the necessity of meeting the French with
their own weapons took place about 1750, as a result of
the efforts of Duplex's unchecked influence in the
Barnato. Somewhat, however, Duplex was recalled, and
though Bussy attempted to carry on his ideals by
an alliance with the Nizam, the arrival of Lally with
French troops indicated an impending conflict between
the two white races, and the Nizam, believing the
British to be stronger, threw in his lot with them.
Next and Lally, at the head of British forces, gained
a succession of victories, and Lally was besieged at
Bundeberry and forced to surrender. Thus the military
power of France in India ceased to exist.
As a result of the French war Britain had
greatly extended her territories, resources, and wealth, and
was now in her accepted position of mistress of the seas,
and her chief interest and prospects of growth
lay in the New World, and not in the continent as
formerly. Now comes a happening, however, that was to
serve as a very real blow to her imperial pride—namely,
The loss of the American colonies. Whether this was a good
or a bad thing for the British Empire has been a point
of controversy for many years, but although it entailed
the loss of many valuable and hard-won possessions,
it is certain that it was in some ways the salvation of
The Empire, for it brought vividly home to the statesmen in England the inadequacy and unsuitableness of the existing system of colonial government. Various stages led up to the Declaration of Independence, and though much of the blame is necessarily due to the gross ignorance and misunderstanding of the people in the old country, the colonies themselves should come in for a share of criticism. Nevertheless, the war from England and the American War which followed were pregnant with consequences. Both for England and America. The entrance of France into the war on the side of the independent colonies that hope of an Empire in real Britain were not yet abandoned, and, after the failure of British troops in land, both Spain and France joined America in an attempt upon the sea-supremacy of England. Unprepared though she was, Britain took up the challenge, and after the crucial successes of the Battle of Yorktown, the armies rested, with the after Rodney's great victory off St. Vincent. So she was able to secure favorable though humbling terms at the Peace of Versailles. So then, at the end of the 18th cent. Britain, two great foreign possessions were Canada and India. Soon, however, public attention was to be drawn to further possibilities of expansion. The report of Captain Cook, the first navigates to thoroughly explore and investigate the possibilities of the practically unknown "South Sea Island," opened before the eyes of the home government an opportunity both to replace the lost colonies in America and to supply a dumping-ground for the surplus convict population that Britain herself might no longer hold. So was the magnificent beginning of Australia, soon, however, it was seen that the new country was worthy of better things.
Samples of Australian grown wool sent to England were found to
compare favourably with the best European fleeces, and the opening
up of great territories of good grazing land beyond the coastal
mountains brought thousands of immigrants to Australia’s
distant shores. Thus the new land steadily grew, and
with New Zealand, fortunately favoured by a more
promising start. The greatLandmark in the history of
these southern dependencies occurred about the middle of the
19th century, when the discovery of gold became generally
known, and miners flocked from all parts of the world to
seek their fortune in the new raw country. And after the
first few years of frantic prospecting had passed, and the
gold-producing industry of Australia had subsided to
take a minor position in that country’s resources, the
island continent, with various other possessions in the
Pacific, assumed its present position as a member of the
great British Empire.

All this while the Empire had been extending in all
parts of the world. Possessions in Africa, in the Indies, and
many related colonies had drifted under the British flag.
Social and moral views had made their appearance, but the Empire
was now so mighty and successful a unit as to be shaken
by nothing short of a world disquietude. So the Suez Canal
of 1857 and little more bear out the lesson of the loss of the
American colonies — how well Britain had learnt that
lesson was shown by the granting of self-government to
many of her young dominions —, and being more ex-
perience in the statesmen of the Empire. Similarly the South
African war was noteworthy mainly for the wonderful spirit
and patriotism of the men from overseas, showing that the
dominions were ever ready to rally round the standard of
The motherland on her time of need. This ardent fervour of loyalty, so still better exemplified by their conduct in the First War—an event too briefly before men to-day to require description. Sufficient to say that the Empire, as she had done many times in the past, weathered the storm of conflict, and emerged a more closely-bound whole than ever before.

Thus the great story ends, so far as the past centuries are concerned. What the years to come may hold, none can foretell; yet, as we are sure that critical periods will arise in the Empire's future history, and that their effects will be greater and more far-reaching than any in

The past, we confidently rest assured that, whatever the emergency, England and the Empire will meet and overcome it, fortified and encouraged by the example of the past.

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